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Title of Project: Evangelism and its Four Christian Practices

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Abstract

Adam and Eve. Cain and Abel. Mary and Martha. Jesus and John. Relationships, one with another whether healthy or otherwise, permeate the Bible. When two people are in a relationship, there are expressions of care and concern as well as an understanding of each other’s backgrounds. When we are in relationship with one another, we want to know as much about the other person as we can. In many cases, this includes knowing about one another’s faith traditions and experiences.

From a very early age, I have done what I can to make sure that people around me feel welcome in whatever environment we share. In high school, I welcomed each person who came into the doors of youth group by name with a smile and a hug. I invited all of my non-youth group friends to events because I thought they would enjoy them. Some of my strongest relationships are with people I have known for more than 75 percent of my life. To this day, I want to make sure that wherever we are, all with whom I gather have everything they need to have the best experience possible.

Invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome are four practices people do daily and would acknowledge they do so. However, they do not believe they can be successful when asked to evangelize. I argue that, when examined through a theological lens, when people engage in these four practices, they are successfully evangelizing. Through the work of this project, these four Christian Practices are defined, examined, and discussed while thinking about how they can benefit a congregation in helping the church to grow in membership.
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Introduction

Questions and Purpose

Evangelism is “joyfully sharing the good news of the sovereign love of God, and calling people to repentance, to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, to active membership in the church, and to obedient service in the world.”¹ This definition, adopted by the 202nd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA), is easily digestible for many, but can still be intimidating to others. How do we, as individuals, successfully do all of these components of the definition? How do we understand them to apply them to our daily lives and interactions with others?

Starmount Presbyterian Church is described by new members, potential members, and visitors to our congregation as “so friendly” and “so welcoming.” Whether it be at worship or for non-worship events, the pastoral staff, program staff, and members of the congregation wear these compliments as badges. What is the reason for this feedback? What is Starmount doing that makes it known for being friendly and welcoming?

If one were to ask members of Starmount to “do evangelism,” they would stand paralyzed in their tracks, claiming they would not know where to start. I believe that the intimidation with how to start “doing evangelism” is because the concept has multiple definitions, many with negative connotations. Or, on the other hand, the concept may seem intimidating because of the uncertainty of where to start: “What tools do I have to “do evangelism?” This paper will outline and define how each person does, indeed, have the tools and language to become successful evangelizers, just by being in relationships

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with others. By utilizing skills, or practices, that are already familiar, “doing evangelism” will not seem so unattainable. The familiar and common concepts of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome, when presented through a theological lens, can assist in better understanding evangelism. How are these practices theologically rooted?

**Understanding and Defining My Personal Context**

I grew up in an upper-middle class neighborhood in North Central New Jersey with two college-educated parents and an older brother. Serving as a bedroom community for New York City, I was constantly “buzzing about” and always being aware was a part of who I was and who I have become.

My brother, six years my elder, had a lot of friends over. He played sports that I was also forced to attend if my parents wanted to be there. My parents enjoyed entertaining, including my mother’s bridge games and their annual Christmas brunch. Having people in and out of our home was the norm, as was being expected to be respectful, remaining on our best behavior, and making sure that everyone had what they needed.

When I was old enough to attend middle school youth group, I couldn’t wait to go, and I wanted everyone I knew to be a part of this great thing of which I was also a part. I asked one friend in particular to attend what must have been every week—it probably sounded like “Wannago? Wannago? Wannago? Wannago?” She replied, “Fine—I’ll go if you stop asking me.” But that week’s youth group was the first of many weeks through the years of middle school and high school that she attended.

Whether it was during middle school or high school, I would get to youth group early to socialize. And then, at one point, I decided I wanted to stand at the bottom of the
steps and be the first to give each person who walked in the door a hug and a “NORM!”-Cheers-style welcome. Perhaps that was the start of it. But it was that feeling, whether for myself or the person coming in—I wanted to connect with everyone at youth group; I wanted everyone to have a good time; I wanted everyone to experience what I was experiencing. No matter where I went, I wanted this shared experience; in this case, I just happened to be at a church youth group event.

During college, I began volunteering as a leader of the local Presbyterian Church youth group. As a leader, I utilized some of the programs and ideas that I enjoyed as a youth. At the end of the day, I wanted the youth to have a similar experience to the one that I had—a place where they wanted to come and bring their friends. I wanted them to have a safe place that they could call “home.” I wanted a place where they would want to come, not because of what the program was, but because they were confident that they would know someone there and have a good time. Having a good time was guaranteed because they were together as a community.

My experience as a leader continued when moving to Minnesota for graduate school: the youth group of the church where I was attending had what seemed like a revolving door of youth staff. My consistency as a volunteer youth group leader was more important than “being there when I could” and volunteering when it was convenient to me, which I had done at this church in the past. It was in leading youth group that I felt a call to professional ministry, applying for the youth ministry position when it became available.

Once hired for the position in which I felt called, I found myself to have two gifts in ministry: one God-given, the other circumstantial. The ability to recruit and retain
adult volunteers was provided by God. The senior class that decided—as a group of eight teens—that the youth group was not going to “die” on their watch; that was circumstantial. With intention, this group of seniors invited their underclass counterparts to movies and other events that were outside of youth group. They understood that relationships were important, building up the youth group through being known, one to another. And grow it did: what began as eight high school youth and one leader at the beginning of my tenure finished at 38 youth and eight leaders by the end. But it wasn’t just about the numbers—these youth (and their leaders) deepened their faith through the relationships they built with each other and the relationships they each grew deeper in with God. God was at work (and still is) in that congregation.

Following seminary, Starmount Presbyterian Church called me to serve as their Associate Pastor. The multigenerational worshipping body gathers for one worship service each Sunday, for Sunday school and for other faith formation activities. It was a good fit and continues to be so because of the gifts I have and the personality of the congregation. New members, potential members, and visitors to our congregation for non-worship events reported that Starmount is “so friendly” and “so welcoming.” These claims are the result of both highly visible and less visible practices at Starmount:

- A parking lot greeter arrives at your car on an icy Sunday morning with a helping hand to ensure that you get inside safely.
- Someone at the front door says “Good Morning” and welcomes you inside.
- The usher escorts the newcomers to their seats, asking the unfamiliar (to them) church members to move down or let in the newcomers.
• The visitor who returns for a second or third time and is greeted by the pastor by name.

All are examples of the ways in which Starmount congregants serve others.

Being someone who has “never met a stranger,” I am friendly and make people feel at home. These two traits were nurtured by my parents. I have become increasingly aware that my ability to engage newcomers in conversation and make them feel welcomed is not something that comes naturally to everyone.

As I consider this, I am aware of many things that shape who I am. I address them by utilizing Richard Osmer’s questions of Practical Theology²:

• What is going on with me?
  o I am aware that I am college- and graduate school-educated.
  o I am aware that I am married to a man who also has a bachelor’s and master’s degree, providing a high level of critical thinking when engaged in conversations.
  o I am aware that I am a working mother who has one child.
  o I am a seminary graduate who successfully passed all of the milestones to stand for ordination in the denomination.

• Why is this going on?
  o I am aware that I am a White woman who lives in an upper-middle class neighborhood.
  o I am aware of my upbringing, from my parents’ financial situation to the current one my husband and I share.

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• What ought to be going on?
  
  o My personal and professional theology from which I work is one that is rooted in the Reformed Tradition.
  
  o I believe in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
  
  o I believe that God created the world and that it has evolved over time through nature and nurture.
  
  o I believe that God created us to be in relationships, one with another, since the beginning in the Garden of Eden and continuing throughout each of the books of the Bible.

• What will go on?
  
  o This project will allow me to be sensitive to the needs of the congregation I serve, including the way we care for one another.
  
  o This project will influence me to think critically about the way I interact with individual congregants. By doing the work, I will be able to understand them better so that I can connect them with others in the congregation.
  
  o This project will influence me to grow as a person who is sensitive to the needs of others, attempting to make them feel comfortable at any event I also attend.

The experiences I have had during my 39 years of life, 14 years in professional ministry and 8 years of ordained ministry make me who I am today. They shape the decisions that I make each day. It is this same background and experiences that define the lens which I consider my ministry.
Understanding and Defining My Congregational Context

Greensboro, North Carolina, is the third-largest city in the state and the 67th largest in the country. The city was founded in 1808 and named after General Nathanael Greene, who was the Revolutionary War commander of the American forces at the Battle of Guilford Court.

Greensboro is in the top 14 percent for college-educated adults, which is above the seventy-fifth percentile when compared nationally or in-state. The age of the city’s population ranked above average nationally but ranked lower than other cities in the state. The city’s median family income is higher than its in-state counterparts, although that comparison is a bit lower when compared to the rest of the country. Despite the seemingly affluent picture these statistics paint about the city including a median family household income of $53,150, a 2014 Gallup poll commissioned by the Food Research and Action Center identifies that, based on a percentage of the total population, the Greensboro-High Point areas are number one for people who are “food insecure”—those who have difficulties securing food.

4. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
The city has a rich history of events that made a national impact, including the site of the start of the Underground Railroad\(^{11}\) and the Woolworth store where the four African-American men sat at the lunch counter and refused to leave, marking the start of the Civil Rights movement.\(^{12}\) These events indicate a long-established culture of hospitality, displaying ways that they provided hospitality when none would or demanded hospitality when not being afforded the same as their fellow citizens. The many hospitable events that follow reflect and name how caring for one another can sometimes mean hard work. Those caring people are who worked, demanded, and established the nurture and care of others through action and relationship.

Starmount Presbyterian Church, established in November 1952, was the product of the combined efforts of Orange Presbytery, First Presbyterian Church of Greensboro, and Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, also in Greensboro.\(^ {13}\) A member in good-standing of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Starmount is one of 151 churches in Salem Presbytery and one of 21 Presbyterian churches (any Presbyterian denomination) in Guilford County. With approximately 383 members, the congregation has seen equal waves of growth and decay, although it sits much larger than the national average of 175 members.\(^ {14}\) The waves, specific to Starmount, can be attributed to transitions in pastoral


\(^3\) “Our History,” Starmount Presbyterian Church, accessed July 1, 2016, [http://starmountpres.org/about/our-history/](http://starmountpres.org/about/our-history/).

leadership and differences within the church body. The denomination’s statistical report indicates that the congregation’s population has remained fairly stable over the last 10 years, with the average worship attendance around 200 people weekly.\textsuperscript{15}

The congregation’s giving is approximately two-thirds larger than the denomination’s national average and has remained relatively consistent when compared to the previous 10 years. The congregation’s average contributions per member and average contributions per worship attendee were also above the denomination’s national average.\textsuperscript{16} Starmount Presbyterian Church, comparatively speaking, is healthy, in membership, worship, and contributions.

In another period of transition, Starmount’s sixth head of staff completed his tenure in September 2015. As the congregation discerns its identity in this next chapter to call its seventh head of staff, its members cling to one another as a church family. The multigenerational worshipping body gathers for one worship service each Sunday, for Sunday school and for other faith formation activities, as well as many fellowship opportunities throughout the year.

\textbf{Statement of the Challenge}

Friendliness and the ability to welcome everyone they encounter could be attributed to Southern hospitality. However, there is something more at Starmount. It goes deeper: God is present in the midst of the encounters, one with another. However, I am not confident that the members would identify what they are doing as theologically

\footnotesize{15. Ibid.}
\footnotesize{16. Ibid.}
rooted. The practices of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome should be identified and given definition within a theological framework.

How are these practices theologically rooted? God craves being in a relationship with us through God’s embrace. God created us in God’s image. Therefore, God desired to be in a relationship with what God created, which is an example of invitation. We were formed to be in relationships with one another, as Adam and Eve displayed, and thus serve as an example of nurture and hospitality. Therefore, we are hardwired to be in a relationship, one with another. When God shunned Adam and Eve and forced them to leave the Garden, God never stopped loving them. God, instead, attempted to teach a lesson, which is an example of the nurture God can provide. Despite the many times we turn our back on God through sin, God continues to welcome us back with open arms; this is the ultimate example of what it means to welcome. Invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome are practices that reflect God’s relationship with us.

This project seeks to assist Starmount in identifying the Christian practices already being done, theologically rooted in God’s ministry and mission in the world. This project assesses and evaluates Starmount’s efforts at embodying practices of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome in a relational ministry of evangelism.

Hopes for the Project

My hope and prayer for this project is that the Holy Spirit will work, move, live, and breathe in my work and the hearts and minds of the readers, as well as those with whom the work is shared and applied. My hope is that something so close to my heart translates onto these pages and throughout this project.

What to Expect in Upcoming Chapters

This project’s chapters will define evangelism, as well as its four Christian practices of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome. Each chapter will allow for definition, a literature review, and details of the study of the subject. Conclusions and future hopes and dreams will complete the project.
Chapter 1: The Evangel

I don’t like to talk about my faith. I feel like my faith is best when it is lived out. My actions and words speak to who I am and what I believe. I do not feel comfortable going around to all of my friends and inviting them to church. What if they already have one? What will they think of me?

Being politically correct is king in today’s society out of fear of being offensive.\(^1\) Therefore, if one is to speak of their faith, there can be a fear of insulting others. Perhaps it is more a concern about how the conversational recipient will perceive the one who is doing the talking. But a third possibility and, perhaps, causing the most hesitancy of all, is people being asked to discuss their faith when they don’t know what it is they believe or how exactly to put words to their beliefs. With the word “evangelism” seemingly hijacked by conservative Christians\(^2\), what does that term mean in today’s culture? Just how, exactly, does one “do evangelism” today?

Evangelism is a term that the PC(USA) defines as “joyfully sharing the good news of the sovereign love of God, and calling people to repentance, to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, to active membership in the church, and to obedient service in the world.”\(^3\) As each congregation has its personality, the important


undertaking of evangelism can look very different and distinct in each of these congregations.\textsuperscript{4} Programming is designed for both those who come through their doors and for its members who go out to serve the world. Depending on who is listening, the communication of the gospel of Jesus Christ can sound different, despite the same message being delivered. Knowing this, what does true and authentic evangelism look like in today’s society?

Successful true and authentic evangelism today is generated through true and authentic relationships. "If we recognize that biblical commands to show hospitality are most often tied to an encouragement to exhibit brotherly and sisterly love, then something good will happen, first in our churches and then in our world."\textsuperscript{5} Abraham and Sarah were wonderful evangelists who did just that—exhibited brotherly and sisterly love—to the three who came to their house.\textsuperscript{6} Although set in a different time and place, these two set a good example of how we should live our lives today.

Abraham was approached by three men one hot afternoon. Upon realizing that he and his wife, Sarah, had company, he sprung into action—offering bread and drink, as well as a place to sit for respite. “Not only does Abraham leap to his feet and run (in that heat), but the first words out of his mouth beseech the visitors to allow him to care for them: ‘My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant.’ . . . The narrative's emphasis on Abraham's gracious hospitality goes beyond an effort to satisfy Abraham's

\textsuperscript{4} The author is ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA).


\textsuperscript{6} Genesis 18:1-8 (NRSV).
justifiable curiosity.” By bringing people into their home, they were able to extend the Kingdom to their guests.

Evangelism can be examined and defined when thinking globally, but how do individual churches think about the concept? Theologian David Bosch identifies evangelism as a mission of individual congregations. When thinking about evangelism as growing membership of the church, he writes:

The purpose of church growth is [to] further church growth. Those who have become church members should win others for church membership; that is a main thrust, perhaps the main thrust of the New Testament. A ‘theology of harvest’ has to take priority over a ‘theology of seed-sowing.’ Numerical or quantitative growth should have first priority in a world where three billion people are not Christian. . . . The focus in evangelism should, however, not be on the church but on the erupting reign of God.

If we focus on bringing people to understand the love of God through Jesus Christ first, we can then talk about where they come to understand that relationship.

When you learn about people and extend grace and warmth and love and compassion to them before learning or "wanting" anything else, then they will more than likely extend interest in you. More specifically, they will be interested in what you are doing, who you are, and what makes you tick. This interest can include what you believe in and where you worship. Bosch points out that “if we understand evangelism not just as recruiting church members, not just as offering individual souls eternal salvation, and not as seeking to hasten the return of Christ, it cannot be divorced from the larger mission of the church.”

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9. Ibid.
This focus on evangelism is important for consideration when thinking about this larger mission of the church: bringing people to understand the foundation of the greater understanding of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and its impact on one's life. This mission is foundational to any other work done in the church’s name: service projects in the community, providing resources for those less fortunate, and understanding faith on a personal level are rooted in this mission.

Black Presbyterian congregations are reporting growth. Within this niche of the larger denomination, a 2007 study reports that “respondents are not passive in their attitudes and feelings about evangelism. Ninety percent of the respondents are actively involved in personal faith sharing. . . . It was felt that the reason why more Christians and congregations are not more involved in the ministry of effective evangelism should be attributed to their lack of knowledge as to how to share their faith, or not understanding the Christian faith well enough to share it, rather than to any lack of concern.” This viewpoint is shared across denominations, regardless of race. If lack of knowledge is at the root of the hesitancy, then education and training are keys to successfully “doing evangelism.”

The way to educate the congregation in “doing evangelism” took on many different forms throughout the work of this project. The foundation of all Christian education is the Bible. Therefore, identifying scriptural passages to be used as themes for each of the Christian practices and the all-encompassing title of evangelism was critical.


11. Ibid, 130.
Once identified, a multi-week Bible study was written to teach both a biblical foundation and practical implications of putting the Christian practice to use.\textsuperscript{12}

A Bible study was drafted to coincide with the sermon series, utilizing the same scripture passage as the primary text for the sermon. Although drafted in 2013\textsuperscript{13}, it served as a mid-week educational series in the summer of 2015. That summer, a Christian education class and Bible study (see Appendix A) was administered by me and included lecture, large- and small-group discussion, reflection, and prayer. The Bible study was to introduce and expose the participants to the four Christian practices as aspects of evangelism. As the premise of this final project indicates, the Christian practices are not foreign concepts to participants. However, the main objective of this educational series was to get participants to think theologically, critically, and practically about how to incorporate those Christian practices into their lives.

Following the completion of the Bible study series, participants had the opportunity to reflect on what the concept of evangelism means to them. One Baby Boomer\textsuperscript{14} stated that “Evangelism is indirectly inviting others to church. I do better when I can have a conversation and can talk about [my] church family and how wonderful [they are] and then invite [friends] more often to events other than church service. Most of my friends and a lot of neighbors are part of their own church family. I don’t want them to perceive I am trying to get them to abandon their church for mine.”\textsuperscript{15} This

\begin{flushleft}
12. See Appendix A.
13. The Bible Study was originally drafted for an earlier degree requirement by this author.
15. Appendix B, 11.
\end{flushleft}
response is a perfect example of why the Christian practices are critical to the future of evangelism in the church.

When thinking about the importance of the introduction and discussion of Christian practices, a member of Generation X\textsuperscript{16} wrote,

I think that some training on how to ‘evangelize’ may be useful. As Presbyterians, the word ‘evangelize’ is scary to some who are afraid they’ll be asked to share their testimony. However, there are many ways to share the love of Christ. Congregants need to understand the multiple meanings of the word and ways that they can share their faith and evangelize others through everyday actions, such as a kind word, a hug, a shoulder to cry on, a card, a warm meal, a blanket to someone who is cold. Christians forget that it is the power of the Holy Spirit that touches the hearts of others—not us. If we are open to ways that the Spirit can use us—and allow the Spirit to do so—we’ll become better evangelists.\textsuperscript{17}

Mastery of the learning about evangelism can take many forms. One of those forms is through participation in a multi-week Bible study.\textsuperscript{18} My study consisted of focusing each week on one of the four Christian practices, as well as the overarching topic of evangelism. Each Christian practice engaged a different Bible passage, focusing its conversation on better understanding the scriptural context, as well as its modern-day application in the congregation. Discussion of the application included how the church is already engaging the Christian practice, pairing it with what ideas are possible for improvement of that practice.

Abraham and Sarah were the focus of the “evangelism” Bible study. The way the couple sprung into action was admirable, stopping all they were doing in the intense heat of the day to tend to their guests’ needs. They greeted their guests warmly, allowing them

\textsuperscript{16} People born 1965 and 1983.

\textsuperscript{17} Appendix B, 17.

\textsuperscript{18} Other forms will be explained in future chapters.
a place to find respite from the weather. They treated their guests as members of their family, providing them food and water. They even asked to take a servants’ attitude by washing the guests’ feet. These, I think, are unique characteristics of what equips someone for “doing evangelism”: a willingness to serve guests with humility, making them feel as if the new place is their own. Providing rest, providing nourishment, and providing safety of any form make for good evangelism. This safety can be in the form of physical, emotional, or spiritual shelter.

The great example of evangelism in action comes from an organization called The Carpenter’s Boat Shop in Pemaquid, Maine. Founded in 1979, the Boat Shop is an apprenticeship school and community for all people. Whether apprentices are between college and life careers, jobs and new directions, alcoholism and sobriety, or simply transitioning into retirement, the Boat Shop provides a safe harbor before setting sail on a new course in life. While considering goals and directions, apprentices live in community with one another learning boatbuilding, carpentry, furniture making, sailing, seamanship, and perform community service. They also explore personal faith through reading, study, and discussion.

During the summer, when not hosting apprentices, the Boat Shop would host churches from up and down the Eastern seaboard to do work in the neighboring towns. Participants of our annual church mission trips from New Jersey would stay on the grounds, sleeping on the floors in sleeping bags, and eating meals around picnic tables. After eating breakfast each morning and making sandwiches for lunch, participants were split into groups to head off to work sites in and around the Pemaquid area. One work group, however, pulled chore detail around the Boat Shop grounds.
The Martha Crew—affectionately named for the biblical account of Jesus-centric Mary and her hard-working sister, Martha—was charged with cleaning the bathrooms, tending to garbage, and tidying up the sleeping areas, among other things. While seemingly unending job for the day, there was one perk: a mandatory work stoppage at 10:00 in the form of a tea break—complete with blueberry muffins.

Ruth Ives, the matriarch of the Boat Shop, would pull out the same set of pans as a part of her morning ritual to make the blueberry muffins. She utilized needle-nose pliers to adjust the oven temperature just so. When 10:00 rolled around, dozens of hot, fresh, steaming Maine blueberry muffins would find their way to the picnic table where everyone would gather for fellowship over a muffin and cup of tea. Any and all who were on the boat shop grounds participated, as well as some who may have conveniently showed up.

The ministry of this fellowship is significant—people gathered around a table, sharing stories and exchanging pleasantries. All had a seat at the table, regardless of background or occupation. The Boat Shop touched on each of the characteristics of successfully “doing evangelism”: a willingness to serve guests with humility, making them feel as if the place is their own, providing rest, providing nourishment, and providing safety of any form. The experiences at the Boat Shop shaped how I think of successful evangelism through the simple task of a break for a cup of tea and a fresh blueberry muffin.

Regardless of the ministry setting, students of evangelism understand how the intentional actions of evangelism can better the life of the congregation. Within the Starmount congregation, all generations understood evangelism similarly following
completion of the Bible study. However, that does not mean that they felt comfortable doing it. One Baby Boomer reflected that the definition of evangelism for them is done through conversation and shared experiences. To talk about church is to talk about what is going on in their daily lives. However, many of their friends are already a part of other church families. This reluctance seems to be more present in the older generations of the congregation.

Younger generations of participants were much more willing to adapt to this new way of living and thinking about evangelism. Growing up in a conservative Christian household, one member of Generation Y was more amenable to this new definition of the term. On the experience, the member reflected:

I’ve begun rethinking how I see evangelism. When I used to hear the word ‘evangelism’ I would cringe. To me that meant, doing cold calls around neighborhoods with the youth group at my father’s church. Literally, going up to someone’s house, knocking on the door, and asking if whomever answered was saved. Honestly, I never went on any of these excursions (whew!), but the thought of doing so, TERRIFIED ME! Small examples like that one held me back from sharing my faith simply because I was taught that that was the only way to do so. However, I now understand evangelism as action rather than verbal invitation. For instance, I talk to my non-church friends, colleagues, and even my girlfriend about what I do at church (volunteer at the community garden, work with the youth, etc.) and why I do it. I believe this to be a form of evangelism; I’m sharing my faith by letting others know that I have found a place of faith to which I belong and why it is that I cling tightly to that place.19

Redefining evangelism in ways that are noticeable and differently forward-thinking for individuals in the congregation also assists in a shift in the congregation on the whole. Thinking of evangelism, as well as each of the four Christian practices of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome, through simple, everyday events and encounters allows them to be much more attainable. That attainability allows for

19. Appendix B, 55.
successfully adopting and embodying the Christian practices. One member of Generation X reflected: “For me, this has become a very important part of what I want for my church. I find that the best way to evangelize to others is through Christian practices.” 20

Chapter 2: Invitation

“I find it important to dispel assumptions people have about ‘Christians’ and help them to see that Christians are just people too. My faith is an open and inviting one, not one that requires excessive work and lifestyle changes. There are some whose faith requires these things—and that doesn’t mean that they can’t share the same faith as me, but that we need to be open and accepting of others through hospitality and invitation.”¹

Jesus says, "Come to me, all who are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."² He also tells a parable about a host inviting guests to dinner.³ Being invitational is critical to assist the church in growing. We are called to invite people to be a part of what we are doing, particularly if we are excited about it. Yes, people will find out about the church and its ministries through websites, social media, and seeing the building as they pass by on the street. But how will people truly learn about what makes the congregation the congregation?

It is important for congregation members to have a strong ownership of the church of which they are a part. In that ownership, congregants should not hoard the church for themselves—they should be promoting the kingdom through including others in what is going on in their congregation. Theologian Henri Nouwen reminds us that "we are called not to own [what is important to us], but to serve each other and to create the

¹ Appendix B, 25.
² Matt. 11:28 (NRSV).
space where that is possible."\(^4\) So invitation should be happening at all times, providing a safe space for people to learn more about the Gospel.

Unfortunately, there are some people who find it difficult to invite others to church. There seem to be three reasons people provide as to why they do not invite people to worship, including: “It feels so comfortable on the inside—why change it?” or “There is no designated cadre for doing outreach and inviting them.”\(^5\) The other reason for the lack of extended invitations: they just don't want to.

I have heard the first reason for not inviting people to worship quite a bit. A benefit of a strong congregational community is that it feels comfortable and a lot like home. Inviting new people into the community would alter the dynamics of it. So, if the member feels comfortable, why invite people in and possibly alter it?

Some people have certain God-given gifts. One gift, in particular, is being invitational to others. Many churches charge a committee with focusing on the invitation. As an example, Starmount has an Evangelism and Membership Committee. This committee is responsible for communicating the mission, ministry, and events of the congregation to the greater community. Expressed differently, the Committee develops ways to help others in the congregation bring new people into the church—it isn't just the Committee's responsibility. The caveat, however, is that many believe inviting others to church is not their responsibility, despite it being a good idea.


\(^6\) Ibid.
The third excuse isn't necessarily heard often, but aligns with the one before: inviting people to church is not at the top of people’s to-do lists. Although this is not overtly expressed, some place the responsibility on other members to invite people to church (when encouraged to do so by church leadership). Members also do not invite others because they do not want to hear someone telling them "no" and face rejection. The third aspect of this excuse is that people do not want to impose their viewpoints on anyone and are hesitant to mention church for fear of offending someone.

Dr. Rodger Nishioka, a former professor at Columbia Theological Seminary, told a story as a part of his keynote address at a workshop. Dr. Nishioka told the group about being a member of an ecumenical panel on current issues in religion. During the first part of the panel, he didn't say much about his beliefs or share much as a part of the panel. While at intermission, an Imam, also a part of the panel, asked Dr. Nishioka why he didn't share much about his Christian beliefs and viewpoints, to which Dr. Nishioka explained that he didn't want to offend anyone or say anything controversial. The Imam reminded Dr. Nishioka that just because he speaks with conviction about his beliefs and viewpoints does not mean that he is offending someone else; it just means that he's standing up for what he believes, which gave Dr. Nishioka pause and on something to reflect. After concluding the second installment of the panel, friends and students of Dr. Nishioka who were in the crowd asked if anything happened at intermission since there was a remarkable difference in his contributions from the first to the second segments.

This story demonstrates that some people are nervous to talk about their church for fear of offending someone. However, if they have a strong relationship with the

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person whom they are inviting, the invitee should understand that it is not coming from a place of intended offense, but from a place of passion. Instead of thinking about it as offensive, one would hope that the person is so excited about their church they want to tell anyone and everyone what is going on.

When thinking about the Christian practice of invitation, it is important to consider how the invitation will be received by the other person, as well as how we do the inviting. Christian spirituality must “receive our fellow human beings into our world without imposing our religious viewpoint, ideology or way of doing things on them as a condition for love, friendship and care.” The invitation is not something that you have to lead with in your conversation; that is important for people to know and understand. There are times in which you may think that someone would be a great fit in your congregation, but it might not be the right time to invite them. First and foremost, it is critical to be aware of the person’s needs. Nowen writes, "Really honest receptivity means inviting the stranger into our world on his or her own terms, not on ours."

Growing up as a middle school student in New Jersey, I couldn't get to youth group on a Sunday night fast enough. My brother, six years my elder, wasn't a youth group "junkie" when he was my age and let me know early that he regretted not getting into youth group early in high school. Being encouraged by him to attend weekly, I became fully immersed in the culture of The Oaken Bucket at Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church, enthusiastically soaking in all it had to offer.

9. Ibid.
Having a wonderful time, I wanted all of my friends to be involved. Mentioned earlier in the Introduction, Mindy was one of my two main "targets." Asking her to come to youth group was a primary focus of our conversations. While I was, perhaps, a bit overzealous or "aggressive" with my invitations to Mindy to come to youth group. Fortunately, that is NOT how invitation has to be. The reason I was this way was because I was excited to have people be a part of something that I loved so much. Inviting others to participate in youth group became a part-time job. The invitation was something that came out periodically with a few of my friends.

Wanting to know how different generations perceived the church, one part of this project’s research included four focus groups from the congregation based upon generational age. The congregation served is a faith community containing five generations: the Silent Generation, the Baby Boomer Generation, Generation X, Generation Y, and the youngest generation that is yet to be defined, categorized, and named. Because of the vast number of years that the first four generations span, these were the focus of this project.

**Generational Characteristics**

**Silent Generation**

The Silent Generation is comprised of those individuals who were born between 1925 and 1945. Growing up in a time of war and economic difficulties, members of the Silent Generation learned to work hard and keep quiet, thus acquiring their generational nickname.\(^{10}\) The Great Depression had an effect on people across all social classes in

some way.\textsuperscript{11} Words to describe this generation include hard workers, savers, frugal, patriotic, loyal, private, cautious, respectful, dependable, stable, and intolerant.\textsuperscript{12}

A review of the literature reveals that the Silent Generation spent much of their time around school and the church.\textsuperscript{13} While they may not talk a lot about their faith,\textsuperscript{14} members of the Silent Generation were trained to attend worship and Sunday school regularly for spiritual growth and its social aspect. With the majority believing in God, most in this generation have a strong duty to God and country.\textsuperscript{15}

Members of the Silent Generation helped each other in their communities face difficult times through the stability of family, school, and church.\textsuperscript{16} Therefore, for many, the lines between “community” and “faith community” are difficult to draw. When they find a faith community they want to be a part of, they join for life. They come to appreciate the order and style of worship and are resistant to change because it disrupts their stability and security.\textsuperscript{17} Members of the Silent Generation do all they can to serve the church that they love.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{12} Gary McIntosh, \textit{One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church} (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2002), 38-41.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, 37.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, 40.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 37.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, 46.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 44.
Baby Boomers

The Baby Boomer Generation earned the nickname because of the large increase of children born in the post-war period. Born between 1946 and 1965, Baby Boomers are currently the fastest-growing segment of the current church population. Although members of this generation seem to be a melting pot of experiences and backgrounds, Boomers do have one thing in common: they want to stay young and resist anything associated with getting older. Words to describe this generation include: educated, media-oriented, independent, cause-oriented, fitness conscious, rock music fans, activists, quality conscious, and questioners of authority.

The faith Boomers identify as their personal theology used for guidance seems to be deeply rooted. However, this personal faith is not necessarily being lived out while connected to a faith community. The institution of the church has been utilized for their personal life milestones: for hatching (baby dedications), matching (weddings), patching (counseling), and dispatching (funerals).

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20. McIntosh, 72.


22. McIntosh, 83-87.


24. McIntosh, 91.
participation, however, can be influenced by education level and whether or not children are a part of the family unit.25

Due to the size and influence of the Baby Boomer Generation, one church growth expert dubbed it a “lead generation,” which means that it “tends to set the agenda for the entire nation. As the lead generation goes, so goes the nation—and the church.”26 This generation’s decisions influence both the faith communities they may be a part of, as well as the community at large. As many Boomers begin to retire, they find themselves with quite a bit of time on their hands. This extra time can mean that many are returning, or considering returning, to church to attend and serve alongside their friends and neighbors.

With more of a consumer mentality, Boomers are more likely than other generations to find a congregation and denomination that meets their personal, ideological, and family needs. If Boomers find a church with a leader they can relate to or if they appreciate worship and other aspects of congregational life, they will probably stick around for a while. However, this does not always translate to joining the church in membership. As they get older, Boomers want to seek insight into their lives and life experiences, find ways to serve others, and provide time, energy, and monies to projects and activities with which they want to align themselves.27

25. Roof and Johnson, 301.
26. McIntosh, 89.
Generation X

Generation X, who *Time* Magazine called the Twenty-something Generation, was called Yiffies (Young, Individualistic, Freedom-minded and Few) by *Fortune* Magazine and the Nowhere Generation by *Esquire* Magazine.\(^{28}\) Children of Baby Boomers were born between 1965 and 1979 or as late as 1983, depending on where one reads.\(^ {29}\) This generation, wanting to ensure that they were not following in their parents’ footsteps, crave freedom from workaholism and do not want to be rooted in one place. They also have an affinity for 60s nostalgia, practical education, rejecting their Boomer parents’ values, and postponing marriage.\(^ {30}\)

Being known for being a bit selfish, X-ers want their needs met and a faith that works for them.\(^ {31}\) Friends and family define their community, many times with friends forming that family for them. Craving belonging and being loved, X-ers often participate in family-type activities with friends, including dinner parties and holiday celebrations. When they do have group discussions, typically over a shared meal, it may sound quite a bit like what topics a family could discuss: what happened at work or school, what they heard in the news that day, or plans for the weekend.\(^ {32}\)

Seeking a faith tailored to their needs of being connected to one another more than the church, the faith community of X-ers tends to influence their decision of where

\(^{28}\) McIntosh, 122.

\(^{29}\) Ibid.

\(^{30}\) Ibid, 131-134.

\(^{31}\) Ibid, 139.

\(^{32}\) Ibid, 146.
to participate in a faith community as well. Valuing true family atmosphere,\textsuperscript{33} X-ers want their faith communities to meet real and practical needs of others, and are involved with “the social, political, and environmental issues of their local communities.”\textsuperscript{34}

Generation Y

Generation Y has been dubbed “millennials” because of their being born close to the turn of the century (1980–2000).\textsuperscript{35} Members of this generation are computer dependent, listen to a variety of music, and are influenced by members of their predecessor generation, including Britney Spears, Dr. Dre, *NSYNC, Tiger Woods, and Haley Joel Osment.\textsuperscript{36} Words to describe this generation include: entrepreneurial, technologically savvy, neotraditional, superfragmented, sophisticated, interactive, demanding, diverse and tolerant, wanting to be connected, and group reliant.\textsuperscript{37}

When it comes to their faith lives, published research establishes the rise of the “nones”: among 18-to-24 year olds, 32 percent prefer no religion, whereas only seven percent of people 75 years old and over prefer no religion.\textsuperscript{38} Their experiences shape this generation's faith: at churches, in relationships, in their understanding of other faith

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, 137.
\textsuperscript{34} McIntosh, 137.
\textsuperscript{35} McIntosh, 162 (identifies this generation to be born between 1984 and 2002).
\textsuperscript{36} McIntosh, 163.
\textsuperscript{37} McIntosh, 170-176.
\end{flushleft}
traditions, and what their parents have taught them about Christianity. Like their generational predecessors, relationships are the key to forming a community, with loyalty to friends being very high on their priority list, while still wanting to maintain their individualism.

Within their faith communities, Millennials crave authenticity in the lives of their leaders and mentors. Seeking the use of technology within their grip, those faith communities that respond to being interactive in multiple dimensions will connect the best with this generation. Other characteristics of this generation’s shaping and defining of faith communities include being committed to the group, desiring interactivity, wanting honest relationships, and finding authentic faith.

While performing the generational research, I found common themes about what individuals were looking for, according to their demographic. To be successfully invitational, it is best to know what people are looking for – including their faith. The questions posed to the focus group, as well as each generation’s responses, are found in Appendices C and D. In many cases, the findings of my literature review corresponded with what the focus groups said. However, regardless of demographics, the focus groups tended to have responses that matched up more regularly than the comparison of the

41. McIntosh, 185.
42. Ibid, 193.
literature to the focus groups. Some of this bias may be due to the groups all attending the same church, which I will speak to later in this paper.43

The literature review and the focus groups disagreed most in regards to worship and, more specifically, in regards to the music during worship. Almost every individual across all focus groups wanted traditional music with the occasional guitar or contemporary hymn. This desired music selection seemed to contradict what the literature found regarding the Baby Boomer Generation, who wanted contemporary worship with a lot of guitar music. The literature also indicated that the Silent Generation was resistant to change, which was also not corroborated with its focus group.

While I think that it is easy to find that the focus groups contradicted the published research, I also think that the results could be examined from another angle: Why do the generations’ responses have so much in common? There are two in particular that merit further thought: self-selection and the nurturing that is taking place within the congregation.

Those who are a part of a community will, themselves, feel like it is a place where they belong and can make a contribution. Someone reading this paper could argue that this study is biased since all of the people interviewed go to Starmount and are members of Starmount. Those who didn’t find Starmount to be the place to define their faith community did not return to worship, nor are they members, nor were they interviewed as a part of this paper. Whether individuals decided to stay or not stay was self-selection. With that assertion aside, it is important to recognize that the people in the focus groups

43. Page 34: Intersections of Generational Understandings
did, indeed, self-select to be a part of the Starmount community, a place where they can belong and can contribute.

The second argument for why the focus groups’ responses were more alike to one another than to published research stems from the culture within the Starmount community itself. Because so many aspects of the individuals’ responses were related to perceived characteristics of the community as a whole, one would wonder if there is an undercurrent of the hospitality, nurture, and welcome of Starmount being soaked up and absorbed by members. This absorption could allow for that same perception of the community to be conveyed by all Starmount members to all those they encounter.

**Intersections of Generational Understandings**

When discussing faith, each of the focus groups indicated that worship is integral to personal faith development. Each generation seemed to have their way of deepening their faith in the same way that each person within each focus group had their own way. The music and sermons were equally important for being able to connect and think more deeply about faith on a personal level. All agreed that membership was not integral to faith development but that it was one indicator of being a part of something bigger.

The definition of community was one of agreement across all generations: the community is formed by people with common interests and shared experiences, some of which are not chosen by their own volition. However, community members remain connected because of the ways they are brought together and continue to grow as people.

Conversation centering on the definition of faith community had the most common themes and trends of all. With the bias of self-selection stated above notwithstanding, it is still important to note that each focus group indicated that the
feelings of family, welcome, and acceptance were all noted in at least one way. This characteristic continues to be repeated throughout the Starmount community when asking visitors of their first impressions of Starmount.

One way to engage a congregation in being invitational is asking, “How can generations appreciate each other’s differences to create a faith community that is loved, appreciated, and supported by all?” If committed members of a faith community can come to appreciate what gifts the people of the community can be for one another, then they can encourage that in one another and reflect it to all newcomers. That is defined as “evangelism,” whether they like to think of it that way or not.

In an interview with Mary Schaller, President of Q Place, the Barna Group asked Schaller what Christians could do differently when engaging others in conversation about faith. Schaller, the President of the organization who assists in forming small groups to ask questions about spiritual matters, replied:

The majority of Christians and non-Christians alike can agree on one thing: They are uncomfortable with the “E” word—evangelism. It’s one of the highest church values, and the least practiced. Perhaps there is a different “E” word that fills the need in this secular culture and lays essential groundwork for the Gospel—engagement. The key is to figure out how to empower Christians to engage in meaningful conversations about God with those who believe differently. This is not something we leave to the “professionals,” but rather something anyone can do on any day of the week. Everyone can have conversations, so let’s start there. If our conversations can build trust and prove that we care, then relationships grow, and disciples are made over time. We should strive to create spaces for safe and open spiritual conversations that pave the way for people to discover God for themselves at their own pace.44

When examining what each focus group reported for their definitions of community and faith community, the spectrum of the two tended to become very muddled. There is ultimately not a lot that separates the two other than the richness of relationships in a faith community versus the secular community. As was stated in the introduction, if faith tradition is something shared in conversation with one another in a relationship, then it should be considered that they are “doing” evangelism. A less intimidating way to consider evangelism is to understand it within the context of relationships with one another. I believe this study has been important in understanding and reinforcing that if God’s word and Jesus’ message is to be shared and spread, then knowing you are supported in a community is the best way to connect and relay that message. Perhaps those gathered in the community are not together because of their faith, but because they have common interests in other areas. Faith traditions may naturally come up in conversation. Ultimately, generational age does not necessarily play a factor in discussions of faith and faith communities. Knowing that generations experience faith differently, how should and can a congregation understand what it means to be invitational? How can a congregation engage scripturally and theologically to better understand being successful at invitation?

The ways in which invitation manifests itself in scripture are ones that come down somewhere in the middle of the spectrum between the middle school invitations of my youth to invitations you might receive to a formal dinner party. The prophet Isaiah extends an invitation to the reader: "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money
and without price.” The bold exhortation embedded in Isaiah 55:1’s thrice-repeated imperative verb “come … come … come” is to choose well. Come to the water; come to the banquet; buy without money. In other words, don’t take what has value and waste it on nothing. Don’t settle for what doesn’t feed; take what only is good. The invitation extended is one for a deepening of faith through discipleship.

A personal invitation is the most effective means of getting someone to participate in a new activity or event, including worship. Anderson and Coyner, in their book The Race to Reach Out: Connecting Newcomers to Christ in a New Century, writes, “Between 70 to 90 percent of all persons who come new to church to worship do so because of the direct or indirect influence or contact of someone in the life of that church.” As this indicates, there can be hesitation to invite someone to worship, whether out of reluctance or fear of rejection. Church members can be provided with language and reason to engage friends about an invitation to church through an “Invite a Friend Sunday” program.

There are many “Invite a Friend Sunday” programs already created and available for congregations to utilize. The program utilized in my particular congregation was five weeks in length. After the pastoral and program staff had selected a date for the event, the congregation received information through an article in the monthly newsletter...

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and weekly bulletin inserts. Each week, the insert provided information for the reader about the importance of inviting someone to worship, including praying for the person whom you would be inviting, as well as for the church.\footnote{August 2 Insert, Appendix E.} One member commented, “I intentionally invited a neighbor to ‘Invite a Friend Sunday.’ She didn’t accept the invitation, but I did invite. I invited another friend and she did attend.”\footnote{Appendix B, page 11.} Being provided with information, direction, and language to use when inviting someone new to church greatly benefitted the person doing the inviting.

When we are inviting someone into our world and, when possible, our church, it is important to do so with a true heart. Nouwen writes,

> We can enter into communication with the other only when our own life choices, attitudes, and viewpoints offer the boundaries that challenge strangers to become aware of their position and to explore it critically. As a reaction to a very aggressive, manipulative and often degrading type of evangelization, we sometimes have become hesitant to make our religious convictions known, thereby losing our sense of witness.\footnote{Henri J M. Nouwen, \textit{Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life} (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1986), 98-99.}

The true heart is revealed through conversation and the building of relationships.

Once the relationship is established, insight into what brings joy to the other will be mutually explored and shared. The invitation does not mean that the relationship is a means to an end, but that the relationship is the end in and of itself. This exploration can include where one might worship and volunteer their time. Inviting someone to something shouldn’t make the other self-conscious—instead, consider it being a way to let the other get to know you better.
One of the biggest concerns that many people have about inviting someone to any event—worship or otherwise—are vulnerability and fear. To invite someone to something is to ask the other into their world. To invite someone means potentially subjecting oneself to another person’s saying “no.” This potential is the fear that many have, leading to reluctance to invite anyone in the first place. So how do we assist congregants in "getting out of their own way" and not being afraid of being rejected or, more so, hearing "no" from someone? It is a tough question without easy answers; one that needs to be examined as the other Christian practices are learned and exercised.

Although the utilization of the Christian practices can vary in order, the invitation is usually one of the first. Invitation leads to the other practices, including welcome, examined in the next chapter.
Chapter 3: Welcome

“We have to move out of our comfort zones to welcome others into our congregation. . . .
I’ve learned that our church is particularly good in these areas and [is] known for our welcoming style. We have to be careful, however, to guard from becoming complacent. We can’t afford for a visitor or member to ever experience a ‘cold and unwelcoming’ congregation when they worship with us. They’ll never forget it. . .”¹

How we encounter others through the first few minutes of them walking in the door can speak volumes about what the community represents. Theologian and author Jessica Wrobleski states that "Humility, generosity, persistence, diligence, and empathy are qualities typically associated with the practice of welcoming the stranger. At the heart of the practice is the triune logic: to receive the stranger, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, is to receive God's own Son, and to receive the Son is to receive the Father. Consequently, welcoming the stranger is an expression or confession of Christian faith and a reliable gauge of Christian maturity."² How can we welcome the stranger in a way that provides space for that person to encounter God in their way?

There needs to be a way for a person to be acknowledged and led to feel like they are a part of the gathering. Simple, practical steps can allow for the visitor to be a part of the community: showing a person which hymnal to use or where the bathroom is or the

¹ Appendix B, 26.
location of the nursery. The objective is to break down the anxieties a newcomer may feel as they first enter the door like the father welcomes back his son.³

“Welcome” can produce the same anxiety plaguing our congregations as we examined earlier with “invitation.” Authors Anderson and Coyner provide practical examples of extending hospitality as newcomers arrive, or "welcome." They write: "Jesus challenges us to regard how God has welcomed us and how we welcome others with God's love. To do that we have to let go of self-absorption so we can pay attention to others—and let go of being indifferent to people we don't know or who were not in our group."⁴

This is what our congregation's biggest struggle is: we are very welcoming to those we know, but don't seem to have the time for those we don't. While there are some that truly understand that the way for the church to grow is through being a welcoming congregation, others think their tight-knit circle is sufficient for them. It takes a personal introduction to someone who knows someone in that circle to "break in" and break down walls.

So what needs to be done to provide a genuine and caring welcome? What are ways to utilize the Christian practice of welcome that are not perceived as overly aggressive? It is most important for people to "get out of their own way" when encountering a newcomer to the church. Whether because of their busy-ness, me-centric thinking, or lack of wanting to meet new people, the congregation needs to—as a


whole—cultivate an attitude of welcome. One way to think about welcoming a newcomer to church is to think about how you would welcome that same person into your home.

In welcoming someone into your home, there is a need and desire to provide them with everything they need, including knowing where to put their jacket (if not taking it for them), providing them with where they can sit, and introducing them to other people around them. "To welcome strangers means to cultivate an invitational spirit and offer a sense of 'home' to others. We pay attention to others, inviting them to be at home with us as they unfold themselves before us."\(^5\) The more comfortable one can make someone feel builds relationships between them and the newcomer. The relationship, albeit in its infancy stage, can grow because of a decrease in anxiety. It should be stated, however, that although they go hand-in-hand, welcome and hospitality are not the same things.

Author Jan Johnson continues by writing, “Unfortunately hospitality has become limited to inviting others to eat with us or stay in our home. . . . The core idea of hospitality is to be open and vulnerable to a person's needs. Additionally, to welcome the stranger is to reach out not just to friends but to those who for some reason are considered strangers."\(^6\) Whether "stranger," "newcomer," or "visitor," it is important for the congregation to provide a means of allowing those who are "not like them" to feel welcomed and greeted when they enter the doors of the church.

The simplest way to welcome a newcomer to church is to speak to them. In his book, *Welcoming the Stranger*, theologian Patrick Kiefert explains that by “refusing to

\(^5\) Ibid, 11.

\(^6\) Ibid, 11.
speak [to other people] we close ourselves off from one another.” 7 When we are not engaging someone—welcoming them—to this new experience, we cannot expect them to find a place of comfort which they will want to frequent. Kiefert continues, “by refusing such ritual greetings [like saying “hello”] in the contemporary public space, we refuse to give of ourselves even to the extent of acknowledging the value of the stranger’s presence. Although we may indeed value the presence of strangers, the silence of our tongues and gestures powerfully expresses our fear in their presence.” 8 To welcome a newcomer to a house of worship means being willing to be vulnerable. Making simple steps toward that vulnerability have already been named and identified in the previous chapters.

A critical place for newcomers to feel welcomed is in the church entrance on Sunday morning before worship. For many churches, the first welcome a person receives is somewhere outside of the front doors of the building. In the case of my congregation, there are greeters to provide this warm welcome in the parking lot as people arrive, as well as at the front doors. In both cases, the greeters are trained to provide a warm greeting and assistance if it is needed.

The book The Race to Reach Out: Connecting Newcomers to Christ in a New Century speaks to why providing welcome through greeters is of utmost importance. Anderson and Coyner write, “Quickly responding to newcomers when they visit our church the first time is critical. When we hold back in order not to appear ‘pushy’ or manipulative, most newcomers will view this as indifference or coldness. Working to


8. Ibid.
improve our speed is not only essential in a race, it is also imperative in our follow-up of newcomers.\textsuperscript{9}

After a newcomer is warmly greeted and helped into the building, the two most common questions asked are the locations of the restrooms and the nursery. To be able to have an immediate answer is important. Having proper signage assists with direction. Holding regular training sessions for greeters and ushers allows for all of them to ask questions and understand the importance of the warmth and attention that newcomers need and deserve. Anderson and Coyner liken the roles of ushers and greeters and their interactions with newcomers to a relay team in a track and field competition. Just like those on a track and field team, ushers and greeters need practice to be successful: “constant practice is essential. A good relay team works constantly on the skills necessary to be victorious, and effective [volunteers] do the same. They stay in contact with newcomers consistently, and they evaluate their process in order to improve their effectiveness in connecting people to Jesus Christ and to his Church.”\textsuperscript{10}

In my congregation, usher training is held on a regular basis, usually twice a year. Scheduled with a lunch after a worship service, the ushers and greeters discuss, learn, and review why their respective roles are important. Simon Simek, the author of the book, Start with Why, believes that when people understand why they are doing something, they are more willing to adopt and adapt to the requested tasks.\textsuperscript{11} After learning the importance of ushering and greeting, participants engage in a discussion about the details

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10. Ibid, “73 of 1791”.

\end{flushright}
and what some may consider minutae.\textsuperscript{12} At one particular training session at our church, an usher did not know the location of the nursery, let alone that we even had one! With the greeters and ushers working together, the relay team analogy is brought to life. Being able to successfully pass the visitor (baton) to one another, as the members of a successful relay team, the ushers learn that the “handoffs are critical. Being able to exchange the baton smoothly and efficiently is a primary, required skill in running a relay race well. The church also must be able to make a smooth ‘handoff’ of care, contact, and vital information about the needs, interests, gifts, talents, and passions of the newcomer so that he or she can be vitally connected to God and others.”\textsuperscript{13} For the handoff to be successful, each member of the congregation has to understand their role on the team and the importance of modeling welcome.

After a successfully trained usher has acknowledged the needs of the newcomer, that usher should do more than direct a newcomer to the bathrooms and give them a bulletin. An usher should accompany a newcomer into the sanctuary, engaging him in conversation as they walk to the desired seat. A successful handoff from an usher to a well-engaged member would have the member continue welcoming the newcomer once they were sitting down.

The continued welcome of the newcomer not only provides a formal introduction when exchanging names but also makes sure that the newcomer can effectively navigate the worship bulletin and service: when to sit and stand, where to find words to the hymns, and what to expect throughout the service.

\textsuperscript{12} Appendix F.

\textsuperscript{13} Anderson and Coyner, “73 of 1791”.

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Those crafting the worship service also need to think critically about how to ensure that all newcomers feel a part of the community, whether it’s their first or 101st time. The worship bulletin should be informative. If there are worship slides projected during the service, then ensuring the slides are clean and easy to read is vital. The worship service aides should clearly indicate the utilization of the version of The Lord’s Prayer used in worship. Make necessary communion instructions from the pulpit clear for all. It is important for a newcomer to be acknowledged by those around them as new. However, although identified as new, the last thing a newcomer wants is to stick out. Actions that make them feel like they are sticking out may include standing when they should have been sitting or not knowing how to participate in the passing of the peace. Regardless of the community context, the newcomer wants to understand how quickly one could assimilate to the new atmosphere.

In my particular context, we are a pretty homogeneous bunch: upper middle class, mostly Caucasian congregation. But there is something that makes us unique. Something that makes us, in my opinion, pretty special. Even though we are a mostly Caucasian congregation, diversity comes from those we have helped. Since the 1980s, the congregation has assisted in helping refugee families resettle in town. While not doing this ministry for the sake of gaining members, due to the welcome felt by these newcomers, many have felt a strong connection to the church and its members. The refugees have witnessed, first-hand, the hands and feet of Christ.

The congregation has also been welcoming to those who identify with the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/queer community. While our particular congregation has not overtly or publicly stated that it is open and affirming, the pastors have done all that they
can to model what it is to welcome all who enter the doors of the church. Each congregation has to navigate how they indicate that all are welcome, regardless of orientation. Our congregation, in particular, has a wide age-range and varying political affiliations. Therefore, for our congregation to declare that we are (or are not) open and affirming would exclude a certain cross-section of the congregation. Our actions indicate that all are welcome. Period. Word-of-mouth from others—being invited and feeling welcome—is the key to the success of getting the word out about the congregation and the work and ministry there.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force believes there is much more to it than claiming to be a welcoming congregation. Through the organization’s Institute for Welcoming Resources, a guide has been published to assist congregations with the task of being welcoming, opening, and affirming. The introduction to the guide states that “A Welcoming Process is an officially recognized path that includes relational organizing, education, some kind of public vote and a public statement of Welcome for persons of ALL sexual orientations and gender identities.”14 This task force argues that word-of-mouth is not enough. The pulse of the congregation needs to be known to better understand which direction to take without compromising who God is calling each congregation to be in this world.

But what would it look like if our congregation were to indicate, publicly, that we were an open and affirming congregation? Some members have questioned why we haven’t yet done so. When providing our rationale, there are mixed responses: some

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understand, while others do not feel that no-action is an appropriate action. In fact, they believe it is cowardly not to be socially justice-minded. But why focus specifically on this slice of how a person identifies? What about those other “strangers” who are not currently a part of Starmount’s community? What about those who are homeless? What about those people who are struggling financially? How do we welcome those who truly seem to be “strangers” to us?

In his book *Reaching Out*, Theologian Henri Nouwen argues that we are called, as Christians, to convert “the hostis into a hospes, the enemy into a guest and to create a free and fearless space where brotherhood and sisterhood can be formed and fully experienced.”\(^{15}\) When we treat strangers like those who truly are “strangers” in our congregation, we act as though they have to prove to us in some way that they should be among us in our community. To think of newcomers in this way is to think of them as the enemy. To think of newcomers as the enemy is not truly to welcome them with an open mind and open heart: it is to welcome them with reservations. It is to welcome them with judgement, treating them as if they have to prove something to belong. To treat them in this way is not authentic welcome.

Creating an authentic welcome means working from Nouwen’s playbook: constructing a free and fearless space, allowing for newcomers to become friends, who then become a part of the church community as family. To create authentic welcome means believing that newcomers have something to offer and bring to the congregation and community. A congregation who thinks that only they have something to offer the newcomer would be foolish.

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The PC(USA) and other established religions are slowly dwindling in numbers and have been for many years. We are slowly, but surely, learning that we can no longer sit in the same pew seat we have sat in since our great-grandparents' time at the church. We must extend the "right hand of fellowship"\textsuperscript{16} to all new faces. We must welcome people at events and not immediately press them to be on a committee or volunteer their time, as have been past practices, but simply set a place of welcome where the newcomers can find a place of belonging and fellowship.\textsuperscript{17} As the newcomer experiences welcome, another Christian practice is also being engaged by the congregation: hospitality; which is the next chapter’s topic.

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\textsuperscript{16} Galatians 2:9 (NRSV).
\textsuperscript{17} Appendix B, 28.
Chapter 4: Hospitality

“Recently, I’ve begun thinking about hospitality and nurture as a core practice for my own spiritual growth (and) self-care and how I treat others. Hospitality, most recently, has shaped my new research interest, as I’m looking for how hospitality or models of Christian hospitality can help enter into conversations about food insecurity. . . . I have begun to see ways that Christ is at the very core of my being and influences all arenas of my life, not just when I step into church on Sundays.”

When considering the concept of hospitality, Henri Nouwen defines the term as "a fundamental attitude toward a fellow human being, which can be expressed in a great variety of ways." Biblically, a great illustration of the "variety of ways" than Jesus’ encounter with Mary and Martha. Martha provides the physical tasks of hospitality, while Mary provides hospitality by sitting at their guest's feet, hanging on his every word.

Nouwen continues to explain the concept as follows:

The German word for hospitality is Gastfreundschaft which means 'friendship of the guest.' The Dutch use the word Gastvrijheid which means 'the freedom of the guest.' Although this might reflect that the Dutch people find freedom more important than friendship, it definitely shows that hospitality wants to offer friendship without binding the guest and freedom without leaving him alone. Hospitality, therefore, means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality is not to change people, but offer them some space where change can take place.

1. Appendix B, 19.
Jessica Wrobleski does a good job of explaining that space which Nouwen identifies. About hospitality, she writes: "Hospitality seeks to make the guest feel she 'belongs' or is 'at home,' and it acknowledges the fluidity of 'host' and 'guest' roles—and it recognizes her separateness and irreducibly independent identity. Hospitality appreciates the needs and the gifts—the vulnerabilities and the strengths—that both host and guest bring to their relationship."  

Ultimately, what is most important in providing hospitality in whatever form is to make the guest feel at home in the space they are entering. Perhaps this is by providing some of their comforts, including a warm meal and a place to sleep. But this also can mean providing a space where they can be themselves and be at rest—physically, spiritually, mentally, and emotionally.

Some members of the congregation are inherently hospitable. Others are willing to learn how to be hospitable (or, at the least, be aware of things they could do better). Then there are those who may think they are hospitable but are only hospitable to those they know—not necessarily to visitors. As Wrobleski points out: hospitality and hostility come from similar Latin roots—how is a person received?  

There are some aspects of hospitality that are missed by our congregation. Perhaps they think they are hospitable when, in reality, they are more than likely grazing the surface of being welcoming. Theologians Patrick Keifert and Christine Pohl both, in separate writings, discuss both being hospitable and being welcoming. Showing

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hospitality and being welcoming do not have to translate to being the person's best friend. To welcome and be hospitable to someone means that the "host" is sensitive to how the "guest" may be feeling in his new environment and helping to dispel any fears about what he doesn't know about being new. "Stranger" does not need to translate to "completely included and given all access to the new place" immediately. Some of our more-resistant-to-being-evangelistic members believe that they have to open themselves completely to any new visitors who darken the congregation's doors. There is a lack of understanding about the concepts I have identified, which is why I am attempting to put words and practices to them.

How can I help the congregation be sensitive to them being the "host" and others being a guest? It is important for the congregation to remember what it is like to be in a new place for the first time. With that memory in mind, work needs to be done to make the first experience of a newcomer the same (if positive) or different (if negative) than the member's own first experience.

Also interesting to think about is this: "host" and "guest" are the same words in Latin, Greek, and French. The host is "host" because they are at home in the context, while the guest is "guest" because they are a foreigner in some way. Wrobleski discusses how the welcome provided to "guest" is transitive (I welcome you) but also locative (I welcome you into my home). Hospitality must point beyond itself. And this is one of the critical thoughts for our congregation—with some of our church members quite "me-centric," how can I help them see beyond themselves and to the greater good not only

7. Ibid, 75.
about our congregation but also getting people to know God through their experience at Starmount?

Wrobleski discusses how hospitality is a spiritual practice and is integral to spiritual life. To get better at anything, it takes practice—and that includes hospitality. If you don't practice it, it doesn't get to a certain standard of excellence. Through practice, it leads to personal growth and, in turn, an improved spirituality. Being relational is key to becoming great—do not emphasize perfection.

The repetitive practice is a lot like the advertising term “effective frequency”: The term *effective frequency* may not mean a lot to the average reader, but it is something that is critical in the world of advertising. Depending on what source you are to believe, it can take as few as three but as many as 20 times for a consumer to hear about a product before making a purchase of said product.⁸ The standard, agreed-upon average number of times a consumer needs to hear about a product is seven.⁹

Whether we like it or not, prospective church attendees and members are consumers of a similar sort. The amount of advertising about one of the dozen-plus congregations in the community may come across as deafening. Newly redesigned websites, the use of social media, and the archaic means of print newspaper ads attempt to attract new visitors on a weekly basis. However, a recent Nielsen marketing survey

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⁹ Ibid.
indicated that “92% of consumers believe recommendations from friends and family over all forms of advertising.”

With these two pieces in mind, it is crucial to the future life of a congregation that its members talk about their church, its activities, and what it means to them—often. However, for a congregation to fully grasp, absorb, and embody the Christian practices within evangelism, it is important to provide at least seven different ways to communicate the same message. Why more than seven? More than seven are necessary because not everyone will attend every event or read every posting. To be able to communicate this important message across different platforms and through different means will help the practices take hold. For my project, the multiple platforms utilized were already in place.

Methods of Communication

Newsletter Articles and Bulletin Announcements

Despite the many forms of communication through technology today, print media still has its place, especially in the church. Because of the many generations and their levels of comfort with print versus technology, the Sunday worship bulletin and monthly newsletter are still critical to introducing and communicating the Christian practices of evangelism to members.

The newsletter articles located in Appendix G were published weekly through email and provided to congregants via printed form for those who do not have access to email. Highlighted and identified were each of the four Christian practices as they

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pertained to the week of the sermon series or worship event to which they connected. The final newsletter article, tying the Christian practices together, served as the associate pastor letter for the monthly printed newsletter.

Sermon Series

A five-part written sermon series was preached throughout the summer months of 2013. The themes for each of the sermons coincided with each of the four Christian practices of invitation hospitality, nurture, and welcome, along with a final sermon with the theme of evangelism. Located in Appendix H, the biblical texts for each of the sermons was used in other aspects of the teaching of the Christian practices.

Bible Study

A Bible study was drafted to coincide with the sermon series, utilizing the same scripture passage as the primary text for the sermon. Although drafted in 2013, the study was implemented in the summer of 2015 as a mid-week educational series. That summer, a Christian education class and Bible study, located in Appendix A, were administered by me and included lecture, large- and small-group discussion, reflection, and prayer. The Bible study was to introduce and expose the participants to the four Christian practices as evangelism. As the premise of this final project indicates, the Christian practices are not foreign concepts to participants. However, the main objective of this series was to get participants to think theologically, critically, and practically about how to incorporate those Christian practices into their lives.

Retreat

A weekend-long retreat was drafted from the Bible study’s curriculum. Used as a women’s retreat curriculum in February 2014, the retreat’s participants were asked to
discuss, reflect, and pray about the Christian practices and evangelism. Like the Bible study above, the main objective of the retreat was to get participants to think theologically, critically, and practically about how to incorporate those Christian practices into their lives. The retreat curriculum is located in Appendix I.

**Generational Feedback and Analysis**

As described above, the congregation received the message of the Christian practices of evangelism in many different ways. Throughout the work of this project, participants of the multi-week Bible study and focus groups were asked questions about their experiences of engaging in the four Christian practices. Those in the Bible studies were asked to reflect on how they have put the Christian practices into use: how have you been changed? How have you noticed your faith being impacted? Do you think the Christian practices make a difference in your life and the life of the church? Bible study participants were asked to reflect twice—once through survey immediately following the event and again a couple of months later. Those surveys are in Appendix J.

The demographic focus group participants were also asked to reflect and think critically about how the Christian practices have impacted them and their faith. Those questions are in Appendix K and the complete data analysis is in Appendices B, L, and M. The surveys and focus group responses were analyzed through the methods outlined in Appendix N. The responses people provided were examined through different lenses, including thinking about how people responded based on their age. Two keys to evaluating the effectiveness of the various methods of training were how the respondents reacted and how they learned.
Silent Generation

The Silent Generation was very diligent in attempting to put the Christian practices into action in their daily lives. Some indicated that despite learning and sharing ideas in the Bible study, they might not know how to fully put the Christian practices into action in their daily lives. The responses seemed to lean toward methodological and calculated intentions for putting the Christian practices into action after listening and then thinking about how to do so.

The Silent Generation reported successfully putting the Christian practices into action, both at church and at home. When thinking about putting the practices into action with their church family, phone calls were made to those who were missed at church-sponsored events. Others would make a point to seek out the unfamiliar faces in worship on Sunday and welcome them. One commented, about the church family, that the congregation “has grown a great deal with the nurturing of our refugee families in many ways—50 years ago it would have never welcomed these families.”

Respondents of this generation noted that utilizing the Christian practices in their daily lives has affected them personally as well. They noted more prayer life, both personally and as a family. The responses seemed to indicate that they have become more self-aware since being introduced to the Christian practices in this way and that they have found themselves to be changed for the better, deepening their faith as they ask for God to use them.

Baby Boomers

Baby Boomers indicated that they learned quite a bit, mainly through education and their pastors. They learned that it is important to always share the practices they have been taught and use them as often as possible. One stated “being a Christian is a 24/7 lifestyle. Friends know of my commitment to my church and all my behavior, day in and day out, show someone what a Christian is supposed to be or not be. I think I am more aware of the kindness relayed with a smile or hello and listening to the response.” The Baby Boomers has learned, through an introduction to the Christian practices, that the church utilizes them in many different ways.

The Baby Boomers who participated in the surveys were not necessarily as thorough about intentionally putting the Christian practices to use. Many people in this demographic are still working outside of the home, so they may not have as much time to concentrate on what actions they might take. However, respondents did report using the Christian practices both at church and within their professional and non-church activities. Invitation appeared to be the number one Christian practice put to use, whether to worship, lunch, or a non-worship Starmount-related function. A number indicated that extending invitations to others would take moving outside of their comfort zones to do so, which was admittedly difficult. There was concern that being invitational would be misconstrued as asking the other to leave their current church environment: “Most of my friends and a lot of neighbors are part of their own church family. I don’t want them to perceive I am trying to get them to abandon their church for mine.”

13. Ibid, 11.
Still driven by work and at-home responsibilities, many Baby Boomers indicated that they are better at putting the Christian practices to use through “doing” rather than “being”—baking brownies, serving on committees, writing letters, and helping neighbors come more easily than listening and “sitting still.”\(^{14}\) However, like the Silent Generation before them, the Baby Boomers have become more aware of how the Christian practices are used in their daily lives: “I have been more observant of my actions—areas where I may be hesitant and areas where I need to work more.” Another Boomer echoed that same feeling. They reflected: “I am not sure my behavior has changed, but I do find myself aware and try to be sure I try to apply those attributes of CP if I find myself in a situation where it might be a little harder to be as loving and compassionate as I should be.”

The Baby Boomers learned through these various introductions to the Christian practices that the experience was introspective: “It is always good to step back and take a personal look at one’s self, especially if you have a measuring stick like the Christian practices.”\(^{15}\) Another indicated that their faith, and the collective faith life of the congregation, can be strengthened through the use of the Christian practices: “It is always easier to practice my faith when I have the Christian practices to be a guide.”\(^{16}\)

Generation X

The participants from Generation X may already have skewed views, considering they are a part of a church community. However, many seemed to indicate that the

\(^{14}\) Ibid, 12.

\(^{15}\) Ibid, 23.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.
Christian practices are ones that people should already be doing and being in their lives. One participant, in particular, noted: “I think that they are attributes that one would EXPECT to experience in a church. I remember visiting a church 20 years ago when I first moved to Greensboro and no one spoke to me. I stood in line for 10 minutes to speak with the minister after the service—just to have some human contact and feel that my visit was acknowledged. I’ve never forgotten the way I felt—and haven’t been back to that church!”

Members of Generation X seem to be sensitive to how their actions play out in their everyday lives, not just on Sundays: “If we profess to be Christians, yet act in a manner outside of these practices, we’ve done more damage to the faith than we’ve prevented. One bad experience with a ‘Christian’ may be all it takes to turn someone away from the church forever.” Being busy with the starts of their professional careers and families can make it difficult for members of Generation X to be fully present in integrating these practices into their lives at church, mainly because they are not necessarily attending church at the same frequency as their older counterparts. However, based upon responses, that does not indicate that the Christian practices are not important to them and how they live their day-to-day lives.

This generation learned that their actions could reflect on the congregation of which they are a member. One participant stated:

I think I have become more aware of my role as a representative of my church – I have observed that others judge you without realizing that they are judging and making assumptions about your faith just based on your practices. Therefore, it is important to show these as underlying parts of your personality—without having to be a false representation. In other words, I’m allowed to use four letter colorful language and have tattoos, as long as I’m aware of how that impacts those around

17. Ibid, 16.
me. And as long as they aren’t offended and I’m a living, hospitable, inviting, nurturing Christian—there isn’t a stigma against Christians and being stuck up.\textsuperscript{19}

Another respondent in this demographic is sensitive to the idea that the congregation needs to embrace and fully utilize the Christian practices:

I’ve learned how important it is for congregations to adopt and implement these practices at every opportunity. We have to move out of our comfort zones to welcome others into our congregation. . . . I’ve learned that our church is particularly good in these areas and [is] known for our welcoming style. We have to be careful, however, to guard from becoming complacent. We can’t afford for a visitor or member to ever experience a “cold and unwelcoming” congregation when they worship with us.\textsuperscript{20}

Those church members engaged from this demographic are aware of the impact that their actions have on others, which is not always typical of this generation.

\textbf{Generation Y}

Responses from Generation Y participants revealed characteristics that align with the stereotypes of the generation: being more aware of themselves in an altruistic fashion. For example, one person from this demographic wrote: “I am being called to open my heart and mind to all peoples; especially those who are different from me. I am being called to speak out for justice for those who are marginalized. I am being called to listen to others and find peace where none may exist. It basically comes down to being present with others.”\textsuperscript{21} The responses also indicate that members of this generation are exposed to thinking of things in a new and different way:

\begin{quote}
Upon first being introduced to Christian practices as thought of in terms of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome, I admittedly had never thought of Christianity in line with these concepts. Since then, I’ve started to see Christianity, or my call as a Christian, to be one who is inviting and welcoming to
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{19} Ibid, 25.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 26.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, 19.
others—that extending invitations to church events isn’t asking someone to then become a Christian; instead, I am using my call to reach out to others. Simple as that.\(^\text{22}\)

In reacting to the Christian practices in this way, respondents in this generation have learned more about themselves and their faith. One wrote: “I have learned that if I let those principles be at the center of my life, I become a more grounded, empathetic person.”\(^\text{23}\)

**Overall Impressions about Generational Responses**

Regardless of age, participants of the Bible study series and retreat thought that the Christian practices can be of benefit, both individually and as a collective church family. One person wrote: “Hospitality and nurturing of current church members and visitors strengthen the whole congregation. The welcome and invitation should be our response to Christ’s love. I feel that all four Christian practices are essential to a healthy congregation.”\(^\text{24}\) Another echoed that response but emphasized that growing the community of faith isn’t always about people officially becoming members of the congregation: “I continue to find the importance of giving someone a home to come to before trying to get their name in the family Bible. Invitation is the first step, Hospitality encourages your acceptance and love within that community. . . worry about the bookkeeping later.”\(^\text{25}\)

The follow up of focus group members led to honesty when thinking about putting the Christian practices to use. As the community of faith moves forward, it is

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22. Ibid, 19.
23. Ibid, 27.
important to recognize that not everyone will embrace or connect with using the Christian practices in their daily lives. They wrote, “I think there will always be some members of our congregation who will step forward, using Christian practices and those who will not. I don’t feel we can condemn those who do not—maybe they are not ‘connecting the dots’ with Christian practices or maybe they are doing things outside of the church which we don’t know about. Or maybe they do but don’t label what they do as Christian practices.” This is something on which to reflect in the next chapter.

There was also an interesting reflection on how these Christian practices can impact the church when thinking about the times in which we currently live. If the denomination is to continue to remain, then it is important to reflect and employ these Christian practices. Personally, one stated, “For me, this has become a very important part of what I want for my church. I find that the best way to evangelize to others is through Christian practices. Showing the way via being a living example. As we’ve progressed in to a more politically charged time in the Presbyterian Church, in regards to alternative lifestyles and the church’s acceptance, I find these to be even more important.”

Another reflected on what we need to do as a community: “The PC(USA) as well as other established religions are slowly dwindling in numbers and have been for many years. We are slowly but surely learning that we can no longer sit in the same pew seat we have sat in since our great-grandparents’ time at the church. We must extend the ‘right

27. Ibid, 17.
hand of fellowship’ to all new faces. We must invite people to events, and not immediately press them to be on a committee or volunteer their time, as have been past practices, but simply set a place of welcome where the new persons can find a place of belonging and fellowship.” By providing hospitality to all, we can enrich one another’s lives, allowing for deeper and richer relationships.

Because the four Christian practices of evangelism are ones that come to me naturally, I need continual reminders that they are not simple concepts to all. One of the final points Wrobleski makes is one of those reminders: "As with most activities in our lives, the practice of hospitality will come more easily to some people than to others. Certain individuals may be said to have a gift of hospitality—just as other people are gifted as teachers, writers, physicians, counselors, scientists, or musicians—and may find that the limits of their hospitality are naturally more flux and expansive than others." Since it is not a gift of all in the congregation, how do we help those who are not inherently gifted with hospitality to understand its importance and be willing to try and learn it, let alone practice it? As the newcomer has since been invited, welcomed, and extended hospitality, it is now critical to nurture the newly established relationship. The need to nurture is what the next chapter will address.

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29. Ibid, 28.
30. Wrobleski, 149.
Chapter 5: Nurture

“Starmount is a very welcoming place that extends invitations for all sorts of fellowship activities. Once you are in Starmount, the people nurture you through fellowship, food, and your called talents. People, in other words, approach you to serve on various committees or elicit your help for particular events. I see these as nurture. Those people might just need another body in a chair, but they more likely are seeing something in you; calling you forth to be that particular body in that particular chair.”

Nurture evolves out of the many forms of hospitality. Caring for the body, mind, and soul of another is to nurture. Jesus tells of a Samaritan man who does just that to a stranger he encounters on the road. As he bandaged his wounds and helped locate a place for care and recovery, the Samaritan provided support in more than just the physical—showing he cared provided so much to the wounded man.

Nouwen discusses different forms of hospitality that translate into the different ways nurturing others can take place. The three types of relationships, Nouwen writes, are ways in which people interact: as parent and child, as healer and patient, and as teacher and student. In the parent/child relationship, parents can offer their child a home, a receptive place with safe boundaries, and a place to learn what is safe and what is harmful. In this relationship, although seemingly one-sided in the beginning, there is an understanding of support and care that continues to grow through time, allowing each person individually to grow in the relationship.

1. Appendix M, 4.
At some point in our lives, we have been both healer and patient, regardless of whether or not we have training. The relationship of the Good Samaritan and the man he helped is a perfect example of this. What is most critical in these relationships is making the right diagnosis. Subsequent treatment (in whatever form) is only effective if the diagnosis is correct. The willingness to know the other is the key to reaching out and becoming healers. Many times, the healing comes in the healer's willingness to listen to the patient. Listening is an art that is learned, practiced, and developed—and it needs a person's full and real presence.

In the teacher/student relationship, what is most critical to the relationship is building fearless communication with each other and allowing respective life experiences. It is critical to ask for "mutual trust in which those who teach and those who want to learn can become present to each other, not as opponents, but as those who share in the same struggle and search for the same truth." The relationship is mutual in some respects, although one is still leading the other. The church looks most like this type of relationship. As Nouwen states, "The Church is not an institution forcing us to follow its rules. It is a community of people inviting us to still our hunger and thirst at its tables." Nouwen states, key to a "global" understanding in the Starmount community. How do we create and provide "space" for people to hunger and thirst for a deeper faith and deeper relationships, one with another?


Today's North American society is one of individualism. We have our support circles of family and friends, which can seem like enough. Christian education, while perceived as important and crucial to faith development, is not a priority for attendance. Whether focusing on interpersonal or personal nurturing, there just doesn't seem to be enough time or passion for either.

So people head to church Sunday-to-Sunday to worship. But it is not, necessarily, for the good of the whole. For some, as they enter the church, they are still in the "me mentality." However,

as the church, we aren't just a collection of isolated individuals, each one following our own pathway of spiritual growth. We are the family of God. Ours is a personal faith, but not a private one. Our hospitality becomes our offering, our gift to God, reflecting on what Christ did for us. Through these experiences, I learned that practicing the gift of hospitality means caring and providing for the other person—that it is not about changing people, but offering them space in which change can take place. I learned that our hospitality should not be a way of working God and our way into the lives of others, but creating an opportunity for others to find God and his way in their lives.5

We find some truth in this statement: what the Good Samaritan did that was most helpful for the injured man was to provide a place to rest.

Starmount's Evangelism and Membership Committee discusses new and different ways to bring in new people (Evangelism) and how to continue to connect its current members, one to another (Membership). As the congregation continues to grow in number, the "face" of the congregation begins to look different. With this growth, there is a great potential for rich and wonderful relationships to be cultivated and nurtured. Christine Pohl states it best. She writes, "Churches are potentially rich settings for nurturing a life of hospitality. In some churches, expanding the hospitality that members

offer to one another would be an important first step. Churches that have not nurtured a common life among members will find hospitality to strangers quite difficult. But churches who do have a rich common life can sometimes overlook strangers in their attention to, and care for, one another.”

This passage struck me as where Starmount is right now. Whether in brainstorming new ideas for a different take on our dinner club program or having conversations with long-time members, the first step in continuing to create a more hospitable Starmount is to ensure that our current members know each other. Is there a hesitation (fear, perhaps?) that prohibits people from saying more than "hi" to someone they don't recognize? What if the person they are saying hi to has been a member for six months or more? Consciously working to connect current members, one to another, will provide the freedom and confidence to strike up conversations with those whom they don't recognize—and that can translate to being more welcoming and nurturing.

The most difficult of the concepts to grasp, understanding "nurture" in a "me-centric" society, can sometimes lose its importance and potency. There continues to be a desire for individual nurture which can, in turn, lead to the nurture of others. When we can take care of ourselves, we can take care of others. Continuing to develop relationships and extend care is the best way to understand nurture in the larger picture of evangelism. One of the places to consider the larger picture of evangelism is in and through social media.

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Theology of Social Media

Once considered a luxury, the Internet is on the cusp of being considered a utility, just like water, natural gas, and electricity. With that being the case, the Internet is present in the majority of households, utilized in every aspect of life. Because it is important to consider how the church operates in the physical world, it is becoming equally important to understand how the church operates in the online (virtual) world. Understanding and considering the positive ways social media is utilized in churches can define the future of its use while also keeping in mind some of the potential pitfalls.

Social media, one of the many instruments to find online, can be a bridge between people. And, with its growing popularity, it’s important to keep in mind that “today’s mission field is online.” It allows people to be connected, one to another. For some, it provides a community of people gathered, albeit virtually. For most, relationships are nurtured, if not in some cases, started and fostered. It is this connection and relationship-building that is a critically important characteristic of what makes social media important. Connections and relationships, in turn, nurture the community at large.

For many, particularly for younger generations (including millennials), community and connection are found on a computer screen. The communities created have different niches that fill perceived needs.

Many provide havens: a sense of belonging and being helped. Many provide bandages: emotional aid and services that help people cope with the stresses and strains of their situations. Others provide safety nets that lessen the effects of acute crises and chronic difficulties. They all provide social capital: interpersonal resources not only to survive and thrive but also to change situations (houses,

jobs, spouses) or to change the world or at least their neighborhood (organizing a major political activity, local school board politics). This raises questions about how a church utilizes the social media as a network: what type of network is Facebook, in particular, for church members? Can different social media platforms serve as different niches for individual congregation members, or do they all need to fill the same need or purpose?

It may seem counterintuitive for something used in isolation to bring people together, being used as another tool in evangelism and its four Christian Practices. Ultimately, however, social media can provide yet another way to bring people together, one to another. This togetherness is a fundamental goal of Christian ministry. Digital strategist, author, and leading voice on social media, Meredith Gould, states it simply: “Social media has opened up yet another portal for seeing and being seen, for knowing and being known, for being in and belonging to community.” When used wisely and with intention, there are many positive attributes to using social media in congregations.

One positive use of social media in congregations is to allow for congregations to learn more about each other than can be gleaned from short-burst interactions on Sunday mornings in and around worship services. “Social media is both a stethoscope, magnifying your ability to listen to your congregation and community, and a megaphone, magnifying your ability to proclaim God’s word to your community.” Through social media, congregants can learn about similar interests.

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Social media is a positive for congregations because it can bridge the generational gaps: teens interacting with Baby Boomers, Millennials sharing thoughts with Generation Xers. These interactions can lead to a better understanding of one another. “Social networks, with their ability to foster genuine interaction and bring people together in a variety of locations, allow users a unique window into the humanity that is often hidden behind traditional left/right debates. Social media also allows people to build relationships on the integrity and authenticity of the human being behind the theological position, rather than on a shared theological position.”

In fact, many congregations utilize the knowledge of the younger generations to assist its older members in getting situated online, providing tutorials where the younger teaches the elder.

Social media can allow for ways to provide interactions and connections to one another. Groups that benefit include a congregation’s college students, young adult members yet to connect to a local congregation, and the congregation’s homebound members. “Ultimately, this is where the value of social media lies—in its ability to use technology to facilitate connection and relationships between people. Emerging generations see little to no difference between an ‘online’ and ‘offline’ world. They are becoming one in the same.”

Because the younger generations continue to blur the lines of “online” and “offline,” when the church can come alongside them in conversations, then the connection can only continue to grow. Many older congregants, thanks to their children, are being connected virtually more and more to stay “in the know” with their

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children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Online and offline are blurring more and more every day.

There are arguments by some that social media and the increased amount of time in the virtual world can prevent many from interacting in face-to-face situations. However, some researchers counter the argument, finding and believing that social media “enables people to gain more experience and confidence, which in turn facilitate offline relationships.”¹³ In many cases, social media becomes one of the many avenues to make plans for offline events. So, if connections are indeed made, then there cannot be any reason to be cautious or think of social media and its use in congregations in a negative light, right?

One of the greatest pitfalls of social media is its inability to understand emotions, tone, and subtlety. Phil Tanis, Executive Secretary for Communications for the World Communion of Reformed Churches, believes that social media conversations are “generally surface oriented [and] very basic. The [platform] does not encourage deep discussions and thus misunderstandings [and] misinformation dominate and proliferate.”¹⁴ The mood of the person reading a social media post may influence how they interpret the writer’s post—it can lead to confusion and, as Tanis indicates, misunderstanding.

Another detriment to social media’s credit also has to do with emotions and interpreting what others post. Craig Detweiler in his book Igods: How Technology Shapes our Spiritual and Social Lives observes that because of limitations of the


¹⁴. Phil Tanis, emailed to author, March 31, 2015.
programming on Facebook, despite people being upset, expressing those feelings still has to be done in a particular way. He writes:

What happens when we’re sharing our pain or sorrow? We’ve all been confronted by status updates that might suggest dire circumstances such as ‘Mom is in the hospital for an MRI, still waiting for a diagnosis; or ‘My Dad passed away today, getting in the car for the long drive back to my hometown.’ While such updates may trigger a wave of condolences, they are certainly something we would not ‘like.’ Facebook doesn’t offer a ‘dislike’ button. Eli Pariser of Upworthy.com notes how this simple software option may force us to rethink our status updates, shading them in hopeful terms. Slight shifts toward ‘Mom is in the hospital for an MRI, doctors working on a diagnosis’ or ‘Dad passed away today, know he’s in a better place’ make our updates much more ‘likeable.’ While I am all for projecting hope, we must acknowledge that not all our prayers will be answered and not all of our experiences are positive. The introduction of emoticons to Facebook allows for a broader range of responses but it still tends towards the shallow. Facebook offers a way to reach out to friends and family, but it isn’t predisposed toward depression, doubt, or loneliness.15

Social media can only go so far in its conveying of information. But, if the information needs to get out to many people at once, it can be helpful!

Despite the understanding that online and offline is becoming blurred for many these days, it is important to consider that some put too much currency into social media for its use in the church. However, many argue that true Christian community cannot be fully realized online due to a lack of physical presence with one another: “True friendship is more than a post. It extends beyond a ‘like.’ Friends get in the car, board the plane, and deliver dinner.”16

The argument discussed above is that there is a blurred line between online presence and physical presence; however, it is important to consider how the Holy Spirit

15. Detweiler, 159-160.
can work in the midst of the relationships. In the Presbyterian Church (USA), votes for session meetings cannot be placed in absentia so that the Holy Spirit can work through those gathered to vote based on conversations at the time. While not impossible, it currently seems to be that the Holy Spirit’s work of transformation is better understood through being face-to-face with one another. “The context of caring relationships and supportive communities is central to the process whereby the Holy Spirit can bring about the inward turning to Christ that lays the groundwork for transformation.”

It remains unclear how we, as a body of Christ, can utilize the virtual community in conjunction with the real presence of a community, which many argue is necessary to strengthen the body of Christ definitively. “Christ, our Emmanuel, is ‘God with us.’ In the community of faith, we are present to and with each other and Emmanuel binds us together.” It is important to keep this in mind when considering how social media can be helpful to congregations.

Social media can be helpful to a congregation in the simplest way: it provides connection, one to another. As has been stated above, connection and relationship build community. Social media provides a venue for discussion, pictures, prayer requests, and other musings that allow for people to get to know one another on a different level.

Meredith Gould, author of *The Social Media Gospel: Sharing the Good News in New Ways*, writes:

When used wisely and well, social media can help your church: build Christian community within and beyond church-the-building; deliver time-sensitive news and information; educate newcomers about your church community; enhance the website’s functionality; establish and maintain a local, regional, or national


presence; gather feedback from congregants; minister to the homebound and those unable to attend; organize, publicize, and invite people to events; preach the Gospel; model Gospel values and Christian love; provide a safe, secure place to gather for online fellowship; and share stories to deepen faith and inspire action.  

Practically, while it can do all of those things, it is important to dig a bit deeper and understand in what other ways utilizing social media can be helpful to the congregation. Social media can also benefit a congregation’s members personally, emotionally, and as a different way to interact with the pastor.

A congregation’s members can be strengthened in their faith and grow deeper in a relationship with one another. It can serve to be faith-strengthening because when connections are made with fellow congregants in the name of Christ, it can strengthen one’s resolve to speak to their faith more openly and freely. “Relationships are at the heart of our faith. Through relationships with others, we can express and receive God’s love in both communal and personal ways.” Social media can benefit individuals in the parish personally as a means of sharing faith and modeling Christian life, but it can also benefit them emotionally as well.

Connections provide emotional support to individuals in congregations. As described by psychologist Janet L. Surrey, authentic connection is at “the core of psychological wellbeing and is the essential quality of growth-fostering and healing relationships. In moments of deep connection in a relationship, we break out of isolation

and contraction into a more whole and spacious state of mind and heart.”22 When we are connected, one to another, we can be happier and healthier emotionally. Homebound members of the congregation can be tied to the younger population, providing insight and comments that allow them to feel connected. This connection is an example of an emotional benefit of social media.

If people, when feeling fulfilled emotionally by the worshipping community, can count on this same community between worship services and other church events, this can provide an emotional boost that can only benefit them. This fulfillment is important when one accepts that a virtual community is a real community. It is through this online environment that people can remain connected, especially to the pastoral staff, in new and different ways.

Social media could pose a threat to building community. Technology is more readily accessible. The Internet is made available on multiple platforms: desktop computers, tablets, and smartphones. Seeking out smartphone programs and applications is quickly becoming the default action when people are spared a free moment. Social isolation Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor and clinical psychologist Sherry Turkle studied how this phenomenon has evolved over the past 15 years. She thinks that technology has created a new normal kind of social isolation as being “alone together”23. Being alone together “offers the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship.”24 This can serve as a detriment to the attempts being made in

24. Ibid.
evangelism. So how does church leadership understand this crux alongside the benefits which social media can present?

When church leadership—more specifically, pastors—connect to their congregation’s members through social media, it creates an understanding that pastors are no different than their flock. The community can only grow stronger when “church leadership actively participates, especially from a place of relatable authenticity rather than one of distanced authority.”

Being personable—reflecting times of joy and sorrow, funny vignettes, and pictures of family activities—allows for two-way conversations to happen more regularly. To be able to connect with congregants, pastors need to be identified as understanding and relatable; by joining the conversation, this is achievable.

Social media can also be a way in which pastoral staff can engage congregants when in need of pastoral care. While it is important to point out that social media will never replace face-to-face interactions regarding pastoral care, it is yet another way to connect pastors with their congregants, and they do not need to be mutually exclusive. Practically, personally, and emotionally, social media can be of great benefit to a church. It is imperative, however, to understand more fully why congregations should use it.

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As has been stated in different ways above, it is important to reiterate that people connected, one to another, in any way possible, can only help those individuals and the Body of Christ as a whole. Gould writes:

Community is revealed, emerges, and can be enhanced when churches: provide an illustrated history of the community and its activities by populating the timeline with milestones and pictures; help congregants exchange ideas and chat in between meetings by setting up open (public) groups for committees; create a safe haven for ministries requiring privacy and confidentiality by setting up closed (private) groups; reduce administrative hassles by using the Events function to publicize celebrations and events, invite people, collect RSVPs, and send reminders; participate in the larger community of faith by “liking” pages of sister churches, denominational organizations, and religion publishers and then leaving meaningful comments.  

Connection builds relationship builds the Body of Christ, allowing the furthering of God’s Kingdom, growing together in the name of Christ, and supporting the Kingdom at large.

Despite its ability to keep people apart from one another, social media is as great a benefit to facilitating and furthering God’s Kingdom in the world as any other. Pew Internet research shows that social media does not pull people away from interactions with one another; in fact, it may be able to bring them closer and be more connected to ways to engage and interact through volunteering and knowing the needs of the organizations of interest. Gould reminds us that we are called to further God’s Kingdom through the sharing of the gospel. She comments: “Believing in Gospel teachings calls us to model what we believe while using social media by offering helpful information, providing comfort, sharing joy, and engaging in conversations that build and unite, rather

30. Rainie and Wellman, 119.
than tear down or divide the people of God. Believing in the grace available through sacraments calls us to encourage.”31 We further God’s Kingdom through encouraging one another in relationships through connections.

It is that connection that allows relationships to be nurtured through the name of Jesus Christ. Contrary to what many believe, not all social media is isolating. While some may find social media to suck large amounts of time from one’s day, it is important to recognize that those same people are connecting with one another, conversing with others. “People have changed the ways they interact with each other. They have become increasingly networked as individuals, rather than embedded in groups. In the world of networked individuals, it is the person who is the focus: not the family, not the work unit, not the neighborhood, and not the social group.”32

People continue to build relationships and grow together in Christ. Knowing that someone is thinking about them and praying for them, albeit through social media, is still knowing they are the subject of someone’s thoughts and prayers. “Think about the big impact of little phrases such as ‘Keep up the good work,’ ‘Hang in there,’ ‘Praying for you,’ and ‘Rooting for you.’ It doesn’t take much, but the minimum requirement is a commitment to showing up.”33 It is through these interactions, no matter how small, that people can confirm that they are growing together in the name of Jesus Christ.

How does that support God’s Kingdom at large? Simply, it transcends boundaries, both geographically and socially. Individuals are solely responsible for being connected

32. Rainie and Wellman, 6.
to others. Therefore, it allows each person to put “people at the center of personal networks that can supply them with support, sociability, information, and a sense of belonging.” Geographically, churches can interact with mission sites on the opposite side of the world. Socially, multigenerational relationships can thrive. Church-based networks can continue to spread the Word about the Kingdom of God.

I would be remiss if I didn’t mention an ulterior motive for why one utilizes social media in the congregation: congregants are connected to non-church people in the community. When posting information and details about congregational events, the events may populate non-church people’s newsfeeds. This connection provides free “advertising” about the congregation, perhaps encouraging the non-church person to come to church, thus facilitating the growth of the congregation.

Analysis of Social Media and Its Use in a Congregation

When thinking about social media as a vehicle for evangelism, it is critical to examine how it is used within a particular context. By befriending any and all people associated with the Starmount Presbyterian Church, Facebook was utilized both for personal and professional connections. By creating a custom newsfeed of members, I was able to read quickly and, when appropriate, respond to status updates, posts, and pictures.

According to what I know to be true, 183 members of Starmount have a Facebook profile. While it is understandable that some utilize it more than others, it is impressive that forty-two percent of Starmount’s 435 members have a social media presence. All of what I observed in member-to-member interaction was positive and supportive. I think

34. Rainie and Wellman, 124.
that it is true that members were able to interact and get to know one another’s personal lives better through this means.

Many of the interactions I witnessed were comments or “likes” of pictures or status updates. However, when updates were regarding personal or family health, comments were typically (paraphrased) that they were praying for the individual or their family member. When parents of young children were expressing frustration over something their grade-school-aged child did, a comment from a parent of a college-aged child would provide words of empathy and encouragement.

When asking a few of the church members who have a higher profile on Facebook (translation: post and comment more frequently than others), they agreed that Facebook allowed for them to connect with others on a level they may not be able to on a Sunday morning before or after worship. For example, one respondent indicated that his family’s schedule doesn’t allow for him and his family to participate in many church activities outside of worship, so Facebook allows for deeper connection.35 Others indicated that they appreciate the way that Facebook helps remind them of upcoming events and activities in the life of the church. One indicated that she is aware that her presence on social media can, indeed, act as a catalyst for conversation with non-church friends about church activities—she continues to be hopeful that the conversation may lead to a visit to church.36

Whether engaging people online or in person, how relationships are fostered and enriched can lead to long-lasting connections. The way this fostering happens is what the

35. Kevin S., emailed to author, April 8, 2015.
36. Libbi G., emailed to author, April 9, 2015.
Christian practice of nurture is all about. When engaged and enacted with the other three Christian practices under the umbrella of evangelism, relationships are rooted in the richness of Christian love and a God who loves each of us unconditionally.
Chapter 6: Dreams and Conclusions

The Christian Practices of Evangelism are critical for the health and growth of a church. By embracing and embodying Invitation, Hospitality, Nurture, and Welcome, people are charged and challenged to look outside of themselves and think more regularly about others. Through this extensive five-year process, I have learned quite a bit about the evolvement of my Theology of Evangelism and the Four Christian Practices, as well as about myself.

What I Learned

Learnings about Myself

I have learned a lot about myself though this process. When I began my undergraduate education at Hope College, I was an athletic training and exercise science major – I think the reason I was successful in my classwork and studies was that I was able to actively engage the various ways of learning, including the physical demands in labs and practical exams. Those studies of the muscles, nerves, joints and other anatomy led to me internalizing what it was that I knew. Applying that information to how to tape an ankle or rehabilitate a quadriceps strain was the next step in showing others that I knew what I was doing and was proficient in my learnings.

As my education continued at the University of Minnesota as a graduate assistant athletic trainer studying Sports Psychology, I found myself at a crossroads. What I was doing was not “doing it” for me anymore; Lost, I wondered why I spent more than seven years of my time, energy, and finances doing something that wasn’t what I enjoyed after all. When an opportunity to apply for a youth ministry position opened at my local
congregation, I prayed about it, interviewed, and was extended the position. Little did I know that it would be the start of something bigger.

When deciding to make the commitment to yet another handful of years of organized education, I did not know it would be so difficult – always being a good student and learner wasn’t as easy as I thought it to be. Thinking of my faith and learning about practical ministry was as if I was learning a foreign language – to this point, all I knew of my work in ministry was what I had experienced for myself as a middle school and high school student. To have to think critically of what it was that I believed and why, I believed and why I believed in that way was a challenge. And, unfortunately, it didn’t involve math and science, those courses in which I excelled in through my younger education. Ironically, it was the humanities in which I struggled the most.

Attending Luther Seminary, a seminary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, had its equal challenges: not only was I learning something that, at times, felt equally foreign and familiar, but I also needed to understand the nuances of Lutheran theology versus my Reformed theological standards. It was the Presbyterian Church (USA) in which I was striving to be ordained and installed as a Teaching Elder. Encouraged by another PC(USA) pastor who earned her Master of Divinity from Luther Seminary, my studying would constantly be hearing what the professors were teaching and how my reformed foundation did or did not mesh with the class discussions. I often found my internal reformed sirens going off because of something of which I didn’t agree, but couldn’t quite verbalize why. It was more difficult to display to others how I was proficient in my learnings.
All of this backstory is to identify the following:

- I am confident I was called and equipped by God to this ministry because this non-writer math-friendly lab rat is now writing and using words in all aspects of her job.

- I am better at “doing” than at “being;” I can put together a bible study, sermon, or retreat without much difficulty because it has a beginning, a middle, and an ending. Those things have concrete tasks at hand, and I can check them off one at a time. That is “doing.” “Being” entails sitting down with my thoughts, forcing me to put into words what I am confident will be of benefit to more than just myself.

- What God has placed on my heart is not what necessarily is in the hearts of everyone around me – my truths are not the truths of others. The things that seem easy to me are not the same for others – including being able to relate to others and strike up a conversation on the smallest windows of commonality.

- This project has been difficult for me – I know it is “right,” but I have trouble putting those “rights” into words – in person or on paper. It is a challenge I will pursue because I know I am on to something and I am called to communicate these “rights” to others.

- I know that what I am doing is hitting a nerve – based upon follow up surveys and conversations, items I have read, and the way people are responding – there is truth in what is my hypothesis.

Through this five year process, my definitions of evangelism, invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome have had different words put to them, but they maintain the same foundation: what God is calling us to do and be in this world is to grow the Kingdom of God.
Theology of Evangelism and the Four Christian Practices

The terms are not exclusively Christian; that is what makes them less intimidating. Through my readings and what I have learned, it is important to keep the four Christian Practices and their overarching umbrella terms defined in such a way that, moving forward, all can understand from where my interpretation and future teachings lie.

*Invitation* is asking someone if they want to join you at an event, whether it is a worship service, bible study or other church-related function. Most people receive invitations to parties of the birthday or holiday-themed variety. To be invitational is to offer a spirit of vulnerability and willingness to allow someone else to be a part of something of which you deeply care.¹ Extending invitation to another means that you have built up enough of a relationship with the person to know what it is that they like and dislike. Extending invitation to another means that you know and care enough about the person to believe they may appreciate the event to which you are inviting.

Jesus invited people to break bread often. The Pharisee invited Jesus to dine with him, an offer which Jesus accepted.² Jesus invited sinners not only to eat with him but to follow him as well.³ Jesus called to Zacchaeus to come down from the tree so that he might invite himself over for dinner at the tax collector’s house.⁴ While these examples hinge around the sharing of food, what lies deeper than that is that Jesus wanted to share

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² Luke 7:36 (NRSV).
³ Mark 2:13-17 (NRSV).
his time with the people to and from whom the invitation came. Spending time with people, regardless of the conversation that takes place, can lead to shared experiences which, in turn, leads to connection and relationship.

Martha was wonderful at extending hospitality to Jesus and other guests who entered the home she shared with her sister, Mary. Bustling about the house, Martha would cook and clean and make sure that her guest would have all he needed. Her sister? Sat at Jesus’s feet while they shared in conversation. After all of the exertion, what did an exasperated Martha do? She wanted Jesus to scold her sister for the lack of effort.\(^5\) The irony of the situation is this: both sisters were providing hospitality to their houseguest, they just took different avenues in doing so.

To extend hospitality to another is to help them to feel comfortable in their skin in their new situation. At home, it may be making sure that they have something to drink and know there the bathroom is. At church, it may be the same things, but one might also add knowing where the hymnal is in the pew, when it is appropriate to stand, and how to feel enough at ease so as to not feel like they are sticking out like a sore thumb as the first-time visitor. It is ensuring that, when the service is over, they know that the coffee hour is open and available to all and how to get there. To extend hospitality is to be empathetic to the needs of the other, placing yourself in their shoes enough to remember what it is like to not know the “secret handshake,” making the other comfortable and assurance to meet their needs.

Some may argue that hospitality and nurture are one in the same – I contend that they go hand-in-hand. Providing hospitality can nurture a relationship. In the same way

that a parent nurtures a child, someone who stands to be nurturing is one who seeks to provide the tools and means necessary to grow the other’s foundation. Whether it be relationship or faith, one who nurtures is one who cares for the other in such a way that the progress is recognized in the other and is identified as a success for all involved. The one who nurtures is happy and excited to see the growth and progress in the one he nurtures. Like with hospitality, nurturing means looking outside of the scope of self and think of someone else more than you do yourself.

Jesus nurtured all whom he encountered. The important piece to keep in mind is that Jesus understood that each person with whom he interacted was different than the person before. The “recipe” which Jesus used in engaging those he met was not the same – the ingredients were different with each encounter. Mary and Martha, Zacchaeus, the Pharisees, the Disciples – all came from different backgrounds, just like people in the relationships of today. Interacting with each of them, in the same way, could cause a loss of those relationships. By getting to know the other – what makes them tick, their gifts, their family background – allows for nurture to take place in the way that the other needs, whether they know it or not.

_Welcome_ is the way we encounter others for the first time, every time. How do we make them feel when they come to the place that is so familiar to us? Are we cold and intimidating, with our arms crossed and ignoring those who come in our doors? Or are we smiling, using eye contact, and engaging the other, extending the hand of friendship? What does the greeting look like and how does that greeting feel?
Jesus told the story of the prodigal son.\(^6\) Despite the way the son treated him, his father greeted him with open arms, disregarding the treatment he endured. When we are in a relationship with one another, feelings will be hurt. There will be disagreements. But, in the end, we are rooted in faith as the body of Christ and should extend that same welcome to one another each time, as if welcoming a long-lost family member home.

Jesus did all of these things. He instructed others to do the same. The underlying foundation of all of these Christian Practices is relationships: how one interacts with and engages the other. These relationships, bigger than ourselves, lead to the growth of the body of Christ, whether increasing in the number of people who believe or the number of people in the pews on a Sunday morning. To be in a relationship with one another is to care about them. To know about their families, their work, their gifts and the other things that make them “them” allows for the person to know that there is genuine care, in the same way that God cares for each of us.

The way we order the use of the Christian Practices can vary, depending on how one encounters the other. The use of the Practices is not linear nor clear-cut. Just as the Practices could each define the other in some way, the importance in all of the considerations of using the Christian Practices under the authority of Evangelism is engaging and thinking of others before thinking of self.

**Implications for the Local Church**

As the comments and feedback have shown, people introduced to the Christian Practices have seen positive changes in their lives personally and in the lives of those around them. They are more self-aware, being able to understand how their actions may

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impact the other confidently. The local congregation can benefit from the training – by adopting the Christian Practices as their own, they can cultivate a culture of evangelism, allowing invitational, hospitable, and welcoming hearts to nurture relationships with all whom they encounter, both inside and outside of the church walls.

In that sense of understanding how to encounter all, a topic in which a great deal of education, critical thinking, and conversation needs to take place is specific to race and LGBTQ+ relations. How, specifically, does Starmount address the ways the congregation provides, as Parker J. Palmer writes a “safe space for deep democracy?” It is important to acknowledge that one of the most racially segregated times in our country is on Sunday mornings. We also acknowledge that Starmount is a congregation whose property sits in the middle of an upper-middle class primarily Caucasian neighborhood with one of the oldest African American Presbyterian churches in the country less than five miles away.

As mentioned earlier, Starmount has made it its mission to assist in the resettlement of refugees. Primarily immigrating from Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the African population at Starmount has increased dramatically, even in the last few years; but that does not make us a highly racially diverse congregation. Nor does having three openly gay church members in committed relationships make us a More Light congregation. But we are not as homogeneous as we could be or have been in the past. We continue to make attempts to welcome all who enter our building, and the Holy

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8. Paraphrased from Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

9. More Light Presbyterians is an organization that works toward the full participation of LGBTQ+ people in the lives of their congregations, specifically to the PC(USA). https://mlp.org/
Spirit is at work. More African families are finding a place they can call their church home. Members of the GLBTQ+ community are more confident in sharing their personal lives with other members of their church family. The Session and staff of Starmount should, in the very near future, engage one another in a dialogue about how race, full GLBTQ+ participation, systemic racism, and possible prejudice within the congregation can affect how evangelism and the four Christian Practices are engaged.

In the book *Teaching Reflectively in Theological Contexts: Promises and Contradictions* edited by Mary E. Hess and Stephen D. Brookfield, by naming how the systems at Starmount work, we may “experience both grief and guilt in this recognition (of white privilege). Yet, rather than withdrawing into defensiveness, our recognition of this systemic process can give birth to a deeper sense of how God’s grace liberates one into energy and action.”\(^\text{10}\) Welcoming the voices of all into the conversation within the Christian Practice of Nurture can “evoke the voice of the inner teacher”\(^\text{11}\), allowing for a “slow, patient process of speaking and listening without judgment – taking in what affirms us and what challenges us, together weaving a ‘tapestry of truth’ that allows each person to sort out personal truth at his or her own depth and pace.”\(^\text{12}\) This is a way that transformation takes place, both personally and as an institution.

But this transformation will take time. As one response indicated, not everyone in the church family will necessarily adopt this new culture of evangelism: “I think there will always be some members of our congregation who will step forward, using Christian


\(^{11}\) Palmer, 161.

\(^{12}\) Ibid, 161.
Practices and there will be those who will not. I don’t feel we can condemn those who do not – maybe they are not ‘connecting the dots’ with Christian Practices or maybe they are doing things outside of the church which we don’t know. Or maybe they do but don’t label what they do as Christian Practices.”

With intentional education and training taking place, there will be a better understanding of how this new culture of evangelism may look. As one focus group respondent reflected, "I think that some training on how to ‘evangelize’ may be useful. As Presbyterians, the word ‘evangelize’ is scary to some who are afraid they’ll be asked to share their testimony. However, there are many ways to share the love of Christ. Congregants need to understand the multiple meanings of the word and ways that they can share their faith and evangelize others through everyday actions, such as a kind word, a hug, a shoulder to cry on, a card, a warm meal, a blanket to someone who is cold. Christians forget that it is the power of the Holy Spirit that touches the hearts of others – not us. If we are open to ways that the Spirit can use us. If we allow the Spirit to do so, we’ll become better evangelists.”

**Implications for the Greater Church**

The PC(USA) is in transition. Following the completion of the 2016 General Assembly, the denomination has reinforced its stances on LGBTQ+ issues, the elimination of patriarchy at the higher leadership levels, and the importance of remaining relevant in the midst of mainline denominations shrinking in population. The prayer for the greater church is that it will, on the whole, embrace this new culture of evangelism,

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tracing back to the same way Jesus interacted with and built the Kingdom of God – through building individual relationships, one person at a time.

A couple of focus group respondents reflected on their growth in this topic but also thought about the larger church. One wrote,

> For me, this has become a very important part of what I want for my church. I find that the best way to evangelize to others is through Christian Practices. Showing the way via being a living example. As we’ve progressed into a more politically charged time in the Presbyterian Church, in regards to alternative lifestyles and the church’s acceptance, I find these to be even more important.\(^{15}\)

Another was sensitive to how this training could be of benefit, writing,

> The PC(USA) as well as other established religions are slowly dwindling in numbers and have been for many years. We are slowly, but surely, learning that we can no longer sit in the same pew seat we have sat in since our great-grandparents' time at the church. We must extend the 'right hand of welcome' to all new faces. We must invite people to events, and not immediately press them to be on a committee or volunteer their time, as have been past practices, but simply set a place of welcome where the new persons can find a place of belonging and fellowship.\(^{16}\)

Finding a place of belonging in a denomination who is attempting to remain continuously progressive is critical to its remaining present in the Christian conversation. Concentrating the message down to simply not just “loving God, loving neighbor” but “seeing God, seeing other” will be of great benefit.

**What I Would Do Differently**

**Timeline and Strategy**

The four Christian Practices were claimed and understood from the beginning of my studies at Western Theological Seminary. However, the process of defining them and

\(^{15}\) Ibid, 17.

\(^{16}\) Ibid, 28.
assisting a congregation in adopting them was a bit unclear. Through the five years, the Learning Units were modeled, crafted, and shaped along the way – they were not clear-cut from the beginning in May 2013. If I knew then what I know now, I would have been more strategic in mapping out my learning units and the work that went into them.

Differently building the learning units would have allowed for a more strategic program for the congregation. Thinking about Richard Osmer’s Practical Theology, I would have done better at asking, “What is going on?” “Why is this going on?” “What ought to be going on?” and “What will be going on?” By asking these questions, a better plan would be implemented for rolling out the various aspects of the training, including timelines and tactics for a wider reach throughout the congregation.

I also would have been better in the way I engaged my work – however possible. There were times I would find myself overwhelmed by the work I needed to achieve and felt more and more behind. Instead of “eating the elephant one bite at a time,” I would become overwhelmed and intimidated, not sure of where to start or pick back up. I am thankful for the patience, support, and guidance of my advisor and learning unit mentors during this experience. I am also incredibly grateful for the three-month sabbatical granted me by Starmount Presbyterian Church to complete my proposal and this final project. It was during this time I was able to fully concentrate on the work at hand, not needing to attempt at balancing the day-to-day of ministry at Starmount and the work of this Doctor of Ministry program.
New Questions

There is only so much time and there are only so many questions that can be examined, despite wanting to do and read more. Through my readings and conversations, the following questions have come to the surface:

- *Does the evangelist always have to engage the audience for the sake of the church?*
  The person utilizing the four Christian Practices could be termed the evangelist, considering that they are doing evangelism. One of the questions that has come up is to ask if it is always that the evangelist is engaging the other on behalf of the church which they attend. Could the evangelist be engaging the other for the sake of a community organization of which they are a part? Do the Christian Practices need to be used strictly for the sake of reflecting their faith? How could that look? Should another term other than “evangelism” be used to make the Christian Practices more palatable?

- *What is it that makes the conversation “endorsed” by the Christian Practices?*
  There is no checklist in the conversation stream for the evangelist to identify when one or more of the Christian Practices is utilized. Therefore, what is it that signifies to someone that the conversation taking place between an evangelist and another is validated as successful under the guise of the training? Does it even matter?

- *How does the audience need to be engaged to be considered successfully utilizing the Christian Practices?*
  What is it that makes the use of the Christian Practices successful? Is it the person with whom the evangelist is talking making it to a worship service or church-sponsored event? Further conversation and reading can be done to understand how these Christian Practices can be quantified, or whether it is necessary to do in the first place.
• Are there other Christian Practices that can be identified or developed for this Evangelism Toolbox?

Might there be an examination of other aspects of everyday living through a Christian filter? A way for the evangelist to continue to think of the other and the relationship fostered with that person? How might they be utilized in the bigger picture of evangelism and growth in relationships and the church?

• Are there other common words or phrases that can be examined through a Christian lens that would allow for them to be deemed “less intimidating” or “more approachable/manageable/tangible”?

Through all of the conversations I have had, people cringe when they hear the word “evangelism.” When asked about what it is that is scary or intimidating to them about the word, they respond with stories of bad experiences from years before specific to going out and knocking on doors, asking if the person on the other side had “been saved.”

Others have preconceived notions of what the term means due to media coverage or televangelists from the 1980’s or how conservative Christians have hijacked the word and claimed it as their own, not necessarily for the betterment of the Kingdom of God. This is one term that can “scare” people – are there others misunderstood in this mainstream culture that can give Christianity a bad name?

**Recommendations and Next Steps**

**Training Program**

As discussed above, a strategy would have been idyllic for the rollout of the introduction and various methods for teaching the Christian Practices under the Evangelism umbrella to the congregation. As it was a work-in-progress, it was rolled out
in the same manner. Therefore, the next step would be to make a more formalized training program for the congregation as a whole.

What does that look like – a training program? Does the bible study stay specific to a concentrated few who would then, in turn, be “certified evangelists”? The sermon series and newsletter articles would allow the worship attendees and newsletter subscribers respectively receive information about evangelism and the Christian Practices, but does it start as a whole-congregation endeavor? Whatever the case, the next step would be to be more strategic in its implementation in the congregation.

There will be a benefit to this happening – of this, I am confident. One focus group member, in a follow-up survey, wrote, “I’ve begun rethinking how I see evangelism. However, I now understand evangelism as action rather than verbal invitation. For instance, I talk to my non-church friends, colleagues, and even my girlfriend about what I do at church (volunteer at the community garden, work with the youth, etc.) and why I do it. I believe this to be a form of evangelism; I’m sharing my faith by letting others know that I have found a place of faith to which I belong and why it is that I cling tightly to that place.”17

Program for Children and Teens

Another aspect of the congregation-wide training is understanding how to introduce the younger members of the church family to evangelism and its four Christian Practices. The earlier these younger members become exposed and can understand more about how to be sensitive to the needs of others will have a tremendous impact on foundational faith and the future of the church.

17. Appendix B, 27.
Like many churches, my current context has a small youth group; so small, in fact, that the middle school and high school groups combined to allow for successful group games and conversation. Like many churches, my current context’s leadership desires for the youth group to grow in number. When the current youth group members are asked about the growth of the group, their response is “we like it small – we know everyone.” From where does this mentality generate? Can it be changed? While it is integral for the congregation to think creatively about how that can happen, it is through programs like this one that would allow for the youth to understand, for themselves, the importance of engaging “other” and the benefit of looking outside of themselves for the sake of the larger faith community.

Training Manual

Once a determination of how the order of instruction and teaching should take place, then a training manual will be written. This manual will be intended for other congregations to utilize the bible study, training program, retreat, newsletter articles, and sermon series for themselves. The manual, intended for the program’s leader(s), would include further background about the origin of this project, the definitions of evangelism and the four Christian Practices, and questions for congregation-wide discernment.

Package and Publish

With the completion of the training manual, the next step would be to request a few churches to assist in ironing out any bugs and questions that may come from completing the program. Any changes, based on the feedback, would take place. The intention would, then, be to package the curriculum as one that any church could use for their betterment.
Conclusion

“Love God, love neighbor,” partnered with “seeing God, seeing other” can be of great benefit to all involved. Being in a relationship, one with another, allows for the growth of the church, both in the faith lives of its individuals, but also the number of people who know and understand the love, strength and saving power of Jesus Christ. Being invitational, hospitable, nurturing, and welcoming are all practices that, with adoption, will serve the betterment of the individual and the one with whom he or she interacts. The church will only grow through their adoption and use.
Appendix A: Bible Study with Training

A.1: Bible Study Letter Invitation

Pastor Kathryn has been working hard on her Doctor of Ministry degree and project. As she has shared with many in the congregation, her studies are focused on how we, as a congregation, can continue to be *invitational, hospitable, nurturing, and welcoming* of all who are a part of Starmount, no matter whether they are coming for the first time or the 1,001st time.

How are we, as a body of Christ, going to sort out what it looks like to be *invitational, hospitable, nurturing, and welcoming*? How is doing those things going to look different at Starmount versus, for example, the Holiday Inn? The simple answer: because they are rooted in our faith.

As a part of her Doctor of Ministry studies, Pastor Kathryn is going to be leading a 6-week bible study through the summer called *Christian Practices of Relationships*. This study, being held on Wednesdays from **June 24 to July 29** inclusive, will be from **6:30-8 pm** in the Fellowship Hall. If you’d like to come for dinner, it will be served from 6-6:30 for $5 per adults (ages 12+), $3 for children (3-11), and free for any younger than 3. The meals will be family-friendly! Childcare will be available during the bible study.

You don’t have to come to all of the sessions, but Pastor Kathryn would love it if you do!

If you have any questions, or to register for the bible studies, please visit the church website or contact Pastor Kathryn directly.
A.2: Bible Study #1 (with Instructor Notes)

**Topic:** Christian Practices (Bible Study #1 of 6)
**Scripture:** Romans 12:1-8 (One Body, Many Members)

"Housekeeping" (Ground Rules, Opening Prayer, and Check In)

**Ground Rules:**
- Leader: Remind everyone gathered that this is a "safe" space for everyone to share and examine their faith deeper - therefore, everything that is shared in the bible study is kept at the bible study. Also remind them, however, that should anything be shared that you (as the leader) think needs follow up, that you will discreetly speak with them afterwards and ask if they need to speak with a pastor.

**Opening Prayer:**
Most good and gracious God, as we gather here to study your Word, may our hearts be open to how the Holy Spirit is working and moving and living and breathing not only in ourselves, but in the group as a whole. Allow what we say to each other through this discussion be pleasing to you. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

**Check In:**
- Go around the circle/table introducing yourself.
- As a means of introduction, share with one another one activity, hobby, or sport you participated in as a child.
- After everyone has shared their name and answered the above question, provide a time for each person to then share a high and low from their week.

**Introductory Questions**
- What is it to practice something?
- Why is practice important?
- Are there reasons why practice isn’t important? Why or why not?
- How often do you need to practice something in order to consider yourself “good” (or an expert) at it?
- What is a Christian Practice?
- How might a Christian Practice need to be practiced?

**Read Scripture**
- Read Romans 12:1-8, (RSV)
- What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
- Read Romans 12:1-8 again, in another translation (preferably "The Message", but NIV, NKJV, or "The Good News" will suffice).
- Did anything different stick out to you about the passage this time? Explain.

What are Christian Practices?
Christian practices are not simply healthy attitudes, life skills, or ways of being nice (although these could be part of a given practice). Christian practices go beyond this. They involve us in the activities of God and link us to other practitioners in the past, the present, and the future. Christian practices invite us into Christ’s radical way of being in the world. They frequently involve resisting how things are ordinarily done in our culture.

A Christian practice is a set of activities Christian people do together over time to address fundamental human needs in the light of and in response to God’s active presence for the life of the world in Jesus Christ.

Each Christian practice:
- involves us in God’s activities in the world and reflects God’s grace and love.
  Teresa of Avila put it this way: “Yours are the eyes through which Christ’s compassion is to look out to the world. Yours are the feet with which Christ is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which Christ is to bless all people now.” (See pages 2 and 11 of Way to Live.)
- is done together—not alone but with others.
  The folks with whom we practice include people we know personally, brothers and sisters around the world, and many people who have come before us or who will come after us. Even when someone is participating in a practice alone, he or she is embraced by this community, which has Jesus at its heart.
- is learned with and from other people.
  We have been invited into Christian practices by Jesus. Almost always, however, other people have helped us to hear Jesus’ invitation and to learn the moves that make it possible to respond. Someone—family, church, mentor, friend—has shared Christ’s love with us by making a specific practice a living reality: for example by welcoming us, by teaching us to make music, or by offering us forgiveness. As we take up our own parts in these practices, we will in turn invite others to join in too.
- comes to us from the past and will be shaped by us for the future.
  Our challenge and privilege are to join in each practice where we are. Often it is not completely clear how to do this, however. So we reflect, drawing on the wisdom of the past (including scripture and history) and being creative as we put the practice into play in our own situation, mindful that what we do will have an influence on generations to come.
- addresses fundamental human needs.
  Each practice addresses one or more needs that are basic to who we are as human beings created in God’s image and offered new life in Christ. When thinking about a practice, it is often helpful to reflect on what really basic part of our humanness is at stake in this practice. This can help us to resist the dubious notions of what we need that are promoted by advertisers and to recognize the true character of human fulfillment.
is thought-full; it relies on beliefs and develops in us certain kinds of wisdom. Christian practices are active and embodied, but that does not mean that they don’t involve our minds! They do. The biblical Story clothes each practice with images and words. In addition, each practice relies on specific Christian beliefs; for example, the belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ gives us hope (Grieving) and allows us to repair torn relationships (Forgiveness). However, belief doesn’t always come before practice: being members of communities where the Christian practices are really lived can help us to understand and embrace the central beliefs of Christian faith more fully.

is done within the church, in the public realm, in daily work, and at home. A Christian practice is not something we do only at church. Each practice takes shape also in the area of social justice, at home, at school, at work, and as a dimension of personal spirituality. Christian practices overlap with the practices of other religious groups at many points, though not in every way.

shapes the people who participate in the practice, as individuals and as communities. When we live Christian practices, we express who we most truly are: beloved children of God. When we live Christian practices, we also learn to see everyone else as a beloved child of God. In the midst of any given practice, we also acquire specific skills and character traits.

comes to a focus in worship. Every Christian worship service involves some practicing of the practices, and a full service that includes Holy Communion gives a taste of all the Way to Live practices. When we worship, we gather up our whole way to live and offer it to God. At the same time, we are prepared to go out once again into a way to live that is deeply shaped by our worshipful encounter with God.

is a strand in a whole way of life. Taken all together, Christian practices add up to a way to live. They are woven together: if one is missing, all are distorted in some way. On the other hand, because they are woven together, any one practice can become a gateway into faithful living. Fortunately, almost everyone has at least a little start on some of the practices, even if he or she does not use these words or think of these practices as related to Christian faith.

Christian Practices are NOT:

• add-ons to life. Teens don’t have to do these in addition to homework and household chores! Instead, a practice is a life-giving way of doing something that is already part of everybody’s life in one way or another.

• ways of showing God, ourselves, or other people how good we are. God already loves us, and we do not make ourselves or others more lovable by scrambling anxiously to be right all the time. Instead, we believe that God is trying to care for teens through these practices, calling them to live a more free and truthful life. Within this way to live, teens get to share God’s love with others too.

• rules or formulas to master. Though practices involve skill, they often require creativity to figure out how to use these skills well in a given situation.
• **an invitation to be “spiritual but not religious.”** Christian practices are rooted in religious communities, even though no particular community has exclusive claim on these practices.

• **do NOT require the use of any code language and do not have some hidden agenda.** Christian practices can be described, interpreted, and lived in a variety of faithful ways.

**Questions about Scripture, Practices, and "Real Life Application"

• In what ways do you see yourself as the body of Christ?

• What about what Christian Practices are do you agree with? Disagree with? Please explain.

• As you think about your day-to-day interactions with others, what are some actions you do that could be considered Christian Practices?

• Is there anything that you think Christian Practices are that wasn’t included on this list?

• Is there anything that you think Christian Practices are NOT that wasn’t listed?

• How do you hope to grow deeper in your faith and understanding of Christian Practices throughout this Bible Study Series? Please explain.

**Closing Prayer**

• Invite someone, should they feel comfortable and Spirit-led, to close the group in prayer.

• Should no one volunteer, provide one of your own or the following:

  Dear God, we are so thankful for your presence in our lives. Allow our hearts to be open to the many ways you call us to be community. Thank you for calling each of us to this Body of Christ, with its many functions. Allow us to be open to your Holy Spirit and its work in our lives. May we continue to understand how all of the Christian Practices in our lives can impact those around as, as well as ourselves. We are confident, God, that your Spirit is at the center of each encounter. In the name of Jesus Christ, the ultimate guest, we pray. Amen.
Christian Practices of Relationships

WEEK 1: CHRISTIAN PRACTICES

“Housekeeping”

- Ground Rules
- Opening Prayer
- Check-In
  - Go around the table introducing yourself, making sure you can address one another by name.
  - As a means of introduction, share with one another one activity, hobby, or sport you participated in as a child.
  - Share a high and low from your week.
Opening questions

- What is it to practice something?
- Why is practice important?
- Are there reasons why practice isn’t important? Why or why not?
- How often do you need to practice something in order to consider yourself “good” (or an expert) at it?
- What is a Christian Practice?
- How might a Christian Practice need to be practiced?

Scripture – Romans 12:1-8 (NRSV)

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4 For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. 6 We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; 7 ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; 8 the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.
Scripture – Romans 12:1-8
(The Message)

1-2 So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Ready to recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

3 I’m speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it’s important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.

Scripture – Romans 12:1-8
(The Message)

4-8 In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we’re talking about is Christ’s body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn’t amount to much, would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ’s body, let’s just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren’t.

4-8 If you preach, just preach God’s Message. nothing else; if you help, just help, don’t take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don’t get bossy; if you’re put in charge, don’t manipulate; if you’re called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don’t let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face.
What are Christian Practices?

- Not simply healthy attitudes, life skills, or ways of being nice
- They involve us in the activities of God and link us to other practitioners in the past, the present, and the future.
- Invite us into Christ’s radical way of being in the world.
- They frequently involve resisting how things are ordinarily done in our culture.
- A set of activities Christian people do together over time to address fundamental human needs in the light of and in response to God’s active presence for the life of the world in Jesus Christ.

What are Christian Practices?

- Involves us in God’s activities in the world and reflects God’s grace and love.
- Is done together—not alone but with others.
- Is learned with and from other people.
- Comes to us from the past and will be shaped by us for the future.
- Addresses fundamental human needs.
What are Christian Practices?

- is thought-full; it relies on beliefs and develops in us certain kinds of wisdom.
- is done within the church, in the public realm, in daily work, and at home.
- shapes the people who participate in the practice, as individuals and as communities.
- comes to a focus in worship.
- is a strand in a whole way of life.

What are Christian Practices NOT?

- add-ons to life.
- ways of showing God, ourselves, or other people how good we are.
- rules or formulas to master.
- an invitation to be “spiritual but not religious.”
- do NOT require the use of any code language and do not have some hidden agenda.
Discussion

- In what ways do you see yourself as the body of Christ?
- As you think about your day-to-day interactions with others, what are some actions you do that could be considered Christian Practices?
- Is there anything that you think Christian Practices are that wasn’t included on this list?
- Is there anything that you think Christian Practices are NOT that wasn’t listed?
- How do you hope to grow deeper in your faith and understanding of Christian Practices throughout this Bible Study Series? Please explain.

What’s Next?

- Doctor of Ministry Project
- Weekly Survey
- Follow Up Survey
- Informed Consent

PLEASE NOTE: YOU DO NOT HAVE TO CONSENT NOR COMPLETE THE SURVEYS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE BIBLE STUDY.
CLOSING

- Prayer Concerns
- Closing Prayer

Dear God, we are so thankful for your presence in our lives. Allow our hearts to be open to the many ways you call us to be community. Thank you for calling each of us to this Body of Christ, with its many functions. Allow us to be open to your Holy Spirit and its work in our lives. May we continue to understand how all of the Christian Practices in our lives can impact those around us, as well as ourselves. We are confident, God, that your Spirit is at the center of each encounter. In the name of Jesus Christ, the ultimate guest, we pray. Amen.
A.4: Bible Study #2

**Topic:** Invitation (Bible Study #2 of 6)
**Scripture:** Luke 14:15-24 (Parable of the Dinner Guests)

"Housekeeping" (Ground Rules, Opening Prayer, and Check In)

**Ground Rules:**
- Leader: Remind everyone gathered that this is a "safe" space for everyone to share and examine their faith deeper - therefore, everything that is shared in the bible study is kept at the bible study. Also remind them, however, that should anything be shared that you (as the leader) think needs follow up, that you will discretely speak with them afterwards and ask if they need to speak with a pastor.

**Opening Prayer:**
Most good and gracious God, as we gather here to study your Word, may our hearts be open to how the Holy Spirit is working and moving and living and breathing not only in ourselves, but in the group as a whole. Allow what we say to each other through this discussion be pleasing to you. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

**Check In:**
- Go around the circle/table introducing yourself.
- As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and the most unique event you've ever been invited to.
- After everyone has shared their name and answered the above question, provide a time for each person to then share a high and low from their week.

**Introductory Questions**
- What is "invitation"? How do you define it?
- What does it mean to "invite" someone to something? Can there be more than one way to do so?
- What are some obstacles you have to inviting someone to something you're going to? What about, more specifically, to church worship or a church event?
- What does it mean to you, emotionally, to be invited to something?

**Read Scripture**
- Read Luke 14:15-24. (NRSV)
- What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
- When knowing that the topic of this bible study is "invitation", what do you hear about that topic in this passage?
Questions about Scripture and "Real Life Application"

- How credible are the invited guests' excuses for not coming? (14:18-20) Who do the invited guests in the parable represent?
- Have you ever been able to tell when an excuse that someone gives you for not accepting an invitation is false? How does that make you feel?
- Why is the host angry? (14:21)
- Have you ever been angry when invitations are not accepted? Why or why not?
- The host commands his servant to invite the poor and outcast both inside the town and outside in the rural areas. Who do these two groups probably represent?
- Why is the host urgent about his invitation in verses 21-23?
- What kinds of feelings would go through you if you had planned an extra-special banquet and your guests gave excuses why they could not come?
- What was one of the more recent special occasions to which you were invited? Why did you go or not go?
- How did being invited make you feel?
- As you look back through your life, what are one or two different ways God has given you invitations? How did you respond to His invitations?
- Are those invitations which God has given different than invitations you receive from those around you? Why or why not?
- Does this passage make you think differently about inviting people to church or a church event? Why or why not?
- Put yourself in the shoes of the invitee? Can an invitation seem "threatening" or "intimidating"? Why or why not?
- What are different ways we can invite someone that do not appear that way?

Closing Prayer

- Invite someone, should they feel comfortable and Spirit-led, to close the group in prayer.
- Should no one volunteer, provide one of your own or the following:

Dear God, you provide us with invitations every day. May our hearts be open to them. May we, through those invitations, be willing to invite others to understand the overflowing love you have for us. Whether it be to grab a cup of coffee or to come to worship, may our invitations be extended with your Spirit and love in mind, so that we may continue to see each other like you see us. For we ask all of this in Jesus' name. Amen.
Christian Practices of Relationships

WEEK 2: INVITATION

“Housekeeping”

- Ground Rules
- Opening Prayer
- Check-in
  - Go around the table introducing yourself, making sure you can address one another by name.
  - As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and the most unique event you’ve ever been invited to.
  - Share a high and low from your week.
Opening questions

- What is "Invitation"? How do you define it?
- What does it mean to "invite" someone to something? Can there be more than one way to do so?
- What are some obstacles you have to inviting someone to something you're going to?
  - What about, more specifically, to church worship or a church event?
- What does it mean to you, emotionally, to be invited to something?

Thinking about the Passage

- What sticks out to you about the passage?
- When knowing that the topic of this bible study is "Invitation", what do you hear about that topic in this passage?
Scripture – Luke 14:15-24 (NRSV)

16 One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, “Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!” 17 Then Jesus said to him, “Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. 18 At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, “Come; for everything is ready now.” 19 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, “I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my apologies.” 20 Another said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my apologies.” 21 Another said, “I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.” 22 So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, “Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.” 23 And the slave said, “Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.” 24 Then the master said to the slave, “Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. 25 For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.”

Thinking about the Passage

- What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
- When knowing that the topic of this bible study is "Invitation", what do you hear about that topic in this passage?
Discussion

- If you were in the host’s shoes, how credible are the invited guests’ excuses for not coming? (14:18-20) Who do the invited guests in the parable represent to you?

18 "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my apologies." 19 Another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my apologies." 20 Another said, "I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come."

- Have you ever been able to tell when an excuse that someone gives you for not accepting an invitation is false? How does that make you feel? Is there anything that you can do about it?

- Have you ever been the person giving the excuse? Why?

Discussion

- Why is the host angry? (14:21)

21 "So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, "Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame."

- Have you ever been angry when invitations are not accepted? Why or why not?

- The host commands his servant to invite the poor and outcast both inside the town and outside in the rural areas. Who do these two groups probably represent?
Discussion

- Why is the host urgent about his invitation in verses 21-23?
  21 So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, “Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.” 22 And the slave said, “Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.” 23 Then the master said to the slave, “Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled.

- What kinds of feelings would go through you if you had planned an extra-special banquet and your guests gave excuses why they could not come?

Discussion

- What was one of the more recent special occasions to which you were invited? Why did you go or not go?
- How did being invited make you feel?
- As you look back through your life, what are one or two different ways God has given you invitations? How did you respond to His invitations?
- Are those invitations which God has given different than invitations you receive from those around you? Why or why not?
- Does this passage make you think differently about inviting people to church or a church event? Why or why not?
- Put yourself in the shoes of the invitee. Can an invitation seem “threatening” or “intimidating”? Why or why not?
- What are different ways we can invite someone that do not appear to be “threatening” or “intimidating”? 
What’s Next?

- Doctor of Ministry Project
- Informed Consent
- Weekly Survey
- Follow Up Survey

PLEASE NOTE: YOU DO NOT HAVE TO CONSENT NOR COMPLETE THE SURVEYS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE BIBLE STUDY.

CLOSING

- Prayer Concerns
- Closing Prayer

Dear God, you provide us with invitations every day. May our hearts be open to them. May we, through those invitations, be willing to invite others to understand the overflowing love you have for us. Whether it be to grab a cup of coffee or to come to worship, may our invitations be extended with your Spirit and love in mind, so that we may continue to see each other like you see us. For we ask all of this in Jesus’ name. Amen.
A.6: Bible Study #3

**Topic:** Hospitality (Bible Study #3 of 6)

**Scripture:** Luke 10:38-42 (Mary and Martha)

"Housekeeping" (Ground Rules, Opening Prayer, and Check In)

**Ground Rules:**
- Leader: Remind everyone gathered that this is a "safe" space for everyone to share and examine their faith deeper - therefore, everything that is shared in the bible study is kept at the bible study. Also remind them, however, that should anything be shared that you (as the leader) think needs follow up, that you will discretely speak with them afterwards and ask if they need to speak with a pastor.

**Opening Prayer:**
Most good and gracious God, as we gather here to study your Word, may our hearts be open to how the Holy Spirit is working and moving and living and breathing not only in ourselves, but in the group as a whole. Allow what we say to each other through this discussion be pleasing to you. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

**Check In:**
- Go around the circle/table introducing yourself.
- As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and your most favorite and least favorite chore to do around the house.
- After everyone has shared their name and answered the above question, provide a time for each person to then share a high and low from their week.

**Introductory Questions**
- What is "hospitality"? How do you define it?
- What makes someone "hospitable"?
- What makes somewhere "hospitable"?
- Do you practice hospitality easily, or is it difficult? Discuss what factors make it easy or difficult for you.
- What is the greatest act of hospitality you have ever shown? Did you receive anything from this experience?

**Read Scripture**
- Read Luke 10:38-42. (NRSV)
- What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
- Did anything different stick out to you about the passage this time? Explain.
Questions about Scripture and "Real Life Application"

- Two types of hospitality are provided in this passage. Can anyone identify them? (one provides hospitality by putting guest first; one works to provide the home they think the guest wants, including food, drink, place to sleep)
- What type of hospitality are you more comfortable with providing for a guest? Explain.
- Do you know anyone like Martha? Share the things you like about her. Is there anything you don’t like?
- Do you know anyone like Mary? Share the things you like about her. Is there anything you don’t like?
- Who are you most like—Martha or Mary? Why?
- How can you be more like the other in your day to day life?
- In what ways do you sometimes find yourself busy, upset, and troubled like Martha?
- What patterns and practices could you institute in your daily life that would make you more like Mary?
- Return to Luke 10:41. What was it Mary choose that was "better"?
- Was what Martha did wrong? Why or why not?
- What is risky about hospitality? What is inconvenient?
- (Referencing the two types of hospitality from above:) Is one type of hospitality "right"?
- Does this passage and this conversation make you think any differently about hospitality? About how you extend hospitality to guests in your home? What about how you extend hospitality to guests at church (both worship and at church functions)?
- How might God be present for you as you extend yourself in creating hospitality for another, whether in your home or at church?

Closing Prayer

- Invite someone, should they feel comfortable and Spirit-led, to close the group in prayer.
- Should no one volunteer, provide one of your own or the following:

  Dear God, the Ultimate Host, thank you for providing us with grace. Despite all we have on our plates that keeps us extremely busy like Martha, provide us with the space to breathe and rest at your feet like Mary. May we extend hospitality in all of the ways we know how, continually being pushed to show both Mary- and Martha-like gifts when we do. Allow us to go from this place challenging ourselves to live in both hospitable realms. For we ask all of this in Jesus’ name. Amen.
Christian Practices of Relationships

WEEK 2: INVITATION

“Housekeeping”

- Ground Rules
- Opening Prayer
- Check-in
  - Go around the table introducing yourself, making sure you can address one another by name.
  - As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and the most unique event you’ve ever been invited to.
  - Share a high and low from your week.
Opening questions

► What is “invitation”? How do you define it?
► What does it mean to “invite” someone to something? Can there be more than one way to do so?
► What are some obstacles you have to inviting someone to something you’re going to?
  ► What about, more specifically, to church worship or a church event?
► What does it mean to you, emotionally, to be invited to something?

Thinking about the Passage

► What sticks out to you about the passage?
► When knowing that the topic of this bible study is “invitation”, what do you hear about that topic in this passage?
Scripture – Luke 14:15-24 (NRSV)

16 One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, “Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!” 
18Then Jesus said to him, “Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. 
19At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, “Come; for everything is ready now.” 
20But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, “I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my apologies.” 
21Another said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my apologies.” 
22Another said, “I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.” 
23So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, “Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.” 
24And the slave said, “Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.” 
25Then the master said to the slave, “Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled.” 
26For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.”

Thinking about the Passage

- What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
- When knowing that the topic of this bible study is "invitation", what do you hear about that topic in this passage?
Discussion

- If you were in the host’s shoes, how credible are the invited guests’ excuses for not coming? (14:18-20) Who do the invited guests in the parable represent to you?

  18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, “I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my apologies.” 19 Another said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my apologies.” 20 Another said, “I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.”

- Have you ever been able to tell when an excuse that someone gives you for not accepting an invitation is false? How does that make you feel? Is there anything that you can do about it?

- Have you ever been the person giving the excuse? Why?

Discussion

- Why is the host angry? (14:21)

  21 So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, “Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.”

- Have you ever been angry when invitations are not accepted? Why or why not?

- The host commands his servant to invite the poor and outcast both inside the town and outside in the rural areas. Who do these two groups probably represent?
Discussion

- Why is the host urgent about his invitation in verses 21-23?

21 So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, “Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.” 22 And the slave said, “Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.” 23 Then the master said to the slave, “Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled.

- What kinds of feelings would go through you if you had planned an extra-special banquet and your guests gave excuses why they could not come?

Discussion

- What was one of the more recent special occasions to which you were invited? Why did you go or not go?
- How did being invited make you feel?
- As you look back through your life, what are one or two different ways God has given you invitations? How did you respond to His invitations?
- Are those invitations which God has given different than invitations you receive from those around you? Why or why not?
- Does this passage make you think differently about inviting people to church or a church event? Why or why not?
- Put yourself in the shoes of the invitee. Can an invitation seem “threatening” or “intimidating”? Why or why not?
- What are different ways we can invite someone that do not appear to be “threatening” or “intimidating”?

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What’s Next?

- Doctor of Ministry Project
- Informed Consent
- Weekly Survey
- Follow Up Survey

PLEASE NOTE: YOU DO NOT HAVE TO CONSENT NOR COMPLETE THE SURVEYS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE BIBLE STUDY.

CLOSING

- Prayer Concerns
- Closing Prayer

Dear God, you provide us with invitations every day. May our hearts be open to them. May we, through those invitations, be willing to invite others to understand the overflowing love you have for us. Whether it be to grab a cup of coffee or to come to worship, may our invitations be extended with your Spirit and love in mind, so that we may continue to see each other like you see us. For we ask all of this in Jesus’ name. Amen.
A.8: Bible Study #4

**Topic:** Nurture (Bible Study #4 of 6)

**Scripture:** Luke 10:25-37 (The Parable of the Good Samaritan)

"Housekeeping" (Ground Rules, Opening Prayer, and Check In)

**Ground Rules:**
- Leader: Remind everyone gathered that this is a "safe" space for everyone to share and examine their faith deeper - therefore, everything that is shared in the bible study is kept at the bible study. Also remind them, however, that should anything be shared that you (as the leader) think needs follow up, that you will discretely speak with them afterwards and ask if they need to speak with a pastor.

**Opening Prayer:**
Most good and gracious God, as we gather here to study your Word, may our hearts be open to how the Holy Spirit is working and moving and living and breathing not only in ourselves, but in the group as a whole. Allow what we say to each other through this discussion be pleasing to you. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

**Check In:**
- Go around the circle/table introducing yourself.
- As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and your most favorite comfort food, briefly telling you why it is your favorite and how it makes you feel when you eat it.
- After everyone has shared their name and answered the above question, provide a time for each person to then share a high and low from their week.

**Introductory Questions**
- What is "nurture"? How do you define it?
- "Nurture" is both a noun and a verb: does its definition or meaning change for you when thought of as a noun? As a verb? Why or why not?
- What are different "things" you can nurture?

**Read Scripture**
- Read Luke 10:25-37. (NRSV)
- What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
- Many of you have heard this story before. Did anything new and different stick out to you this time as you heard it? Why or why not?
Questions about Scripture and "Real Life Application"
• In what ways did the Samaritan help the victim?
• Based on our earlier conversation, would you consider what the Samaritan did as "nurturing"? Why or why not? Explain.
• Based on the passage, would you add any other definitions for the word?
• What resonates most with you about the story of the Good Samaritan?
• How are we tempted to refuse compassion out of personal security?
• Based on this conversation, how might you nurture those around you in a new and different way?
• Why is it difficult sometimes to nurture relationships with others?
• In today's society of "me" and "I", what emotions can stir inside when providing nurture to someone else?
• What are some ways you might nurture the relationships of those whom you consider to be very close? Your family? Your friends?
• Think about one or two people in your congregation that you don't know as well. How might you nurture those relationships? Would you even want to? Explain.
• How can we all express more compassion and care for one another?

Closing Prayer
• Invite someone, should they feel comfortable and Spirit-led, to close the group in prayer.
• Should no one volunteer, provide one of your own or the following:
  Dear God, the Ultimate Nurturer, thank you for providing us with all we need. As we continue to be in relationship with one another, may we be sensitive to the needs of more than just "me". Open our hearts to your presence in our lives. May your Spirit be awakened in us, stirring our hearts to be aware of what others need just as much, if not more so, than what we do for ourselves. Allow us to be like the Samaritan, providing support for those we encounter on the sides of the roads in our daily lives. For we ask this in your Son's name. Amen.
Christian Practices of Relationships

WEEK 4: NURTURE

“Housekeeping”

▶ Ground Rules
▶ Opening Prayer
▶ Check-in
  ▶ Go around the table introducing yourself.
  ▶ As a means of introduction, tell everyone your most favorite comfort food, briefly telling you why it is your favorite and how it makes you feel when you eat it.
Opening questions

► What is "nurture"? How do you define it?
► "Nurture" is both a noun and a verb: does its definition or meaning change for you when thought of as a noun? As a verb? Why or why not?
► What are different "things" you can nurture?

Thinking about the Passage

► What sticks out to you about the passage?
► When knowing that the topic of this bible study is "nurture", what do you hear about that topic in this passage?
► Many of you have heard this story before. Does anything new and different stick out to you this time as you hear it?
25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus, ‘Teacher,’ he said, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ 26 He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? What do you read there?’ 27 He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.’ 28 And he said to him, ‘You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.’ 29 But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’ 30 Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.” 36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” 37 He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’
Thinking about the Passage

► What sticks out to you about the passage?
► When knowing that the topic of this bible study is “nurture”, what do you hear about that topic in this passage?
► Many of you have heard this story before. Does anything new and different stick out to you this time as you hear it? Why or why not?


25 Just then a religion scholar stood up with a question to test Jesus. “Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?”
26 He answered, “What’s written in God’s Law? How do you interpret it?”
27 He said, “That you love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence—and that you love your neighbor as well as you do yourself.”
28 “Good answer!” said Jesus. “Do it and you’ll live."
29 Looking for a loophole, he asked, “And just how would you define ‘neighbor’?"
30-32 Jesus answered by telling a story. “There was once a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and went off leaving him half-dead.

Luckily, a priest was on his way down the same road, but when he saw
him he anguished across to the other side. Then a Levite religious man
showed up; he also avoided the injured man.

33-35 ‘A Samaritan traveling the road came on him. When he saw the
man’s condition, his heart went out to him. He gave him first aid,
disinfecting and bandaging his wounds. Then he lifted him onto his
donkey, led him to an inn, and made him comfortable. In the morning
he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying,
‘Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I’ll pay
you on my way back.’

36 ‘What do you think? Which of the three became a neighbor to the
man attacked by robbers?’

37 ‘The one who treated him kindly,’ the religion scholar responded.
Jesus said, ‘Go and do the same.’

Thinking about the Passage

▶ What sticks out to you about the passage?
▶ When knowing that the topic of this bible study is
  “nurture”, what do you hear about that topic in this
  passage?
▶ Many of you have heard this story before. Does
  anything new and different stick out to you this
  time as you hear it? Why or why not?
Discussion

Thinking about the passage:

► In what ways did the Samaritan help the victim?
► Based on our earlier conversation, would you consider what the Samaritan did as "nurturing"? Why or why not? Explain.
► Based on the passage, would you add any other definitions for the word?
► What resonates most with you about the story of the Good Samaritan?

Discussion

Thinking about “Real Life”:

► How are we tempted to refuse compassion out of personal security?
► Based on this conversation, how might you nurture those around you in a new and different way?
► Why is it difficult sometimes to foster relationships with others?
► In today’s society of “me” and “I”, what emotions can stir inside when providing nurture to someone else?
► What are some ways you might nurture the relationships of those whom you consider to be very close? Your family? Your friends?
► Think about one or two people in your congregation that you don’t know as well. How might you nurture those relationships? Would you even want to? Explain.
► How can we all express more compassion and care for one another?
What's Next?

- Doctor of Ministry Project
- Informed Consent
- Weekly Survey
- Follow Up Survey

PLEASE NOTE: YOU DO NOT HAVE TO CONSENT NOR COMPLETE THE SURVEYS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE BIBLE STUDY.

CLOSING

- Prayer Concerns
- Closing Prayer

Dear God, the Ultimate Nurturer, thank you for providing us with all we need. As we continue to be in relationship with one another, may we be sensitive to the needs of more than just "me". Open our hearts to your presence in our lives. May your Spirit be awakened in us, stirring our hearts to be aware of what others need just as much, if not more so, than what we do for ourselves. Allow us to be like the Samaritan, providing support for those we encounter on the sides of the roads in our daily lives. For we ask this in your Son's name. Amen.
A.10: Bible Study #5

Topic: Welcome (Bible Study #5 of 6)
Scripture: Luke 15:11-32 (The Prodigal Son)

"Housekeeping" (Ground Rules, Opening Prayer, and Check In)

Ground Rules:
• Leader: Remind everyone gathered that this is a "safe" space for everyone to share and examine their faith deeper - therefore, everything that is shared in the bible study is kept at the bible study. Also remind them, however, that should anything be shared that you (as the leader) think needs follow up, that you will discretely speak with them afterwards and ask if they need to speak with a pastor.

Opening Prayer:
Most good and gracious God, as we gather here to study your Word, may our hearts be open to how the Holy Spirit is working and moving and living and breathing not only in ourselves, but in the group as a whole. Allow what we say to each other through this discussion be pleasing to you. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

Check In:
• Go around the circle/table introducing yourself.
• As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and (briefly) one bad travel experience.
• After everyone has shared their name and answered the above question, provide a time for each person to then share a high and low from their week.

Introductory Questions
• What comes to mind when you hear the word "welcome"?
• What is the definition of the word "welcome" to you?
• Does the definition change when you think of the word as a verb vs. a noun? Why or why not?
• What does it mean if someone makes you feel "welcome"?
• How does being "welcomed" make you feel?
• For you, what is a simple way for someone to make you feel "welcome" when you are new to a place?

Read Scripture
• Read Luke 15:11-32. (NRSV)
• What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
• Many of you have heard this story before. Is there something new that stuck out to you in hearing it this time? If so, what was it?
Questions about Scripture and "Real Life Application"

- Think back to one of the first times you left home for a short period of time. Why did you leave home? How did people respond when you came back?
- When thinking about "welcomed", how do you think the younger son felt to be welcomed that way by his father? How do you think the father felt in seeing (and welcoming) the son home?
- What concerns did the younger son have about going home? Do you think he still had the same concerns upon the welcome by his father?
- When he returns, how does his father greet him – with anger? with "I told you so"? with love?
- What does the father do to make the son feel at home and welcomed?
- Look at the father’s reaction in verse 20. What clues do you find that show the father has been waiting for his son’s return? (“But while he was still far off, his father saw him . . .”) In verses 20-24, what strong, emotional words do you see that describe an extravagant welcome? What did the son do to deserve such a wonderful welcome? Why did the father welcome him like this?
- Imagine yourself as a first time guest at a new place, like going to a new church. What concerns do you have as you pull into the parking lot? (Do you even make it to the parking lot? Have your concerns disallowed you from going at all?)
  - How can we, as church members, welcome each guest like the father, making each person feel like the younger son returning home?

Closing Prayer

- Invite someone, should they feel comfortable and Spirit-led, to close the group in prayer.
- Should no one volunteer, provide one of your own or the following:
  Most good and gracious God, thank you for this conversation we have just concluded. We also give you thanks that you are always there for us with your arms outstretched wide to welcome us back. May we continue to greet all we encounter with love in our hearts and a spirit of welcome that makes everyone feel like they, too, are home. For it is in Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.
Christian Practices of Relationships

WEEK 5: WELCOME

“Housekeeping”

- Ground Rules
- Opening Prayer
- Check-in
  - Go around the circle/table introducing yourself.
  - As a means of introduction, tell everyone (briefly) about one bad travel experience.
Opening questions

► What comes to mind when you hear the word "welcome"?
► What is the definition of the word "welcome" to you?
► Does the definition change when you think of the word as a verb vs. a noun? Why or why not?
► What does it mean if someone makes you feel "welcome"?
► How does being "welcomed" make you feel?
► For you, what is a simple way for someone to make you feel "welcome" when you are new to a place?

Thinking about the Passage

► What sticks out to you about the passage?
► When knowing that the topic of this bible study is "welcome", what do you hear about that topic in this passage?
► Many of you have heard this story before. Does anything new and different stick out to you this time as you hear it?
11 Then Jesus said, ‘There was a man who had two sons. 12The younger of them said to his father, “Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.” So he divided his property between them. 13A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. 14When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. 15So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. 17But when he came to himself he said, “How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger!

19I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.’ ” 20So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21Then the son said to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.” 22But the father said to his slaves, “Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23And get the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!” And they began to celebrate.
Scripture – Luke 15:11-32 (NRSV)

25 ‘Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. 27He replied, “Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.” 28Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29But he answered his father, “Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!” 31Then the father said to him, “Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.”

Thinking about the Passage

► What sticks out to you about the passage?
► When knowing that the topic of this bible study is “welcome”, what do you hear about that topic in this passage?
► Many of you have heard this story before. Does anything new and different stick out to you this time as you hear it? Why or why not?
11-12 Then he said, ‘There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, ‘Father, I want right now what’s coming to me.’
12-16 “So the father divided the property between them. It wasn’t long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to hurt. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncocks in the pig slop, but no one would give him any.

17-20 “That brought him to his senses. He said, ‘All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I’m going back to my father. I’ll say to him, Father, I’ve sinned against God, I’ve sinned before you; I don’t deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand.’ He got right up and went home to his father.
20-21 “When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: ‘Father, I’ve sinned against God, I’ve sinned before you; I don’t deserve to be called your son ever again.’
22-24 “But the father wasn’t listening. He was calling to the servants, ‘Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a grain-fed heifer and roast it. We’re going to feast! We’re going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!’ And they began to have a wonderful time.

25-27 “All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day’s work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on. He told him, ‘Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast—barbecued beef!—because he has him home safe and sound.’

26-30 “The older brother stalked off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn’t listen. The son said, ‘Look how many years I’ve stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!’

31-32 “His father said, ‘Son, you don’t understand. You’re with me all the time, and everything that is mine is yours—but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he’s alive! He was lost, and he’s found!’"
Thinking about the Passage

- What sticks out to you about the passage?
- When knowing that the topic of this bible study is “welcome”, what do you hear about that topic in this passage?
- Many of you have heard this story before. Does anything new and different stick out to you this time as you hear it? Why or why not?

Discussion

Thinking about the passage:

- When thinking about “welcomed”, how do you think the younger son felt to be welcomed that way by his father? How do you think the father felt in seeing (and welcoming) the son home?
- What concerns did the younger son have about going home? Do you think he still had the same concerns upon the welcome by his father?
- When he returns, how does his father greet him – with anger? with “I told you so”? with love?
- What does the father do to make the son feel at home and welcomed?
- Look at the father’s reaction in verse 20. What clues do you find that show the father has been waiting for his son’s return? In verses 20-24, what strong, emotional words do you see that describe an extravagant welcome? What did the son do to deserve such a wonderful welcome? Why did the father welcome him like this?
Discussion

Thinking about “Real Life”:

- Think back to one of the first times you left home for a short period of time. Why did you leave home? How did people respond when you came back?
- Imagine yourself as a first time guest at a new place, like going to a new church. What concerns do you have as you pull into the parking lot? (Do you even make it to the parking lot? Have your concerns disallowed you from going at all?)
- How can we, as church members, welcome each guest like the father, making each person feel like the younger son returning home?

What’s Next?

- Doctor of Ministry Project
- Informed Consent
- Weekly Survey
- Follow Up Survey

PLEASE NOTE: YOU DO NOT HAVE TO CONSENT NOR COMPLETE THE SURVEYS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE BIBLE STUDY.
CLOSING

- Prayer Concerns
- Closing Prayer

Most good and gracious God, thank you for this conversation we have just concluded. We also give you thanks that you are always there for us with your arms outstretched wide to welcome us back. May we continue to greet all we encounter with love in our hearts and a spirit of welcome that makes everyone feel like they, too, are home. For it is in Jesus’ name we ask it. Amen.
A.12: Bible Study #6

Topic: Evangelism (Bible Study #6 of 6)

Note: The other bible studies in this series (invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome) can be done in any order. This bible study, however, is intended to be the last in the series, since some of the discussion questions below feed off of what participants have learned in the previous weeks about how those "virtues" are defined and what they mean to them.

Scripture: Genesis 18:1-8 (Abraham and Sarah Have Guests)

"Housekeeping" (Ground Rules, Opening Prayer, and Check In)

Ground Rules:
• Leader: Remind everyone gathered that this is a "safe" space for everyone to share and examine their faith deeper - therefore, everything that is shared in the bible study is kept at the bible study. Also remind them, however, that should anything be shared that you (as the leader) think needs follow up, that you will discretely speak with them afterwards and ask if they need to speak with a pastor.

Opening Prayer:
Most good and gracious God, as we gather here to study your Word, may our hearts be open to how the Holy Spirit is working and moving and living and breathing not only in ourselves, but in the group as a whole. Allow what we say to each other through this discussion be pleasing to you. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

Check In:
• Go around the circle/table introducing yourself.
• As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and your most favorite Halloween costume as a kid.
• After everyone has shared their name and answered the above question, provide a time for each person to then share a high and low from their week.

Introductory Questions
• What do you think of when you hear the word "evangelism"?
• How do you define the term?
• (Depending on how the conversation leads depends on how this question is phrased:)
  • Why does the term "evangelism" get such a bad rep?
  • Why is being an "evangelist" seen as a negative in so many places these days?
• Let's review from the previous four week's bible studies. Go around the circle/table taking turns reminding each other what the terms "invitation", "hospitality", "nurture", and "welcome" mean. Since discussing each of those terms, have you given any more thought to what those terms mean? If you have any new definitions to share, please do so.
• Can each of the four terms (invitation, hospitality, nurture, welcome) find a "home" within the term "evangelism"? Why or why not? If so, how? Explain.
Read Scripture
• Read Genesis 18:1-8. (NRSV)
• What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
• Read Genesis 18:1-8 again, in another translation (preferably "The Message", but NIV, NKJV, or "The Good News" will suffice).
• Did anything different stick out to you about the passage this time? Explain.

Questions about Scripture and "Real Life Application"
• Who are the characters in the passage? Do they represent anyone or anything in particular?
• What did Abraham do for the three men who came to him?
• How did Abraham show hospitality to the guests? Notice the verbs and adverbs that describe Abraham's actions, the participation of his household in serving, and the content of the meal. What does this event show about Abraham and his family?
• What elements of hospitality does Abraham show even to visiting strangers?
• Based on your earlier conversation, in what ways, if any, is Abraham being an evangelist?
• Which of the four "virtues" (invitation, hospitality, nurture, welcome) did Abraham extend to their guests? Specifically identify what he did for each virtue identified.
• Why is it important for Christians to welcome strangers? Is it something that is easy to do? Why or why not?
• What is our response to the opportunity to serve our God as evangelists? Are we enthusiastic, giving God our best?

Evangelism, in this case, is important to think about in regards to the relationships we build, one with another. If we invite people into our lives, provide welcome and hospitality to them when we encounter them, and nurture relationships with them, then chances are great that they will want to learn more about us and what makes us "tick". This could not only include what we do and more about us, but also what is important in our lives, including where we worship. By creating a true and authentic relationship with the other, you are extending Christlike love to them, seeing them as God sees them.
• How can you develop deeper, more authentic relationships with those already in your close circle of friends?
• Should we encounter strangers (or not-as-well-known acquaintances) in the same way we encounter our friends and family? Why or why not?
• Describing friendly people sometimes, the phrase "s/he's never met a stranger" can be used. When thinking about evangelism in terms of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome, does this phrase take on new or different meaning? Can this phrase be helpful when encountering those you don't know?
• How can you take what you've learned during the conversations over these last five weeks and apply it to those we encounter on a day-to-day basis?
Closing Prayer
• Invite someone, should they feel comfortable and Spirit-led, to close the group in prayer.
• Should no one volunteer, provide one of your own or the following:
  Dear God, we are so thankful for your presence in our lives. Allow our hearts to be open to those we don't know. Encourage us to invite someone new into our lives, providing a safe space to learn more about you, allowing them a space at the feast. When they come, may we welcome them with the same open arms that the father welcomed his son home with. May we nurture their spirits and souls with a heart generous like the Samaritan's. May we provide them hospitality like Martha - being attentive to their needs - and Mary - keen on all they have to say. We are confident, God, that your Spirit is at the center of each encounter. In the name of Jesus Christ, the ultimate guest, we pray. Amen.
Christian Practices of Relationships

WEEK 5: EVANGELISM

“Housekeeping”

- Ground Rules
- Opening Prayer
- Check-in
  - Go around the circle/table introducing yourself.
  - As a means of introduction, tell everyone your most favorite Halloween costume as a kid.
Opening questions

► What do you think of when you hear the word “evangelism”?
► How do you define the term?
  ► Why does the term “evangelism” get such a bad rep?
  ► Why is being an “evangelist” seen as a negative in so many places these days?
► Let’s review from the previous four week’s bible studies. Go around the circle/table taking turns reminding each other what the terms “invitation”, “hospitality”, “nurture”, and “welcome” mean. Since discussing each of those terms, have you given any more thought to what those terms mean? If you have any new definitions to share, please do so.
► Can each of the four terms (invitation, hospitality, nurture, welcome) find a “home” within the term “evangelism”? Why or why not? If so, how? Explain.

Thinking about the Passage

► What sticks out to you about the passage?
► When knowing that the topic of this bible study is “evangelism”, what do you hear about that topic in this passage?
Scripture – Genesis 18:1-8 (NRSV)

The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. 2 He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. 3 He said, ‘My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. 4 Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. 5 Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.’ So they said, ‘Do as you have said.’ 6 And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, ‘Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.’ 7 Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. 8 Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

Thinking about the Passage

► What sticks out to you about the passage?
► When knowing that the topic of this bible study is “evangelism”, what do you hear about that topic in this passage?
Scripture – Genesis 18:1-8 (The Message)

1-2 GOD appeared to Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance of his tent. It was the hottest part of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing. He ran from his tent to greet them and bowed before them.

3-5 He said, “Master, if it please you, stop for a while with your servant. I’ll get some water so you can wash your feet. Rest under this tree. I’ll get some food to refresh you on your way, since your travels have brought you across my path.”

They said, “Certainly. Go ahead.”

6 Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. He said, “Hurry. Get three cups of our best flour; knead it and make bread.”

7-8 Then Abraham ran to the cattle pen and picked out a nice plump calf and gave it to the servant who lost no time getting it ready. Then he got curds and milk, brought them with the calf that had been roasted, set the meal before the men, and stood there under the tree while they ate.

Thinking about the Passage

▸ What sticks out to you about the passage?
▸ When knowing that the topic of this bible study is “evangelism”, what do you hear about that topic in this passage?
Discussion

Thinking about the passage:

- Who are the characters in the passage? Do they represent anyone or anything in particular?
- What did Abraham do for the three men who came to him?
- How did Abraham show hospitality to the guests? Notice the verbs and adverbs that describe Abraham’s actions, the participation of his household in serving, and the content of the meal. What does this event show about Abraham and his family?
- What elements of hospitality does Abraham show even to visiting strangers?
- Based on your earlier conversation, in what ways, if any, is Abraham being an evangelist?
- Which of the four Christian practices (invitation, hospitality, nurture, welcome) did Abraham extend to their guests? Specifically identify what he did for each practice identified.
Discussion
Thinking about “Real Life”:

- Why is it important for Christians to welcome strangers? Is it something that is easy to do? Why or why not?
- What is our response to the opportunity to serve our God as evangelists? Are we enthusiastic, giving God our best?
- How can you develop deeper, more authentic relationships with those already in your close cicle of friends?
- Should we encounter strangers (or not-as-well-known acquaintances) in the same way we encounter our friends and family? Why or why not?
- Describing friendly people sometimes, the phrase “s/he’s never met a stranger” can be used. When thinking about evangelism in terms of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome, does this phrase take on new or different meaning? Can this phrase be helpful when encountering those you don’t know?
- How can you take what you’ve learned during the conversations over these last six weeks and apply it to those we encounter on a day-to-day basis?

What’s Next?

- Doctor of Ministry Project
- Informed Consent
- Weekly Survey
- Follow Up Survey

PLEASE NOTE: YOU DO NOT HAVE TO CONSENT NOR COMPLETE THE SURVEYS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE BIBLE STUDY.
CLOSING

- Prayer Concerns
- Closing Prayer

Dear God, we are so thankful for your presence in our lives. Allow our hearts to be open to those we don’t know. Encourage us to invite someone new into our lives, providing a safe space to learn more about you, allowing them a space at the feast. When they come, may we welcome them with the same open arms that the father welcomed his son home with. May we nurture their spirits and souls with a heart generous like the Samaritan’s. May we provide them hospitality like Martha - being attentive to their needs - and Mary - keen on all they have to say. We are confident, God, that your Spirit is at the center of each encounter. In the name of Jesus Christ, the ultimate guest, we pray. Amen.
A.14: Follow-Up Letter

October 5, 2015

Thank you SO MUCH for participating in the summer bible study. The Summer weather quickly changed to Fall – I pray that what you learned during the bible study did not escape you at that same pace. In fact, just the opposite: I pray that you were able to grow deeper in your faith by quickly putting the spiritual practices to work.

Although slightly delayed, this follow-up survey is to have you reflect for a few moments on how you have been putting what you learned and reflected on during those bible study sessions to practice. In what ways have you found yourself being invitational, hospitable, nurturing, and welcoming, all through the lens of “doing” evangelism through relationship building?

I ask that you take a few minutes to complete the survey included with this letter and return it to me by October 22nd. You may drop it by my office, leave it in my mailbox in the workroom, or use the self-addressed, stamped envelope to do so. As you work to complete the survey, if you completed written answers to the original surveys, I have included them to help jog your memory.

Again – thank you for your participation in the bible study and with the surveys as well: I would be unable to successfully complete this learning unit – and Doctor of Ministry – without your support!

Blessings,

Kathryn
336.740.0555
Appendix B: Narrative x Kirkpatrick Matrix Data Analysis

**Chronology**

**Reaction**

*How do Silent Generation React?*

Bible Study Written Response

- Listening, thinking, and then acting
- Daily activities and interaction with people in my environment
- Be more interested in others situations and need
- Be more open to discussion and listening and responding
- Look for those opportunities – take the time
- Be alert of/for opportunities and participate/act
- Greeting attendees at church, those that I know, and those that I don’t know
- Spending more time in conversation and relationship with guests and members
- Spending more time coming and going conversations with guests and members
- How to think about how to do this more effectively – know I could improve
- Keeping the ways to accomplish this in my mind
- Being more aware of others needs and my capabilities
- Finding more qualities in myself that I can improve on to be more welcoming
- Moving around the sanctuary on Sundays so that I can talk to different people – until choir starts again
- I will try and think of someone to invite
- Trying to meet new 2 members
- Being more hospitable!
- Speak to a couple that have been here twice – I missed them last Sunday!
- Praying always to be the kind of person that God wants me to be in welcoming everyone
- Being available
- Being more aware of how I can help Starmount Presbyterian Church
- Being more aware of how I can help others
- Being a more understanding Christian
- Being more courteous to all people
- Being more understanding to all people
- Most comments indicate that the members of the Silent Generation will do what they need to do to help put the CP into action.¹
- One commented that she needs to think of how to do it more effectively, indicating that she (probably like others) might not know the best way to incorporate these CP into their daily lives.
- Another indicated that it is about listening, thinking, and then acting – many in this Silent Generation seem to be that there is a methodical, pointed examination of how to put the CP to use – not doing so flippantly.
- Some concrete responses, some specific to faith

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¹ Comments in red indicate author’s reflections and not actual responses of participants.
Bible Study Follow Up Written Response

- I am trying to be more effective in the five areas that you requested us to concentrate on. Can’t say that I have “plussed out” in any way – but am hoping that I will make more constant improvement. I help J. Lee with the organizing and carrying out of First Monday Starmount Suppers at River Landing – takes patience to work with people who constantly forget whether they have committed to attend or not! I do help Barbara Hochuli as much as I can. She will be moving into the building the end of October – I’m sure she will need help. I keep working at meeting new people who visit the church. I’ll keep trying!
- We have talked with friends and neighbors about our church, telling them of different events that are here and invite them to come.
- We’re both very social and continue to meet new people and seek common ground to attend functions together.
- We both try to help people in our community of Howard’s Walk to make them feel welcome and encourage them to get involved in our communities activities.
- Warm Welcome to All
- Greeting in church
- Phone calls to those missed.
- This program/study on Christian Practices caused me to think critically and a-fresh opportunities that I encounter and how to deal with them and how to look for these opportunities with different views. And continue to realize at the “ripe old age” of 84 years there are still opportunities to be improving Christian Practices. Thank you for the sessions!
- Promoted church worship attendance to acquaintances
- Encouraged family prayer
- Been more prayerful in daily life myself
- Taken a nurturing approach toward strangers who appear to be hurting or angry
- Hopefully I have used the Christian Practices all my life! I loved attending your bible study as just a reminder of how we should live!!
- Being more tolerant of small disagreements to put myself in someone else’s shoes
- I speak to children and adults in my shopping each week and always take some time (if possible) to engage in light conversation.
- I try each day to do one kind deed to help someone. Sometimes a smile helps more than we realize.
- I try to always thank God for the many blessings in my life and not take some things for granted.
- I believe the example I set in trying to show and live my faith in life tells other the kind of Christian I strive to be.
- I continue to invite my friend to come to church with me and as yet am unsuccessful.
- I’ve gotten to know others from our table discussions. I’m hoping to entertain and get to know them better!
- Are you a Martha or a Mary? The responses to that were interesting! Why didn’t Jesus ask Martha to join in and everyone would then help in preparing the feast?!!
- Have talked about Starmount to former members and encouraged them to try again.
- Always say hello to a new face.
• By giving to and helping others whenever possible thru mobile meals, church participation on many committees to name a few.
• By praying for those in need when the situation arises.
• By trying to keep in mind – “What is the Christian thing to do in various situations.”
• Making sure that I wear my nametag on Sundays
• Searching out strangers in church and welcoming them
• Taking more time (slowing down) to listen to others
• Talking to friends about our programs and encouraging attendance
• Looking for new members I met at bible study
• Being aware of welcoming behavior, smiles, welcomes, not only at church but all the time
• Sharing with friends what a warm family we have at Starmount
• Share the “helping” mission SPC takes part in
• The bible study, for a number, allowed a good “refresher course” on what they should/could be doing for their church and for their faith.
• A number said it encouraged them to be more prayerful – always a good thing
• Better listener
• More self-aware of their actions and how they might impact/influence someone new

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• The SG reacts in such a way that indicates that they have deep roots for a foundational faith and deep roots for the life of their church family.
• The SG reacts in such a way that indicates that they understand what it is that they like and do not like in worship and in the life of their church.
• Aligning with the characteristics/stereotypes of this demographic, the SG react strongly to what it is that they know and understand to be true for themselves, rooted in their faith.

Focus Group Follow Up
• Feel all four of they CP are utmost to be displayed by us the members of the church--Kathryn has done an excellent job of explaining them in our training and giving us ways we can use them
• I feel my calling is the hospitality and welcome - with my circle and Presbyterian Retreat -- all activities at church.
• I think our congregation has grow a great deal with the nurturing of our refugee families in many ways --fifty years ago it would have never welcomed these families.
• I don't think my behavior has changed as I* have been blessed with sharing my love from Jesus with all and everywhere I go.
• I think those of us who took the training sessions will have to share with other members that didn't come.
• I use them all to some extent. But I could improve my behavior in each “Christian Practices” category.
• I do not think broadly enough about Christian Practices but focus on specific interest such as music.
• My person practice is too self-centered. I need to reach out more to others.
• The Starmount congregation uses Christian Practices well and seems to have an ever-expanding program of activities that foster the use of Christian Practices.
I am more conscious of what I am doing as a Christian Practice.  
I think I have always done them, just not connecting them as Christian Practices.  
I feel good working what I do with Christian Practices.  
Not sure that my behavior did change. Maybe doing more.  
I think there will always be some members of our congregation who will step forward, using Christian Practices and those who will not. I don’t feel we can condemn those who do not – maybe they are not “connecting the dots” with Christian Practices or maybe they are doing things outside of the church which we don’t know about. Or maybe they do but don’t label what they do as Christian Practices.  
Hospitality and nurturing of current church members and visitors strengthen the whole congregation. The welcome and invitation should be our response to Christ’s love. I feel that all four Christian Practices are essential to a healthy congregation.  
From the beginning, with the small group meals in my home to the Wed. night programs, I enjoyed getting to know members better. The Wed. night programs were like a refresher course in responsibility to others.  
I was open to inviting people I do not know to my home for meals. I am much richer because of the friendships and respect that grew out of those visits. I was able to do this because I did not feel judgment about how or what I did for the evening. The invitation and welcome part became the most important to me. Among neighbors and friends I continue to tell about the various programs or mission outreach that we do. Our music programs have provided the opportunities to invite others to church.  
**Bible Study Written Response**  
- Inviting someone to a church function  
- Pray to be more inviting  
- Try to get out of my comfort zone  
- Invite someone to lunch  
- Write two caring letters to grieving and/or sick members  
- Not to feel overwhelmed of trying to nurture all I see  
- More intentional in asking others to church activities  
- Try to go outside my comfort zone to practice these  
- Prayer  
- Conscious thought  
- We have 6 churches in our neighborhood. They are fighting for new blood. We are trying!!!  
- Greeting guests at church  
- Baking brownies for new neighbors  
- Looking for opportunities to invite  
- Recognize the Martha and welcome the Mary  
- Looking for opportunities to nurture  
- I will be intentional in speaking to members at church and do more than just great. I will try to move out of my comfort zone  
- I will work to nurture my relationship with my husband by being kind and intentional in my actions.  
- Be less about me and more about others
- Work through my shyness and move out of my comfort level to be more welcoming of others in a group setting
- Work towards intentionally building relationships
- Actually inviting someone
- Keep asking
- Praying for God’s guidance
- Being open to God’s leading
- Paying attention
- Thinking of others before self
- Look to God for opportunities to be welcoming
- Being intentional about Christian practices knowing it is evangelism in action perhaps leading to evangelism in word (sharing my faith)
- Intentionally approaching friends/family with 4 practices
- Inviting friends to the unique Sunday worship services
- When faced with obstacles to reaching out to others, using mindful prayer: “You must do this God, I cannot.”
- Reminding myself, daily, that each attempt to be more authentically invitational, charitable, and sensitive to others helps me grow nearer to God in this life.
- Asking: “Is holiness here?” and reach out to others – speak and act
- As the heart is ready – remove obstacles to communication, building in new and different ways
- Inviting a family member to church
- Inviting somebody for a causal meal
- I will call my sister-in-law who is peeved at me
- “being” my faith
- Be more a Martha!
- Invite God into my thoughts more often
- Be open to more ways to show hospitality at home and church!
- Encouraging people (friends) to attend Starmount.
- Welcoming newcomers at church
- Taking initiative to greet newcomers
- Inviting someone to join me in worship
- Wearing my nametag
- “Talking up” Starmount
- Listen better
- Take more time for others
- Try to read people better so as not to scare them off
- Sharing Starmount’s activities with friends
- Better with names of old and new members
- Watchful where I can help
- Try to engage people in church
- Build relationships
- Invitations to Starmount activities
- Include talk of what SPC is doing in social conversations
- Being more open in invitations
- Being more honest when I must decline an invitation
- Being more open to inviting others to Starmount
- Attempting to be more of a Mary as I am more a Martha
- Being more hospitable at church
- In visiting my homebound and facility members I will keep nurture
- Asking God to help me (be) a better nurturer
- Working on putting those 4 practices into my daily activity with others
- Concentrating on using these practice with a family.
- More approaching and inviting
- Friendly
- Being more of a doer
- Being more generous with my invitations
- Being more considerate when issued an invite
- Being friendlier to people I don’t know
- Some concrete: bake brownies, work within the family
- Others faith-based: prayer, asking God for help

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
- Intentionally invited a neighbor to invite a friend Sunday. She didn’t accept invitation but I did invite. Invited another friend and she did attend.
- Inconsistently pray to be more extrovert and invite friends to events at Starmount. Invited a new member to an event.
- Having written several cards to grieving or sick members but always feel badly that I didn’t do more.
- Evangelism as indirectly inviting others to church. I do better when can have a conversation and can talk about church family and how wonderful and then invite more often to events other than church service. Most of my friends and a lot of neighbors are part of their own church family. I don’t want them to perceive I am trying to get them to abandon their church for mine.
- For those of us who’ve grown up in the church – maybe not there every time the doors opened – but there often, it’s more of a refresher course or perhaps a new perspective. There’s a more thoughtful intentionality. (When you ask this of an OCD-type, it’s hard to differentiate.)
- Since an early age I have put into Christian Practices into practice.
- Growing up in a church that strongly pushed studying scriptures and catechism, taking part in group studies outside my church like church camp, young life, college discussions and as adult my faith has stayed strong. I find that this study has helped me to focus on what I church need. I have said before, that I reach people in our hood to offer to take part in our church. We are still trying to reach out.
- I have baked brownies of 2 of our 3 sets of new neighbors and visited the 3rd set but no brownies for them yet! These visits were NOT invitations to church but I hope those will come soon.
- From the choir loft it’s difficult to “sneak” into the congregation either before or after our service to greet those folks I may not recognize. Since our choir is loaded with
outgoing, gregarious members it might be nice to find some mechanism for them to greet folks.

- The invitational part is still the most difficult – learning to recognize opportunities. I invited Bob + Jackie Hood to the E&M luncheon!
- It’s easier to recognize opportunities to serve (Martha) than it is to be still and listen (Mary). However, I’ve been doing lots of listening serving on the Personnel Committee.
- Nurturing is the “easy” assignment for me. It usually translates to listening and affirming.
- The Bible Study helped me to focus on these practices in all of my relationships. My goal is to apply them daily. I am most recently aware of the benefits of these practices in my work and family relationships.
- I invited a family member to church (and he CAME to church)
- I invited a neighbor for wine and snacks
- I am more able to consider others’ viewpoints, I think.
- I know what I should do, but haven’t been able to dive into extended time away from home until yesterday!
- I do try to find time daily for quiet and reflection to seek God.
- More of a “doer” – helping neighbor (who is hard to be around); drove to Penn, picked up mom and sister – took them to Buffalo to our old church. Then, stayed in Penn. To attend mom’s bible study
- Trying to be supportive to family and neighbors
- We have issued invitation to a neighbor, who is mentally unstable and hard to be around; we have had her over to eat and just to visit. – we have to remember, she is one of God’s children.
- Not unlike the Osmer/Kirkpatrick analysis, there is a number of people who either “brag”/name what they have done, but there are also the people who self-condone or self-criticize without my doing (not that I would have) – they are glad that they did _____, but don’t feel like they did enough. What is “enough”?
- Some were able to identify that they did a better job at being a “do-er” (concrete) than in tasks that required putting themselves out there or with talking – being vulnerable.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
- BB react with humor
- BB react with honesty
- BB react with a sense that their opinion has weight and merit
- BB react thoughtfully to the questions being asked.

Focus Group Follow Up
- It is nice to have them broken down this way. So often, we think about what living as a Christian should look like, but this helps to further define it.
- I feel we are each called to use these Christian Practices. We all however, may not excel in each area. It is helpful to learn where we excel and where we need to practice a bit more.
- I don’t know how to rally more people to participate, but I feel the more people involved in learning and engagement, the stronger we will be as a congregation.
I have been more observant of my actions…areas where I may be hesitant and areas where I need to work more. I feel I became more intentional in my actions.

Starmount has seemed to really focus on outreach to the congregation through its programming. It is good to see the level of engagement by the congregation.

Honestly, I do not think about being called to use them. I feel I have tried to always use the Christian Practices as a member of Starmount.

I am not sure my behavior has changed, but I do find myself aware and try to be sure I try to apply those attributes of CP if I find myself in a situation where it might be a little harder to be as loving and compassionate as I should be.

I feel that we should reinforce these CP as the baseline of how we approach how we interact, govern and teach one another as a congregation.

How does Gen X react?

Bible Study Written Response
- Do more
- WWJD
- Drop a hint to a random person
- Just let someone know where I attend church
- Inviting friends to come to worship
- Listening for God to tell me more when to be more “Martha” and when to be more “Mary”
- Practice becoming more hospitable with others within the church and everywhere
- Offering assistance to a friend
- Writing a hand-written letter
- Being warm to others
- Offer more invitations to church/get-togethers/etc.
- Reaching out to people I don’t know (at church)
- Many are concrete responses
- Many indicate that people are wanting to do more
- Some are attitude adjustments

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- No written follow-up responses from Gen X

Focus Group – Gen X
- Xers react with humor
- Xers react with sarcasm
- Xers react in ways that indicate that they are passionate about things that are important to them
- Xers react to what they are doing, but also wondering what other generations are doing as well

Focus Group Follow Up
- I think that they are attributes that one would EXPECT to experience in a church. I remember visiting a church 20 years ago when I first moved to Greensboro and no one spoke to me. I stood in line for 10 minutes to speak with the minister after the service - - just to have some human contact and feel that my visit was acknowledged. I’ve never forgotten the way I felt - - and haven’t been back to that church!
While some have more gifts in this area than others, all Christians should be capable and willing to use these gifts to welcome others to share in our worship experience and faith.

I am more sensitive to newcomers and go out of my way to acknowledge them. It is not always comfortable to do this, but I remember my experience from the past and don’t want anyone to ever say that they experienced this in our church.

My behavior changed in that I have become more mindful of the need to show these practices in my daily life. If we profess to be Christians, yet act in a manner outside of these practices, we’ve done more damage to the faith than we’ve prevented. One bad experience with a “Christian” may be all it takes to turn someone away from the church forever. What a shame that would be…

I think that some training on how to “evangelize” may be useful. As Presbyterians, the word “evangelize” is scary to some who are afraid they’ll be asked to share their testimony. However, there are many ways to share the love of Christ. Congregants need to understand the multiple meanings of the word and ways that they can share their faith and evangelize others through everyday actions, such as: a kind word, a hug, a shoulder to cry on, a card, a warm meal, a blanket to someone who is cold. Christians forget that it is the power of the Holy Spirit that touches the hearts of others - not us. If we are open to ways that the Spirit can use us and allow the Spirit to do so - we’ll become better evangelists.

For me, this has become a very important part of what I want for my church. I find that the best way to evangelize to others is through Christian Practices. Showing the way via being a living example. As we’ve progressed in to a more politically charged time in the Presbyterian Church, in regards to alternative lifestyles and the church’s acceptance, I find these to be even more important.

I don’t feel any different really. It has always been something that I have felt strongly about representing in my own life.

I’m not sure I would say it has. Although, I am more aware of my actions within Starmount and the role I play as a strong member of that community.

It didn’t occur to me until responding above, but we as a community should be actively teaching our parents to teach children in these ways! (don’t ask me how to do that, but, its important!) I continue to find the importance of giving someone a home to come to before trying to get their name in the family Bible. Invitation is the first step, Hospitality encourages your acceptance and love within that community… worry about the bookkeeping later.

How does Gen Y react?

Bible Study Written Response
- Gen Y did not participate in this bible study.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- Gen Y did not participate in this bible study.

Focus Group – Gen Y
- Yers react with gravitas
- Yers react to those around them
- Yers react to one another with respect, but with ability to share what they do/do not agree with
Focus Group Follow Up

- I think when they are applied in the manner that Christ intended them to be utilized they are fantastic and basically, how we should treat everyone, with I, H, N, & W. I think we are at an impasse nationally where these values are being distorted in the name of "Religious Freedom" a phrase that states, "you don't belong in my club." Or, as Steve Fisher wrote and David Lamotte so aptly covered in the song "That's My Toy": This is my God, you don't know Him; He's saving a place up in heaven just for me; You won't go there, my Bible tells me; You'll go hell, just wait and see

- I am being called to open my heart and mind to all peoples; especially those who are different from me. I am being called to speak out for justice for those who are marginalized. I am being called to listen to others and find peace where none may exist. It basically comes down to being present with others.

- Difficult to answer since I have been gone from Starmount for over a year. I will state that The Guinness and the Good News fellowship seems to be welcoming new members and remains an inviting place for all. I will also say that, in conversations with the associate pastor, Starmount seems to be moving forward on progressive issues involving the LGBTQ community in opening its doors.

- Simply using these practices in our daily lives. Truly looking at and studying the people Jesus truly befriended during his ministry. LISTEN. ALWAYS LISTEN!

- Upon first being introduced to Christian Practices as thought of in terms of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome, I admittedly had never thought of Christianity in line with these concepts. Since then, I’ve started to see Christianity, or my call as a Christian, to be one who is inviting and welcoming to others—that extending invitations to church events isn’t asking someone to then become a Christian; instead, I am using my call to reach out to others. Simple as that.

- Recently, I’ve begun thinking about hospitality and nurture as a core practice for my own spiritual growth / self-care and how I treat others. Hospitality, most recently, has shaped my new research interest, as I’m looking for how hospitality or models of Christian hospitality can help enter into conversations about food insecurity. In terms of welcoming, I’ve begun trying to make my classroom a more welcoming space for all; this has always been part of my pedagogy but since honing in on welcoming as a spiritual practice, I have begun to see ways that Christ is at the very core of my being and influences all arenas of my life, not just when I step into church on Sundays.

- These Christian Practices reshaped how I saw mission. Again, because of the church environment in which I was raised, mission was always some across the seas trip to help the poor, unsaved souls. Now, I see mission as an integral part of one’s local community. For me, it is staggering to see so many people be food insecure, especially children, right in your local backyard. For me, mission work—the work of being hospitable, inviting, and nurturing—is desperately needed in my community and mission isn’t necessarily about saving souls but nurturing those souls that God already has a plan for. So, I’ve begun teaching my college freshman about food insecurity and have begun to think about how to integrate lessons of food insecurity into my teaching and research of Renaissance literature. My newfound understanding of mission, hospitality, and nurture, thanks to Kathryn’s evangelism re-vamping, has phenomenally transformed me, my interest in the community, and at work. At home, I believe these practices have shaped how I interact with my girlfriend/partner. They
make me see when I’m being selfish, what I can do to help nurture her self-growth or her life journey. They also allow me to see how I nurture myself so that I can be the person God calls me to be.

- It would be good to have this training and practices as an integral part of the youth programing.

**Learnings**

*How do Silent Generation Learn?*

**Bible Study Written Response**
- *How do Silent Generation learn?* They seemed to be rather engaged in the bible study, enjoying the fellowship and conversation in which they participated.

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
- The data seems to indicate that the Silent Generation learned through doing
- The responses indicate that the SG is “busy” – a common trait of the generation, they work and do not ask for accolades in return.

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**
- The SG learn through the experiences they have
- The SG learn through the lessons taught to them by their family (parents, grandparents)
- The SG learn through their pastors and spiritual leaders, respecting them for the office which they hold

**Focus Group Follow Up**
- That I enjoy people and talking with them but am hesitant to start conversations with those I do not know well. The exception is I try to speak to new faces when I recognize them in church.
- That being a Christian is a 24/7 life style. Friends know of my commitment to my church and all my behavior, day in and day out, show some one what a Christian is suppose to be or not be. I think I am more aware of the kindness relayed with a smile or hello and listening to the response.
- Our congregation has varied groups in it. This is good in that the many interest make Starmount the committed church that it is. Music, garden, mission, Christian Education, church officer and volunteer commitments and others I am sure I have not mentioned are areas where people serve. Unless you have worked in the same areas, sometimes, you do not have or make the opportunity to get to know those other members very well. The small group meals and fellowship programs, I think, help bridge some of the members. Our members are very gracious to each other in times of need, card, meals, visits etc. These acknowledgments of concern are very welcome. Both the circles and and the caring committee do a good job of keeping in touch with our shut ins. This evaluation comes from hearing friends in other churches being surprised at the coverage we provide for our shut ins.
- Again, taking what I do with Christian Practices.
- I feel that our congregation uses Christian Practices in a big way through all that they do.
- I feel good working what I do with Christian Practices.
- I do not think broadly enough about Christian Practices but focus on specific interest such as music.
- My person practice is too self-centered. I need to reach out more to others.
• The Starmount congregation uses Christian Practices well and seems to have an ever-expanding program of activities that foster the use of Christian Practices.
• I will always need to learn and share these practices. I feel God has kept me here to use these CP and to share them with others.
• It has strengthened my faith as each one are important in your faith.
• I think our congregation has grow a great deal with the nurturing of our refugee families in many ways – fifty years ago it would have never welcomed these families.

How do Baby Boomers Learn?

Bible Study Written Response
• The BB learn by doing as well – they respond with comments about what they are to do – many/most of the responses are “things” or “tasks” to be done – they are not, necessarily, directly correlated with their faith

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• The BBs learned through this exercise that there are number of things that can be done to apply the CP to their daily lives, both at church and through activities at home/in the community.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• The BB learn through the examples provided them by their parents and parents’ peers (line 260)
• The BB learn through experiences what it is that the like and do not care for in worship, from music to aesthetics

Focus Group Follow Up
• It is always good to step back and take a personal look at one’s self, especially if you have a measuring stick like the Christian Practices. I am not sure about learning anything specific, but am trying to be more aware of my actions.
• It is always easier to practice my faith when I have the Christian Practices to be a guide.
• I can’t say I have learned anything about the congregation and its use of Christian Practices as I find it hard to discern if they are trying the various aspects of CP or our congregation is just that kind and engaging. We are blessed with what I think is a very open and loving congregation.
• Practicing Invitation is not always easy for me. I tend to be shy unless confident in a situation… or ready to step out of my comfort zone. I feel I have more gifts to share in the areas of nurture and welcome.
• God calls us to use these Christian Practices. When we do, our faith is strengthened.
• I feel our congregation does a good job in these areas. Different people have stronger abilities in different areas. Together, we form a strong set of practices.

How do Gen X Learn?

Bible Study Written Response
• Gen X took things they knew from other experiences and connected them – “WWJD”, as an example

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• No written follow-up responses from Gen X

Focus Group – Gen X
• Xers learn through experience
• Xers learn through observing their parents/elders
Focus Group Follow Up

- I think I have become more aware of my role as a representative of my church – I have observed that others judge you without realizing that they are judging and making assumptions about your faith just based on your practices. Therefore, it is important to show these as underlying parts of your personality – without having to be a false representation. In other words, I’m allowed to use four letter colorful language and have tattoos, as long as I’m aware of how that impacts those around me. And as long as they aren’t offended and I’m a living, hospitable, inviting, nurturing Christian – there isn’t a stigma against Christians and being stuck up.

- See above comment. I find it important to dispel assumptions people have about “Christians” and help them to see that Christians are just people too. My faith is an open and inviting one, not one that requires excessive work and lifestyle changes. There are some whose faith requires these things – and that doesn’t mean that they can’t share the same faith as me, but that we need to be open and accepting of others through hospitality and invitation.

- One of my more recent learnings was that our church family is still a family – just like the one you have at home. It’s not a strict school environment with a teacher/principal who governs all that you do. We all contribute to the family – like a strong marriage, not that we are all children who have to listen to dominating parents. We are a strong church because we are the church – mental image of all those people fingers inside the church steeple who make up the church. The pastor doesn’t make the church… yes, it can set a tone, but a strong church family is about the people. We are inviting., welcoming and caring – because of who we are, not what we are told to do.

- I am more sensitive to newcomers and go out of my way to acknowledge them. It is not always comfortable to do this, but I remember my experience from the past and don’t want anyone to ever say that they experienced this in our church.

- It is a biblical mandate to “go into the world and preach the gospel.” While I might feel uncomfortable “witnessing” to others in a “Bible-Thumper” type format, all of us who profess to be Christians should show our faith by living a life that exemplifies these characteristics because we follow Christ. If people can’t see these attributes in us, then we need to do something about it.

- I’ve learned how important it is for congregations to adopt and implement these practices at every opportunity. We have to move out of our comfort zones to welcome others into our congregation. Through some of our transition studies, I’ve learned that our church is particularly good in these areas and are known for our welcoming style. We have to be careful, however, to guard from becoming complacent. We can’t afford for a visitor or member to ever experience a “cold and unwelcoming” congregation when they worship with us. They’ll never forget it.

How do Gen Y Learn?

Bible Study Written Response

- Gen Y did not participate in this bible study.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- Gen Y did not participate in this bible study.

Focus Group – Gen Y
- Yers learn through experience
- Yers learn through observing their parents/elders
- Yers learn through conversations with others
- Yers learn through the things they read and “digest”

Focus Group Follow Up
- I have learned that if I let those principles be at the center of my life, I become a more grounded, empathetic person.
- I will repeat something I wrote earlier, which is that I’ve begun rethinking how I see evangelism. When I used to hear the word, Evangelism, I would cringe. To me that meant, doing cold calls around neighborhoods with the youth group at my father’s church. Literally, going up to someone’s house, knocking on the door, and asking if whomever answered was saved. Honestly, I never went on any of these excursions (whew!), but the thought of doing so, TERRIFIED ME! Small examples like that one held me back from sharing my faith simply because I was taught that that was the only way to do so. However, I now understand evangelism as action rather than verbal invitation. For instance, I talk to my non-church friends, colleagues, and even my girlfriend about what I do at church (volunteer at the community garden, work with the youth, etc.) and why I do it. I believe this to be a form of evangelism; I’m sharing my faith by letting others know that I have found a place of faith to which I belong and why it is that I cling tightly to that place.
- That Starmount is a very welcoming place that extends invitations for all sorts of fellowship activities. Once you are in Starmount, the people nurture you through fellowship, food, and your called talents. People, in other words, approach you to serve on various committees or elicit your help for particular events. I see these as nurture. Those people might just need another body in a chair, but they more likely are seeing something in you; calling you for to be that particular body in that particular chair.
- SLOW DOWN! LISTEN! Realize that there are times, even when one is living in "The Suck", that I must stop, look and listen to others because in the voices of others I may hear the voice of God.
- That everyone has their own struggles. If we remain and open and welcoming it may be a vehicle for people to enter the faith, or simply dip their toe in the shallow end as they search for a place of belonging and fellowship.
- The PC(USA) as well as other established religions are slowly dwindling in numbers and have been for many years. We are slowly, but surely, learning that we can no longer sit in the same pew seat we have sat in since our great-grandparents' time at the church. We must extend the "right hand of welcome" to all new faces. We must invite people to events, and not immediately press them to be on a committee or volunteer their time, as have been past practices, but simply set a place of welcome where the new persons can find a place of belonging and fellowship.

Behavior

How to Silent Generation Behave?

Bible Study Written Response
• The SG behaves through doing – without looking for reward or recognition. I think they also expect others to do the same.

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**

• The SG behaves through doing – they were able to take the CP and put them to action.
• Some were able to more readily voice what, specifically, they did.
• Others were able to indicate that they did “more” of “something”

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**

• As is typical for their demographic, the SG go to church because it is what they do
• The SG behave in manners that are also typical to the characteristics of the demographic, allowing men to speak more “authoritatively” due to their “position” in the household
• The SG women behave by speaking their opinions in such a way as to not want to offend or hurt the other
• The SG women do what they can to nurture those around them (CP!)

**Focus Group Follow Up**

• This one is a little harder to answer as self-evaluation always is. I was open to inviting people I do not know to my home for meals. I am much richer because of the friendships and respect that grew out of those visits. I was able to do this because I did not feel judgment about how or what I did for the evening. The invitation and welcome part became the most important to me. Among neighbors and friends I continue to tell about the various programs or mission outreach that we do. Our music programs have provided the opportunities to invite others to church.
• Not sure that my behavior did change. Maybe doing more.
• At Starmount I have a better behavior guide towards others and also in the community.
• I don’t think my behavior has changed as I* have been blessed with sharing my love from Jesus with all and everywhere I go.

**How do Baby Boomer Behave?**

**Bible Study Written Response**

• Boomers are in a sandwich generation-situation – some still have children at home (or in college) while also having to take care of their parents.
• They are busy.
• Most are still working (although many are retiring).
• If they came to the study at all (the retirees came more than the working-types), they indicated that they would “do” things – be more “Martha” than “Mary”

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**

• As with the other generations, the BBs were able to applaud the things/ways they were able to put CP to use, while also being the most critical of themselves when they didn’t “do as much” as they would have liked.
• Perhaps they weren’t paying attention? Could they have been doing/not doing, but the information is not in the forefront of their thinking? Or, if they are doing something, they aren’t thinking about “oh, I’m doing ___ right now.” And then, when pressed to think about the ways they accomplished doing CP’s in daily lives, they couldn’t think of concrete things...
• Also very much about “Doing” than applying to faith – what does that say about the training? Yes: the pragmatic piece is more tangible and attainable, but how can this be better applied to faith development?

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• BB behave through humor and sarcasm
• BB behave through action – volunteering for things that support their children
• BB behave by indicating what it is that they are wanting and desiring in a church and a worship space

Focus Group Follow Up
• I am not sure my behavior has changed, but I do find myself aware and try to be sure I try to apply those attributes of CP if I find myself in a situation where it might be a little harder to be as loving and compassionate as I should be.
• I have been more observant of my actions….areas where I may be hesitant and areas where I need to work more. I feel I became more intentional in my actions.

How do Gen X Behave?

Bible Study Written Response
• Like BB, Gen X are working and taking care of kids. The age of children in this demographic can dramatically range from newborn to teenager. Some are taking care of parents. Many are dealing with debt from student loans, cars, and mortgages.
• Gen X are busy – if they ARE putting CP into practice, then it’s most likely on their terms. Generationally, it’s self-serving and self-promotional.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• There were no written follow-up responses from Gen X.

Focus Group – Gen X
• Xers behave as ones who are hardworking and take their “fun” seriously.
• Xers behave as ones who want to be taken seriously
• Xers, while passionate about many things, will only dedicate themselves to their non-work passions as their time allows (between work, family obligations, and fun/free time)

Focus Group Follow Up
• I’m not sure I would say it has. Although, I am more aware of my actions within Starmount and the role I play as a strong member of that community.
• My behavior changed in that I have become more mindful of the need to show these practices in my daily life. If we profess to be Christians, yet act in a manner outside of these practices, we’ve done more damage to the faith than we’ve prevented. One bad experience with a “Christian” may be all it takes to turn someone away from the church forever. What a shame that would be…

How to Gen Y Behave?

Bible Study Written Response
• Gen Y did not participate in this bible study.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• Gen Y did not participate in this bible study.

Focus Group – Gen Y
• Yers behaves as ones who are still learning
• Yers behave as ones who seek the same feelings of tradition that they have before
**Yers behave as ones who want to be spiritually grounded**

**Focus Group Follow Up**

- I answered this above a little bit. These Christian Practices reshaped how I saw mission. Again, because of the church environment in which I was raised, mission was always some across the seas trip to help the poor, unsaved souls. Now, I see mission as an integral part of one’s local community. For me, it is staggering to see so many people be food insecure, especially children, right in your local backyard. For me, mission work—the work of being hospitable, inviting, and nurturing—is desperately needed in my community and mission isn’t necessarily about saving souls but nurturing those souls that God already has a plan for. So, I’ve begun teaching my college freshman about food insecurity and have begun to think about how to integrate lessons of food insecurity into my teaching and research of Renaissance literature. My newfound understanding of mission, hospitality, and nurture, thanks to Kathryn’s evangelism re-vamping, has phenomenally transformed me, my interest in the community, and at work. At home, I believe these practices have shaped how I interact with my girlfriend/partner. They make me see when I’m being selfish, what I can do to help nurture her self-growth or her life journey. They also allow me to see how I nurture myself so that I can be the person God calls me to be.

- Difficult to answer since I have been gone from Starmount for over a year. I will state that The Guinness and the Good News fellowship seems to be welcoming new members and remains and inviting place for all. I will also say that, in conversations with the associate pastor, Starmount seems to be moving forward on progressive issues involving the LGBTQ community in opening its doors.

**Results**

*What are the outcomes for Silent Generation?*

**Bible Study Written Response**

- The “outcomes” from these responses is that they have, indeed, provided responses—outcomes that they would indicate are the ways they will “do” the CP’s in their lives through the upcoming weeks.

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**

- The outcomes from the responses indicate that this generation does what they can to not only do what is asked (put their learnings about CP into action), but also that they understand the implications for the greater congregation (outside of themselves).

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**

- The outcomes for the SG are that they go to church; participate in the life of the congregation; want the best for their church family, of which they love dearly.

- The outcomes for the SG, in this focus group specifically, is to provide responses that will allow for truth-telling and information that will assist in the betterment of the researcher and the congregation.

**Focus Group Follow Up**

- Your programs emphasized how important little acts of kindness are to others. This has made me want to be more in tune to reaching out to others.

- More connection between what I do and my faith.

- I have used them as a reminder as to what the good Lord wants me to do.

*What are the outcomes for Baby Boomers?*

**Bible Study Written Response**
The “outcomes” from these responses is that they have, indeed, provided responses – outcomes that they would indicate are the ways they will “do” the CP’s in their lives through the upcoming weeks.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- The outcomes for the BB indicate that they know how to put CP into action but that they do not always have time nor tools/resources to do it
- There is a “block” about being vulnerable – how will this “look” if I were to do it? (If I ask and they already have a church, I don’t want to appear to be poaching; I already know that they have a church so I don’t want to ask…)

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
- The outcomes for the BB are that they go to church; participate in the life of the congregation; want the best for family which they love dearly
- The outcomes for the SG, in this focus group specifically, is to provide responses that will allow for truth-telling and information that will assist in the betterment of the researcher and the congregation.

Focus Group Follow Up
- I am not sure my behavior has changed, but I do find myself aware and try to be sure I try to apply those attributes of CP if I find myself in a situation where it might be a little harder to be as loving and compassionate as I should be.
- I have been more intentional in my actions.

What are the outcomes for Gen X?

Bible Study Written Response
- The “outcomes” from these responses is that they have, indeed, provided responses – outcomes that they would indicate are the ways they will “do” the CP’s in their lives through the upcoming weeks.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- Gen X did not participate in the written follow-up responses

Focus Group – Gen X
- Xers participate in the life of the church as their schedules afford
- Xers indicate that they do consider themselves “regulars” (which I read as “invested”) despite not being at worship every Sunday
- Xers participate as they are able to, as they want to set examples for their children

Focus Group Follow Up
- Not directly. Although, I would honestly state that I have always been someone who represents these traits.
- During passing of the peace, I make a point to greet and speak to those around me. I always try to search out faces I don’t recognize and introduce myself to them during church functions.

What are the outcomes for Gen Y?

Bible Study Written Response
- Gen Y did not participate in this bible study.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- Gen Y did not participate in this bible study.

Focus Group – Gen Y
- Yers participate in the life of the congregation as their schedules afford
• Yers participate in the life of the congregation as they are instructed/guided by their parents
• Yers seek to be a part of the community and tradition it affords

Focus Group Follow Up
• I’ve used these practices to go out into the community and serve (through the Starmount Community Garden, Out of the Garden Project), to become a better teacher who raises students’ awareness about the world around them, and to improve my life and wellbeing.
• Daily. They should be a part of one's daily life. These simply are practices of being a decent human.

Function
What are the Reactions?
Male vs. Female

Bible Study Written Response
• Men (40% of participants)
  o One man indicated frustration in doing a lot of inviting but being one of a number of churches in the neighborhood.
  o Indications of “doing” – “do more”, doing things that are concrete (bake brownies)
• Women (60% of participants)
  o Mentions of moving out of their comfort zones
  o Intentionality
  o Being more aware of others
  o Being able to identify qualities/characteristics in themselves
  o Many mentions of interactions with friends

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• Men (40% of participants)
  o A few indicated that the bible study was helpful and a good reminder for those who were older (these two are baby boomer and silent generation)
  o “always” (vs. “try” of women)
  o Indicted concrete things that they were successful in doing
• Women (60% of participants)
  o There, again, were reactions about intentionality, talking to specific people and/or neighbors
  o Some indicated aspects of CP that are more difficult than others
  o Indicated the bible study was a helpful reminder of what they should do in their lives
  o “I try…”; “I try…” – the doubt and self-depreciation that many women face – lack of confidence? (up-ending in voices, etc.)

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• Men
  o One of the men was very vocal (in general), but was explicit about his past experiences with faith and how they shape who he is today (and what he is seeking in a faith community).
• Women
  o The women spoke of being vocal with friends and family
The women indicated what they appreciated in worship and what they would like to see different, although they were less vocal about what they didn’t want.

One indicated hesitation on teaching something, which I find interesting and (unfortunately) indicative of gender differences.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer

- **Men**
  - Very analytical.
  - Indicating very black and white things that are seemingly clear-cut.

- **Women**
  - Feelings are attached to the comments being made.
  - Deep-rooted connections and emotions are what allow them to be connected to the congregation and worship.

Focus Group – Gen X

- **Men**
  - Spoke freely.
  - Provided strong opinions.
  - Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming.

- **Women**
  - Spoke freely.
  - Provided strong opinions.
  - Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming.

Focus Group – Gen Y

- **Men**
  - Spoke freely.
  - Provided strong opinions.
  - Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming.
  - Indicated that they were assertive in their thoughts about participating in the life of a church.

- **Women**
  - Spoke freely.
  - Provided strong opinions.
  - Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming.

Focus Group Follow Up

- **Men**
  - I think when they are applied in the manner that Christ intended them to be utilized they are fantastic and basically, how we should treat everyone, with I, H, N, & W. I think we are at an impasse nationally where these values are being distorted in the name of "Religious Freedom" a phrase that states, "you don't belong in my club." Or, as Steve Fisher wrote and David Lamotte so aptly covered in the song "That's My Toy": This is my God, you don't know Him; He's saving a place up in heaven just for me; You won't go there, my Bible tells me; You'll go hell, just wait and see.
  - I think that they are attributes that one would EXPECT to experience in a church. I remember visiting a church 20 years ago when I first moved to Greensboro and no one spoke to me. I stood in line for 10 minutes to speak.
with the minister after the service - - just to have some human contact and feel that my visit was acknowledged. I’ve never forgotten the way I felt - - and haven’t been back to that church!

- Starmount has seemed to really focus on outreach to the congregation through its programming. It is good to see the level of engagement by the congregation.
- They are a good guide to being a Christian and what aspects to focus in one’s interactions.

**Women**

- Upon first being introduced to Christian Practices as thought of in terms of *invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome*, I admittedly had never thought of Christianity in line with these concepts. Since then, I’ve started to see Christianity, or my call as a Christian, to be one who is inviting and welcoming to others—that extending invitations to church events isn’t asking someone to then become a Christian; instead, I am using my call to reach out to others. Simple as that.

- For me, this has become a very important part of what I want for my church. I find that the best way to evangelize to others is through Christian Practices. Showing the way via being a living example. As we’ve progressed in to a more politically charged time in the Presbyterian Church, in regards to alternative lifestyles and the church’s acceptance, I find these to be even more important.

- It is nice to have them broken down this way. So often, we think about what living as a Christian should look like, but this helps to further define it.

- Feel all four of the CP are utmost to be displayed by us the members of the church--Kathryn has done an excellent job of explaining them in our training and giving us ways we can use them

- I am more conscious of what I am doing as a Christian Practice.

- Hospitality and nurturing of current church members and visitors strengthen the whole congregation. The welcome and invitation should be our response to Christ’s love. I feel that all four Christian Practices are essential to a healthy congregation.

**Passive Members vs. Active Members**

**Bible Study Written Response**

- It is difficult to gauge how “passive” members would react – they are passive members who do not participate in activities like this

- Active members reacted by naming what it is they would do to put CP into practice and “do”

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**

- It is difficult to gauge how “passive” members would react – they are passive members who do not participate in activities like this

- The hope and desire is that the passive members recognize the change in the active members – the little things (greeters, umbrellas, etc.)

- Active members reacted by indicating that they were successful or not successful in putting CP into practice

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**
Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.

Interestingly enough, one of the focus group participants is no longer a member of the congregation, he and his wife departing because of the PCUSA’s change in stance over gay marriage.

These active members continue to participate in activities, although I am hearing from non-focus group church members of the same generation, it is getting more and more difficult to “get up and moving” in the mornings, making it difficult to get to Sunday school.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
- Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.
- Interestingly, it is admitted that some of the active members, now that they are empty nesters, are becoming less active (line 178)
- Active members are engaged in the ways they know how to be engaged. There are other aspects of the church life that they do not recall or know about, because it is not of interest to them – “blindness”

Focus Group – Gen X
- Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.
- These active members may not be considered active by older generations, due to attendance trends
- These active members know what they want and what they are seeking; they are strongly tied to solid relationships, but will do what is best for self/family

Focus Group – Gen Y
- Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.
- These active members may not be considered active by older generations, due to attendance trends
- These active members know what they want and what they are seeking, steeped in tradition and being a part of a community

Focus Group Follow Up
- Passive
  - I think when they are applied in the manner that Christ intended them to be utilized they are fantastic and basically, how we should treat everyone, with I, H, N, & W. I think we are at an impasse nationally where these values are being distorted in the name of "Religious Freedom" a phrase that states, "you don't belong in my club." Or, as Steve Fisher wrote and David Lamotte so aptly covered in the song "That's My Toy": This is my God, you don't know Him; He's saving a place up in heaven just for me; You won't go there, my Bible tells me; You'll go hell, just wait and see

- Active
  - I think that they are attributes that one would EXPECT to experience in a church. I remember visiting a church 20 years ago when I first moved to Greensboro and no one spoke to me. I stood in line for 10 minutes to speak with the minister after the service – just to have some human contact and feel
that my visit was acknowledged. I’ve never forgotten the way I felt - - and haven’t been back to that church!

- Starmount has seemed to really focus on outreach to the congregation through its programming. It is good to see the level of engagement by the congregation.
- They are a good guide to being a Christian and what aspects to focus in one’s interactions.
- Upon first being introduced to Christian Practices as thought of in terms of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome, I admittedly had never thought of Christianity in line with these concepts. Since then, I’ve started to see Christianity, or my call as a Christian, to be one who is inviting and welcoming to others—that extending invitations to church events isn’t asking someone to then become a Christian; instead, I am using my call to reach out to others. Simple as that.
- For me, this has become a very important part of what I want for my church. I find that the best way to evangelize to others is through Christian Practices. Showing the way via being a living example. As we’ve progressed in to a more politically charged time in the Presbyterian Church, in regards to alternative lifestyles and the church’s acceptance, I find these to be even more important.
- It is nice to have them broken down this way. So often, we think about what living as a Christian should look like, but this helps to further define it.
- Feel all four of the CP are utmost to be displayed by us the members of the church—Kathryn has done an excellent job of explaining them in our training and giving us ways we can use them
- I am more conscious of what I am doing as a Christian Practice.
- Hospitality and nurturing of current church members and visitors strengthen the whole congregation. The welcome and invitation should be our response to Christ’s love. I feel that all four Christian Practices are essential to a healthy congregation.

Those with No responsibility vs. those with responsibilities (leadership)

Bible Study Written Response

- Those without responsibilities in the church (non-elders) reacted in the same way, I think, as those who are elders and committee chairs.
- If they wanted to participate and be a part of the “change they want to see”, then they will step up, regardless of whether or not they have a title.
- 10% of the people do 90% of the work…

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response

- The ones who responded are the ones whom I would consider leadership – they take responsibility for their congregation, regardless of their title or position or office.

Focus Group – Silent Generation

- Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory. Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory. Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.
• Those who have had leadership continue to have leadership, but in different ways (KK – was youth leader, now is Sunday School teacher for his peers)

Focus Group – Gen X
• Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory. Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.
• Those who have had leadership continue to have leadership, but in different ways (teaching, leading youth group, serving on committees, etc.)

Focus Group – Gen Y
• Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory.
• Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.
• Those who are “no responsibilities”, at times, take advantage, only attending worship when obligated by those responsibilities.

Focus Group Follow Up
• No one in the focus group can currently be classified as “those with responsibilities” (leadership)
• No responsibilities (no leadership)
  o I think when they are applied in the manner that Christ intended them to be utilized they are fantastic and basically, how we should treat everyone, with I, H, N, & W. I think we are at an impasse nationally where these values are being distorted in the name of "Religious Freedom" a phrase that states, "you don't belong in my club." Or, as Steve Fisher wrote and David Lamotte so aptly covered in the song "That's My Toy": This is my God, you don't know Him; He's saving a place up in heaven just for me; You won't go there, my Bible tells me; You'll go hell, just wait and see
  o I think that they are attributes that one would EXPECT to experience in a church. I remember visiting a church 20 years ago when I first moved to Greensboro and no one spoke to me. I stood in line for 10 minutes to speak with the minister after the service - - just to have some human contact and feel that my visit was acknowledged. I’ve never forgotten the way I felt - - and haven’t been back to that church!
  o Starmount has seemed to really focus on outreach to the congregation through its programming. It is good to see the level of engagement by the congregation.
  o They are a good guide to being a Christian and what aspects to focus in one’s interactions.
  o Upon first being introduced to Christian Practices as thought of in terms of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome, I admittedly had never thought
of Christianity in line with these concepts. Since then, I’ve started to see Christianity, or my call as a Christian, to be one who is inviting and welcoming to others—that extending invitations to church events isn’t asking someone to then become a Christian; instead, I am using my call to reach out to others. Simple as that.

- For me, this has become a very important part of what I want for my church. I find that the best way to evangelize to others is through Christian Practices. Showing the way via being a living example. As we’ve progressed in to a more politically charged time in the Presbyterian Church, in regards to alternative lifestyles and the church’s acceptance, I find these to be even more important.

- It is nice to have them broken down this way. So often, we think about what living as a Christian should look like, but this helps to further define it.

- Feel all four of the CP are utmost to be displayed by us the members of the church—Kathryn has done an excellent job of explaining them in our training and giving us ways we can use them.

- I am more conscious of what I am doing as a Christian Practice.

- Hospitality and nurturing of current church members and visitors strengthen the whole congregation. The welcome and invitation should be our response to Christ’s love. I feel that all four Christian Practices are essential to a healthy congregation.

**What are the Learnings?**

**Male vs. Female**

**Bible Study Written Response**

- **Men (40% of participants)**
  - The men appear to have learned what each of the CP are and how to apply them to tangible/pragmatic tasks

- **Women (60% of participants)**
  - The women appear to have done the same

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**

- **Men (40% of participants)**
  - The men learned about the CP and how to apply them to their lives.
  - The men learned it is harder than they thought to put them into action (or name specific ways they are utilized.)

- **Women (60% of participants)**
  - The women learned that they did it (putting CP into practice) but that they didn’t always get a response/return on their ask.
  - One indicated it is easier to recognize opportunities to put CP into practice (but not, necessarily, that they did them)

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**

- People in this demographic have identified that they connect with the sermons
- Men indicated that they learn due to the “squirmability” in a sermon which allows for people to grow in their faith (line 107)
- This generation understands that they need to do more than just worship on Sundays – one way to connect with others in the congregation (line 140)

**Focus Group – Baby Boomer**
• Men
  o Very analytical.
  o Indicating very black and white things that are seemingly clear-cut

• Women
  o Feelings are attached to the comments being made
  o Deep-rooted connections and emotions are what allow them to be connected to the congregation and worship.

Focus Group – Gen X
• Men
  o Spoke freely
  o Provided strong opinions
  o Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming

• Women
  o Spoke freely
  o Provided strong opinions
  o Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming

Focus Group – Gen Y
• Men
  o Spoke freely
  o Provided strong opinions
  o Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming
  o Indicated that they were assertive in their thoughts about participating in the life of a church

• Women
  o Spoke freely
  o Provided strong opinions
  o Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming

Focus Group Follow Up
• Men
  o SLOW DOWN! LISTEN! Realize that there are times, even when one is living in "The Suck", that I must stop, look and listen to others because in the voices of others I may hear the voice of God.
  o That everyone has their own struggles. If we remain and open and welcoming it may be a vehicle for people to enter the faith, or simply dip their toe in the shallow end as they search for a place of belonging and fellowship.
  o The PC(USA) as well as other established religions are slowly dwindling in numbers and have been for many years. We are slowly, but surely, learning that we can no longer sit in the same pew seat we have sat in since our great-grandparents' time at the church. We must extend the "right hand of welcome" to all new faces. We must invite people to events, and not immediately press them to be on a committee or volunteer their time, as have been past practices, but simply set a place of welcome where the new persons can find a place of belonging and fellowship.
  o I am more sensitive to newcomers and go out of my way to acknowledge them. It is not always comfortable to do this, but I remember my experience
from the past and don’t want anyone to ever say that they experienced this in our church.

- It is a biblical mandate to “go into the world and preach the gospel.” While I might feel uncomfortable “witnessing” to others in a “Bible-Thumper” type format, all of us who profess to be Christians should show our faith by living a life that exemplifies these characteristics because we follow Christ. If people can’t see these attributes in us, then we need to do something about it.

- I’ve learned how important it is for congregations to adopt and implement these practices at every opportunity. We have to move out of our comfort zones to welcome others into our congregation. Through some of our transition studies, I’ve learned that our church is particularly good in these areas and are known for our welcoming style. We have to be careful, however, to guard from becoming complacent. We can’t afford for a visitor or member to ever experience a “cold and unwelcoming” congregation when they worship with us. They’ll never forget it….

- It is always good to step back and take a personal look at one’s self, especially if you have a measuring stick like the Christian Practices. I am not sure about learning anything specific, but am trying to be more aware of my actions.

- It is always easier to practice my faith when I have the Christian Practices to be a guide.

- I can’t say I have learned anything about the congregation and its use of Christian Practices as I find it hard to discern if they are trying the various aspects of CP or our congregation is just that kind and engaging. We are blessed with what I think is a very open and loving congregation.

- I do not think broadly enough about Christian Practices but focus on specific interest such as music.

- My person practice is too self-centered. I need to reach out more to others.

- The Starmount congregation uses Christian Practices well and seems to have an ever-expanding program of activities that foster the use of Christian Practices.

- Women

- I have learned that if I let those principles be at the center of my life, I become a more grounded, empathetic person.

- I will repeat something I wrote earlier, which is that I’ve begun rethinking how I see evangelism. When I used to hear the word, Evangelism, I would cringe. To me that meant, doing cold calls around neighborhoods with the youth group at my father’s church. Literally, going up to someone’s house, knocking on the door, and asking if whomever answered was saved. Honestly, I never went on any of these excursions (whew!), but the thought of doing so, TERRIFIED ME! Small examples like that one held me back from sharing my faith simply because I was taught that that was the only way to do so.

- However, I now understand evangelism as action rather than verbal invitation. For instance, I talk to my non-church friends, colleagues, and even my girlfriend about what I do at church (volunteer at the community garden, work with the youth, etc.) and why I do it. I believe this to be a form of evangelism;
I’m sharing my faith by letting others know that I have found a place of faith to which I belong and why it is that I cling tightly to that place.

- That Starmount is a very welcoming place that extends invitations for all sorts of fellowship activities. Once you are in Starmount, the people nurture you through fellowship, food, and your called talents. People, in other words, approach you to serve on various committees or elicit your help for particular events. I see these as nurture. Those people might just need another body in a chair, but they more likely are seeing something in you; calling you for to be that particular body in that particular chair.

- I think I have become more aware of my role as a representative of my church – I have observed that others judge you without realizing that they are judging and making assumptions about your faith just based on your practices. Therefore, it is important to show these as underlying parts of your personality – without having to be a false representation. In other words, I’m allowed to use four letter colorful language and have tattoos, as long as I’m aware of how that impacts those around me. And as long as they aren’t offended and I’m a living, hospitable, inviting, nurturing Christian – there isn’t a stigma against Christians and being stuck up.

- I find it important to dispel assumptions people have about “Christians” and help them to see that Christians are just people too. My faith is an open and inviting one, not one that requires excessive work and lifestyle changes. There are some whose faith requires these things – and that doesn’t mean that they can’t share the same faith as me, but that we need to be open and accepting of others through hospitality and invitation.

- One of my more recent learnings was that our church family is still a family – just like the one you have at home. It’s not a strict school environment with a teacher/principal who governs all that you do. We all contribute to the family – like a strong marriage, not that we are all children who have to listen to dominating parents. We are a strong church because we are the church – mental image of all those people fingers inside the church steeple who make up the church. The pastor doesn’t make the church… yes, it can set a tone, but a strong church family is about the people. We are inviting, welcoming and caring – because of who we are, not what we are told to do.

- Practicing Invitation is not always easy for me. I tend to be shy unless confident in a situation….or ready to step out of my comfort zone. I feel I have more gifts to share in the areas of nurture and welcome.

- God calls us to use these Christian Practices. When we do, our faith is strengthened.

- I feel our congregation does a good job in these areas. Different people have stronger abilities in different areas. Together, we form a strong set of practices.

- I will always need to learn and share these practices. I feel God has kept me here to use these CP and to share them with others.

- It has strengthened my faith as each one are important in your faith.
o I think our congregation has grow a great deal with the nurturing of our
refugee families in many ways --fifty years ago it would have never welcomed
these families.
o I feel good working what I do with Christian Practices.
o Again, taking what I do with Christian Practices.
o I feel that our congregation uses Christian Practices in a big way through all
that they do.
o That I enjoy people and talking with them but am hesitant to start
conversations with those I do not know well. The exception is I try to speak
to new faces when I recognize them in church.
o That being a Christian is a 24/7 life style. Friends know of my commitment to
my church and all my behavior, day in and day out, show some one what a
Christian is suppose to be or not be. I think I am more aware of the kindness
relayed with a smile or hello and listening to the response.
o Our congregation has varied groups in it. This is good in that the many
interest make Starmount the committed church that it is. Music, garden,
mission, Christian Education, church officer and volunteer commitments and
others I am sure I have not mentioned are areas where people serve. Unless
you have worked in the same areas, sometimes, you do not have or make the
opportunity to get to know those other members very well. The small group
meals and fellowship programs, I think, help bridge some of the members.
Our members are very gracious to each other in times of need, card, meals,
visits etc. These acknowledgments of concern are very welcome. Both the
circles and the caring committee do a good job of keeping in touch with our
shut ins. This evaluation comes from hearing friends in other churches being
surprised at the coverage we provide for our shut ins.

Passive Members vs. Active Members

Bible Study Written Response
• Passive members are ones that would not necessarily attend the bible study.
• Active members learned what they could about how to apply the CP to their daily
lives and interactions

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• Passive members are ones that would not necessarily attend the bible study.
• Active members learned how putting CP to their daily lives can help make the church
successful

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• Passive members are only learning what they are willing to learn – through personal
bible study, prayer, and reflection and through the worship services they attend
• Active members are learning what they want to learn; but being that they are active,
they are more engaged and intentional about the ways in which they learn. This isn’t
to say that passive members are not intentional about what they learn, but they are
seeking out ways to be engaged through the church family.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive),
although with differing levels of participation.
Interestingly, it is admitted that some of the active members, now that they are empty nesters, are becoming less active (line 178)

Active members are engaged in the ways they know how to be engaged. There are other aspects of the church life that they do not recall or know about, because it is not of interest to them – “blindness”

Focus Group – Gen X

Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.

These active members may not be considered active by older generations, due to attendance trends

These active members know what they want and what they are seeking; they are strongly tied to solid relationships, but will do what is best for self/family

Focus Group – Gen Y

Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.

These active members may not be considered active by older generations, due to attendance trends

These active members know what they want and what they are seeking, steeped in tradition and being a part of a community

Focus Group Follow Up

Passive

- SLOW DOWN! LISTEN! Realize that there are times, even when one is living in "The Suck", that I must stop, look and listen to others because in the voices of others I may hear the voice of God.
- That everyone has their own struggles. If we remain and open and welcoming it may be a vehicle for people to enter the faith, or simply dip their toe in the shallow end as they search for a place of belonging and fellowship.
- The PC(USA) as well as other established religions are slowly dwindling in numbers and have been for many years. We are slowly, but surely, learning that we can no longer sit in the same pew seat we have sat in since our great-grandparents' time at the church. We must extend the "right hand of welcome" to all new faces. We must invite people to events, and not immediately press them to be on a committee or volunteer their time, as have been past practices, but simply set a place of welcome where the new persons can find a place of belonging and fellowship.

Active

- I am more sensitive to newcomers and go out of my way to acknowledge them. It is not always comfortable to do this, but I remember my experience from the past and don’t want anyone to ever say that they experienced this in our church.
- It is a biblical mandate to “go into the world and preach the gospel.” While I might feel uncomfortable “witnessing” to others in a “Bible-Thumper” type format, all of us who profess to be Christians should show our faith by living a life that exemplifies these characteristics because we follow Christ. If people can’t see these attributes in us, then we need to do something about it.
I’ve learned how important it is for congregations to adopt and implement these practices at every opportunity. We have to move out of our comfort zones to welcome others into our congregation. Through some of our transition studies, I’ve learned that our church is particularly good in these areas and are known for our welcoming style. We have to be careful, however, to guard from becoming complacent. We can’t afford for a visitor or member to ever experience a “cold and unwelcoming” congregation when they worship with us. They’ll never forget it.…

It is always good to step back and take a personal look at one’s self, especially if you have a measuring stick like the Christian Practices. I am not sure about learning anything specific, but am trying to be more aware of my actions.

It is always easier to practice my faith when I have the Christian Practices to be a guide.

I can’t say I have learned anything about the congregation and its use of Christian Practices as I find it hard to discern if they are trying the various aspects of CP or our congregation is just that kind and engaging. We are blessed with what I think is a very open and loving congregation.

I do not think broadly enough about Christian Practices but focus on specific interest such as music.

My person practice is too self-centered. I need to reach out more to others.

The Starmount congregation uses Christian Practices well and seems to have an ever-expanding program of activities that foster the use of Christian Practices.

I have learned that if I let those principles be at the center of my life, I become a more grounded, empathetic person.

I will repeat something I wrote earlier, which is that I’ve begun rethinking how I see evangelism. When I used to hear the word, Evangelism, I would cringe. To me that meant, doing cold calls around neighborhoods with the youth group at my father’s church. Literally, going up to someone’s house, knocking on the door, and asking if whomever answered was saved. Honestly, I never went on any of these excursions (whew!), but the thought of doing so, TERRIFIED ME! Small examples like that one held me back from sharing my faith simply because I was taught that that was the only way to do so.

However, I now understand evangelism as action rather than verbal invitation. For instance, I talk to my non-church friends, colleagues, and even my girlfriend about what I do at church (volunteer at the community garden, work with the youth, etc.) and why I do it. I believe this to be a form of evangelism; I’m sharing my faith by letting others know that I have found a place of faith to which I belong and why it is that I cling tightly to that place.

That Starmount is a very welcoming place that extends invitations for all sorts of fellowship activities. Once you are in Starmount, the people nurture you through fellowship, food, and your called talents. People, in other words, approach you to serve on various committees or elicit your help for particular events. I see these as nurture. Those people might just need another body in a chair, but they more likely are seeing something in you; calling you for to be that particular body in that particular chair.
I think I have become more aware of my role as a representative of my church – I have observed that others judge you without realizing that they are judging and making assumptions about your faith just based on your practices. Therefore, it is important to show these as underlying parts of your personality – without having to be a false representation. In other words, I’m allowed to use four letter colorful language and have tattoos, as long as I’m aware of how that impacts those around me. And as long as they aren’t offended and I’m a living, hospitable, inviting, nurturing Christian – there isn’t a stigma against Christians and being stuck up.

I find it important to dispel assumptions people have about “Christians” and help them to see that Christians are just people too. My faith is an open and inviting one, not one that requires excessive work and lifestyle changes. There are some whose faith requires these things – and that doesn’t mean that they can’t share the same faith as me, but that we need to be open and accepting of others through hospitality and invitation.

One of my more recent learnings was that our church family is still a family – just like the one you have at home. It’s not a strict school environment with a teacher/principal who governs all that you do. We all contribute to the family – like a strong marriage, not that we are all children who have to listen to dominating parents. We are a strong church because we are the church – mental image of all those people fingers inside the church steeple who make up the church. The pastor doesn’t make the church… yes, it can set a tone, but a strong church family is about the people. We are inviting, welcoming and caring – because of who we are, not what we are told to do.

Practicing Invitation is not always easy for me. I tend to be shy unless confident in a situation….or ready to step out of my comfort zone. I feel I have more gifts to share in the areas of nurture and welcome.

God calls us to use these Christian Practices. When we do, our faith is strengthened.

I feel our congregation does a good job in these areas. Different people have stronger abilities in different areas. Together, we form a strong set of practices.

I will always need to learn and share these practices. I feel God has kept me here to use these CP and to share them with others.

It has strengthened my faith as each one are important in your faith.

I think our congregation has grow a great deal with the nurturing of our refugee families in many ways --fifty years ago it would have never welcomed these families.

I feel good working what I do with Christian Practices.

Again, taking what I do with Christian Practices.

I feel that our congregation uses Christian Practices in a big way through all that they do.

That I enjoy people and talking with them but am hesitant to start conversations with those I do not know well. The exception is I try to speak to new faces when I recognize them in church.
That being a Christian is a 24/7 life style. Friends know of my commitment to my church and all my behavior, day in and day out, show some one what a Christian is suppose to be or not be. I think I am more aware of the kindness relayed with a smile or hello and listening to the response.

Our congregation has varied groups in it. This is good in that the many interest make Starmount the committed church that it is. Music, garden, mission, Christian Education, church officer and volunteer commitments and others I am sure I have not mentioned are areas where people serve. Unless you have worked in the same areas, sometimes, you do not have or make the opportunity to get to know those other members very well. The small group meals and fellowship programs, I think, help bridge some of the members. Our members are very gracious to each other in times of need, card, meals, visits etc. These acknowledgments of concern are very welcome. Both the circles and the caring committee do a good job of keeping in touch with our shut ins. This evaluation comes from hearing friends in other churches being surprised at the coverage we provide for our shut ins.

**Those with No responsibility vs. those with responsibilities**

Bible Study Written Response
- Those without responsibilities in the church (non-elders) learned the same things, I think, as those who are elders and committee chairs.
- If they wanted to participate and be a part of the “change they want to see”, then they will step up, regardless of whether or not they have a title.
- 10% of the people do 90% of the work…

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- The ones who responded are the ones whom I would consider leadership – they take responsibility for their congregation, regardless of their title or position or office.
- So while they may not have direct titles of elder, chairperson, etc., they are serving as the leadership of the church in their actions (volunteering as ushers, etc.)

Focus Group – Silent Generation
- The learnings are what they are, regardless of leadership or not: the learnings in this focus group are based upon what they have heard and processed by the other participants

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
- Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory. Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.
- Those who have had leadership continue to have leadership, but in different ways (KK – was youth leader, now is Sunday School teacher for his peers)

Focus Group – Gen X
- Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory. Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.
- Those who have had leadership continue to have leadership, but in different ways (teaching, leading youth group, serving on committees, etc.)
Focus Group – Gen Y

- Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory.
- Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.
- Those who are “no responsibilities”, at times, take advantage, only attending worship when obligated by those responsibilities.

Focus Group Follow Up

- No one in the focus group can currently be classified as “those with responsibilities” (leadership)
- No responsibilities (no leadership)
  - SLOW DOWN! LISTEN! Realize that there are times, even when one is living in "The Suck", that I must stop, look and listen to others because in the voices of others I may hear the voice of God.
  - That everyone has their own struggles. If we remain and open and welcoming it may be a vehicle for people to enter the faith, or simply dip their toe in the shallow end as they search for a place of belonging and fellowship.
  - The PC(USA) as well as other established religions are slowly dwindling in numbers and have been for many years. We are slowly, but surely, learning that we can no longer sit in the same pew seat we have sat in since our great-grandparents' time at the church. We must extend the "right hand of welcome" to all new faces. We must invite people to events, and not immediately press them to be on a committee or volunteer their time, as have been past practices, but simply set a place of welcome where the new persons can find a place of belonging and fellowship.
  - I am more sensitive to newcomers and go out of my way to acknowledge them. It is not always comfortable to do this, but I remember my experience from the past and don’t want anyone to ever say that they experienced this in our church.
  - It is a biblical mandate to “go into the world and preach the gospel.” While I might feel uncomfortable “witnessing” to others in a “Bible-Thumper” type format, all of us who profess to be Christians should show our faith by living a life that exemplifies these characteristics because we follow Christ. If people can’t see these attributes in us, then we need to do something about it.
  - I’ve learned how important it is for congregations to adopt and implement these practices at every opportunity. We have to move out of our comfort zones to welcome others into our congregation. Through some of our transition studies, I’ve learned that our church is particularly good in these areas and are known for our welcoming style. We have to be careful, however, to guard from becoming complacent. We can’t afford for a visitor or member to ever experience a “cold and unwelcoming” congregation when they worship with us. They’ll never forget it….
  - It is always good to step back and take a personal look at one’s self, especially if you have a measuring stick like the Christian Practices. I am not sure about learning anything specific, but am trying to be more aware of my actions.
It is always easier to practice my faith when I have the Christian Practices to be a guide. I can’t say I have learned anything about the congregation and its use of Christian Practices as I find it hard to discern if they are trying the various aspects of CP or our congregation is just that kind and engaging. We are blessed with what I think is a very open and loving congregation. I do not think broadly enough about Christian Practices but focus on specific interest such as music. My person practice is too self-centered. I need to reach out more to others. The Starmount congregation uses Christian Practices well and seems to have an ever-expanding program of activities that foster the use of Christian Practices. I have learned that if I let those principles be at the center of my life, I become a more grounded, empathetic person. I will repeat something I wrote earlier, which is that I’ve begun rethinking how I see evangelism. When I used to hear the word, Evangelism, I would cringe. To me that meant, doing cold calls around neighborhoods with the youth group at my father’s church. Literally, going up to someone’s house, knocking on the door, and asking if whomever answered was saved. Honestly, I never went on any of these excursions (whew!), but the thought of doing so, TERRIFIED ME! Small examples like that one held me back from sharing my faith simply because I was taught that that was the only way to do so. However, I now understand evangelism as action rather than verbal invitation. For instance, I talk to my non-church friends, colleagues, and even my girlfriend about what I do at church (volunteer at the community garden, work with the youth, etc.) and why I do it. I believe this to be a form of evangelism; I’m sharing my faith by letting others know that I have found a place of faith to which I belong and why it is that I cling tightly to that place. That Starmount is a very welcoming place that extends invitations for all sorts of fellowship activities. Once you are in Starmount, the people nurture you through fellowship, food, and your called talents. People, in other words, approach you to serve on various committees or elicit your help for particular events. I see these as nurture. Those people might just need another body in a chair, but they more likely are seeing something in you; calling you for to be that particular body in that particular chair. I think I have become more aware of my role as a representative of my church – I have observed that others judge you without realizing that they are judging and making assumptions about your faith just based on your practices. Therefore, it is important to show these as underlying parts of your personality – without having to be a false representation. In other words, I’m allowed to use four letter colorful language and have tattoos, as long as I’m aware of how that impacts those around me. And as long as they aren’t offended and I’m a living, hospitable, inviting, nurturing Christian – there isn’t a stigma against Christians and being stuck up. I find it important to dispel assumptions people have about “Christians” and help them to see that Christians are just people too. My faith is an open and
inviting one, not one that requires excessive work and lifestyle changes. There are some whose faith requires these things – and that doesn’t mean that they can’t share the same faith as me, but that we need to be open and accepting of others through hospitality and invitation.

- One of my more recent learnings was that our church family is still a family – just like the one you have at home. It’s not a strict school environment with a teacher/principal who governs all that you do. We all contribute to the family – like a strong marriage, not that we are all children who have to listen to dominating parents. We are a strong church because we are the church – mental image of all those people fingers inside the church steeple who make up the church. The pastor doesn’t make the church… yes, it can set a tone, but a strong church family is about the people. We are inviting, welcoming and caring – because of who we are, not what we are told to do.

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visits etc. These acknowledgments of concern are very welcome. Both the circles and the caring committee do a good job of keeping in touch with our shut ins. This evaluation comes from hearing friends in other churches being surprised at the coverage we provide for our shut ins.

**What is their Behavior?**

*Male vs. Female*

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**Bible Study Written Response**

- **Men (40% of participants)**
  - Action
  - Their behavior indicates that they understand what they can do to put CP into practice.
- **Women (60% of participants)**
  - The women indicated ways to behave/do things that integrate the CP

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**

- **Men (40% of participants)**
  - Their behavior indicates that they understand what they can do to put CP into practice, but that it is not as easy as they would think.
  - Their behavior has changed, in some part, because of their having participated in the bible study.
- **Women (60% of participants)**
  - The women indicated that they did things that would classify as using the CP, but that it is a matter of them going out of their comfort zones
  - Their behavior indicates that they are able to understand the concepts of CP

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**

- **Men**
  - One of the men was very vocal (in general), but was explicit about his past experiences with faith and how they shape who he is today (and what he is seeking in a faith community).
- **Women**
  - The women spoke of being vocal with friends and family
  - The women indicated what they appreciated in worship and what they would like to see different, although they were less vocal about what they didn’t want.
  - One indicated hesitation on teaching something, which I find interesting and (unfortunately) indicative of gender differences

**Focus Group – Baby Boomer**

- **Men**
  - Very analytical.
  - Indicating very black and white things that are seemingly clear-cut
- **Women**
  - Feelings are attached to the comments being made
  - Deep-rooted connections and emotions are what allow them to be connected to the congregation and worship.

**Focus Group – Gen X**

- **Men**
  - Spoke freely

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Provided strong opinions
Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming

Women
Spoke freely
Provided strong opinions
Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming

Focus Group – Gen Y

Men
Spoke freely
Provided strong opinions
Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming
Indicated that they were assertive in their thoughts about participating in the life of a church

Women
Spoke freely
Provided strong opinions
Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming

Focus Group Follow Up

Men
My behavior changed in that I have become more mindful of the need to show these practices in my daily life. If we profess to be Christians, yet act in a manner outside of these practices, we’ve done more damage to the faith than we’ve prevented. One bad experience with a “Christian” may be all it takes to turn someone away from the church forever. What a shame that would be…
I am not sure my behavior has changed, but I do find myself aware and try to be sure I try to apply those attributes of CP if I find myself in a situation where it might be a little harder to be as loving and compassionate as I should be.
At Starmount I have a better behavior guide towards others and also in the community.
Difficult to answer since I have been gone from Starmount for over a year. I will state that The Guinness and the Good News fellowship seems to be welcoming new members and remains and inviting place for all. I will also say that, in conversations with the associate pastor, Starmount seems to be moving forward on progressive issues involving the LGBTQ community in opening its doors.

Women
These Christian Practices reshaped how I saw mission. Again, because of the church environment in which I was raised, mission was always some across the seas trip to help the poor, unsaved souls. Now, I see mission as an integral part of one’s local community. For me, it is staggering to see so many people be food insecure, especially children, right in your local backyard. For me, mission work—the work of being hospitable, inviting, and nurturing—is desperately needed in my community and mission isn’t necessarily about saving souls but nurturing those souls that God already has a plan for. So, I’ve begun teaching my college freshman about food insecurity and have begun to
think about how to integrate lessons of food insecurity into my teaching and research of Renaissance literature. My newfound understanding of mission, hospitality, and nurture, thanks to Kathryn’s evangelism re-vamping, has phenomenally transformed me, my interest in the community, and at work. At home, I believe these practices have shaped how I interact with my girlfriend/partner. They make me see when I’m being selfish, what I can do to help nurture her self-growth or her life journey. They also allow me to see how I nurture myself so that I can be the person God calls me to be.

- I’m not sure I would say it has. Although, I am more aware of my actions within Starmount and the role I play as a strong member of that community.
- I have been more observant of my actions….areas where I may be hesitant and areas where I need to work more. I feel I became more intentional in my actions.
- I don't think my behavior has changed as I* have been blessed with sharing my love from Jesus with all and everywhere I go.
- Not sure that my behavior did change. Maybe doing more.
- I was open to inviting people I do not know to my home for meals. I am much richer because of the friendships and respect that grew out of those visits. I was able to do this because I did not feel judgment about how or what I did for the evening. The invitation and welcome part became the most important to me. Among neighbors and friends I continue to tell about the various programs or mission outreach that we do. Our music programs have provided the opportunities to invite others to church.

**Passive Members vs. Active Members**

**Bible Study Written Response**
- Passive members’ behavior would not necessarily change, due to the fact that they have not been made aware of the CP and how they can be utilized in their daily lives.
- Active members’ behavior should change, at least, in recognizing the way(s) that they can participate and put CP to use

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
- Passive members’ behavior would not necessarily change, due to the fact that they have not been made aware of the CP and how they can be utilized in their daily lives
- It is hoped that active members’ behavior changed because they were able to see the impact that using the CP in their daily lives can be

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**
- Passive members are only learning what they are willing to learn – through personal bible study, prayer, and reflection and through the worship services they attend
- Active members are learning what they want to learn; but being that they are active, they are more engaged and intentional about the ways in which they learn. This isn’t to say that passive members are not intentional about what they learn, but they are seeking out ways to be engaged through the church family.

**Focus Group – Baby Boomer**
- Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.
- Interestingly, it is admitted that some of the active members, now that they are empty nesters, are becoming less active (line 178)
Active members are engaged in the ways they know how to be engaged. There are other aspects of the church life that they do not recall or know about, because it is not of interest to them – “blindness”

Focus Group – Gen X
- Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.
- These active members may not be considered active by older generations, due to attendance trends
- These active members know what they want and what they are seeking; they are strongly tied to solid relationships, but will do what is best for self/family

Focus Group – Gen Y
- Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.
- These active members may not be considered active by older generations, due to attendance trends
- These active members know what they want and what they are seeking, steeped in tradition and being a part of a community

Focus Group Follow Up
- Passive
  - Difficult to answer since I have been gone from Starmount for over a year. I will state that The Guinness and the Good News fellowship seems to be welcoming new members and remains and inviting place for all. I will also say that, in conversations with the associate pastor, Starmount seems to be moving forward on progressive issues involving the LGBTQ community in opening its doors.
- Active
  - My behavior changed in that I have become more mindful of the need to show these practices in my daily life. If we profess to be Christians, yet act in a manner outside of these practices, we’ve done more damage to the faith than we’ve prevented. One bad experience with a “Christian” may be all it takes to turn someone away from the church forever. What a shame that would be…
  - I am not sure my behavior has changed, but I do find myself aware and try to be sure I try to apply those attributes of CP if I find myself in a situation where it might be a little harder to be as loving and compassionate as I should be.
  - At Starmount I have a better behavior guide towards others and also in the community.
  - These Christian Practices reshaped how I saw mission. Again, because of the church environment in which I was raised, mission was always some across the seas trip to help the poor, unsaved souls. Now, I see mission as an integral part of one’s local community. For me, it is staggering to see so many people be food insecure, especially children, right in your local backyard. For me, mission work—the work of being hospitable, inviting, and nurturing—is desperately needed in my community and mission isn’t necessarily about saving souls but nurturing those souls that God already has a plan for. So, I’ve begun teaching my college freshman about food insecurity and have begun to
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- I’m not sure I would say it has. Although, I am more aware of my actions within Starmount and the role I play as a strong member of that community.
- I have been more observant of my actions…areas where I may be hesitant and areas where I need to work more. I feel I became more intentional in my actions.
- I don’t think my behavior has changed as I have been blessed with sharing my love from Jesus with all and everywhere I go.
- Not sure that my behavior did change. Maybe doing more.
- I was open to inviting people I do not know to my home for meals. I am much richer because of the friendships and respect that grew out of those visits. I was able to do this because I did not feel judgment about how or what I did for the evening. The invitation and welcome part became the most important to me. Among neighbors and friends I continue to tell about the various programs or mission outreach that we do. Our music programs have provided the opportunities to invite others to church.

Those with No responsibility vs. those with responsibilities

Bible Study Written Response
- The ones who responded are the ones whom I would consider leadership – they take responsibility for their congregation, regardless of their title or position or office.
- So while they may not have direct titles of elder, chairperson, etc., they are serving as the leadership of the church in their actions (volunteering as ushers, etc.)

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Focus Group – Silent Generation
- Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.
- Interestingly enough, one of the focus group participants is no longer a member of the congregation, he and his wife departing because of the PCUSA’s change in stance over gay marriage.
- These active members continue to participate in activities, although I am hearing from non-focus group church members of the same generation, it is getting more and more difficult to “get up and moving” in the mornings, making it difficult to get to Sunday school.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory. Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.

Those who have had leadership continue to have leadership, but in different ways (KK – was youth leader, now is Sunday School teacher for his peers)

Focus Group – Gen X

Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory. Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.

Those who have had leadership continue to have leadership, but in different ways (teaching, leading youth group, serving on committees, etc.)

Focus Group – Gen Y

Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory.

Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.

Those who are “no responsibilities”, at times, take advantage, only attending worship when obligated by those responsibilities.

Focus Group Follow Up

No one in the focus group can be categorized as having responsibility

No responsibilities

- My behavior changed in that I have become more mindful of the need to show these practices in my daily life. If we profess to be Christians, yet act in a manner outside of these practices, we’ve done more damage to the faith than we’ve prevented. One bad experience with a “Christian” may be all it takes to turn someone away from the church forever. What a shame that would be…

- I am not sure my behavior has changed, but I do find myself aware and try to be sure I try to apply those attributes of CP if I find myself in a situation where it might be a little harder to be as loving and compassionate as I should be.

- At Starmount I have a better behavior guide towards others and also in the community.

- Difficult to answer since I have been gone from Starmount for over a year. I will state that The Guinness and the Good News fellowship seems to be welcoming new members and remains and inviting place for all. I will also say that, in conversations with the associate pastor, Starmount seems to be moving forward on progressive issues involving the LGBTQ community in opening its doors.

- These Christian Practices reshaped how I saw mission. Again, because of the church environment in which I was raised, mission was always some across the seas trip to help the poor, unsaved souls. Now, I see mission as an integral part of one’s local community. For me, it is staggering to see so many people be food insecure, especially children, right in your local backyard. For me,
mission work—the work of being hospitable, inviting, and nurturing—is desperately needed in my community and mission isn’t necessarily about saving souls but nurturing those souls that God already has a plan for. So, I’ve begun teaching my college freshman about food insecurity and have begun to think about how to integrate lessons of food insecurity into my teaching and research of Renaissance literature. My newfound understanding of mission, hospitality, and nurture, thanks to Kathryn’s evangelism re-vamping, has phenomenally transformed me, my interest in the community, and at work. At home, I believe these practices have shaped how I interact with my girlfriend/partner. They make me see when I’m being selfish, what I can do to help nurture her self-growth or her life journey. They also allow me to see how I nurture myself so that I can be the person God calls me to be.

- I’m not sure I would say it has. Although, I am more aware of my actions within Starmount and the role I play as a strong member of that community.
- I have been more observant of my actions…areas where I may be hesitant and areas where I need to work more. I feel I became more intentional in my actions.
- I don't think my behavior has changed as I* have been blessed with sharing my love from Jesus with all and everywhere I go.
- Not sure that my behavior did change. Maybe doing more.
- I was open to inviting people I do not know to my home for meals. I am much richer because of the friendships and respect that grew out of those visits. I was able to do this because I did not feel judgment about how or what I did for the evening. The invitation and welcome part became the most important to me. Among neighbors and friends I continue to tell about the various programs or mission outreach that we do. Our music programs have provided the opportunities to invite others to church.

**What are the Results?**

**Male vs. Female**

**Bible Study Written Response**
- Men (40% of participants)
  - The results indicate that men were successful in grasping the concepts of CP and how to identify ways that they could put the CP into action
- Women (60% of participants)
  - The results indicate that women were successful in grasping the concepts of CP and how to identify ways that they could put the CP into action

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
- Men (40% of participants)
  - Their behavior indicates that they understand what they can do to put CP into practice, but that it is not as easy as they would think.
  - Men know what they should do to put CP into practice at the church and in their daily lives.
- Women (60% of participants)
  - Their behavior indicates that they understand what they can do to put CP into practice, but that it is not as easy as they would think.
Women know what they should do to put CP into practice at the church and in their daily lives.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
- The results are indicated by the responses given
- Men
  - One of the men was very vocal (in general), but was explicit about his past experiences with faith and how they shape who he is today (and what he is seeking in a faith community).
- Women
  - The women spoke of being vocal with friends and family
  - The women indicated what they appreciated in worship and what they would like to see different, although they were less vocal about what they didn’t want
  - One indicated hesitation on teaching something, which I find interesting and (unfortunately) indicative of gender differences

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
- The results are indicated by the responses given
- Men
  - Very analytical.
  - Indicating very black and white things that are seemingly clear-cut
- Women
  - Feelings are attached to the comments being made
  - Deep-rooted connections and emotions are what allow them to be connected to the congregation and worship.

Focus Group – Gen X
- The results are indicated by the responses given
- Men
  - Spoke freely
  - Provided strong opinions
  - Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming
- Women
  - Spoke freely
  - Provided strong opinions
  - Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming

Focus Group – Gen Y
- Men
  - Spoke freely
  - Provided strong opinions
  - Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming
  - Indicated that they were assertive in their thoughts about participating in the life of a church
- Women
  - Spoke freely
  - Provided strong opinions
  - Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming

Focus Group Follow Up
• Men
  o During passing of the peace, I make a point to greet and speak to those around me. I always try to search out faces I don’t recognize and introduce myself to them during church functions.
  o I am not sure my behavior has changed, but I do find myself aware and try to be sure I try to apply those attributes of CP if I find myself in a situation where it might be a little harder to be as loving and compassionate as I should be.
  o Reaching out more as a Christian.
  o Daily. They should be a part of one's daily life. These simply are practices of being a decent human.

• Women
  o Not directly. Although, I would honestly state that I have always been someone who represents these traits.
  o I have been more intentional in my actions.
  o I have used them as a reminder as to what the good Lord wants me to do.
  o Your programs emphasized how important little acts of kindness are to others. This has made me want to be more in tune to reaching out to others.
  o I’ve used these practices to go out into the community and serve (through the Starmount Community Garden, Out of the Garden Project), to become a better teacher who raises students’ awareness about the world around them, and to improve my life and wellbeing.

  Passive Members vs. Active Members

Bible Study Written Response
• Passive members’ would not have results, since they did not participate in the study
• Active members’ results include writing responses to the survey about how they will put the CP into their daily lives.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• Passive members’ would not have results, since they did not participate in the study
• Active members’ results should indicate the ways they successfully (or unsuccessfully) put the CP into action, including baking brownies, inviting people to worship and events, etc.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.
• Interestingly enough, one of the focus group participants is no longer a member of the congregation, he and his wife departing because of the PCUSA’s change in stance over gay marriage.
• These active members continue to participate in activities, although I am hearing from non-focus group church members of the same generation, it is getting more and more difficult to “get up and moving” in the mornings, making it difficult to get to Sunday school.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.
Interesting, it is admitted that some of the active members, now that they are empty nesters, are becoming less active (line 178)

Active members are engaged in the ways they know how to be engaged. There are other aspects of the church life that they do not recall or know about, because it is not of interest to them – “blindness”

Focus Group – Gen X
- Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.
- These active members may not be considered active by older generations, due to attendance trends
- These active members know what they want and what they are seeking; they are strongly tied to solid relationships, but will do what is best for self/family

Focus Group – Gen Y
- Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.
- These active members may not be considered active by older generations, due to attendance trends
- These active members know what they want and what they are seeking, steeped in tradition and being a part of a community

Focus Group Follow Up
- Passive
  - Daily. They should be a part of one's daily life. These simply are practices of being a decent human.
- Active
  - During passing of the peace, I make a point to greet and speak to those around me. I always try to search out faces I don’t recognize and introduce myself to them during church functions.
  - I am not sure my behavior has changed, but I do find myself aware and try to be sure I try to apply those attributes of CP if I find myself in a situation where it might be a little harder to be as loving and compassionate as I should be.
  - Reaching out more as a Christian.
  - Not directly. Although, I would honestly state that I have always been someone who represents these traits.
  - I have been more intentional in my actions.
  - I have used them as a reminder as to what the good Lord wants me to do.
  - Your programs emphasized how important little acts of kindness are to others. This has made me want to be more in tune to reaching out to others.
  - I’ve used these practices to go out into the community and serve (through the Starmount Community Garden, Out of the Garden Project), to become a better teacher who raises students’ awareness about the world around them, and to improve my life and wellbeing.

Those with No responsibility vs. those with responsibilities

Bible Study Written Response
• Those with no responsibility in leadership’s behavior would not have results, due to the fact that they have not been made aware of the CP and how they can be utilized in their daily lives
• Those with responsibilities would have results that indicate that they name ways that they would put CP to use

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• The ones who responded are the ones whom I would consider leadership – they take responsibility for their congregation, regardless of their title or position or office.
• So while they may not have direct titles of elder, chairperson, etc., they are serving as the leadership of the church in their actions (volunteering as ushers, etc.)

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory. Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory. Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.
• Those who have had leadership continue to have leadership, but in different ways (KK – was youth leader, now is Sunday School teacher for his peers)

Focus Group – Gen X
• Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory. Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.
• Those who have had leadership continue to have leadership, but in different ways (teaching, leading youth group, serving on committees, etc.)

Focus Group – Gen Y
• Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory.
• Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.
• Those who are “no responsibilities”, at times, take advantage, only attending worship when obligated by those responsibilities.

Focus Group Follow Up
• Those who responded from the focus group cannot currently be classified as “those with responsibilities”
• No Responsibilities
  o During passing of the peace, I make a point to greet and speak to those around me. I always try to search out faces I don’t recognize and introduce myself to them during church functions.
  o I am not sure my behavior has changed, but I do find myself aware and try to be sure I try to apply those attributes of CP if I find myself in a situation
where it might be a little harder to be as loving and compassionate as I should be.

- Reaching out more as a Christian.
- Daily. They should be a part of one's daily life. These simply are practices of being a decent human.
- Not directly. Although, I would honestly state that I have always been someone who represents these traits.
- I have been more intentional in my actions.
- I have used them as a reminder as to what the good Lord wants me to do.
- Your programs emphasized how important little acts of kindness are to others. This has made me want to be more in tune to reaching out to others.
- I’ve used these practices to go out into the community and serve (through the Starmount Community Garden, Out of the Garden Project), to become a better teacher who raises students’ awareness about the world around them, and to improve my life and wellbeing.

**Storytelling (look for differences/generalities)**

*Differences/Generalities in Reactions*

**Bible Study Written Response**

- **Differences**
  - The reactions were plentiful – for one reason, they were different depending on the different CP that were being discussed.
  - Differences were not as extensive, since many talked about specific ways that they would do specific CP

- **Generalities**
  - Many ways that people said they would “try” to do things
  - Many ways that people talked about inviting someone – a particular “someone” in mind
  - Many ways that people named pragmatic pieces – not as much about prayer

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**

- **Differences**
  - Differences in success rates
  - Differences in ages of respondents

- **Generalities**
  - Different from the previous responses, there were responses about prayer and how they asked God for help in doing the CP
  - As has been mentioned, there were many who applauded the things that they named, but there were also people who self-implicated and indicated that they had not been as successful “as they would have liked”

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**

- There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic.
  More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

**Focus Group – Baby Boomer**

- There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic.
  More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.
Focus Group – Gen X
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Gen Y
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group Follow Up
• Differences
  o Not all used the CP daily
• Generalities
  o Most saw the benefit of using the CP daily
  o There is benefit to the congregation using the CP daily

Differences/Generalities in Learnings

Bible Study Written Response
• Differences
  o Learnings were not all that different – many indicated what they would do to integrate/utilize the CP in their lives
• Generalities
  o Learning how to use the CP in their daily lives
  o Learning how to apply the CP in their daily lives
  o Learning how to define what the CP mean to them, based upon the conversation and definitions they were given

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• Differences
  o Successes
  o Attempts
  o Asks, but no results
• Generalities
  o Learning that it was more difficult than people thought it might be
  o Comments that the bible study was impactful and made them think

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Gen X
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Gen Y
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group Follow Up
• Differences
  o Some are confident that they use the CP daily, whereas others were not made aware of them prior to conversations
• Generalities
  o Successful learning did take place
  o The CP were learned and have been applied to daily living

  Differences/Generalities in Behavior

Bible Study Written Response
• Differences
  o Men vs. women
• Generalities
  o People have similar ways of thinking of how they will engage the CP in their daily lives

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• Differences
  o
• Generalities
  o Had successes
  o Had frustrations

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Gen X
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Gen Y
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group Follow Up
• Differences
  o Behavior hasn’t changed for everyone
• Generalities
  o Behavior changed for the better
  o Behavior was understood to be for the betterment of themselves, their faith, their congregation
Differences/Generalities in Results

Bible Study Written Response
- Differences
  - Not many
- Generalities
  - Results can be classified as responding by writing down comments and ideas of how they would use CP in their daily lives

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- Differences
  - Many different ways that people responded to how they successfully did the CP in their daily lives
- Generalities
  - People had success
  - People “tried”
  - People realized it was harder than they thought it might be
  - People became more aware of how to use CP in their daily lives

Focus Group – Silent Generation
- There are no differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
- There are no differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Gen X
- There are no differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Gen Y
- There are no differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group Follow Up
- Differences
  - People have had success in engaging the CP in their daily lives
  - Some people haven’t had any changes
  - Some haven’t noticed the changes, if any, in their behavior
- Generalities
  - People are noticing marked changes in their behavior and the behavior of others because of their engagement in CP

Sequence – what is the order? In what order do things happen?
What is the sequence in Reactions

Bible Study Written Response
- People attend bible study
- People learn each of the CP
- People stake the survey, identifying how they will use the CP in their daily lives
• People go home and attempt to do them

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
• People receive the bible study follow up survey
• People reflect and comment on how they did in utilizing the CP in their daily lives
• People fill out the surveys
• People return them to this researcher, hopefully continuing the CPs in their lives despite not having to do it for a “reason”

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**
• There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

**Focus Group – Baby Boomer**
• There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

**Focus Group – Gen X**
• There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

**Focus Group – Gen Y**
• There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

**Focus Group Follow Up**
• People will think (again) about their participation in the focus group
• People will think (again) about the CP
• People will reengage the CP in their daily lives, both inside and outside of the church.

*What is the sequence in Learnings*

**Bible Study Written Response**
• People attend bible study
• People learn each of the CP
• People stake the survey, identifying how they will use the CP in their daily lives
• People go home and attempt to do them

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
• People receive the bible study follow up survey
• People reflect and comment on how they did in utilizing the CP in their daily lives
• People fill out the surveys
• People return them to this researcher, hopefully continuing the CPs in their lives despite not having to do it for a “reason”

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**Focus Group – Baby Boomer**
There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Gen X

There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Gen Y

There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group Follow Up

- People will think (again) about their participation in the focus group
- People will think (again) about the CP
- People will reengage the CP in their daily lives, both inside and outside of the church.

What is the sequence in Behavior

Bible Study Written Response

- People attend bible study
- People learn each of the CP
- People stake the survey, identifying how they will use the CP in their daily lives
- People go home and attempt to do them

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response

- Between when the bible study took place and the follow up survey, it is the hope that the behavior of the participants changed
- By knowing about the CP and how they could be applied in their lives, they would go and do things with the CP in mind
- People receive the bible study follow up survey
- People reflect and comment on how they did in utilizing the CP in their daily lives
- People fill out the surveys
- People return them to this researcher, hopefully continuing the CPs in their lives despite not having to do it for a “reason”

Focus Group – Silent Generation

There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer

There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Gen X

There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Gen Y
There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group Follow Up

- People will think (again) about their participation in the focus group
- People will think (again) about the CP
- People will reengage the CP in their daily lives, both inside and outside of the church.

What is the sequence in Results

Bible Study Written Response

- People attend bible study
- People learn each of the CP
- People stake the survey, identifying how they will use the CP in their daily lives
- People go home and attempt to do them

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response

- Between when the bible study took place and the follow up survey, it is the hope that the behavior of the participants changed
- By knowing about the CP and how they could be applied in their lives, they would go and do things with the CP in mind
- People are able to have successful outcomes, considering them “results”
- People receive the bible study follow up survey
- People reflect and comment on how they did in utilizing the CP in their daily lives
- People fill out the surveys
- People return them to this researcher, hopefully continuing the CPs in their lives despite not having to do it for a “reason”

Focus Group – Silent Generation

- There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer

- There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Gen X

- There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Gen Y

- There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group Follow Up

- People will think (again) about their participation in the focus group
- People will think (again) about the CP
- People will reengage the CP in their daily lives, both inside and outside of the church.
Appendix C: Focus Group Questions

Generations:
Silent Generation: 1925-1945
Baby Boomers: 1946-1965
Generation X: 1965-1979
Source: http://geography.about.com/od/populationgeography/qt/generations.htm

Focus Group Timeline:
• Introductions - prayer, thanks, snacks
• Reason for the focus group: explanation of LU2
• Questions/Conversation - "faith", "community", and "faith community"
• Thanks. Explanation of next steps.
• Closing prayer.

Focus Group Questions
• What do you look for in a group of friends? The community of people that you wish to associate (chosen, not family)?
• What do you look for in a worshipping community?
• What are ways (individual or communal practices) that you, personally, seek to deepen your faith?
• Questions for general purpose understanding of each demographic:
  • how often do you go to church?
  • Do you consider yourself a "regular attendee"?
  • Do you have to go to church to deepen your faith?
  • Do you have to be a member to deepen your faith?
  • What does church membership mean to you?
• Why do you go to church?
• In an ideal scenario, what do the following look/sound like to you:
  • Prayers
  • Hymns
  • Anthems/Music Listened to
  • Scripture
  • Sermon
  • Those gathered around you?
• Do aesthetics play a role? The way the sanctuary looks? What about the rest of the building?
• What are you looking for in a faith community? Is a place to raise your children an influencing factor?
• What drives you to attend church?
• What does "meaningful worship" look like to you? Does Starmount achieve your desires for that type of worship? What would you like to see more of or different to achieve your ideal "meaningful worship" experience?

Questions for Survey
• Statement for the Likert scale:
  • Talking about politics from the pulpit is acceptable.
  • Talking about politics in a conversational setting (Sunday School, as an example) is acceptable. (Or: talking about politics in church is unacceptable.)
• Questions for survey: What is it that attracted you to Starmount? What keeps you here? What do you think Starmount is lacking in?
• Question (either True/False or on a Likert scale): Attending church as a family is important.
Appendix D: Focus Group Transcripts

D.1: Silent Generation

Participants: M, J, E, C, B

- K: What do you look for in a group of friends? As you are looking at, as you identify friends, are their characteristics, is it things that you do, what is it that tends to make your friends your friends?
- M: Common interests
- B: Mutual support, because by now we have had friends for a long, long time.
- J: I would say common interest is the main thing because you could say that for whatever reason your friends, not always, your real good friends, your support friends tend to be about the same age and I don’t know whether we get ourselves into that or exactly what happens, but and that’s because people that are the same age tend to have the same common interests, perhaps.
- C: And as you get older, you have to make some new, younger friends.
- *Laughter.*
- J: Some people tend to outlive their friends
- C: I have a list even of the young ones that are coming to see me when I get to the home.
- B: She believes in guilt.
- *Laughter*
- E: I think on the friendship thing it depends on the level of friendship because there are friends and then there’s friends. I agree with my colleagues to my right that common interests are important, especially for deeply held friends because there you talk about the whole spectrum of things. And for instance if you’re misaligned politically that can be a huge wedge, but if you’re talking about general friends, kind of like social friends that you enjoy being around because they are pleasant or kind to you, your kind to them, I think there common interests are all that important and you can have differences in various things and still be friends and respectful.
- K: The next small question, as you are looking for a place to worship… how long have you been members at Starmount?
- M: 23 years
- E: oh just, what, 5 years. Anita though about 100..
- B: 58 years
- C: 61/62 is when we joined
- K: Anita?
- E: How long do you think Anita has been here? I mean, before, she was teaching kids..
- M: She was not here when we joined the church, her interim period was..
- K: So when you were looking for a church, if you can think back that long, what do you look for? What were you looking for in terms of the worshiping community? .. So as you’re thinking about…
B: That was easy. Linda Stewart brought me by, aunt and uncle were charter members while I was in college, but when Don and I were dating and first married we went to First Church. Doctor Radio was there, but we wanted a family church where we felt like we could make a contribution and Starmount was perfect.

M: When we were church hunting we went to one church where everybody was ancient, we couldn’t relate to them. We went to another church where we felt like we were fresh meat and we were already signed on committees before we even got out the door. Then we went to First Church four Sundays in a row and not a single person said hello to us except for the guy at the door. Nobody sitting around us said anything to us. The first Sunday we came to Starmount, we came to the early service and it was John’s last Sunday. Jim and Kay were here buying a house so they were introduced. Cindy preached but what I liked and I don’t know if this is the same with John but I felt that because I’m musical I could hear the congregation singing around me and so making music together I really liked and was important to me and I don’t know if at First Church if was the acoustics or whatever, the noise all went up there (points to ceiling), which yea, we are singing to praise God, but its nice to know the people around you are singing instead of mumbling. So that was important to me just that feeling of community through music.

J: I think we were certainly, compared to what she is talking about, we were welcome here. I think that is important. I don’t know if you can say that studies have shown, but it has been shown that if you are… if people come and say hello, are friendly, when you attend service for the first time or several times, that’s perhaps one of the more important factors in your decision and that’s what I found in particular. And I liked the church size. It was compared, to first church it seemed to be the right size. That’s a subjective thing and so I think those are two of the things that attracted me. I think philosophically or religiously, I think we were looking for the Presbyterian faith, I suppose to Baptist for example, something a little bit more liberal.

M: And it’s very similar. We came from the reformed church in new jersey, which is no longer the Dutch reformed, it is the reformed church but is now the Scottish equivalent – the Dutch equivalent of the Scottish Presbyterian and it is very similar.

J: About that much difference (makes small measurement with hands) than the Presbyterian. Very, very similar,

M: Worship is the same, but of course that negates… it didn’t matter what was said up in the pulpit but it was more the feeling of community.

J: Fellowship.

C: My first experience with the church I came and I realized I had… and I had one child and was expecting the second one and all the ladies in Sunday school – every one of them had fur coats, fur jackets all the jewelry on I mean they couldn’t have held their arms up and I thought this not for me but I loved (couldn’t understand name) I just adored (him) so I told him about and he said I’ve got a place for you- so he put down with the three year olds and I was there for ten years.

No furs

And I was happy because I felt like I was part of the church and I was doing something and of course when the parents would come they couldn’t say Kronenfeld because back then there was no name like Kronenfeld – from outer space.. But the children could say it and they would come and ask for and would say teacher could
you (couldn’t understand remainder.) but I was so happy that… Alan? Saw that I wanted to part of the church but I didn’t feel like part because I felt like we didn’t have all of the things that all of these …. When you’re living in the apartments

- As we did
- E: Well I kind of think that the whole community feeling comfortable and community of believers, that first meeting you, looking at church I think that it’s important how welcome they make you feel, genuine concern and love and all that and I know that before I even attended this church we had been attending a big mega church over in Burlington – St. Mark’s. 2000 and another 2000 would come in -- anyway well we just got lost in the shuffle. We were lost in the shuffle and so you know what, no pressure but why don’t’ we try the church I used to go to. So we went a few times and I think that to me – all those things are important, the community the feeling that you are contributing, but to me I and I think e knows where I’m coming I feel most comfortable in an environment where it is a new test church and where the message is salvation is preached and where you can feel like you’re really being fit spiritually. So that’s where I’m coming and obviously it’s a little on the conservative side. And I look for something a little bit on the conservative side and I’m probably in the minority here, but that’s where I’m coming from.
- K: And are you feeling like you’re fighting that if you’re feeling like you’re in the minority in terms of that spectrum of theology and you’re coming and with not putting you on the spot, do you feel like you are being nourished in that way? That’s kind of what the next question in general is, are you feeling as though you are being nourished and your faith is being challenged and deepened?
- E: Not to put me on the spot, but you are and I think that at times yes and at times no. I mean know that … but as I said, my most rewarding sermons that I sit under and the ones in which you or John will get sometimes a bit passionate about urging people to step up their spiritual life and talk about them, talk about the things that, the challenge we are going to have and there is always forgiveness, always hope and prayer and those are sermons that I really enjoy the ones that challenge me that maybe make me squirm a bit- I don’t get many of those but I like them, so same with the old hymns. I like every once in a while, doesn’t happen often, but I love to hear those old songs—“Old Rugged Cross,” those kinds of things.
- K: They made their way back into the new hymnal.
- E: I think they do that to lighten things up, one of those olds ones but I love them.
- C: Oh I do too.
- B: Oh that squirm-ability is what makes us grow, we may not like it.
- E: Oh I love it.

- B: Very uncomfortable, oh where I am, but I think that is necessary. I think that opens another area of thought, a door and sometimes it closes one if you’ve thinking something or doing something that wasn’t … I think that’s a necessity almost for growth.
- E: And that what I’m saying, I welcome it and I’m not a great example I’m a horrible sinner and sometimes not a good person, but the way I was raised, I really know the
right way and I know better and that makes it even worse for me. Sometimes I do really dumb things and I tell myself Elmer, you were raised better than that.

- C: one sure thing, he is a perfect host, he is a perfect host and makes you feel so welcome in his home and that has to be …
- E: Let me make note of that. Thank you.
- J: It’s on record.
- K: It is on record.
- J: For your wife. (laughter)
- B: I’ve been working on the Sunday school lesson for tomorrow and its Luke, it’s basically the lords prayer, then removing yourself to prepare, but they bring in Martha and Mary and they say Martha was unloving and got self-righteous and I thought uh uh and what is this? What are thing trying to direct – I can’t say that in Sunday school
- C: Well I won’t be there.
- B: But there are things that are going to resonate so positively and things that will make us angry if we listen to them like that.
- K: So not getting off topic but why are you not going to say that in Sunday school?
- B: Well I’m going to emphasize the Matthew and the Luke versions, and the version that we have and explain why some of it’s a little different and go with the part where Jesus separates himself during his ministry to go and pray and rather than – where they brought it in was that Mary was separating herself to prepare and Martha was not. Do you think I should put it in?
- K: Neither here nor there, I was just curious as to why you were choosing to not-as it resonates a little bit true and it makes you squirm.
- B: You’re right.
- K: It’s one of the struggles of Mary and Martha.
- B: Particularly for us Martha’s.
- M: And one of the things that we have sort have touched on because we are all involved, one of the goals of the church was to get people doing more than just sitting in the pews on Sunday and I think that all involved in other aspects of the church and I think that is something that’s an important thing to feel needed, to be able to contribute, you know more than just ass in the seat, but to be able to give to the community and to the church and to the lord in other ways. If its teaching Sunday school or preparing meals or singing in the choir, ushering or whatever we’re all able to give and I think maybe in larger church and I don’t know this for a fact but maybe its harder to find your niche because you’re one of such a large group of people. Maybe it isn’t, I don’t know because I haven’t been a member of really large church, but you know here I don’t’ feel like we’re getting lost. That’s my feeling anyway and that’s an important thing.
- K: So to that point, what does church member- being a member of the church mean to you kind of in that abstract not necessarily – why join and be a part of Starmount in that why? Say I am a member of Starmount Presbyterian Church – what does that mean to you?
- B: It’s like extended family. It’s like I was raised with my grandmother living with us and the church was always important. I think I would be very lost without a church family and Starmount’s church family has been through many turmoils over the
years, but the core and the love and the acceptance and the ability to contribute has been there. I think it’s stabilizing, nourishing; it’s almost a core family.

- J: And I don’t know what the statistic is, but there may be more people involved in things in this church than others. If not we may be the champion in that regard, but I’m proud to be a member of this church. I think it has a lot of support, a tremendous range of programs, everybody’s involved, it’s a giving church. It, in my opinion, it is second to none in a lot of these particular categories and it really is a prideful place to be.

- ?: Well it’s come a long way

- J: It’s come along way in the last five or ten years really.

- B: But our mission goals have never been let down. Oh, session 25 years ago was to be fifty percent but we had 1200 members and now, what are we about 30 percent and I think this incredible to support and Starmount is known for not letting those obligations down.

- J: I can remember when the day our percentage of mission giving because of issues that we had, was way down and it’s come back – 30 percent- it wasn’t half that at one point.

- K: So what about membership? The term membership. What it means to be a member of church is kind of in debate, so yes, what does it mean to be a member of Starmount? And Betty kind of touched on this, but in terms of saying, “I’m a member,” why be a member of a church and stand up and say I am a member?

- M: I think it’s a commitment. It’s an outward showing of a commitment to the institution that is Starmount and the family that is Starmount and I think that that – and maybe this – I know this is a generational thing also, but when we were all raised, you became a member. You weren’t a peripheral, sometimes visitor, you made that commitment and that was important from the time you joined the church. That was the expectation and I think that follows through even in our older years.

- B: I try to share what Starmount is doing with my tennis friends, my golf friends, my neighbors. I feel like not only is it my commitment, it’s sort of part of evangelism to get the news out there. If somebody is for seem reason uncomfortable or needs something else, they may hear one of us say that you know Starmount has the best thing- In fact I just left a copy of the stuff about good Friday with a neighbor who knows what may…

- M: Scattering the seeds.

- B: Well said.

- M: But we can also, we’re also proud of what our church has to offer, what our church is. It’s wonderful to say, “come to Starmount for boxed lunch.” This is a gift to the community from the church and we’re proud of that gift that we can give. We’re proud of the garden and the number of vegetables and ..

- B: And see we’re not being self-righteous! That’s what bothered me about reading that. I think we know this is contributing to God’s work; it’s contributing to other people being benefitted from our faith. I guess that’s what bothered me, saying that Martha was being un-loving.

- M: Wasn’t sure the context..

- J: Well to answer your question why be a church member, I think basically to learn and to contribute and to do so in a environment, which you very comfortable, a loving
congregation, most of whom, if not all of whom, you’d like to expect and to be able to learn and contribute in that environment is very important.

- E: I’ve never been a “joiner” and as far as contributing you can certainly do that without being a member. In fact, this is first church I’ve ever belonged to. I’ve been a member here. For years and years, I’ve gone to interdenominational churches, the Methodist and Nazarene churches. Never belonged to any of them. I contributed and did things and evangelism and so forth, but I guess it’s kind of like baptism you know, which is now a sign of an inner belief, or living together with your love one but never making a final commitment and standing before a preacher and getting married so its kind of – it’s probably a bad analogy- but I think, for me, what it means for me is something that Anita and I were able to do together and it made her happy and I was pretty comfortable with the fact that this is a new testament bible believing church and also it kind of sealed it for me that, okay now I belong and I want to be able to contribute now as a member and stay a member. So it was just kind of a final commitment type of thing for me.

- Connie: A final commitment.

- E: Like I said, I’ve never belonged to a church, just never felt like it was necessary.

- K: To kind of seg-way into the next question and I think I’m hearing that a little bit in your question, but do you need to be a member to deepen your faith? So for you personally, do you think that being member somehow deepens your faith?

- E: No, not at all and I think that there is faith, then there’s works, there’s your personal relationship with Christ and then there’s works and yea, you should-- the works should follow the faith and but, works alone ain't going to get it and so I, you think that you can still do good works and still contribute and have a deep relationship and not be a member, but I think that if you want to contribute to the community and with the colleagues and the friends and other partitioners, if you want to be a really contributing person then you should join the church so that you can do it- so you can do things like ushering, teaching and be a session member and all those things and I’m just assuming you can’t do that unless you’re a member, right?

- K: Some of those things.

- E: Some of those things

- M: Only session member

- E: Oh really?

- M: You could usher, if were just… you know

- E: So I know I’m in the minority now, but I still think it’s a good thing to be a member, I do. Spiritually I don’t think the Lord cares if we’re members or not, I think He cares about what’s in our heart and He does talk about gathering together and like I’ve heard people say, well, I I don’t need to go to church, I can get that on TV or I can stay or nature or I can read the bible, well the bible’s pretty clear on that they want you to gather together with other believers, but it doesn’t necessarily say you have to join or anything and for me I think its been a good experience and a good thing and it feels good to be a member.

- K: What about in terms…

- J: I think being a member reinforces your faith and maybe a personal thing, I don’t think you have to be a member to do this, but membership reinforces your faith, your learning, your fellowship, it creates a better opportunity to learn and contribute rather
than trying to do all of this on your own. I think with a family of believers it’s better for the individual.

- B: I agree with John and the fact that when your in the church, I don’t know if (wicked study) is the right word to put by it- but if you’re on your own, kind of just floating around, but when you are in the confines of the church and the programs in the church, you have guidance.

- J: It provides the commitment and the learning and the continuity and I don’t know if the word is forces you, but it kind of in a way forces you to focus on these things.

- C: I think it’s an outward expression of your commitment. To me, it’s important.

- K: I think Elmer started to touch on this a little bit, but as you think about it personally, so perhaps there is a little bit of a dual question in here- do you have to go to church to deepen your faith and when your outside of church how do you deepen you faith – so maybe outside of Sunday mornings – so just trying to understand not speaking from --- from yourselves and I ask this questions across the groups if there are some of those common themes, so do you have to go to church to deepen your faith? We’ll start there.

- B: That’s a hard one Kathryn.

- J: I think that relates to individuals. I mean some people can read the bible daily, even go to open bible classes if they want to and in this fashion and contribute, perhaps belong to some clubs like rotary or something that gives back, so I think it’s possible to deepen your faith without being a member. However, like I said before, I think being a member focuses you more and I think you learn more.

- K: Outside of being a member is going to church, so regardless of whether you’re a member or not.

- E: I agree with John up to point where he said member. I think who knows what God really means for us to do. I mean we have some instructions, where he wants us to, through the writing of Paul and others, to assemble together and to study his word and to be with like minded people and I don’t think- I can’t remember if its an instruction or something that we should be doing- but anyway- technically, probably, you don’t have to go to church to have a deep belief, but certainly shut-ins can’t do, but that’s because they can’t. I think it’s foolish to have that line of thinking.

- If you truly are a believer, you should be with others and regular spiritual meetings and don’t have to belong to a church, but certainly I believe you should be going to a church and I wish could think of the verses that address that, but I don’t know. I guess I kind of go along with what John said.

- B: I don’t know how to quite say this… I think that going to church gives us the tools, is gives us, we may not know verbatim, the scriptures, but I know that some of my “ah-ha” moments have been life experiences outside of the walls of the church but I have that there, I have that background there that is supported, that has given hope to help somebody else and I don’t’ know if I would have had those, as God is with us, without having been a church member. Am I making sense? But I don’t think that all of these “ah-ha” moments in our lives have to happen in church, but we recognize them as such because …

- K: Because you were at church. So its kind of, you don’t have to have them in church but because we go to church we can understand what they are all about.
E: I have a brother that lives up in a Ohio - an older brother that lives up in the Columbus, Ohio area and he’s got a place in Tennessee, just north of Boone and a place in Florida and when he goes down to Florida or goes to Tennessee, they’ve established themselves in a local church. Why do you do this? He says it’s just important and he does morning devotions everyday and he reads the bible - a strong Christian family, he and Joann, but I just thought of that example. And he’s at a better place that I am spiritually, so I look up to him.

M: I think going to church feeds us. I think about the sermon as part of the whole service, but the sermon particularly is the thought basis for the week and it’s surprising how often during the week that something form the sermon comes back to me as part of my thought process. I’m sure if you’d call it, sort of working through it, relating what you or John said to me, said to what’s happening to me at the moment, I don’t know always why those thoughts come up but it gives me food to chew on sort of which is important but maybe, part of it is that I don’t have the self control, the self discipline – self discipline is a better word I suppose, to read the bible everyday, to study, I don’t do that- I do pray but I don’t read the bible everyday so I think that – so going to church on a Sunday morning is where the primary spiritual life is and the feeding of my soul.

E: It’s a very good point and sure you get fed some by praying and reading the bible as it speaks to you. The real feeding is the church, I think, too

J: It would seem to me that if you don’t attend church and you read the bible everyday and you go to bible classes- one of the persons who said that is not a church member but who is feeding himself and doing all of this independently, it makes sense to also go to church. It just does not seem to be compatible if you’re going to do all of this on your own, why not get fed and go to church?

B: And part of that is the inspiration from other members and the lives they have led and the things they do, at least for me.

M: You know that Sunday in January where we have two members of the congregation preach, is so meaningful because it is relating our lives to their lives and their experience and how does what they’ve gone through, what their life experiences are and how do they relate to what our life experiences are – you know that’s a support that’s a – I think it’s a good Sunday and I’m always so glad to see such a big congregation on that Sunday because you’d think that this amateur or these amateurs are going to get up there and you know, so what do they have to say that is going to speak to me that? Why do I have to listen to them? But yet in a different way, you relate to it.

C: I’ll tell you one thing, no matter how old you get you learn something each time. Each Sunday, it might not be that big, but as long as I’ve been going to church, I’ve always learned something. So you’re never too old to learn.

B: But Marilyn they had asked me -- I’m in the third year now on the session and they had me asked and I said I just can’t do it, now let me think about it. And then we had youth Sunday and those three young men- I had to go home and cry and call Vera back and say yes you may put my name in. Things just…

M: You never know.

C: It touched your heart.

B: And boy, they can do that; I can step up and do something.
K: So with that being said, I’m hearing a lot of great stuff. What drives you to attend church? What drives you to get up out of bed and go on Sunday morning? What is it?

B: Connie would be calling me by 11:30 and saying, why weren’t you there? (laughter)

C: Well I’m afraid you’re sick,

B: I think my allergies..

C: We make a good pair.

M: I think the nurturing of the family, worshipping with other people, seeing other people – I’m thinking I need to write a letter to be in the newsletter and this has been on my mind because so many people have been praying for me and cards and meals and flower and you know all of this and that is such a community of faith but it’s more than that, it’s a family and I’ve been sort of idling the words around in my mind, but that family feeling and along with the learning, the nuggets that I’m going to get to think about the following week, is what gets me here on a Sunday morning. I think that’s very important; very important to me anyways.

J: Well not… don’t take me wrong in this, but one of the driving forces, not all of them, is the opportunity to sing in the choir. I think that is, it’s extremely important to me and hopefully it’s important to the congregation to have the ability to praise God in this way and it’s something I love to do and it’s a big motivating factor.

E: And john we love hearing ya. You know we get so busy with life and work and hobbies and stuff like that and being an old person, I do mostly hobbies rather than work, but you get so busy and everything, but you know that that one day, that one morning, that everything you do that morning is right because you know you’re in the right place and you’re doing something right and it’s something bigger than you. I think that aside from just knowing its the right thing to do, I always look forward to seeing friends and seeing people that I know and just shaking hands and catching up, before the quiet time and the sermon. I think its the right thing to do and you feel guilty if you’re not there.

K: Connie what drives you get here on a Sunday?

C: What drives me?

K: well besides your car. (laughter)

C: I don’t know. Its’ part of my body; I don’t even think about it. It’s Sunday. I’m so happy that I can go to church. I’m happy that I can put my feet on the ground. I’m happy that I can drive, even if I can’t hear – y’all have done real well. I’ve turned the one ear.

E: Remind me to tell you a hearing aid joke (laughter) about my dad.

K: Well what- this is for a matter of record so to speak, but also because it’s generational. So you may look at me funny when I ask this, but how often do you go to church? Is it every week regardless? Is it when it’s convenient? Is it when you’re in town? How often do you go to church?

M: We did not make the 80% club this year.

C: I did!!

J: We have made the 80% club in prior years.

E: I’m sure we did that, but there are times that – that you just get busy or you’re out of town.
J: Travel is the reason for missing most times.
M: If we’re in town, yea.
E: Sometimes, especially when you have grandchildren, especially if they’re local or you have to drive to Raleigh or drive to Charlotte, you know soccer games, hockey or whatever and it’s certainly not as important as going to church, but to the child and building memories for them, it is important. We call it grandparent duty.
K: And so you then consider yourself regular attenders?
Almost in unison: Oh, yes.
K: I guess it might be more of a formality for this question
B: I’ll be glad to leave.. (Coughing)
K: So shifting gears now, if you were to create your ideal church, and we spoke to this a little bit earlier in terms of sermons, what do the following things look or sound like to you …so what do prayers sound like to you or look like to you in terms of an ideal worshipping scenario?
M: I miss having a responsive reading in church. You know I grew up with is and I think it’s another way of presenting the scripture that involves the congregation more than just sitting and listening to it and I miss that and I miss the doxology you know those things that I grew up with that were a part of worship and I wish every once in a while and I don’ think the younger generation know the glory of (patre) or the doxology and I think those are important to traditions is perhaps the word that we don’t have in the church anymore- so I would like those.
E: I don’t even know what those are, so evidently I don’t listen.
K: In terms of prayer,
J: Are you talking about the service itself or are you just talking about church in general?
K: The service itself. I mean you could say the church, but I guess I mean the church as service. So as we look at – in that answer – if we can be all things to all people as sort of a thing, what do these look like and one which being prayer so we have some other categories there.
E: You’re talking about prayer as associated with the service?
K: Correct. Well how about this one, maybe we’ll start with this one, this will get the juices flowing. In terms of hymns, thinking about organ vs. piano vs. Jonah and the small fries, what do the hymns- is there a spectrum of – what are those ideal things- if I walked in and said this really spoke to me today- what do those hymns sound like?
C: You have to read the words and when you read the words it makes a difference. That sounds stupid but to see the words, not just sing them and go along with them, but to understand what the hymn is trying to tell you, because I can’t carry a tune in a bucket so I appreciate the choir and I appreciate the music that we have but I’ve also had so many complaints in my circle about the hymns and then when we had the little praise songs but when you listen to those words- they should say something to you too. And we also have to realize that younger generation is coming up and we have to reach out to them. I mean its’ not about the older generation. You’ve go to reach to the younger generation and if it takes some different ones we have to do it.
M: But you have to be fed also and you deserve to be fed because you’re at church- they’re at church, but you’re at church also and I like the blended service where we
are singing some praise hymns, a variety of things. My one complaint and is that when we have a new hymn and the words are up here, but nobody knows the tune because you just have the words, maybe when we have a new hymn we need to not have the words up there but be using our hymn books. These glorious new hymn books that we have, that never come out of the thing- except for a few people.

- E: That’s a good point.
- M: Because we don’t know the hymns, we don’t know the music and that’s a problem, I think.
- J: And having said that, I like the new hymns, but Marilyn’s point is well taken. If you don’t know them, you’ve got to get to know them first.
- E: But that would be an easy thing to do; that is strictly an audio-visual and media thing, where you just don’t display and say everyone turn to the hymns books and I kind of like a blended, if you mean blended the way I mean it, but blended in that you have different types of songs, addressing different types of age groups, but to your point I do like the ones that tell a story or deliver a message or a promise from the bible. something like that. I like those kind of songs and they’re touching and they’re thought provoking. They touch your heart; they provide you instruction.
- J: Well I’ll give you two cases in point recently that I thought were particularly great was the harpist, what a noble instrument, if you’re picking, pick something that demonstrates music -you got it right there- and the (potter?)- I thought they were very, very neat, unique, different and informative I think that kinds of- we don’t do that often, but those are two recent examples where an attempt was made to be a little different.
- K: What about the anthems or the music in terms of the style or in terms of the words are the anthems- and these are kind of more generic questions in terms of you for you and some of them could be all of the above, are they the more contemporary pieces, the more upbeat pieces? Do you want to hear organ every Sunday? Do you never want to hear organ again? What does that look like it terms of the anthems, of the different music outside of the hymns?
- J: Well first of all, I will explain that we don’t do nearly the classical stuff that we did in the past. Personally as one who is doing some of these, I like that… I think the more contemporary, like “Be Still: and of that sort give a very beautiful message, but they don’t have to be classical to do that. I’m voting for and happy for the contemporary stuff that we do
- E: That’s with the piano primarily right? I don’t even know what an anthem is.
- K: The song that’s sung during the offertory, like the music that the choir sings.
- B: I think there is a really good balance. I love when small fries do it, I love when he gets the jazz going when you’re doing your anthem, I mean I like the whole …
- J: That’s blended.
- E: But we don’t do the real classical.
- J: Well we do some classical.
- M: You know the Bach, Mozart, and I would like to do more of that.
- J: We don’t do that.
- (Talking I can’t understand)
- J: Bach has written a lot of church hymns.
• K: It goes back to musical preference.
• E: And there are words? I didn’t know that.
• K: Yea, there are a number of cantanas and things, (name of song I couldn’t understand) s an example. It’s part of a bigger..
• J: And that’s Handel.
• E: Well I like Handel.
• M: I wish we sang more of that. I like what we’re doing, but I would like a little bit more of the classical.
• K: What about you Connie?
• C: I’m willing to have both. I think that’s what bothers me with people that they aren’t willing to be flexible and you’ve got to flexible in a church, especially today.
• K: Well what about the scripture, are there ways that is it – I’ve had responses – I always appreciate the feedback, how it’s delivered, how the feedback is delivered is obviously a different thing, but in terms of even just where I stand when I’m reading scripture, has been, I’ve been given feedback, that some people don’t like me standing behind the pulpit because they feel like there’s a divide and you know that’s their own personal preference, but is there anything about the scripture that maybe – and obviously the passage may connect with you more than a different passage, are there, is there ideally a way it’s delivered, does that matter at all to you in terms of an ideal worshipping experience?
• M: Number one, I love having the variety of members of the congregation, the kids the older folks the middle folks you know everybody, I like that very much- I like the sermon, the new testament reading, if that is what the sermon is based, which it normally is, I like to have that incorporated into the sermon rather that read first and then the sermon, and this is strictly a personal preference, or both, refer a little bit more to it or emphasizing it more.
• J: Well maybe its me, but sometimes the old testament reading, not always, but sometimes, don’t seem to relate to the sermon, in fact they don’t have anything to do with sermon, and to support Marilyn’s point on that, I wish they did.
• C: I read these days, every day, and that’s with the bible and normally it’s the scripture and very often it’s the scripture that we’ll get that Sunday, which I think is most interesting, so then I’ve had a head start and these days it tells you – well a regular person will take it and say- this effects my life by so and so, so I think that it has a lot to say and we don’t know because …. And its part of … way
• E: You weren’t.. I’m probably showing my age here where I’m coming from, but were you referring to how its read? What it’s read from? that kind because
• K: Any and everything.
• E: You know to me its silly to question whether you read behind the podium, if you come out and stand, walk down the steps and read or stand to the side of the lectern and read, I don’t think that matters at all, but I mean when I give a presentation I’m gestulating and living large like an Italian, but to me, when you read from an iPad that, I’m just old school, I mean I’m an IT consultant so this is second nature for me, mobility, communications, but in a church, I’m just used to seeing a bible.
• K: No, it’s great feedback.
E: It’s old fashioned, but that’s just me. I mean if you have an iPad up there on the lectern no one can see it, well I guess we won’t know, but when you walk out there with it and I think of my grand children and I mean man, their fingers are flying…

J: It’s what you say, not where you’re standing when you say it.

E: And just one comment about the reading, you know, and I haven’t read in a long time, but I’ve often think if I read I’ll do maybe a small preamble to set it up, but I’ve heard people get upset about that- ah you know we don’t want an epistle before you read, so I never did do it but I just wondered about that kind of thing, like this Paul’s letters to the Corinthians, who have drifted so far away and he’s trying to bring them back… so anyway, that’s just a comment.

M: I would agree with that and I like, because we don’t often know the context, the setting, the why this was written, so I like that. I don’t want a sermon; I don’t want even a homily, just a little, a couple of sentences of where this is taking place.

E: I’ve heard that upsets people so I didn’t do it, I don’t know who, but I heard it, just read it.

B: I think particularly with the Old Testament ones it helps to set, it even helps engage me. If I listen to this, it’ll help me.

K: Then what about the sermon, are there some people love that it brings in everything, Elmer, talked about in terms about the growing edge and getting squirm and that piece of salvation, but if you look at it both of terms of what does the sermon ideally look like, not only content wise but maybe and perhaps how its delivered, not necessarily where, but is there a certain way. Some people like first person sermons, where it’s coming as if you’re speaking like a character. Are there certain sermons that seem to speak to you more?

E: I think and I’ll let everyone gather their thoughts; I think, I came, even though I came up through some of the evangelical churches that perhaps are more on the evangelism side, I still, the kind of preaching that I’ve always, and I call it preaching, I like instructional and teaching type preaching where you do take some scriptures and you talk about it and say where… lets get in the mind of Paul and what was he thinking when… and then you read some more scripture or read a little scripture to reinforce your next thought and you build that, and you might have to refer three or four, fives times to the scriptures but it provides instructions that we can apply to our everyday lives that was happening, anyways that was just a thought. I like instructional and teaching type sermons that we can apply to our lives so that we can be better Christians.

B: I will ditto that, but I also like those that are uplifting and I try to pick out one point definitely, sometimes two, in the teaching part of the sermon no matter what the topic will guide you and you will know those points that you are trying to take home with you.

J: I’m with him, I like, not going to add anything to what he said, but I like instructional. I would much prefer that than philosophical stuff, to apply it to your everyday life.

E: And you know, I think we have to be careful, churches in general, when we’re preaching, that is such a holy calling, to not be swayed by national, international, and so called modern day events and trend and cultures and drift away because it’s a popular thing to do and I think we have to stay as closely aligned to Christ teaching as
we possibly can, and I think it’s fine to use quotes, I always enjoy those whether it’s a famous author or whatever it is, I think that adds to a sermon but, I just think we have to stay close to what the bible teaches.

- M: I like relating the biblical teachings to what’s happening in the world. Because we live in the world and so therefore I think its important, it helps our understanding of the biblical teaching and it also helps to understand what’s going on and so I like that relationship, relating the bible to what’s happening now.

- J: And I don’t know if the word is controversial or not, but I distinctly remembered John’s sermon on there are so many Christians in the world but there are other religions, are the other religions because they are other religions? What Islam says about certain things – why are these motivated to do what they do? Are we completely correct in our beliefs? It’s controversial stuff, but this is the world and John did that. He took on something many preachers wouldn’t do, but I thought it was a great effort.

- B: I thought he did a really good job with that.

- J: Yea, I did too.

- E: Doesn’t that boil down to whether or not you believe what the bible says and I guess if you don’t, if you’re kind of wishy-washy on it and you don’t believe what it says then you can say okay, there are.. is some wiggle room with Islam and all of these other religions, but it’s very clear, you believe in Jesus Christ and the only way to heaven is through the son- I forgot the point I was going to make, it was what Marilyn was talking about, oh yea ,I wasn’t talking about so much applying what was taught and applying to our lives, I was talking about cultural things and modern trends in cultures influencing pastors to the point that there is some revision efforts to change the message of the bible to satisfy everyone in the audience – oh I don’t want to step on any toes, so I won’t mention gay marriage or stuff like that and I don’t know.

- B: Our Sunday school class, it’s been several weeks ago now had a really, Mark was the teacher, had a really good discussion about where is that line? Acceptance is fine, compassion is fine, where is that line that we hold? It terms of what you’re saying about – where is that rock bottom line where acceptance of other people and where our own faith, where we can go to help and include, its an awful hard line for us as Christians, particularly older Christians that believe that Jesus Christ by the grace of God is our savior and it’s a hard line there to live in the world and try and help the world and yet try and hold a line and be Christ-like. It’s hard.

- K: Without going too much into other-getting off topic, to that point nailed on.. Older Christians… because one of the things that I’m reading right now especially about generation Y which would kind of be in that born after 1980, so there, they are post high school, college years, is something called moral individualism, meaning what I believe for myself is fine but I’m not going to- if I were to judge you because of what you believe, then that’s wrong – judge, the word judgment has become a negative, stigmatic word in the sense that if you’re judging somebody, judgment equals wagging the finger and scolding, so that exactly the conversation without going to far down that road

- E: And I know.. Certainly there is scripture, scripture that reads you shall not be judged by others, but there is also scripture where we’re instructed to judge. We’re
instructed to judge, because if we’re not judging we’re going to associate ourselves with the wrong people and we are remised if we don’t judge and talk to the people that we love and care about and say look, this is wrong, you can’t be doing that, so that’s why I get.. I’m not going to say irritated, but it bothers me sometimes that well you can’t judge other, people well – you try not to judgmental, harsh and mean spirited about, but if you do it in love, I think..

B: That’s a hard one.

K: And that’s exactly, that’s why I’m fascinated by what the next handful of conversations are going to look like because you know.. I mean I love how as you sit around the table sometimes I start to ask the question and you kind of look at me like duh, I go to church and how that might- how it could be different depending on what you’re looking at and that’s kind of why we’re doing this – two more about ideal worship- ideally what does it look like it terms of those that are gathered around you, whether it be age…

B: The whole smeal, I just love the fact that we’ve got old people, the little babies and if they squirm and one cries, that’s okay with me, I like – that’s what I missed most going to a woman’s college, I just lived for Sunday to get out and meet with real people.

M: we were having a dinner conversation last night with friends that go to Holy Trinity and they were complaining about – oh I know, it was the Sunday that their preschool or whatever is they have there was celebrating their 60th anniversary or their 70th anniversary, so there were children in the congregation and it was horrible. They just thought that was the worse thing. It bothered … it disturbed their worship. Now this was the family service, it was the early service, it was the family service, there were families there and they were there particularly because it was the celebration of this anniversary of the church school, but they were all upset because it disturbed their worship- the children there and you know they were part of the service and the children sang and the children did things as part of the service well you know if you don’t – there is another worship service, but that would disturb their day but it was sort of like – get off it but they were very, they were really upset- so you read your newsletter so you know when that Sunday is going to be and you know …

B: Loosen up

M: It was really – it was part of our dinner conversation last night.

E: But maybe that was the only time they could go and to that point, if the kids were being unruly I would be upset too and it goes to parenting, and where are the parents that let their kids do that and disrupt people around them?

C: That’s a good point too, Elmer.

E: I mean, I’ve seen kids sit back in the back, back there with their iPhone and they’re sending a text to each other and everything else, and I won’t even go back there in the back in the (clapse) – 6 or 8 people back there, but as an usher I see a lot that …

C: You see a lot.

E: I even asked you or John one time, is there a committee that meets back there, but anyway I don’t’ know. If we misbehaved in church we got our hides wore out.

J: Didn’t do that.

K: Well what about esthetics. Does the sanctuary itself play a role in terms, ideally what does, worshipping, whether there is flowers or not flowers, or if you go to
another church, you’re on vacation or you’re with your other family and you happen to go to a different church, does the sanctuary itself or wherever you’re worshiping either enhance or detract from you’re worshipping experience?

- J: Well it sounds very self serving and it probably is if you want to just throw out one aspect of it- the acoustics are tremendous and that enhances things, I would hope. That’s just one of many esthetics.
- E: I think that a church has to be clean and welcoming and friendly. If you visit a new church and not like the one that Marilyn was talking about where they pressure you into service right away, but when you visit a church and its clean and like my brothers church up in Pennsylvania—this is my brother.. and everyone is friendly and it’s a smaller church and I don’t recall even noticing whether it had flowers or if they had stained glass. So to me, I don’t think it matters that much.
- C: It doesn’t to me.
- B: I’m spoiled with our music and there are some choirs….
- C: When you visit other churches…
- E: That’s a good point.
- B: I really really spoil there
- E: They mean well.
- B:… making a joyful noise …
- M: I’m just thinking about how the big painting, the paraments? But particularly the ones next to the cross, the big banners, banners is the word and how they add to worship sometimes and it depends on the banners, like the one now with the cross and the crown
- E: I like the cross.
- M: And I think that adds to…
- C: Your feeling
- M: Yea, and it’s a good, I want to say it’s a contemplative sort of focus
- B: With Easter coming
- M: During the period of lent, I like that, there are others that are very benign and don’t add anything other than color, but those – or the Christmas ones with the manger scene, I like those, but then there are green ones with stripes and I mean they’re just there,
- J: I think these things are assumed, so it might be wasted time to mention it, but obviously the all of the technology that we have as in terms of projecting things on the wall, your individual mics when you’re up there, and in general the new bells and whistles we have back in the control booth, all enhance very much
- M: When they work (laughter). When they don’t they are a distraction.
- J: That is true.
- E: I think that it can actually be distracting with too much, too much media, too much fan fare, my brother goes to a Nazarene church up in Columbus, Ohio where they have two … 3000 in one and 4000 in the second one every Sunday morning, when you’re sitting up there it’s actually scary, its like sitting in a hockey arena and you’re looking down you know and the little stadium looks like its this big around and its huge and you know you’re ‘just in awe of all of it and I think that takes away from everything, but they love it.
M: Well when you go to Westover
J: That is a huge, 2 or 3000 thousand
M: It’s theatre seating and they have the..
J: It’s not a church; it’s a theatre.
E: I can’t believe they allow drinks inside the theatre, the theatre (LAUGHHER)
M: It is a theatre and obviously that is speaking to people because they’re packed. They keep on buying houses for parking lots, so obviously they’re speaking to some of the population.
B: I’ve wondered back to the membership, whether that gives a little bit of anonymous to those people. They can go and are not necessarily members there. I’m not sure what their percentage of members to people that are there
C: A lot of them, they do not want to baptized again. Barbara Spencer’s children, both her adult children and grandchildren were re-baptized. My son goes when he’s in town, there and keeps saying, well, we’re going to move to a smaller church and they’re not members, I mean they do their donation and everything else, but the majority of those people do not belong, because they do not want to have be re-baptized.
E: Re-baptized?
C: They do not accept any other churches
E: The first one didn’t take or?
M: Sprinkling doesn’t take you need to be dunked, although John does sort of a semi with his handfuls of water.
K: Recovering Baptist
E: I mean it’s a moot point with me, I was ready to literally break the ice and – it was in December up in Ohio and you’re put all the way under- it almost stopped my heart but I honestly think if you’re baptized, you’re baptized.
C: And that’s the way most of us feel, but there are some people, that if that’s the only way you can be a member of the church, they do it.
B: There is some Baptist churches now, by daughter’s husband’s father is a Baptist minister, he’s retired now, they first married and went to a Baptist church in Stone Mountain and they wouldn’t even let Jenny join the church. They would not let her teach a kid’s Sunday school class because she said, “I’ve been baptized, I have been active in the church, I don’t want to do this.” Now they go to Duluth United Methodist and everybody’s happy and everybody’s taking part.
E: Did you say Lutheran United Methodist?
B: Duluth United Methodist
E: Duluth- about to say, merge a couple of them,
B: It can be hurtful. Rather than being a spiritual thing it can be a hurtful thing.
E: Someone from the church the other day was at a funeral I attended – you were there right, over in Burlington?
B: Oh, yes.
E: That’s the kind of church I grew up in, the old, ornate, big thick crown molding, just old, ornate, old-fashioned kind of–
B: It’s a Methodist church in downtown Burlington. (Can’t understand what follows)
M: The church I grew up in was a huge gothic, first Presbyterian sort of church and when we were there the ushers wore cut-aways and tails.

J: This is suburban New York city- can you imagine the formality.

M: It was really, it was very different and it had the chancel, had the choir on either side and a very deep chancel and there was very much a separation between the congregation and then a big area, and then this chancel was really deep and then the altar, communion table I suppose it was, it was really an altar because it definitely wasn’t a table, I mean it was a substantial piece of furniture. There was a disconnect between the congregation and the worship center, maybe. So I like our layout, the semi circle where we’re close together and we’re close to the action, to the pulpit, to the communion table and even to the music, so I like that.

K: Well that is all I have and also wanting to respect time, I thank you for this, it has been fascinating to listen. It does make me excited to hear kind of what’s next in terms of the other conversations I’ll be having – as a point of what am I doing next, so you’ll know, is that hopefully, like I mentioned earlier, I can find some crossover in each of the groups, whether it’s in terms of, ideally sermon sounds like this or ideally music sounds like this, and then to take those statements and create a survey that I will sent out to the whole congregation and hopefully get back, rather quicker, quick manner, look over and see can Starmount be all things to all people, and obviously the people who are taking it are all Starmountians- so right there it is already a little bit biased, but its hopefully hearing the honesty of no, this does speak to me and this doesn’t. Because what I appreciated about what I’ve heard and what I hope will be congruent across the things, is that some things might not work for person A, but if it feeds person B, I’m okay with it this week, as long as we don’t do it that way every time, I’m fine with giving it a shot, because it might not speak to me but its going to speak to you and next week something might not speak to you that’s going to speak to me, so it goes back to that community and that feeling of family and all that. I appreciate the time you’ve provided and the feedback its only going to be seen and heard by me, so don’t feel as though I’m going to walk around and say, well betty said, well let me tell you what Marilyn.. It’s not going to be that at all, so like I said I appreciate your honesty and its given me some great feedback just for what to do tomorrow morning versus you know, I appreciate that.
D.2: Baby Boomer Focus Group Transcript

Participants: K, S, Su, T, J

Kat: As a bit of an introduction, I am doing my doctoral work, the last learning unit that I did talked about evangelism in respect to relationships. As many of us know, it is a toolbox of sorts—hospitality, invitation, nurture, welcome and how those fit into what evangelism looks like and could look like in an ideal situation. The second learning unit that will hopefully look at eventually membership and evangelism in the church today is how, ultimately, can Starmount be all things to all people. Granted, that’s a very loaded question. It’s also a loaded question in the sense that everybody that I am interviewing are members of Starmount. Already, it’s a little bit biased because everybody is a member of Starmount, but what I am hoping is that after these, I just worked with the silent generation or the greatest generation, baby boomers, tomorrow I’ll do a group with GenX, I’ll do a group with GenY. GenX being 1965 to 1979, GenY being 1980 to 2000. As a point of clarification, I told the other group about the range, GenX is [edited for confidentiality]. Interestingly, GenY, [edited for confidentiality]. So you’ve got S________ and young M________ who are still in high school with S________ who is married with two kids. So you talk about the ranges of these generations. The hope is that in asking some of these questions and hearing the feedback and all that sort of thing is are there ten or so statements that I can hopefully hear across all groups to create a survey to survey the whole congregation on some sort of likert scale or something to say, make a statement like, music is extremely important, on a scale of one to ten. It may not speak to you, but it might speak to your mom, and the next week, it might be the other way around. Again, it’s trying to see if we as a congregation can be all things to all people and how would we do that. With that being said…

K: Who are the millenials?

Kat: GenY. Honestly, it depends on who you ask because I finally had to land on these are the generations that I’m going with because I’m, depending on who you ask, I’m GenX or GenY. GenY and Millenials consider themselves sometimes separate groups. Within the readings that I have done, baby boomer sometimes, because it is so expansive, because of all that happened during that generation, actually get split. It really honestly just depends on which sociologist and where they land so I try to, in the readings that I have been doing, I have just been trying to land on what is most consistent. Any other questions? Let’s pray. Most good and gracious God, we thank you for this day, for this group gathering, for K, S, S, T, and J, and the time that they have taken out of their days to help. I am thankful and we know that you are present here with us. We invite your holy spirit to be present as always. Amen.

All of these questions are to get an idea of what you as a generation are feeling. I asked all of these questions in the first group and when I asked these questions they would look at me like I had three heads. Just know that this is more for the sake of
conversation than for fact gathering. Thinking about community, before we go to faith community or worshipping community. What do you look for in a group of friends? What are some of the characteristics that you have when you think about that?

- **J:** Shared experiences.
- **T:** Support. Got your back.
- **Su:** Similar beliefs.
- **Steve:** I think back to the shared experiences, being able to relate to each other, whether it is books that you have read, movies you have seen, or places you have been, and people you have met. Those are the things that I think shape us. If you don’t have those amongst each other, there’s not a lot to talk about.
- **K:** Holding common values. Friendships tend to ebb and flow, depending on where you are in your life and we tend to gravitate toward those who hold similar values and are in a similar stage of life.
- **Kat:** Great. How long have you all been members of Starmount?
- **J:** Almost 4 years.
- **Su:** I think we came here in 2001.
- **T:** We moved here when I was four.
- **Su:** And you’ve been a member ever since?
- **T:** Pretty much.
- **Su:** Wow.
- **T:** There have been some times with ebb and flow, but I grew up in the church.
- **K:** She has always been considered a member of this church.
- **Su:** I never left, but certainly there have been times of looking at different experiences, but we moved here when I was four and saw the sanctuary being built.
- **Steve:** It’s been eight years for us.
- **K:** I win! Born here. My parents carried me from the apartments next door and that was not the chapel, that was the sanctuary. So, yeah, 57.
- **Kat:** When you are looking for a church, what are you looking for in general in terms of a worshipping community? If you were to say, I’m leaving Starmount and I’m going somewhere else, God forbid, what would you be looking for in terms of that worshipping community?
- **Steve:** I don’t know about anybody else, but we were very analytical about it…
- **K:** Gee, what a surprise!
- **Steve:** Preaching, music, community, and Christian education. If the church failed on any one of those, we weren’t going to be here.
- **J:** I grew up in a Presbyterian church. The church we left two churches ago, I was born there and enjoyed it my whole entire life and I was looking for some of those same traditions because it made me feel at home. What I had grown up with and what I was used to was very important to me and coming to this church, it was the friendliest, nicest, warmest feeling as soon as I got here and there were people that were just friendly and good to us right away. We had visited many, many churches and had not gotten that feeling, including other Presbyterian churches so that really mattered.
Steve: I want to go back to my comments because we also visited many churches. We also have been married for fifteen years so we had decided early on that we weren’t going to necessarily follow the faith tradition of my childhood or her childhood. We were going to try to come together and find something that spoke to us even if that meant, and she actually grew up in the Presbyterian church and I grew up in the Episcopal church. So we talk about routines, and the Episcopal church is full of routines like the Catholic church is, and so I really thought going into getting married that I wanted something just like I had because there is comfort in that, but we decided again that we were going to come together and throw both out, we were going to try just about anything when it came to churches. We tried many churches all over the spectrum. Even when we came to Greensboro, same thing, we tried several different churches and like you, we looked at those main things and like you, there were a couple of moments of people reaching out to us which really just clicked. We thought, “This has got to be the place.”

T: Community has been so huge for me personally. I grew up here, we did look at, as our kids got older and those teenage and early college years, other churches to see if there was another fit, but people love me here, they love my family, they care about us, they know us, and I love them too, and that’s exactly the reason that I knew this was our home. This is where we needed to be. Even if there were parts that, I do enjoy contemporary music, I think our music is beautiful here. I enjoy contemporary music as well, but it’s coming to a place where you know you’re loved and cared for and I can love and care for people here in the community. Starmount has that and all of my life I have never experienced it as I have here. Yes, growing up here you come because it’s Sunday morning and our rule was that no matter what you do Saturday night, Sunday morning is church and you be there, but then I still would have chosen to go and even growing up here which was so neat was that there was a great diversity in the friends that I made here that may have not been people that I would have known normally, but we became friends here and we have remained friends throughout our whole life. Starmount has an amazing thing. There are other places that they don’t know who you are.

Su: There are and we tried to leave and we went to different places and there is just nothing there so we stayed home for awhile and it was our son who said “First of all, why are we going to these other churches?” “Oh, we’re just looking.” “We have a church. Why aren’t we going?” “Okay, maybe we better get back!” From the mouths of babes. I grew up Presbyterian and my husband grew up Presbyterian and so there wasn’t anything else to do. It’s what I know.

J: I do think that is a big thing, with us moving here and not knowing anyone, I think that comfort thing was very important. Traditions like I was used to and we just walked in and just felt “Ah!” and like I said, people were just so friendly and nice. I had been to another Presbyterian church in another city and I wanted so badly to like this Presbyterian church and I tried so hard and they just had all of their little groups, everything was all set, and they really were not interested. I think the size of the church also has something to do with it. It’s a good size; I know we are always trying to grow,
but I like the size because you don't get lost, but there’s enough people so you don’t feel like you have to run the whole church. I think it’s a good size for us.

• Kat: Still trying to think about the big picture for you, speaking in generalities, what are ways, either individually or communally, that you personally seek to deepen your faith? What are your spiritual practices? What do you define those as?

• K: I enjoy my Sunday school class when we are in town. I have gone to small reunion groups, it’s down to two, but he and I have been meeting for 14 years at least twice a month. We keep each other accountable…

• Kat: In your faith life?

• K: Uh-huh. Up until a few years ago, I hung around downstairs so those are mine.

• J: I think for me it is teaching Sunday School that makes me study more and try to make it something that my young students will understand and so it helps me. I just love to listen to them and to hear their ideas because that gives me hope and makes me feel better.

• S: I think to me it’s worship. You know, it’s Sunday morning and it’s time to go and with any worship there’s learning, there’s community, and there’s not the kinds of things you see everyday, so there is the opportunity to reconnect. The interesting thing that my wife and I have said is “Wouldn’t it be great if there was another time during the week that we could go to church?” Like the Catholics have, like Sunday evenings. I know that we are a small church and might not be able to do that, but a regular coming together with community and God.

• T: I guess I get my Martha on, just doing.

• Su: And I know what you’re speaking of because I went to the retreat!

• J: I want to say worship also. I agree, and the sermons, I am a big questioner and I have had many, many doubtful questions many times. That’s just my personality and I know, my husband tells me that God made us human and he understands that we are going to have a lot of questions, but I have gotten some good answers from some of the questions. It just said to me that “Ah, yes. It’s okay. It’s okay if you’re like this and here it is.” That has really helped me a lot.

• Su: I think for me, worship, certainly mission work really hits home for me. There’s something about when we go as a small group and we travel and we get very much out of our comfort zone and we focus really on our own faith, and learning about how other people practice their faith. The women’s retreat was really helpful. I know that I would like to go to the Sunday school. I look at it in the bulletin every week and say, “Oh, you know what?”

• Kat: But it’s at 9:00.

• Su: I’ll be real honest. Sometimes I forget. On Sunday morning, my alarm is set to get here for worship and then I’ll read it in the bulletin and go, “Oh, the video café! That might be a really good thing to do” and so I need to put it on the calendar too. The other thing is that I went to go see the movie Noah, which I would like to have a conversation about some point because that spurred me to go back and read as much as I could in the Bible again and go “Wait a minute, how did that go? Wait a minute, how did I get this?” So, that’s something.
Kat: Yeah, I haven’t seen it yet, but it’s on my list.
Su: Yeah, I had a lot of questions after.
Kat: To that point, in terms of worship and all that sort of stuff, why do you go to church? I know it’s a big question, but why do you go to church?
Su: You guys do a great job at the sermons too. I remember growing up a lot I would get lost in the circles, but I find them really relevant, scripturally based. I am learning and relearning scriptures from hearing it again. There’s humor and it’s also very relevant so it’s a nice mixture of everything. I have also experienced where it seemed as though there were very little scriptural part, just “This is how you should live your life type of thing”. It’s a chance to learn and grow and connect back to God. I try all week, but life gets in the way.
Kat: Absolutely.
J: I think the music is wonderful here and it’s a way to set your week up and just have a time to reflect, listen, and to change your pace. You’re doing all of these things and this is just what you do on Sunday mornings and it makes you think and hope that you are going to have a good week, thinking about what happened in church. Also, that sense of community is wonderful because things happen in your life that aren’t always so wonderful and I get upset and then I come to church and you see all these wonderful people that care about you and you say, “Ok, this is happening right now, but there are good people here and it makes me feel good”.
S: Speaking on behalf of the Baby Boomer generation, it’s Sunday morning…
J: Right, this is what we always do.
S: We go to church.
J: This was just, absolutely, everybody went to church.
S: Right, and before you got anything out of it, like the things that you said and you said, it just Sunday morning, you go to church. Maybe it’s unfortunate, maybe it’s not, but you look at some of the later generations and you find religion, church, community, a lot of the things that we are talking about, in other places. We’ve talked in some of the committee meetings about giving, and you go back generations and generations, and it all goes back to giving to the church, you don’t give anywhere else. Now you see these other generations scattering their giving. Well, again, I think the Baby Boomer generation, we grew up in the church. There were times in my past, I think late college years and early 20s, where I stopped going to church and came back.
Su: I think we all did the same thing!
S: Yeah. There were some Sunday mornings when I didn’t think there was any benefit of going to church, but the car just went in that direction and the clothes just came on. I’m happy for that as it took me through some times, but I’m at the point now where I am actually here because I want to be here, not because my culture, my generation, says that you’re supposed to be here on Sunday morning.
K: I think with your generation, I think we were talking about this during stewardship. Somebody said “Your generation will sit there with a completely straight face and believe this…I am an active member of my church” if I am there two or three out of six weeks. I’m there and I think “Seriously?” Of course, if you look at my attendance
since we became empty nesters and got that place up in the mountains, I guess I’d say “I’m with you now”, but it is for different reasons. So I feel much better if I don’t see your crew there so okay, that’s fine. You summed it up best, it’s Sunday. I don’t have to clip on a tie now or shine my shoes, I’m good.

- Kat: To that point, I guess, for a matter of perspective, how often do you go to church? Is it one of those that you are in town, therefore you go?
- Su: Most of the time, yes.
- Kat: There are always going to be exceptions to the rule.
- K: I didn’t go 80% of the time because I didn’t get a call.
- Kat: Or a letter.
- K: I didn’t get a letter so…
- J: We just go every Sunday. That’s just the way it is, sort of like exercising. I just exercise every day and every Sunday I go to church. That’s the plan and if you miss one or two, it doesn’t mean anything, well, I mean it does, but it’s not a big deal. I grew up the same way that you did. It was, that’s what you did, there was never a question about it, you just automatically went to church on Sunday and it just seems to feel good.
- S: Like brushing your teeth.
- J: Absolutely.
- S: You might skip it once or twice, but you probably shouldn’t.
- J: You always dressed up for church on Sunday too. You would never wear anything that wasn’t appropriate.
- S: You hear that, K?
- J: That was the way it was. Of course, when I was young, and I am older than most of you, women were wearing hats on Sunday and little white gloves. We wouldn’t even walk into church without that.
- Kat: You hit the nail on the head. Do you then consider yourself a regular attender?
- All: Yes.
- K: I would bring my letter.
- (Laughter)
- S: Now he’s just showing off.
- K: Because we’re her to get a grade, right?
- Kat: It’s all about the grade, exactly.
- J: Well, I got to tell you, when we read that thing in the bulletin and Terry said, “Well, I think we went quite a bit” and we never got a letter. Our neighbor brings the letter over, it has been misdelivered.
- (Laughter)
- Kat: Having that you all are members, what does it mean to you to say that I am a member of Starmount Presbyterian Church? What does that mean to you?
- T: A participant.
- K: I am part of one of the great masteries in this city.
- J: I’m proud of it. Yes, I am very proud of going to this church. That’s the other thing, when we were looking for churches, our children, our son told us “Oh we don’t want to
go to that church. That’s just for uppity rich people.” So we went over to Westminster and it was this huge church, way too big for us, we thought we would get so lost in that church it would be ridiculous, so I thought “Well, the minister’s from Davidson” and Andrew, our oldest son went to Davidson. He wasn’t the one who told us that. We thought “Okay, let’s just try it, even though we know we’re not going to like it”. Because it was just for rich people and we’re not rich. So we went and we said “Oh my gosh, we like it”.

• K: Did he mention any names?
• (Laughter)
• J: Anyways, it took us awhile to break the news to our son. The funny thing is that one of their best friends have now almost joined this church so I think the word is going out that it is not just for uppity rich people.
• Kat: So what does it mean, and this goes back to generational differences and that sort of thing, to decide I want to become a member? Why not just attend? Why be a member? When you say “I am a member of Starmount Presbyterian Church”, what does that mean?
• Su: I belong to a group of people who believe what I believe in and want to do what I want to do. It’s kind of a pack mentality, but we’re humans and we’re supposed to be together.
• J: I think it shows that you’re committed. It’s a kind of commitment that says “Yes, I really mean this and it’s important to me.” I’m not just going to come today and not later.
• T: It’s a commitment to the congregation. There was a time when we were still members, but not attending, but I still knew that this was my home. There was a point when I said “You know, we really need to go back. That’s our home.” That was a decision though, so it was a decision to go from still being a member in the books to being an active member, becoming a member and making that commitment in our hearts and actions.
• S: We’ve had discussions about this in some leadership forums about the younger generations tending not to sign on the dotted line thinking their name just appears on some page of membership. I think you are asking this question because there are going to be some generational differences with that. For me, it is important to sign on the dotted line, but I still think of people that I see in church and other church functions as members even if they are not a member. They are common law members.
• Unison: Right.
• S: Just like people who don’t get married for twenty years, we still think of them as being members of the church so their actions is what determines their membership. Their actions and what they feel about something. They’re not cheating on us by going to another church, they’re really here, and they are committed by their actions.
• J: I think it helps you, yourself, also to keep going and keep doing things because if I am a member, then I feel that I should be helping on committees and I should be participating. Whereas if I am not a member, I could always think “Ah, well…”
Kat: What drives you, besides a car, but what motivates you to come to church, to come to worship, to be part of a community besides it’s what you do and all that sort of stuff? You’re doing it, what is it?

J: It makes me feel good, that’s the bottom line, I feel good and I want to feel good.

K: For 26 years, serving as a youth advisor, is you cannot just show up at 5:30 on Sunday and that’s the first time the kids have seen you.

J: Right, right, good point.

K: You are there. You make sure they’re there. We as church members, just not having your name on a role or whatever, have a responsibility to this congregation. A responsibility to support it financially, support it with your time and efforts. Do you need to sign on for quarter of a century? No, but the advantage of being raised in this church literally, a lot of the older members walking up to the sanctuary “K, tuck your shirttails in”. “Yes, sir”. So I would tuck my shirttails in and go on in to church. You accept the responsibilities and do those. Eighteen and under and 65 and older, I like folks in that range and I can give or take anybody else.

(Laughter)

Su: Thanks so much!

J: We’re out!

K: Because those two ranges will tell you what is on their mind and some in between.

Kat: Yes. Absolutely. What do you think? What drives or motivates you to come to worship, to church, besides it’s what we’ve always done? I’ve heard feel good, for community.

Su: For our family, we have jumped back in in the past year and a half or so. It’s about getting back involved and learning and growing and becoming healthy spiritually. It’s the whole package. I like to come and say “Hey, how was your run?”. It’s a lot of the community which is a good thing and I’m learning and it spurs me on to want to learn some more. It allows me to branch out and get to know more people that I didn’t know before.

S: I’m almost embarrassed to say that I don’t know. The Sunday morning thing is what gets me going. I don’t know what to expect. I don’t go and say, “Alright, I need to go because I want to learn more about this” or “I’m going because I’m seeing somebody”. I go because it’s the right thing to do and when I get there, all these good things happen. I think that’s someplace in the back of my mind, the knowledge that things are going to happen.

J: It’s a positive experience.

S: It’s a positive experience. Right. You feel good, that’s right. I don’t go and say, “Oh, I can’t wait to learn more about Leviticus this morning”.

J: I’m the same way. You know you are going to learn something or it will do something for you.

S: Right. I don’t have any other habits or patterns that make me feel bad that I go on a regular basis. It’s a good thing.

T: It’s become very important that in my child’s life and I thing that’s one thing that David said about before because there are no children his age. He had such a strong
youth group in his church when he was growing up. He really, really wants that, I did not. It’s not as vital for me, but for him to grow spiritually, I don’t think he can do that without us being here. In addition to all of the other reasons, that’s one that nobody else has mentioned because we have a child.

- **S:** I’ll agree with that. We came from another church in town, much larger. The kids did not feel engaged, they didn’t feel part of the community. Coming here was a huge thing for them, they had forgotten anything there was from the other church. Absolutely, I’m sorry that I missed that one, but you’re absolutely right. We’re here because it’s where our kids are loved. People are parenting our kids as much as we are, showing them the good things.

- **T:** Campbell was baptized here so he grew up and people still say “Oh, how did he get so tall?”.

- **K:** That’s one of my concerns, is this the trough that we’ve got? We used to taking thirty kids to Montreat historically, but fifteen years ago there were basically six kids in our youth group. We kind of hit that wall there and it sounds like, you and I have talked about it, that wall is coming back. The thing is that issues that I think from the evangelism point of view is that “Invite your friends” and “Grow the youth group” and “Bring your friends”. I go through my list of friends and I don’t have any friends that don’t have a church. Well, I have one couple that are unchurched. They’re engaged and I’m supportive of whatever, whether it’s synagogue or Catholic or Presbyterian church, they’re going and engaged there. Parents will go anywhere to church if they’re kids are engaged. I mean, that’s why we got the Ratkins, Carter started coming with Christopher and we hit the lottery with that family.

- **Kat:** As you think about that and I’m hearing some of this from people already, but as you think about that and deepening your own faith, do you have to have to go to church slash worship to deepen your faith?

- **Su:** It’s not the only way.

- **T:** No, but it’s a good jumping off point. Did I say that right?

- **J:** I don’t think you have to, but humans are social and when you don’t go, you tend not to do anything.

- **S:** It’s very foundational.

- **T:** My kids went to a camp with several families from here. It transformed them. We will be the girls’ camp director again this year. I’ve never seen a change in them that I had when they went to camp. Why? I don’t know. Why they couldn’t translate that here. Part of it, the personality of my kids and myself, that we tend to be kind of sit on the outside until we feel safe enough to go in and living out where we do. My kids didn’t feel part of the group, but that was partly on their own too, because they didn’t jump in and say “I’m going to make myself a part of this group” and partly on me because I didn’t say “I’m going to make you go and be part of the group”. There was a chain reaction that occurred. It’s not a fault of anybody, it just is. It’s an observation that we’ve made. They’ve both grew up in the church here at Starmount and redabbled in high school a little bit. If she could go back now, she’s so much a stronger individual now that she could make her way into the youth group and be just fine. I
wish she could’ve been that person then. Cyrus is the same way. He’s very reserved, he’s very kind of stand back. He can be a leader or a follower once he’s in the mix, but it’s getting us into the mix. That’s the difficult part. Starmount continues to be a strong hold for our family in lots of ways, but I have also been pleased to see that they were able to grow in their faith very strongly too because I felt like there were some things that push them to do things here.

• Kat: You said this a little bit, but do you have to be a member to deepen your faith? Or how does being a member affect your faith?
• S: I think it goes back to the foundation piece. It seems like there is a commitment under there. From my perspective, it builds from there. I imagine I could, but I like the comment “I’m lazy” and if I didn’t have that commitment, I don’t know if I would be able to effectively deepen my faith without the commitment.
• J: I think to deepen your faith, you have to want to deepen your faith. I think that’s sort of at the root of committing to a church. It’s saying “I want to do this and I’m willing to put some time into it and some thought into it”. I think if you’re not willing to do that, yes, you might do it, but to me you don’t really want it that much.
• Kat: Awesome.
• T: And that might be a generational thing because I just think of Connie Fallor who reads the Bible every single day and studies and just immerses herself in it. Number one, I don’t have the time.
• J: But it doesn’t do that for me, you know, immersing yourself in the Bible does not have the same impact as it does for others. I think we are all different in what works for us because we are all such different people. For some it does and for some it doesn’t because I’ve tried the same thing. It just doesn’t speak to me the way that I think it is supposed to and I feel bad, but I have to do it another way.
• Su: That’s why I try to teach a couple times in circle. It forces me to concentrate and then talk to others and use my life stories to convey the lesson. I just can’t do it.
• J: I know, my husband, the first year that he retired, he read through the entire Bible, and it really does, it works for him really well. I have a problem and he’d say “Read the Bible” and I would try and I would say “Okay, I have to talk to somebody about it”.
• T: I do too. Ty read the Bible in a year as part of something he did and I said “Wow, that’s really cool. Let’s see if I can do it” and I got in a couple chapters in. Membership is important, I get it. I don’t have a strong conviction, I mean, for me it’s membership through my actions when I look back through my history, but I get it too. I understand the importance of it.
• Kat: Well, shifting gears a little bit, thank you for what you’ve shared so far. Think about the ideal situation, the ideal worship experience for you. What do the hymns sound like? Does it matter?
• Su: It does. Sometimes I just can’t follow them. I like old hymns.
• J: Me too.
• Su: Or simple melodies and words. Some of these hymns…
• J: I was very disappointed Christmas Eve. I think it was Christmas Eve that we had only a couple of original hymns and it was so disappointing to me because especially
Christmas Eve I go to hear the old original Christmas songs that make me feel good and we did all of these new ones and I’m thinking “Oh”.

- S: And Test Tubes, that’s not a hymn.
- K: New age political statement.
- J: Uh huh.
- K: Did you get that on camera?
- (Laughter)
- T: I think that I am on that edge of generations. I very much love the traditional hymns, but I have always loved contemporary music. Even growing up when they did “Morning has Broken”, I was like “Yes! We get to do something upbeat”. I like hearing the choir sing their music, I think it is always beautiful, always beautiful. The hymns that we sing, I’m a 63er so I’m on that edge. I prefer contemporary music. I feel more connected myself that way. I just like to sing the Doxology. When I was growing up, we sang it every single Sunday.
- J: We did too.
- T: It is just one of those things and I think “God is holding me”.
- J: I agree and we don’t do those things ever anymore and of course that’s me for tradition and wanting to feel like home, but I would love to do that too.
- S: We used to sing that in public schools.
- J: Really?
- S: Yes. Everyday.
- J: Where did you go to school?
- S: In Arizona.
- J: Very awkward.
- K: It was the territory back then.
- (Laughter)
- S: Well, when I look at it now.
- Kat: So you started to speak to this T, what do the anthems sound like, in terms of any of the music.
- K: I enjoy the breadth of what our choir can do, but they’re operating at a different level and can handle complex pieces of music and be it singing or that they have folks on the piano. I can appreciate that. Would I step up and attempt it? Are you nuts? No, I can’t read music. I can get away with a lot, but that wouldn’t be one of them.
- S: I do enjoy the old standards. I also like some of the contemporary music that’s done with our house band. I don’t want that every Sunday. I also don’t want them doing obscure music. I think most of it is the music that has come out in the past few months.
- Kat: Can the old traditional hymns with the same melodies be sung at a different tempo? Or not by an organ and be accompanied by a guitar?
- J: I don’t think all of the old traditional hymns are like durges.
- Kat: No, no. I just meant in terms of having a different lilt to it or a different tempo.
- Unison: Sure.
- S: Somebody did “A Mighty Fortress is Our God” and did it with a guitar and it was great. I don’t have a problem with that.
• T: There are times when we look at each other and it’s almost like it’s painful sometimes. That’s why I like going to Montreat with the youth and singing the music there. It holds me, it lifts me, it makes me want to shout. There was one hymn and everybody kept looking at each other and I said “That was the hymn that never ended”.

• J: Oh, I remember that one. Eighty-five verses.

• Kat: We usually try to trim that done. What about prayers? Are the prayers of confession that we do collectively, the prayers of the people, some responsive stuff? What prayer ideally?

• K: They hit too close to home sometimes.

• J: That’s good.

• Su: A little bit, yeah. And that’s good.

• J: The prayer of confession always does.

• Su: That’s another thing I grew up with, we had a little bit more time for silent confession after the together one. I always felt good about that.

• J: It kind of makes you sit and think.

• Su: Uh huh. I don’t know if other people have experienced that. You said it and now you sit with it.

• T: I know in my younger years, we would be reading it and I was like “Oh, I don’t really know if I did that”. You know? I couldn’t think back. So does that speak to different generations that at one age, you know, when we’re younger and we’re reading and think “Oh, I don’t think I’m really like that. That’s a little harsh”. You know, but now we can look and say “Yes, in some ways, shape or form, I have done all of these things.”

• J: I think life experience causes you to need these things more. When you’re young, you know, everything’s wonderful.

• T: And you, but not me.

• J: Yes, and I’m not going to worry about this thing now. I think that’s where it just goes over your head until you’ve really had some of these things happen to you, these experiences, and then you say “Oh, yeah.” Then it’s that need more and I don’t think that maybe they do need it. If kids come from traditional families that are pretty happy like I did. Yeah, we went, but I didn’t pay a whole lot of attention because I was fine.

• S: I appreciate the differences between being raised in an Episcopal church where it was the same prayer every Sunday. If you kept me going, I could recite them all right now. I appreciate the fact that we change things up, I think that’s wonderful. There are some themes that we touch on probably a little too much. Again, that’s my opinion, but at the same time, I know we can relate to everything that’s in there and some mornings it’s like “gasp”. I appreciate that.

• Kat: What about sermons? Is there a certain way that they are delivered? Like first person or when it’s coming from a character or a person from the Bible. Are there certain things within the sermon in terms of how it’s being delivered, whether in structure or form or what have you that ideally speak to you more than others?
T: I find it very comfortable in whatever way you and John are doing it. I mean, I find it to be a conversation from someone real. That’s what I feel from it so that I am able to cue in, click in, listen and not lose focus or drift off because it is from someone real.

J: It’s not stiff. You have a very friendly, open manner about it which is good. Yeah, I agree, very good. I still like the traditional one though, where you stand at the pulpit and give it rather than some of the nontraditional sermon methods. That still is the best way for me to focus on what you’re saying. Again it’s traditional.

Su: You made a statement on the retreat that George would talk about what it means to be Presbyterian. That was you, wasn’t it?

T: No, but I remember somebody saying that. Somebody did say that.

Su: Related to whatever we were learning about to Presbyterian itself.

Kat: Presbyterianess?

Su: Presbyterianess, yes. Who was it?

T: I don’t remember, but I remember that. There was something that was also written in the bulletin along with communion that was connected into why as Presbyterians we do it this way.

Su: It’s a book of orders.

Kat: Yeah, really. It’s true. Why we do what we do.

Su: Why are we Presbyterian?

Kat: Some theological standard, so to speak?

Su: Yeah. I need to remember who said it because I need to go back to that person and find out. Who else was on the retreat?

T: D_________

Su: D_________

Kat: What about scripture? Along the same lines as the sermon, is there maybe in delivery or translation, is there, how the scripture is read or does that matter at all?

Su: I’m guilty of what bothers me because I didn’t have access to the pew Bible when I read so I went online, I couldn’t find my Bible, it was underneath my Presbyterian women’s stuff, but I went online and found a version that I felt comfortable delivering. It probably wasn’t the one that was in the pew Bible as the person in the congregation, I’m reading and that wasn’t what I was hearing.

J: Oh, I see what you’re saying.

Kat: So if it is read from a different translation, if you want to see what the pew Bible says, that’s great, but it isn’t going to be what you are hearing.

Su: Right, and I can’t do two things.

J: I don’t even try to do the Bible because I agree, I don’t want that. I don’t mind hearing a different translation, but I couldn’t do that, it’s too confusing. Not that it’s a bad thing.

Su: No, it’s just that, and I also said that I can’t do two things. Give me something simple.

Kat: What about who is gathered around you in this ideal worshipping situation? Is it everybody your age? Is it a mix of ages? Are squeaks and peeps and squirms okay? What does that look like?
• S: I think again, I think the Baby Boomers have their spot in church. You know, a plaque.
• K: The youth have theirs.
• S: The youth have theirs. That’s right. I think we find a comfortable place in church.
• J: That’s true.
• K: As far as like squirming kids, I think it bothers some people who have not had children, but the minute that you have a child, you have a better appreciation in planes, in stores, in restaurants, in wherever.
• J: I love children’s sermon. I love to see the kids go up, I love to listen to their responses. That is a highlight for me. It’s wonderful.
• K: Yeah, what’s Mac going to do now?
• J: It just makes you feel like the church is alive because you see all of these wonderful, young kids that are part of it and it just makes you happy.
• T: I like being able to see it up on the screen because you can’t always see the children so it’s nice to see. As far as where we sit, I think we sit in the general area where is not at all where we sat growing up. We always sat on the right hand side, but that window is not there anymore.
• J: They changed the whole sanctuary, right?
• T: I did, last Sunday when I sat down, there was a couple who sat down beside me and said “This isn’t anybody’s spot, is it?” I said “Absolutely not”. They said because we visited another church, it wasn’t in Greensboro, and they were told it was somebody else’s spot. I said “Absolutely not, but don’t sit in my mother’s seat”.
• S: But your mother died three years ago.
• (Laughter)
• Kat: Exactly.
• T: But she’s 88.
• K: She doesn’t know where she’s sitting.
• T: She won’t say anything. She’ll come home and fume.
• J: Oh, that’s cute.
• Kat: At least she doesn’t say anything.
• T: Oh no, no, no.
• J: She wouldn’t, she’s too much of a lady.
• T: She wouldn’t do that.
• S: I will confess that I get challenged by kids being loud or disruptive around me in church. I mean, a little bit is okay and Mac is fine, and Libby keeps him in line. I’m sorry, but it just reminds me of when we first..
• K: Loved it when her phone went off when we were first visiting church.
• S: I didn’t hear that, but the one that I was talking about was the one whose child was getting a little bit rambunctious a few seats down throughout the service and her comment was “Perhaps your child would like a mint” and that’s what she passed on down to quiet the kid down. That’s what Wendy and I use every once in a while, “Perhaps your child would like a mint”.
• (Laughter)
• T: I’ll be looking out for that one.
• K: So when you hand me a mint one Sunday…
• Kat: Settle down, K, settle down.
• Su: A baby crying and not being ushered out is the only thing that plucks my nerves. A little peep, no, that’s fine.
• Kat: What about aesthetics? In terms of, does it matter? If you were to go to another church, family church, you go on vacation and actually go to church, whatever, do you find yourself sometimes distracted by the sanctuary’s appearance or the church building in general? Or banners? Do they help? Does it matter?
• J: I think the light coming into the church matters. I think dark churches tend to be depressing just like being out in the dark area makes you depressed. I think that our church is light, airy, and I think that is a very good feeling. I think it is a better feeling. I think our church is great that way and the pyramids are amazing.
• Su: We need to put a, when the banners are hung, is there a description in the bulletin on how that was chosen?
• J: It’s done by color, I mean, there’s seasonal colors so that’s why the colors are chosen. So if the liturgical calendar says it’s supposed to be white, then you know.
• K: After Easter, right?
• J: It is true that very few people have any idea about that.
• Su: I knew that some of the typical colors, but some of them I will look at and go “That’s really pretty, I wonder”. I know what it is representing and it’s color and form, but sometimes I wonder about the other things that it is representing.
• S: I prefer a more traditional look in a church and our church is I think still relatively traditional. I’ve seen some very modern looking churches.
• Kat: More theater like sanctuary.
• S: Thank you. That’s what I was looking for, but then last Easter we were at Riverside Church in New York and that kind of cathedral environment is really breathtaking so I like that.
• J: Would you like it for every Sunday, would that be okay?
• S: I think it would be okay.
• K: You get used to it, I guess.
• S: That’s the thing, you get used to it. The one thing I would not get used to is the theater type church.
• Su: My husband does not do theater church.
• J: I think it says something about the kind of congregation that you’re addressing, just like the kind of house you buy says something about you, the kind of sanctuary you have says something about the kind of congregation that you are trying to appeal to. I think that matters, maybe it shouldn’t, but I think it does.
• T: For me, personally, the aesthetics, although I find it very pleasant and I like all the different styles, that would not be a make or breaker. For me, it’s the experience.
• Kat: Those are all my questions. Any other general comments? In terms of what next steps are is that, as I mentioned in the beginning, I have two tomorrow. I have a GenX and a GenY group tomorrow and then I hope as quickly as possible that I send a survey
out to the congregation to ask some of these questions to see what does this look like. What I’ve heard more often than not is that the worship piece is obviously helpful, but it’s not without the community. That’s one of the pieces that it comes back to for me and that I am seeing more and more in this big thing. We can get around worship as long as everyone is in this, you know, kind of that family thing. That’s more of what I am hearing from last learning unit and this learning unit is that if you have a sense of belonging and you have a sense of purpose and you have a sense of being a part of something, it might not speak to you every Sunday, but we can get past that because we are committed to each other and the relationships. Thanks for your time. I appreciate it. I am thankful for it.
Kat: Let’s start on a light note. What do you look for in a group of friends? If you were to say, this is what we are going for and we think about the community piece, what are you looking for in a group of friends?

S: Humor.

L: Things in common.

Li: I also try to, because for me, realizing the other day as I was trying to set up for Matt’s birthday party is what makes friends and who ends up at birthday parties. At what point does it switch over from being Mom and Dad’s friends’ kids to being your own friends? We’re not really in Matt’s own friends land yet. You start realizing, but my best friend and I were best friends since strollers and what made us best friends? Because we are completely opposite people, but we grew up together so we became some of the same things.

S: It’s foundational.

Li: So there’s a lot of that comes with can you make friends with whoever is around you? And is that who you are like the people that are around you? Or do you force yourself to become friends because you are in the same situation? Or do you seek out people who are similar to you? Or just because they make you happy?

Sl: I think it’s easier to become friends with people that you have things in common with, like mindedness, maybe people who are in the same circumstances that you’re in, the same socioeconomic group that you’re in. I mean, those are probably the easiest friends to make because you got a lot in common, but then you discover people that are complete opposite in all those things that can become your friends.

S: Yeah.

Sl: And for some reason, you’re shocked. Sl: And for some reason, you’re shocked. You’re like “Golly, I really like that person, but you know, we’re completely opposite in all these areas, but I really like him”.

S: Well, it’s funny because my parents, speaking of whatever. When was your last meeting, yesterday?

Kat: Yesterday.

S: Okay. From that generation, they have always urged me to be so highly involved in church or whatever because that’s where they drew a lot of their friends from, from dinner group and all those people were church members, so it’s similar. It worked for them, but it hasn’t necessarily worked for me. Also, for me, I have somebody who I say is my best friend and I’ve known her since second grade. Our parents were friends so we were kind of forced to come up together, I say that in a nice way, forced. Then when I went to college, I got to pick, I mean, truly, truly pick who I wanted to be friends with on a different level.

M: I kind of agree with Sl that a lot of it is common interests and shared circumstances. You know, I think about the people that are closest to me in my life
are somewhat in the same place. You know, because I'm not married and I don't have kids. Some of my closest friends are in their fifties because they are empty nesters so it's easy to travel and do things with them as opposed to, no offense, people who are my age and are raising kids. So it's a weird place that I'm in because I have both angles of friends, but it's really about having things in common and relating and doing those things and being in the same place at different ages, but in the same circumstance.

- Kat: Sure.
- L: And what you were saying is that Matt doesn't get to pick his friends, I am kind of on the opposite end of that now, being single and I'm not going to go out to the bar scene or whatever, but my kids have chosen friends from school and we all have similarities of pooled elementary kids and all of the parents just come in and hang out. That's where I'm at, it's the role reversal from him. My kids have picked my friends.
- (Laughter)
- Kat: How long have you been members of Starmount?
- Sl: 14 years.
- L: I don't know. Two?
- Kat: Yes, two.
- Li: Almost my entire life.
- S: Me too.
- M: I have only been here five.
- Kat: What are you looking for in a worshipping community? If you think about it in the bigger picture, so maybe answer the question, why am I a member of Starmount?
- L: This may be easiest for me to answer because I had to do it recently. We shopped around a lot in Greensboro, which is a dreadful thing, church shopping. We came here on a whim, we saw the sign out and we thought that was intriguing and it was close to our house so we tried it. We were just blown away, I mean, blown away, at a) the international flavor that day because a couple years ago somebody spoke in French that day as well, so there was that, as well as the whole Scottish thing. We just thought that was so interesting. We loved how friendly, we have never been in our entire lives, to a church that was so overwhelmingly friendly. People could not wait to say hello to us. We obviously have been to other churches where they are really excited to have visitors, almost too much so that they scare me, but it was a genuine warmth that we found stunning. That was the thing about Starmount for us.
- Li: Yay!
- S: I guess, I have a question for you. What kept you here? We are kind of in the same boat because we were raised here.
- Li: I actually came back because I left in middle school and I went to my best friend's church. I actually joined there, then went to college and stopped going to church because it was just easier. Then I, on my own, decided to visit back here, but
also there was never a question in my mind where I would get married. It was always at Starmount. Jason just got lucky in that he didn’t have a church.

• (Laughter)

• Li: So what made us come back is that it always felt like home, no matter what, it always felt like home for me. The walls are different colors and things like that, but it’s like going back home to your parents’ house after going to college. It was just like that. At the time, the people were still very inviting to me even though there was that “I recognize you, but I don’t know why…you’re not standing next to your parents”. But at that point, I stopped introducing myself as my parents’ child. I was able to be me and it still didn’t matter so I really appreciated that.

• S: So you started coming again before you were married?

• Li: No, I think I was already married, but I couldn’t introduce myself to all these people without saying “Yes, I was a D____”. I couldn’t just be Li ______, I had to say “Yes, I’m S’s daughter”. Right, yes. It’s still very much that home feeling, that mixture of lots of different things and it’s funny, leaving the parking lot today, one of the things that occurred to me was that it’s like home where things don’t always go the way they are supposed to, but it’s okay. We’re going to sing the extra verse and it’s okay. That’s what it is. We all might think “Ah, thank goodness that Grandma’s not paying attention right now”. That’s just how it is.

• S: Yeah. I’m kind of in the same boat. It just felt like home. I never joined another church so my membership has always been here since I went through confirmation. I was married when I came back and so the church went through my divorce with me and because my parents were so involved, a lot of their friends are still here. Maybe because I don’t think I have gotten to grow up because I am still little S to a lot of people. My kids really push, “Are we going to church today? Are we going to church today?” They love it.

• M: Finding a church was probably the hardest thing for me to do because I grew up in a church. My dad was the church organist and Starmount is the first church I ever went to without my father at the organ and it was very odd. I spent years trying to find a church and it was never right. Actually what kept me here, what started me here was Guiness, I always give Guiness credit for that. The thought of beer and the Bible, I even brought my Bible the first time and everyone laughed at that.

• Kat: Rookie!

• (Laughter)

• M: And everyone laughed at that. “You don’t bring your Bible”. Well, I still bring my Bible to church even though nobody else does. It brought me, but one of the most defining stories has to do with John, looking back, as surprising as it is. I had been here about five months and I had to have knee surgery and for those who know I’m very physically active. I had another race coming up and I was very nervous and I didn’t even think about it, but when I went to have knee surgery that morning, John was in the parking lot waiting for me. He prayed with me in the parking lot and I am not sure that John understood the ramifications of what he was doing or what it meant to me, but I was more nervous that day than I was having anything else going on in
my life because my knee was my piece. If I lost my knee, I was kind of screwed and it meant a lot that he was there. I had already been going and I get sucked into things, I might have already been on session. I am not quite sure, it is all one big blur of things that happened that first year, but I stayed. The reason that I think I continued to stay is the one thing I can say about Starmount is that they accept people wherever they are and they’re very good about that. We can laugh in the middle of worship; the old ladies behind me were cutting up today, I almost had to tell them to be quiet.

- Kat: I noticed that.
- (Laughter)
- M: And it’s okay. I think, at the end of the day, the fact that whether I show up in blue jeans or whether I serve communion with this huge tattoo on my arm, things like that. Starmount has always, at least for me, in my mind, has always been accepting of that. There might not be people that are, but for the most part, it feels that way.
- S: I don’t know if you’ve seen this, but I have seen that it has merged into that because for a while I think that might have been shunned or looked at and would have probably had a group of people. They’ve either accepted it or are just not here.
- M: I don’t think we have given them a choice much. I really don’t. Some of us just plow right in and it is what it is.
- Li: Deal with it!
- L: This sounds really bad, but I’m going to share. Fred and I were talking after church and he says “Did you see there was a younger couple” but he said a short man and a woman and I know Tess so I was like “Um, did the person have spiky hair?” He said “Yeah”. And I said, “Well, that’s a woman and they’re partners. I went to high school with one and the other was my softball coach”. So we talked about that a little bit, the partnership, and how my neighbors are also two women. He said “They are people that look like us?” and I said, “Yes, they are”.
- Li: That’s one of those things. I have noticed that, I just thought “I hope we are doing our part to be accepting” and be like “It doesn’t matter to me.” I wanted to take that moment and say “Thanks for coming” not “I’m so proud you’re gay”.
- Sl: We were newly married and I grew up Baptist and Presbyterian, T grew up Lutheran. She lived in Charlotte and I lived in Greensboro. I was going to Westover church. This was before they were where they are. I was in the singles group there and she was in her singles group in Charlotte. We did things with both singles groups before we got married. We got married, we were already going to Westover and we knew all of these people so we just stayed there. It was a real stretch for T growing up Lutheran because it was so completely, by that time it had kind of moved over to Mears chapel and gotten a lot more contemporary. She never felt comfortable in that kind of worship environment. We also noticed that we were vastly different than all of the other single people because we didn’t like children and didn’t want them.
- M: Amen.
- (Laughter).
- M: Sorry. I’ll second that.
So everybody’s breeding and all they can talk about are their babies. It got to the point where we felt like we didn’t belong. We don’t belong in the singles group because we are married, we don’t belong in the married group because we’re not having babies, and we just felt kind of lost. Also, there were so many people there that it was like nobody needed us. We weren’t needed in any way. Some friends invited us to Starmount. We came and this was Starmount 1998, Mike Shelton had just come, the church was still at about 800 people, so it was double the size it is now. It was two services, but it was a lot smaller than Westover church. We instantly felt at home, the friendliness thing has always been a trademark of this church and we love the fact that we became friends with all of these people of all these different generations. We got invited into a dinner group and I remember that we got to know John and Marilyn Theisen and they were probably thirty years older than we were, yet we just had a lot in common with them. We got to know all of these other people and just loved it. It felt like home. Then, of course, we ended up having a child that we love dearly, but we came to that on our own terms. We weren’t forced into it by all of the peer pressure from other people in our own age group. That’s probably the round about way to get to the reason that we came here.

You touched on something that none of us said, but I think size was a thing for us. I liked how small it was.

That’s why I laughed when you said Westover. I have a good friend who actually plays the piano for Westover and her husband works there so I know about the Christmas pageants and stuff. I like it, but I do, and you walk in the door, that was one of the churches that I tried along the way and you’re lost. There’s no connectivity. As someone who grew up in the church, it’s like being a preacher’s kid, the organist kid is like being the preacher kid. You came to church at 7 o’clock in the morning, you didn’t get home until well into the afternoon. You did everything from ring a handbell to sing in the choir to teach Sunday school. I mean, I was superintendent of our Sunday school when I was 18 years old, You just did it and so.

So when you came, was it smaller than 800?

Oh, yeah. I have only been around for...

So really, membership has gone down a lot since...

Yeah, there’s a history behind. There was a mass exodus and...

But you know, as somebody who has been a member on both sides. I like it now because my daughter has been a member of the congregation that has a low population, the youth group is a little small so that’s a little sad.

That’s why I left. When I was in youth group, it was so big and it was just Grimsley and you didn’t have the right shoes on? Oh my goodness. I don’t have the patience for that. So I left. I was before the exodus, but I...

How big was it then?

Oh, it was...

About 1200.

Yes, about 1200.
• Sl: We are a third of the size.
• Li: The youth group, my grade probably had about 15-20 in it.
• Sl: That’s why we have such a big fiscal plan here because it was a lot bigger.
• Li: So youth group was 60-70 people so you had to go through the line in the cafeteria to get your food. You know, it was a big deal and you just got lost in the mix. I just, no, I went to a group that had about 20 in it.
• Sl: I think, part of it, is mainstream, and I wonder if they did any sort of research. You look at the neighborhood, when this neighborhood was built in the 50s, all these young families moved in. If you were a church perched on one of these neighborhoods, you were going to be a big church and this church grew like crazy and then all of those people aged, their kids moved away, you know. Look where we are. Probably one of the good reasons we’ve stayed.
• Kat: For general purpose and I know the answer so please don’t roll your eyes, how often do you go to church? To worship?
• L: You’ve been here recently.
• S: Yeah, I’ve see you on Sunday before.
• M: Well, I was digging, fascitious. I was definitely rolling my eyes there.
• Sl: I think it depends what you mean by church because…
• Kat: I mean worship. Is it “I am in town, therefore I go”? How often do you go to worship?
• S: Right now it’s different than it would have been two years ago. Two years ago I was pretty much here every Sunday. Now if it’s if I am not completely exhausted.
• Li: For me, I grew up that if you are in town, you went to church. That’s how I grew up and so as soon as I didn’t have to do that, I was like “Praise the Lord! I’m sleeping in”, but as soon as I had the ability to not need to sleep until noon, it got much easier to do every Sunday. As long as we’re in town, we come. Then again, because Jason has to get up at 6 a.m., we are basically already awake. Frankly, I can bring my kid here and he kind of gets babysat.
• S: That’s what it was. I got to have a reprieve when my kids came.
• Li: We pretty much try, if there’s Wednesday night stuff, we plan to come and we try to stay involved as much as we can, although there are, like we skipped the whole luncheon thing today.
• M: If I’m in town, I am usually here. Some weeks are a little different. I teach Sunday school. I teach high school Sunday school. I’m earning my way to heaven that way because I really need to.
• Li: Will you still be doing that in ten years?
• M: I hope not. I’m here anyway because I am doing confirmation. So if I’m in town, I’m here. Session burned me out. I laughed at those who were coming off as I was coming on and how burned out they were and I was like “I’ll never get like that, blah, blah, blah”. Three years later, it was a relief to go off session and I’m still on the committee and I still show up to all of the meetings and I’m still teaching Sunday school and I’m still making casseroles next week, but it’s like guilt. After a while, it
became very guilt for me because I’m one of those people who if I want to do something, I do it well. I changed jobs in the midst of session, there was a lot of stuff going on, and I couldn’t commit to church like I used to. I could no longer do church stuff at work. It just didn’t work out anymore so it was a struggle. I kind of shied away from a lot of church activities since I’ve gone off session just because I am not ready to go back in. It’s almost like, we’re trying to start a new women’s circle and things like that, but I’m trying to do it slowly because I don’t want to jump, I mean, it was like a burnout. It was almost like “Oh, I don’t have to do this anymore”. I’m looking at Sl because he was in my class. So I don’t go to a lot of Wednesday night stuff and things like that because I’m slowly trying to get back into it all.

- S: Helen has gotten me back on the building grounds committee so that’s something I am back on.
- L: I’m not sure how often we are here. We’re not here every time we’re in town because it’s impossible to get out the door on time with two small children. Many weeks it is difficult. Caroline locked herself out of her bedroom, stark naked, at 9:50 and there were no clothes to put on the child because they were all in her room so I fished through our donation pile so my daughter wasn’t naked and called my mother-in-law to get my father-in-law on the phone to walk me through picking the lock and I still couldn’t pick it.
- S: Last week Sophie was sick and Maddie had a friend spend the night so I had gotten Maddie and her friend ready to go, I was ready to get them in the car and go to church, and Maddie was like “You mean, you’re going to take me to church and you’re not going to stay?” I think if her friend wouldn’t have been here, she would’ve come by herself. That’s the other thing, this is a safe haven for my kids.
- Sl: When we are in town, we are here. Today Tammy’s dad was in the hospital so we’re planning to leave and go to Charlotte to see him. It differs depending on the season. In the summer, we’re gone a lot. It also differs at the stage of life that you’re in because with a teenager now, it’s really hard. We can’t get here on Wednesday night because she has afterschool activities that don’t end until 5:15 in High Point, then you have to drive back. Wednesday night fellowship has already started by the time we would get here. The same thing is hard with youth group on Sunday nights. If we’re not in town, we’re getting back at 5 or 6 at night. It just depends on your life circumstance. I’ve noticed that my parents are a whole lot more involved with the church now than they were at other times in their lives. Now all of their social activities, a lot of them, revolve around church. So you cycle through life and it’s always there, it’s a constant.
- Kat: So, along those lines, do you consider yourself a regular attender?
- Unison: Yes.
- S: When Claudia, last year, showed up at my house after church, I knew that I was in trouble.
- Sl: Well, I was told by M, “You were on my list to call”. I was like “What did I do?”.  

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L: I didn’t even know there was a list that occurred.
Sl: There is a list.
M: Oh, yeah.
Li: They are supposed to call you if we haven’t seen you in three Sundays.
L: Seriously?
Li: Yeah. Thank you for not calling me after not coming for three Sundays. I would not like that.
M: I wouldn’t either.
Kat: It’s not intended to be..
Li: Right. It’s more like “How are you? Are you okay? Is there something that we need to help you with?”
L: Three is an arbitrary number. They need to look at your track record. I consider myself to be a regular attender, but three is not out of the realm of possibility.
Kat: That’s taken into account.
Li: But, if you were S and you were coming every Sunday and you stopped, that kind of flags you because we worry about you.
Sl: We don’t want you to get poached by some other church.
(Laughter)
L: You don’t have to worry about that. Seriously, I don’t have time to cheat.
(More laughter)
Kat: What does church membership mean to you? Why did you say “I’m becoming a member of Starmount”?
S: I’m not sure. I mean, I have the easy answer and it’s that I was raised in the church and I actually didn’t have enough gumption to go and look at another church because it felt like home and it was just too much work.
Sl: You mean membership in general or Starmount?
Kat: Membership of a church that happens to be Starmount.
Li: What made you transition from being a regular attender to taking the membership class?
Kat: Yes. Why is church membership important to you?
Li: I knew for me, at least, because I had left and joined the other church, that I had intentionally dissociated myself from the other church, something happened there, and knowing that my letter was still there, I just wanted to be like “Could you just send that back to Starmount?” I couldn’t just do that so I thought “Let me make certain that it is still where I want to be.” So I started going and I said, “Yeah, I’m ready to do this.” I actually had a hard time because my parents and I had rejoined at the same day. I actually had pause on whether or not I wanted to do it on the same day as my parents because I wanted so badly to not be a Dixon. I wanted to be who I am. I’m making this choice for myself. Jason’s not a member and that’s something that’s not important to him. He’s a regular attender, he’s got his membership, he’s got his badge, but to put his name on a dotted line is not important to him and so he doesn’t. I know it has come up many times with different people at church who
“Gasp! Really?” It’s not important to me that he’s not a member or is a member, it
doesn’t matter. To me it doesn’t matter if his name is not signed on the dotted line.

- S: My ex-husband never joined.
- M: To me it’s about, I’m the opposite of Jason, to me I joined because it was a
commitment. I mean, I don’t have any other reason to join. I didn’t have a kid to get
baptized. I had no reason to join. I knew the minute that I joined I was going to be
suckered into doing something that I didn’t want to do at some point. That happened
soon thereafter.
- L: Could you direct a play for us?
- (Laughter)
- M: It’s literally because I was raised that way. My father, where he played, he
always joined which is kind of odd, but he was always a church member. We have
been Methodist, Presbyterian, and you made that commitment. When I started going
regularly to Starmount, there really wasn’t an option. It was really about “I have to
make that commitment” because that’s really, otherwise, I always call it a copout.
Then you’re just saying “Well, I’ll go when I want to go.” To me, it was all about
that I wanted to make that commitment. Once I’m committed to it, then I become
active and I have to be responsible.
- Li: Lucy and Jason did not grow up in that household. His family did not, absolutely
no, I mean, they wouldn’t be citizens if they didn’t have to. That’s just not how they
live. His idea of growing up with that is how he has grown up with me.
- Sl: I think besides the obvious reason of you want to be a member of a church
because if you’re a Christian, you have certain beliefs and you want to be in
communion with other Christians to help you grow and nurture your faith and all of
those things are important. Particularly being a member of this church, I think it had
a lot to do with wanting some consistency in our lives as a couple because we both
felt that we needed to be in church whenever possible. Wanting to make sure that we
raised our kid in the church when we ultimately did have a kid. Part of it was
probably growing up in the church like you, it was part of what we were, and it was, I
wouldn’t say it was an expectation of our family because that’s not why we did it, but
it was kind of like you’re raised in the church and I think a lot of times you end up
gravitating back towards it because you know that that was important. You may have
strayed a little bit when you were in college or whatever, but when you grow up and
decide, “You know what, I need to get my life back together,” church membership is
very important to you.
- S: I find it strange that my absolute best friend was not raised in the church, does not
find it important, but her son went to preschool here. We don’t talk about it, but it’s
just one of those things that you accept about somebody else. I completely do not
understand why don’t you go to church or why don’t you believe a certain way.
- Sl: Our best friends moved from Greensboro two years ago. They’re the ones who
lived right by John and Emily and we could not get them to come to church. They
moved away, went to a little town, and low and behold, they joined a church. The
kids are in confirmation class, the female of the couple is thinking about serving on
the vestry council or whatever. It was like “What changed?” Other than the physical circumstances. They got in this little community and they realized, “Oh my gosh, we don’t know anybody here. We’re all alone, we don’t have any friends that live nearby and those people in the church have been inviting us and they’re really friendly.” That’s how they have gotten connected. There’s not many other kinds of organizations where you can connected in communities like church.

- L: I don’t know if I have anything new to add. I always intended, I never moved it from Kentucky when I attended college and grad school, but I never liked a church enough to commit until Starmount and then it was like “Hey, we like it so let’s do it.” It was just the next step.

- Kat: What are ways that you, either individually or collectively, seek to deepen your faith?

- Sl: One way, believe it or not, is Christian radio. There’s that KLOVE channel. I find in the car sometimes, if you’re driving along, you’ll have things pop in your mind and your whole thought processes change by what you’re listening to. If you’re listening to something upbeat and encouraging and they’re talking about car, then you are thoughtful and you’re thinking “Gosh, I am really glad that the deer that just ran out, that didn’t hit my car and kill me”. That happened to me last week. It made me think about God and my mortality and how thankful I was that that didn’t happen because my child was sitting right beside me. You think about the prayer requests and people that you need to be praying for so I think that one little thing really reminds me to think about my creator. It sounds really kind of corny, I like to listen to other music too, but that little thing has helped me and my faith.

- Li: I can honestly say that I have never tried that, it’s not a bad thing. When I listen to music during my three minute drive to work, I don’t get into it. When I listen to it while I’m working, it ends up being something that I don’t have to focus on. There’s no time that I am just sitting around listening to music and if I am, it’s typically classical.

- S: When the kids were younger, I was more purposeful in the filtering. I was very purposeful when I was considering what I was taking in mentally so I did only Christian radio and the KLOVE channel was really good, the stories and everything. That’s what the kids heard all the time. Maybe I should have put that filter on longer.

- Li: I know for me, in terms of what actually works for me. It ends up actually being our ritualistic bedtime routine. Whenever we get the button to push start on bedtime, we try to do that as a family. There’s all three of us and when we sit down for bedtime prayers, that whole regimen is so much easier for me to maintain rather than me just thinking that I need to say my own prayers before I go to bed. I was never that diligent until we had Matt. It makes me think of that much better than I ever did before because I have never been good at devotions, I have never been good at anything. We’ve gotten better about a blessing before food and it wasn’t like I wasn’t thankful for our food because I grew up with it all my life doing it. It just was that we weren’t diligent about it. Part of it was also because Jason did not come from a faithful family and most of that ends up being so false because his mom listens to
KLOVE, but she doesn’t believe a whole lot at least from what I’ve seen. That ends up being very difficult for me to figure out what is the way that I am making certain that both my husband and my son are exposed to it in a way that speaks to them and works for me. It ends up being that daily regimen because not only do we get through prayers, get him to bed, then it becomes Jason and me time. Just that rekindling of who we are together every night helps us keep going through the rest of our lives, actually. For me, it’s daily regimen of something that sadly starts at bedtime.

- **S:** And that ritual will continue because both of my children, every night, I have to say prayers twice for each bedroom and even when I was out of town and I was gone a lot last year. I would be at a dinner business meeting and the phone would ring and so I witnessed to every single one at that table, our bedtime prayers and I still include my ex-husband in my prayers. I think that good seeds are coming. His family and I have really rekindled and we are all making a better effort. This is how I am deepening my faith, getting reestablished with family.

- **Kat:** What about you guys?

- **M:** As I get older, the deepening of my faith is being able to share it more. I am way more talkative about it that I ever have before in my life in terms of work and with the people around me. Most people that I work with now know that I go to church, they know where I go to church, some even come to church with me now. As I move through and have gotten older, now just about sharing it is deepening who I am. Even if people don’t come here and go to Starmount, I am always about trying to find a place for them to go. I have another set of friends that really want to go to Westover so they go Westover, but we still talk about it and what it means to us. I think that is a really big piece for me is getting comfortable enough to be able to express it at work and when things happen. The other piece to it because I do spend a lot of time working out in that endurance mode, there is a lot of alone time. When you swim a mile in the pool like I did today, there’s a lot of time. I’m not going to say that I spend it in meditation or thought, but endurance is all about continuing on and I think you spend a lot of time in prayer even when you don’t know that you’re in prayer. Even through that, that deepens me, that introspective time and that time to put it all together. A simple bike ride sometimes turns into a very meaningful moment. That’s how I do a lot of my connecting.

- **Li:** I would like to interject because this will bring us to something that we said in Good News. I have friends on my Facebook feed who are always doubting junk. **M,** when you post blessings from the pool, I read those every single time. You don’t post a lot on Facebook, but when you post them, I read them. Your moments of introspection call to me too.

- **S:** I guess where KLOVE helps me is that I’m not a good self talker because too much windshield time and I’m not in the right mindset. I get so down on myself when I think of all of the things that I need to do, the list just goes on and on and on, but having that outside filter come in gets me distracted and keeps me in a better mindset.
Sl: I think one of the things about listening to Christian spiritual music is that a lot of times it is a lot easier to sing along and praise God in that way than it is to sit there and try to come up with a prayer. I think so often people are intimidated by praying out loud because they are afraid of saying the wrong thing to God. The way I’m always looking at is, talking to God is like talking to friends. Your friends are still going to love and accept you no matter how you address them usually if it is nice. When you are in the car and you are driving and you are hearing this stuff and it’s nourishing you and you can sing and you feel a connection to God, then that’s as good as a prayer in my opinion.

S: I took it a step further and it had to be positive music. If music would come and it was angry or whatever, I would just switch the channel.

L: I read, I guess, which I thought was unusual, but after listening to everybody else.

M: Well, it depends on what you’re reading. I don’t think my trashy romance novels get me closer to God.

(Laughter)

L: I read a very specific type of genre. I have arrived at that after many years. I was brought up one way and very disillusioned by it by the time I got to college. I read a lot of things about patriarchy in the church so I’ve worked my way through a lot of different books. Nowadays, I read a lot of Eddie Lamont and I just really relate to her. I find it so funny and refreshing and uplifting. There’s that and I also want to continue to make my household nightly whatever more open to talk about it because Brian wasn’t, similar to Jason maybe, I don’t know. He used to be very uncomfortable talking about it, and in my household we talked it up and down, 5 days a week, 10 days a week. I have no qualms talking about it, but he always has, but as the years have gone by, it’s gotten better. I like talking with my kids, my husband and friends, just talking about it.

S: Wait until you have the tithing conversation with your kids.

Kat: Do you have to go to church to deepen your faith?

Li: To me, there’s a difference between worship and fellowship. I think there is a strong amount of fellowship that you can get to deepen your faith. I don’t think that worship is required for everyone, for me it is. I need it to remind me weekly. I don’t think that it works for everyone.

Sl: I think that we’re supposed to. I think Jesus intended for us to be in worship with other Christians. I don’t think it necessarily has to be in the form of a church. There’s lots of different ways that people can meet together and worship. If you believe that, then you should be involved in some faith union because being with others who have similar beliefs help you when you’re challenged or you need somebody to pray for you or when you’re just down and need somebody to understand. That’s a structure that I think works for a lot of people. I don’t think there is only one denomination that you have to be a part of to worship.

M: Yes. I will speak personally, I have a strong opinion on it. I think you have to have something that educates. If you are not learning and you are not continuing to
grow, in my eyes, you are just sitting there. I think of all of the years that I didn’t go
to church, I think I tried to do the whole “I’m going to read devotions on my own. I’m
going to study”. I did do some of that, but it isn’t at the level that goes on now. I will
tell you that the sermon is a big piece of worship for me and reading the scripture. I
need worship because I need that and I need to be fed. I think worship is the only
place for me to sometimes get that. You can have all the fellowship in the world, in
my mind you can overfellowship, but there’s a nourishment that comes in from
hearing the word and understanding it. You might not get something this week, but
you might get something next week. For me that’s a yes.

- S: I guess because I don’t always have the opportunity to hear what’s going on
because I have somebody on either side and when I’m here, I’m correcting someone
because they are screwing off or making too much noise. I don’t always hear, but I
think being here, being in the environment, there’s more power and there’s more
people. When I do hear it and it sinks in, I feel like I got something, I know why I
was at church that day. Unfortunately, I don’t feel like I get to listen the way I want
to every Sunday.

- L: I would say no. I would say all of the years that we didn’t have a membership per
se, which was eight years or more, I think I was still deepening. I wasn’t going that
much because you can still do things. I get a lot of peace and refreshment from
hiking, nature, things like that so I think you can. You don’t have to go to church, I
think it helps.

- Kat: What about being a member? I know we have talked a little bit about you are or
you aren’t, but for you personally, does being a member, do you have to be a member
to deepen your faith?

- L: Depends on the person.

- Li: If you are treating membership just as the step beyond coming sometimes. You
still get something when you come sometimes, but you’re going to get a better level
of deepening if you make the commitment.

- S: I’m wondering as the generations have gotten younger, how that answer is
because I just relate it to marriage. We’re in this transition generation of, well, I lived
with my ex-husband before I married him and some people say that there wasn’t a
difference in your commitment level when you changed from just living together to
being married. I thought it did. Just coming here is like dabbing your foot in the
water, not completely stepping in.

- Sl: I don’t think you need to be a member to deepen your faith. It’s kind of like if
you are renting a house or buying a house, if you’re renting a house, you might plant
a few flowers in the front yard, but you’re not going to get too invested in it because
it’s not yours. If you buy it, then you’re committed. I think when you join a church,
you’re more likely to be committed to it by making that step and saying “Okay, I
want to officially become a member”.

- M: I also think that through the action of deepening your faith, you want to join the
church. I don’t think you have to, I agree that you’re not totally invested in it, but I
think you want to. If you’re so excited about Christ, you want to go to church. Those
people that think they are such a good Christian, but don’t go to church, I don’t understand it because you want to share that faith and you want to be with other people that feel as excited as you do. To me it’s about that same kind of “My faith is getting deeper and I want to share it by joining the church”.

- S: As a member, when we see more people who have purposely decided to become members of our church, it rekindles for me. I get excited because for awhile it was a long time before we would see all these new people coming into the church so it’s refreshing.

- Li: I think my answer has changed. Fifteen years ago, I would’ve said “Definitely.” With spending more time, Jason and I have been together for a good 18 years essentially, and we’ve been married for about 12 so actually spending time with him and seeing his perspective on things. I’ve come to the perspective of seeing that it doesn’t have to be required anymore. What’s the true difference between being a member and being a non-member? Is it truly just that piece of paper? We fought about marriage and whether or not to live together and I flat out refused. That’s where I was in that period of my life and I’m still, as far as marriage goes, we weren’t going to live together without the deed. Faith is very different that’s not about what is on paper. It is that interaction that is between you and God. It’s a personal, not necessarily private, but it’s a personal relationship between you and God. I don’t see Jason as being any less of a person and a member of this church just because he hasn’t signed a piece of paper or stood up in front of people and said things because that’s the piece that puts him uncomfortable about his faith. He is not a person who stands in front of people and says things, he is not a professor.

- M: But Li, that is just a technicality. I guess we would need to define what we mean by membership. Is it literally just signing on the dotted line? If you think about California, if you and Jason just lived together, but never got married, you would according to common law be married. Is that here too? Oh, I’m not married. In my mind, it’s that same thing. I bet there are people that come to this church every Sunday who are not members and they give and we don’t even know it. It gets at that point of how are we defining membership here? Is it all about the signing on the dotted line?

- Kat: Don’t get ahead of me, sister.

- (Laughter)

- Kat: That’s part of why I’m asking the question. As membership declines, it’s about what do generations feel about membership?

- Li: Is membership more important than attendance and members that attend regularly? Is it actually the people you have on your roster? Is it how much money you have in the bank? All of those factors feed into it. Does each of those numbers mean anything different to me based on my relationship with God? Yes, it’s part of the business of the church, to keep it going, to keep it satisfied. If I want to support the business of the church, does that mean I have to be a member or does that just mean that I am contributing back in?
Kat: That goes back to part of the question. I ask it specifically saying “I am a member of Starmount Presbyterian Church”. Yes, it’s biased because everybody that I’m talking to in these is indeed members of Starmount Presbyterian Church, but there are also people who, when I mention that one person couldn’t come today to the next group, were like “Well, if I didn’t have something going on, I would totally help you” and I wanted to be like “Well, you’re not a member” because it goes back to “You’ve never signed on the dotted line”. Interestingly enough, and it goes back to what I’m trying to investigate, from a generational standpoint, membership does matter to some and not to others. If you ask some people who are not members, if you said “Where is your home church?”, they’d say “Starmount”. I am trying to look at that question.

M: The other thing that you have to look at is, and this is where session will get you after awhile, is there are 400 and some members of Starmount. We get 200 on any given Sunday so that piece of paper must not mean something to somebody.

Li: It sounds like it doesn’t mean something to a lot of people.

Kat: Yes, it’s not necessarily a conversation for this. It’s, I’m trying to figure out, how do we help this? As we look at evangelism and membership as of now, because generationally it seems to be that two generations removed, it was you got married, you became a member, you found out how you could connect. Whereas now, it’s you find out how you connect, you check it out, you hang out on the fringes, you see how much you can find out online and you find out as much as you can, you show up once or twice, you keep coming and you go “Okay”. You figure out how you can become connected, and then maybe, you become a member. That’s what we’re trying to figure out, in terms of that, definitions of whether you are a regular attender. Some generations are like…

Sl: Our parents’ generation, my father would not drive a Buick, it was the same thing with denominations. You have your people that, if they move to a city, they would not visit any church other than a Baptist church or a Presbyterian church. We’re here talking about shopping different churches, that’s really more the norm. People are shopping and they don’t really care. They’re not bound by some denominational label, “Oh, I’m only going to go Presbyterian”. They’re like “You know, that church has a great preschool”. They go to where they fit better rather than a brand.

Kat: What motivates you, then, to attend church? Regardless of where it is, regardless of circumstances like getting locked out of bedrooms, what drives you, besides your car, to get you here on a Sunday morning?

M: I think it can vary and actually it’s funny because L Schuck and I went out the other night and we were talking about this. She teaches middle school Sunday school and we were talking about whether or not we were going to teach next year. Don’t have a panic attack yet, I’m not going to tell you what our answers were. One of the things as we talked about it was, and this is sad to say, is that I’m here sometimes on Sunday morning because I have to be, because I know that I have to be down in that Sunday school class at 9 a.m. and come hell or high water. It doesn’t matter what time I got in the night before. I think the commitment sometimes is what brings me
in the door. Now what the Holy Spirit does once I am here is completely different, but the commitment sometimes is what is needed to get me here. So it’s kind of odd because you would think that I would just say “I want to go to church on Sunday”, sometimes I say “I don’t want to go to church on Sunday”, but I go because I am committed. For me, there are times that I want to be here and I always want to be here, but it’s really about the commitment that I made that drives me here to be as frequent as I am, as consistent as I am. It’s that commitment that keeps me coming back.

- S: I can remember as a kid because, you know, the associate pastor only preached so often. I remember picking which, obviously I came because my parents made me come, but I was more excited about when Glen preached because I knew I was going to enjoy it more. It spoke to me, not over my head. Right now it’s we got a good night’s sleep and nobody’s sick and we can come and see friends. I mean, that’s what it about, this relationship.

- Li: For me, it’s just habit. Sunday morning, we get up and go to church. It’s like Monday morning comes and you know you have to get up and go to work. That doesn’t degrade what I feel like I am receiving when I come to church, but it’s just what I do, so that’s what motivates me.

- L: I want to teach my kids the meaning of commitment so when Caroline was a baby and it was rainy, we would not want to come. As she got older and now she really cares about church a lot, we have to come even in the rain because we have to show her that you just don’t copout. Or if it a super gorgeous day and you want to play outside, I want her to learn the meaning of commitment so I was saying some very unholy things to her this morning.

- (Laughter)

- Li: That calls to me. God does not need us to dress nicely to come to church.

- S: My kids dress nicer when we come to church than I do.

- Li: I have the hardest time getting him out of his pajamas because “God does not need me to wear a button shirt to go to church”. He doesn’t want to wear a button shirt, he doesn’t want to wear anything that buttons in the waist. I am just like “Put your clothes on. We dress nicely for church because that’s what we do”, “but God doesn’t need me to do that”, “I know that, but I do!”

- Kat: What about you, Sl?

- Sl: I think I feel like M. I grew up in the church. I’ve always known that, even when I didn’t want to go, I was supposed to go. I think some of that guilt probably led to me staying in church when I went to college. Part of it is the commitment and the feeling that I need to be in worship, I need to be with other Christians, I need to be spiritually fed. Those are the different reasons that get me out of bed to come. There are some days like you that I don’t want to come. It’s not the church, it’s that it’s a nice day or I don’t feel like it or I’m put out. On those days, it’s the commitment that brings you, it’s the commitment. “I’m a member. People will miss me if I’m not there. Three Sundays in a row, I might get a call from somebody”.
S: The commitment for us now, too, is that the kids have a commitment to the children’s choir. One time, when they weren’t there, half of the children’s choir was gone.

Kat: This is kind of the big picture thing still, then we will get more specific. Why do you go to church? Why do you go? I know we have answered that a little bit, but is there any more to add in terms of like, why?

L: I like the music too. That’s important to me.

S: I go more for my kids now. I know what it did for me growing up and I want that for my kids.

L: Yeah, that too.

S: We’re looking for the good, heavy hitter answers now.

M: I think we said it.

Kat: We said a lot of it.

M: We said a lot of it. Some of it’s just habit and some of it’s commitment.

Sl: I go because I’m a follower of Christ and I know he expects me to.

M: Thank you Sl for bringing God back in!

S: Well done, Sl.

Li: Do you think that he expects you to?

Sl: I don’t think he expects me to come physically to church, but I think he expects us to be in contact with him in whatever way whether it’s reading devotionals, taking a walk in nature. I think it has to be deliberate. I don’t think you can just look at a sunset and say “Oh, this is beautiful” and think that you are worshipping God. I think you have to say “This sunset is beautiful and my creator made this and I am grateful that I am alive to see this” and that becomes the worship. I think it has to be intentional worship. I don’t think it has to be in a building.

Kat: In an ideal church, what do the hymns sound like?

M: That’s the funny part because my interests are probably more in line with the Baby Boomers. The one thing about this church that annoys the living daylights out of me is that I don’t get to sing a benediction. That has always been important to me in worship. At this church, the choir sings it. I guess I could join along and sing with the choir. I am a very traditional, one of the reasons that I did not Westover and when I go there, I get frustrated, especially at Christmas time. I want to sing traditional hymns. I want to sing. I don’t want to sing Amazing Grace every Sunday, but sometimes one of the best things we did when John was on Sabbatical, we did that hymn sing and it was so great. Some of that is my father, that whole tie to music. I grew up to music. It’s not all music, I grew up to those hymns and I grew up to my father playing those hymns. Even now, there’s still hymns that I still can’t hear. For me, worship is very traditional. As much as I am all about cutting up in church, I do it just as much as anybody else, I want certain things in my worship. I want to sing the benediction, I want to sing the offerotory, I want a good traditional hymn thrown in there somewhere. Every once in awhile it’s fun to have drums and guitars and Jonah and the Small Fry, but if you gave me Jonah and the Small Fry every week,
would go somewhere else. That’s not how I worship. Nothing’s wrong with Jonah and the Small Fry.

- S: It’s funny because my mom has joined a praise band and I say “I don’t know some of these songs” and she’ll say “Well, just go listen to KLOVE”.
- Li: Maybe that’s why I can’t listen to KLOVE. I just can’t do it 24/7. That’s one of the things that I absolutely love about Starmount is that we have that full range of music.
- L: Please don’t change the music. I love that it’s a mix. That’s why I’m here.
- Li: One of the things that keeps me is, because we are very particular about making certain that we are just not listening to one kind of music around that. I want him to have that full range. It’s funny, when I got my ipod or whatever plugged into the car and Jason is in the car, he thinks to press the mute button and I never do.
- S: I have learned that Pandora doesn’t filter.
- Li: We try to have, we have some classical, we try to do the whole range. I love that our music is like that.
- S: I went to my first box lunch this year and that was great.
- Sl: I heard a sermon years before at Westover. It was at a point that Westover was moving over from Westover Presbyterian to Westover whatever it is now.
- Li: Churchzilla.
- Sl: They were talking about what we are talking about here, in terms of church, and how difficult it is to appeal to every generation and how people do shop churches. “I go to this contemporary church because I like the music” or “I like this praise band and strobe lights” or whatever your reason for going to a particular church. It was interesting because the spin they put on it was trying to help these old, blue haired ladies make the transition from Westover Presbyterian to Westover mega church. Helping those people understand why we don’t sing “Blessed are the ties that bind” for benediction every week. How they pitched it is what stuck with me when I have been irritated about something in worship. They were talking about how we are different generations. They had different people from different generations come up and speak about how they worship and what it meant to them and the fact that, when something is going on in church that you don’t particularly like, like if you’re not into praise bands, think about the fact that God is speaking to someone else through the praise band and realize that there will something for you later.
- M: That’s why Starmount is good because you’re not getting the praise band every week.
- Sl: We have a mix, but that was a good perspective to give people because then when you were irritated, you felt kind of guilty because “I don’t like this, but this is speaking to somebody else and I need to shut up and let God speak to them”. It’s helped me be more tolerant, I think, in worship.
- Li: Our nephew has come with us a couple times and he is 11. It’s been funny because his reaction has always been that he likes it when his church has drums. I would question things because I would have to find that fine line between questioning.
what his parents chose to go to church with versus opening and broadening his perspective and trying to ask him “What is it that you don’t like about it?” It’s mainly that he isn’t exposed to it, when really that is what we offer is lots of variety. We don’t just try to, we don’t all look the same. We have different types of family environments, we all look different, we’re not all driving Buicks out in the parking lot.

- L: I love the harp. A few weeks ago, that was the first time that Caroline had ever seen a harp. I mean, it was awesome.
- Kat: Ideally, what do prayers sound like? Are they responsive? When you think about the different types of prayers that we have? Are they responsive, are they spoken at you, do you do it yourself? Do you have a preference?
- Sl: I like repeating the Apostle’s Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. I think there is a kind of formality to that what you expect in church. I like reading the Call of Confession. If you’re in a really bad place, it’s hard to pray. It’s hard to come up with the words. If you’re really mad at God and you don’t know what to say, sometimes knowing that prayer that you’ve recited all that time, that might be the only thing that you can say today. I think that our generation are people that don’t read the Bible as much as they should and they don’t know where to find passages of scripture. Having that knowledge of prayers will help them at some point in their life. If they are being wheeled into surgery, a lots going through your mind and you might want to be saying the Lord’s Prayer, it might be the only thing you can think of. If it gives you some comfort, then…
- S: I think it’s funny that, not funny but, as the girls have gotten older of kind of keeping that eye on them for when are they reading it and when are they actually saying it because they have memorized it or because it is just part of them now.
- Li: I have never liked the recitation of something that is too easy to just be, I am very good at reciting, but it is always my least favorite part of church. It just doesn’t mean anything to me anymore. I have heard it too many times.
- M: That’s why I make sure that I read it. I never recite it. I always make sure that the bulletin is actually in my hand and I read it. I’ve said it all my life and I read it every time. I have to agree with Sl here, sometimes it is the repetitive and sometimes I wish that we would do more things with the Nicene Creed and some of the other creeds that the church has because we don’t spend enough time in the Bible. We don’t spend enough time looking at scripture that sometimes those creeds help to remind us of who we are. I equate it to my sporting life, you know, everybody’s got a mantra, and you carry it with you whatever you do. As I run and as I run 13 miles and count them down, I say “I can do anything”. When you have those kinds of creeds and those kinds of repetitive prayers, just because you say them all the time it doesn’t lessen the meaning of them. It actually makes them more powerful because you now have a guard against what is going on in the world. I know when life sucks and it’s totally tough, I can drop down on my knees and there is a prayer that I can always remember.
- Li: I just feel that it is simpler to say whatever is on the heart. It feels so artificial.
• M: If you can, but I will tell you that I am one of the worst prayer people in the world. To me, everything that you do in life is a prayer so you are constantly in prayer and with God. That’s another whole deep discussion. I think, in general, we need to teach people how to pray and sometimes those repetitive prayers are the only way to teach people how to pray.

• L: I will say this, as a Presbyterian, when you are a visitor. I obviously know the Lord’s Prayer inside and out, the creeds are, I am always stumbling and where is it and I don’t know it and oh my gosh, it makes me feel excluded so I don’t like that one either. It is very interesting how much you all find meaning in something for me is so off putting.

• Li: In the same way, the Lord’s prayer, I was stuck in that land of repeating, not really thinking about what I am saying and something hit me at one point in my life. “Give us this day our daily bread”. That one phrase, somebody spoke it to me at right point of my life and it made me hear it and think it. Every week when I hit that particular phrase, a fire is lit so I not just saying it. It took something like that because I was in that land. I have lived on both sides of that fence. It’s very easy to repeat and to think “Yeah, I can just spit it out when I need to”. Is it just saying it or am I having a conversation with God and having it be what I need it to be about.

• M: I think, beyond that, I’ll honestly say that the worst prayers for me are where the pastor sits up there and reads a prayer and says “Amen”. I get absolutely nothing out of it. Most of the time I am thinking about what I am doing after church or I’m trying not to fall asleep. I’m not connected to that prayer, whereas if it were either the creeds or the responses. I went to Catholic school, I was never Catholic, long story, but I spent 5 years in Catholic school and they do a lot of repetitive prayers. I actually enjoyed those because it gave you the opportunity to hear someone say it so I was engaged.

• Sl: I think it is like what L said, that’s not meaningful to her, but it is to M. That is why that sermon that I heard so many years stuck with me. Sometimes that can help you more tolerant.

• L: Generationally, what do people say?

• Kat: Prayerwise, they are neither here nor there. Definitely you are the most opinionated about it. It’s more of that prayers, it’s more about the hymns and sermon. Ideally, what is the sermon?

• M: Short.

• (Laughter)

• Li: I like the visual media.

• Sl: I liked your sermon today and I’m not just trying to suck up. I liked it because it was the shortest verse in the Bible, but I think it is also one of the most meaningful verses in the Bible. I think that a lot of times, the message just needs to be really simple. If it is too convoluted with too many themes going on and I am trying to keep them all straight, then it’s hard sometimes. I think in church, if it’s a really simple
message, you can stay focused for that 15 minutes, but those are the most impactful, that you can remember. Otherwise, I find myself drifting.

- S: I know Maddie is actually listening, but she starts to draw and doodle, but she’s actually listening.
- Sl: I can listen better if I take notes.
- Li: The year that I went to Montreat, that’s what I tried to encourage. I feel that when I am engaged and taking notes, that is when I really stay engaged in what is happening in the sermon. You could just see when I mentioned that to most of them that “Oh, I never thought of that”.
- S: I just took class about Calm Parenting and the guy that was teaching it worked with Aspergers and he said to give them something to hold onto to keep from being ficty.
- M: When I go to trainings, they put playdoh in the middle of the table and I am the first one to play with it. I am with Sl, I actually had years where I took sermon notes, and I preached here and there and there is always a structure and you learn how that goes. I always try to find out what that take away it because to me it is like any other presentation you give, what is that last thing that the congregation is going to take away. That’s why when I made that joke “Short”, sometimes I do think they need to be short because otherwise you learn it. I struggle a lot with some sermons because I want more scripture. I sometimes wish at Starmount that we were more into the Bible.
- L: I was just thinking about growing up Baptist and thank goodness that this church is not like that, but one thing that I miss is that they were all about scripture. I am a words person, I enjoyed that.
- Li: That would lose my husband in a heartbeat.
- L: I really like the power points, that makes it really clear.
- M: I really like the movies, of course, you can’t do that all the time, but we did that a lot in Sunday school. We’d watch a Disney movie, then talk about what it was. We watched Harry Potter and I will tell you that my high school kids will never watch Harry Potter in the same way again. You just can’t. I think that when you mix modern media in with a sermon, it can change the dynamics.
- Kat: What do those gathered around you, in your ideal worship experience, what does that look like?
- Sl: I want children to go to worship. That is one of my pet peeves is that child running up and down the aisle. That is pretty selfish of me because I know that children need to be in church.
- M: It is and sometimes you need to strategically place yourself. I agree with Sl and I know it is selfish, but one Sunday a little kid sat down and talked to their friend the whole time and I missed the entire worship. It’s very, sometimes I am missing the moment, so I just strategically place myself.
• Sl: When you are a young parent, you are a lot more accommodating, you are in that mode, but the farther you get from it, the less you remember and you become less tolerant.
• M: But I am very tolerant to the old women behind me.
• Li: I love having the mix of everybody, but the year that it was presented to do preschool church. I thought you all were crazy, but there is that aspect that they need to get it at their level. We have our level and they have their level.
• Sl: I love the children’s sermon and I think sometimes I get more of a message from that and how the kids interact. Once that interaction is done and it gets serious.
• M: The difference between kids talking and the old women behind me talking is that the old women stop and make a moment happen and they move along. I like it because it offers that casual atmosphere because it is home. I do like the fact that there is every age group here. I do get frustrated, but in general, the overall congregation is well represented. I enjoy it because I enjoy the V’s in the world as much as I enjoy the A’s in the world.
• Li: I really like that there is diversity in this church. That is one of the reasons that we joined. It is important to me that there is diversity. I think about that every Sunday.
• Kat: Do aesthetics play a role?
• Sl: Yeah, it’s terrible to admit it, but..
• Li: People?
• M: A few more hot guys would do me wonders.
• (Laughter)
• Kat: No, physical.
• Sl: I think it matter. I was on the committee that made the sanctuary plans. I originally thought “Why are we spending all of this money making the sanctuary pretty” but it was needed. It does say something about the church when it is a nice facility with multi media. You feel like “Gosh, this must be a happening place. It’s attractive, it’s up to date, the people are nice” whereas if it was threadbare carpeting you might go down the block. I think we had to do it to stay current.
• Li: For years, it was just about putting the money someplace else.
• M: I like the simplicity of it. Even at Christmastime, it is not all decked out and crazy. And the banners, especially the one with the butterflies are my favorite.
• Kat: That’s all the questions that I have. Thank you.
• Sl: Have we been the best group?
• Kat: You have been the most entertaining group. Thank you.
Participants: Sh, S, J, L, A

- Kat: What do you guys look for in a group of friends? I know that’s kind of a broad question, but like as you think about your friend groups or think about making friends, what do you look for in a group of friends?
- Sh: Common interests. Loyalty.
- S: The type of people they surround themselves with.
- J: Same age group.
- L: Yeah, common interests. I like intellectual type of people, artsy, creative people.
- Kat: I should back up and say that part of this, some of the questions that we talk about is what you look for in terms of faith, in terms of community, and in terms of faith community so that’s where some of these questions are coming from so I should preface it by saying that. Then that next shift is, and sometimes it’s not by choice, I understand this, is what do you look for in a worshipping community? So like, going to church, and your parents just became members so maybe that is a piece. You guys came here when you were?
- Sh: Elementary school. Second grade.
- Kat: So you became a member how many years ago?
- Sh: Oh, gosh. Confirmation officially, that was freshman year.
- Kat: But you moved here when?
- Kat: And you guys have been attending as a family together for a couple years, right?
- J: Yeah, 3 or 4.
- Kat: Okay, cool. How about you?
- S: My husband came to church here, grew up here, so we just came back and liked it.
- L: Hmmm…we’ve been here 3 or 4 years, yeah.
- S: It has been about 5 years.
- Kat: And did Robert re-member? Like, become a member again or was he never?
- S: He stood up there with me, I sure hope so.
- Kat: Well, I just wasn’t sure if the roles had been scrubbed. So he became a member at the same time you did.
- S: Yes, I don’t think he was still on the docket.
- Kat: As you think about coming back and talked as a family, what do you look for in a worshipping community? In your church, what were you looking for? If you go to a friend’s church or Montreat, what is it that you look for? Is it people, is it experience, is it how worship is laid out, what does that look like?
- S: We looked for something which was like we grew up for me since this is what he grew up with. A little more traditional, not the throwing your hands up in the air kind of deal, and just more of a group, the people rather than, no offense, pastors come and go. The congregation because that’s who is going to be there in the long run and help you raise your family and help guide you and be there for you.
Sh: I think with the tradition, I mean my great-grandparents were members of Starmount then Nana and Grandpa and my mom grew up here. Then we moved to Charlotte and Kentucky and in Kentucky, I was a part of Trinity Presbyterian which was like a Westminster. It’s a big congregation and coming back here, we actually went to four or five different churches before coming back to Starmount. I like the tradition and knowing that we have had generations because it brings the older generation, it bridges that gap. It connects the older and younger generation because they can say “Oh, I remember your mom growing up and you growing up” and that’s a conversation starter and it’s allowed me to have closer bonds with the older generation. It’s not a separated church.

J: I just don’t like big churches. We used to go to one that was just down the street and we didn’t like it.

Kat: Too big?

J: Too big and I can’t remember the other reason that we didn’t like it. Maybe too strict or something.

L: Is it WASP with a congregation that big?

J: Yeah.

Sh: That’s something that we definitely saw with church camp, going to Montreat. Some groups that had eighty people or something like that and would bring three different buses to church camp. In those youth groups, there were so many different cliques and doubles or duos of friends, whereas our youth group, it’s smaller and we all know each other better.

Kat: What are ways you personally deepen your faith? It can be individual things or small groups, how do you look to deepen your faith?

J: Joining a confirmation class.

Kat: Okay. Awesome.

L: I try to, when I can, meditate in the mornings. Just to spend 10-15 minutes looking at a Psalm or a Proverb and then trying to apply that to whatever is going on in my life.

S: I can’t think of anything right now.

Kat: And that’s okay.

Sh: I look forward to Montreat every year. Even though it is a once a year thing, it is still a refresher. Every year we go it is just like a week of intense church, the whole week, it’s not spread out. Especially in your small groups, you dig deeper. You’re not with people that you see every day at church, you’re with people that are bringing different aspects to the group and opening eyes in different ways.

Kat: I will mention that some of these questions you might go “Why is she asking this question?” but I have been asking these questions to everyone. If you want to roll your eyes, that’s fine because I can’t get that on tape. For the sake of comparing responses, how often do you go to church?

J: Every week. Every Sunday.

S: I think ours is a couple times a month. Whenever I can force my husband out of bed or he has to usher, that’s at least once a month.
Kat: So if you’re in town, you’re here. That kind of thing? Where did that come from? Why? What drives you, besides a car, to come to church? What motivates you to come to church?

L: I think for me, part of it is tradition. My family, that’s what we did on Sunday mornings. Which is odd because when I moved out and went to college, I didn’t really go to church all that often, but when I moved up here and I was looking for a family or a community of sorts and finding this place. I think not only tradition, but coming together with a group of people that obviously share the same drive for faith and want to deepen their faith. That wasn’t as clear as I would like to be, but…

S: I go to relax, it is my one hour out of the week when we can get here to just think about what we need to do, where we need to be, and how to do it.

Sh: Classical conditioning. Tradition. I have grown up doing that so I just come every Sunday.

J: I felt like we weren’t going enough so I pushed it. “Let’s go to church”.

Kat: Where did that come from for you?

J: I just felt like I probably should start going since 6th grade.

Kat: Do you consider yourself a regular attender?

Unison: Yes. (A few more hesitant)

Kat: We’ll go bigger, why do you go to church? Why come?

S: I go because I know there is a higher being and it makes me get back to that point. It’s a learning thing. It gets you thinking about things that you don’t think about on a regular basis.

Sh: I agree with that. I was raised knowing that there was a God, especially going through Confirmation when we had to go to all of the different churches and see how people perceive God and worship differently. Especially it being Christianity and being Presbyterian, it allows me to understand God more. I know there is one, but I need to understand Him.

S: We grew up knowing that going to church and if you walked out of there crying because the sermon was so good, if you took something away from it, it was a good day and you learned something from it. I think that’s why I go, it’s selfish, but I like to get something from it.

J: I look at it like you just learn something more about it.

L: I think the same thing, like Sh and S were saying. I like being in a place where the sermons, not only are you learning something, but also you feel like you are being challenged week in and week out, that’s good. You’re not just absorbing it, but also trying to thing about how this is going to pull you out through the rest of the week. What is it that I should be taking away from this?

Kat: You think about, you’re all church members, we’ve talked about that, do you have to go to worship to deepen your faith?

S: Are you talking, physically in the sanctuary?

Kat: Yes, whether it’s Starmount or going to worship on Sunday.

S: You can worship anywhere, any time.

J: I agree with that.
Sh: I think you don’t have to go to worship to deepen your faith. You could sit there alone with a Bible or a daily devotional to deepen your faith, but being able to go to church and listen to a sermon. I like when sermons are relatable to my life and they give examples of things going on in my life because that allows me to deepen my faith, making that personal connection with it and like she said, not just absorbing it. Not just listening to it, but connecting to it.

L: I think I agree. I don’t think you have to go, you don’t have to physically be in church to deepen your faith, but I think it’s easier. It makes it easier if you are actually getting up and going and being in a space where there are other people doing that as well.

Kat: Backing up a little bit, what does it mean to be a member? I am a member of Starmount because… Why does it matter?

Sh: Community. We know that if anything happens to us, we can call somebody in the Starmount community and they will be there for us.

S: We have a couple of people that aren’t members, like Libby’s husband is not a member, but he is still one that could be. I mean, if you are here long enough, your kind of grandfathered in the situation.

L: Specifically for Starmount?

Kat: Church membership.

L: I think it matters because the community, but also to get involved. I teach Sunday school and I feel that is another way to deepen your faith. To also be a part of the church instead of just attending. I think too that its nice to be part of a place that has a hand in the community so I can say “I’m a part of a church that does stuff for the homeless” or the community garden that we have. That kind of social outreach is just as important to me as I’m in this church.

S: You’re owning your religion and you’re owning that you made the step to become a member, this is what I’m doing so rather than just going, you’ve made that commitment.

J: It’s the best way to step forward in church, becoming a member.

Kat: The reason that I ask that is especially, part of what I’m trying to find, is especially in your demographic. Membership means different things to different generations, in terms of what it means to be a member of a church. Especially as members and membership is declining in mainline congregations, mainline denominations like Presbyterian, Methodist, Lutheran, is that older generations move to a community and figure out how to be a member of that church while those in your generation go online to figure out as much as I can, go once or twice, stay very much on the fringes, and when I find out this could be the place that I want to be, then I’ll get really, really involved and I’ll figure out how I can dive in, and then maybe I’ll become a member. Like signing on the dotted line is not as crucial. That’s why I’m trying to hear some of that, that’s why I am asking the question. There are a number of people, who if you ask them, Starmount is their home church, and if they’re not members, people might not realize it because they are here every Sunday. So just
trying to identify why saying “I am a member” is important. Any other thoughts on
that?
• J: Was that another question?
• Kat: No, it was really just an explanation of Why be a member? So in saying church
membership is important, why be a member?
• Sh: Like why commit to that one church rather than go and be a part of it?
• S: Well, when you think about it, a lot of people our age don’t stay in one place that
long so to go through that commitment when they’re just going to get up and move. I
mean, we have friends that come and go all the time. Why are they going to commit
to a church when they can barely commit to a preschool or an elementary school?
Jobs change so quickly, you don’t stay in the same town forever.
• Sh: That’s true with the young adult generation, but as far as growing up in a church
then having to decide if you want to join that church. I come here because I was a
member all my life, but I wasn’t an official, myself a member, until confirmation. So
I mean, by taking that next step and becoming a member, it tells myself that I want to
become more involved. I am not just coming for my family because if my parents
don’t come to church, I’ll still come to church and hang out with everybody and go to
lunch afterward and fellowship and worship. I mean, it’s just that next step for me
personally than it is tradition.
• J: Yeah, I pretty much agree with that too.
• S: We wouldn’t have gone to church if our parents didn’t go. They would have been
the driving force for us going, growing up. We didn’t have a big youth group like
there is here. It was a lot smaller.
• Sh: That’s another thing. The youth group, that’s why I come to church, even if my
parents don’t, because I know I have those people that I can see every Sunday.
Especially when my brother was in the youth group, the youth group was a lot bigger,
but they still had those groups that met every week. They would go on Wednesdays
and get breakfast. It’s that community sense and I can come every Sunday and
Sunday night and still have that community and that’s a big part of why I come to
church.
• L: I think that’s a good point because you know we go to women’s retreat and you
don’t have to be a member to go to the women’s retreat, but it feels like if you are a
member and you have certain communities, it makes it that much more special to say
that “I belong to this church” and this church does this thing rather than somebody
invited me on this church retreat. I think community is definitely a big part of it.
• Kat: We’re talking about membership. Why are you a member of Starmount?
• A: I started coming here in college. My grandfather was actually a minister at
Memorial, but Memorial was here before and my grandfather helped get Starmount
going in connection with Memorial. He stayed on at Memorial so I came here in
college and did some work with the youth programs. That’s why I started being a
member of Starmount.
• Kat: The question we were just talking about, why does it matter to be a member as
opposed to just showing up?
A: A lot of the churches where people just show up, the larger mega churches, people just drop in and drop out. Being a member of Starmount, you get the connectivity thing, sort of a buy in instead of just I’m here on a Sunday, I sit in the pews, and I leave. You get more connected and more with the fellowship developing that church family. I remember seeing her in elementary school and seeing her grow up with that connection through high school and going into college and buying into the programs and having a voice in programming is what membership gives you. You have that voice to help shape and mold the church.

Kat: Do you think you have to be a member to deepen your faith? We kind of asked this a little bit, but does it matter to say “I’m a member”?

Unison: No.

Kat: Shift gears a little bit, think about an ideal scenario, like you leave and you’re like “That’s an amazing worship experience”. What of the following of these look or sound like to you? What do the hymns sound like? Does it matter in terms of how they are being accompanied? Do words matter? Ideally, how does that sound like to you?

S: I like the traditional hymns. The ones that you have been singing for years and years and years. It makes me think back to growing up, it may be that you don’t even have to pick up the book or look at the screen.

Sh: I like those too, especially the songs that you don’t have to look at the book when we are out by the water at Montreat and we sing hymns at the candlelight service. It really impacts me. We all grew up knowing those songs and we are all there together and about to leave as well.

L: I agree with that. I think that, I don’t know if different denominations have different songs that they stick with, but that’s the one thing. I didn’t grow up Presbyterian so there are some songs that I always sang going to church that I haven’t heard here, I kind of miss that sometimes. I like the traditional stuff.

Kat: Can it be the traditional hymns, but like today for example, accompanied by a guitar with a little different vibe to it?

J: Yeah, like using the same lyrics but putting it to different music.

A: I think it’s important to connect the words with the scripture and it’s important to do the old traditional stuff, but it’s also important to introduce newer hymns. Newer being 1800 to today because we have a stack of, to me, even though its 20 years old, I remember it came to Montreat and it was a big deal. This blue hymnal and now we are back to a maroon hymnal which has combined songs that has the traditional hymns as well as the more integrated hymns. It’s important to connect it to the liturgy, it’s important to introduce new things, it’s also important to honor traditions, I mean, long story short, hymn writing is an art. It’s important to grow and continue to grow, but also pay our homage.

Kat: What does the rest of the music sound like, ideally, the anthem? Is there a choir? Is there a band? Is there an organ? Does it matter? Where does that play out for you?
S: Any of it. Any of it is fine. It’s music. I do say that a choir brings a congregation a little bit more together. You can tell a difference between when you play versus the choir, the congregation gets a bit more “Okay, we stand up here”. It’s a little bit more uniform because Bob is up there directing everyone.

Sh: I’m not a fan of bands in worship because church and faith is one of those things that it’s evolved yes, but it hasn’t evolved like style, clothing, or music has. I like church because it is consistent. It’s consistent year to year and although there might be new hymns, I don’t like when it is put to tambourines and guitars and stuff like that. My dad grew up Southern Baptist so I have gone to a Southern Baptist church and when we toured the churches in Greensboro, some had praise bands and stuff like that. I like consistent worship, consistent music.

Kat: Pianos, organs.

Sh: It’s very churchy. I know that music has evolved and people have different tastes, but church is that place where everyone is equal and everyone is listening. There’s not like individual hierarchy of music.

A: You got to ask yourself this question, I’ve seen praise bands and it’s more like a performance. We are very focused at helping to guide and lead worship and not be a performance. You got to ask yourself, when you go to Montreat conference and there is a guitar or some sort of thing on Sunday night, it is still a guitar leading the hymns, leading the songs, praise hymns, whatever. So is it the fact that you go and see a praise band and you feel that they’re giving a performance or is it that when you step into Montreat, there’s that guitar person leading the hymns, but it is about them guiding and leading of that meditative time and worship. I love choir, I love anthems. I grew up doing that, but also it is time to cultivate, there are different ways, but it has almost gone to the extremes with these praise bands.

Sh: It is also the way that it is done because at Montreat we have certain songs, certain ways that the guitar is played, also guitarists that play during energizing key note time and a more slowed down, melancholy worship focused guitar at night worship. It also depends on how it is played in the music, the rhythm of the music so if it’s fast, upbeat songs or if we are in a thinking time, we need slow music, not crazy music.

Kat: But you’re still going to stick with more of the traditional, so guitar is okay…

Sh: The guitar is okay, it just depends how it is played. If someone is up there strumming the heck out of it, not necessarily, but if it is slowed down, and it sounds more like traditional and it sounds more like the actual song that’s traditional rather than a remix of a song. I like that better.

J: To me, music can be put to anything and I like it.

Kat: Good.

A: I heard “O Holy God” at a contemporary church and I thought “Oh, you are messing it up.” I just can’t hear this, this is how it goes. This is not a rock and roll song.

Sh: Because you are in the mindset of church and you don’t want to be disrupted in that mindset with a fast, crazy, redone, remix song.
A: The tempo can be fast, but you mean something that has been remixed or redone.
Sh: Yeah.
A: Okay.
Kat: What about you?
L: I like the traditional piano choir.
Kat: What about the prayers? There’s all different types of prayers, responsive prayers, there’s prayers that we as pastors lead, the ones that we do collectively. What do prayers sound like or what resonates with you in an ideal worship situation?
J: I like the printed worship so I can say it out loud. If I’m thinking and trying to listen, my mind will drift off somewhere easily.
Sh: People always make that joke that Presbyterians are a cult because we always chant in our prayers, we say it at the same time, but that’s what I have grown up in so I wouldn’t know differently. Even at Montreat, we do that and at other camps we do that. Or we listen, but we are still taking it in and we pause and we lift up our own prayers. I enjoy that.
Kat: Same.
S: Yeah. I like chanting. I am okay with it.
L: I think when I first started coming to this church, that threw me off a little bit because I never did that growing up.
A: Like prayers in unison and stuff?
L: Well, we never had prayers in unison and it was always the preacher would say “Brother so and so, would you lead us in prayer for the whatever”. So you would have these certain people in the congregation and you were thinking “Please don’t call on that person, please don’t call on that person” because they’re going to take five minutes and your mind starts drifting off. The longer I was here the more I got used to the fact that we pray, even the prayer of confession, even though it is public and we are all standing up, it also seems strangely intimate in that moment too. Oddly enough, it seems so intimate because it is so public too. That doesn’t even make sense.
Sh: I understand what you mean. If you go to different churches that aren’t Presbyterian, they say it differently. There’s words that they say differently, but when you are saying it, you know that you’re saying it because everybody else is saying it, but it’s how you read it and how much you take, like the emotion you put in it.
A: I think what really works is that the prayers are organized so that there is not that time where someone goes off into Grandpa prayer. It’s organized and it’s specific and it hits the highlights. The confession, you may have not done that that week, but it’s confessing for everyone. It’s confessing for all, very corporate. The great prayer of thanksgiving, I know it, I know it’s going to come and then I pray “Dear Lord, do not let John go on forever”. Especially today, I’m standing up there and I’m like “Are we done? Can we get to the Lord’s Prayer? Let’s get there”. But I knew, I glanced over, he was reading off something that he wrote, which is good, because you
know there is going to be that time of “Oh, we could be here until 3”. Not that it’s a bad thing, but…

- S: As long as there is child care, I am okay with that.
- Kat: Ideally, what do the sermons look like, sound like?
- S: When it is something that you can take home. When the pastor makes it personal. When you hear giggles throughout the congregation after something is said. It’s an entertainment thing, but it is also a learning piece so that you can go home and do something better for yourself or your family. Even the children at the sermons, like when you did the little people with the chalk, I thought “That’s pretty awesome”. Different ways to think about life and what you are doing.
- J: Yeah, you all do a good job because you are able to keep me engaged, probably everybody else. It’s easy for me to understand what you all are trying to get across.
- A: Multi media, the fact that we are able to do all of that now so it doesn’t just have to be you sitting and talking. It adds a little extra because maybe they didn’t get your words but they saw your picture because every learner is different, visual and the other one…auditory. That really helps, it touches on all angles. Some people may say, “Well, I just didn’t get that video”, but you’ve got to meet your congregant any way you can and the fact that we have the ability to do that. New technology is really effective and some days you might just walk out and go “Didn’t get it” and that’s okay, that’s okay. Some days you might go out and text you “Hey, I was on with you” and that’s okay. Keeping it varied and reaching people with their different learning styles is very important.
- Sh: I think that is something that you and John do very well because I have been to other churches. Other churches are preaching and they are trying to get the word across, but because we are a community here at Starmount and because we know you personally outside of church as well and we have grown up with you all, you’re able to connect more with everyone. And like you said, hearing those giggles in the congregation it makes it more informal. We are at a formal church, but it makes it informal so that we feel the freedom to express and find a connection within worship. Like when we break out into small group, it is so we have that freedom to express and allow ideas to develop. I think when you can make that connection with the congregation, that it becomes personal with the congregation. You’re not just trying to get the word across. That’s the highlight of worship.
- A: Today I actually thought you wanted an answer and I was going to be like “Because How I Met Your Mother is over, that’s why I’m crying”. You asked it three times and I was like “I’m going to tell you Kat”.
- L: It’s interesting hearing all of the responses. For me, the ideal service hits your intellect. You all said “What did I take home? What did I learn?”. A lot of churches I went to growing up were more of an emotional, like you felt it emotionally when you left. For me, while that is fine in a temporary moment, that’s not going to last throughout the week. The empathy/sympathy thing that we looked at today. I’m going to try to make this short. I’m teaching, I’m thinking about doing some service learning in my class so I’m trying to think about “Well, how do I express to my
students that if we donate food it’s not that we feel sorry for these people, but that we are actually learning through it as well?” So you’re bringing in this stuff and I’m taking down notes because I am going to show this video to my class. It also got me thinking about if I introduce my students to things like that, it’s also me sharing my faith without specifically saying “This is why we are doing this unit”. I think that you all giving sermons like that where you encourage us to connect the word to our life in whatever form that looks like is really important. The ideal sermon to me also does not read off like a ten verse and then go line by line like “This means this and this means this”. I like sometimes in the sermon too, of course we always have the old testament reading and the new testament reading, but most of the time the sermons don’t refer back to the old testament reading so I’m a lot of times listening to the sermon and trying to figure out how it refers back to or how it connects. To me, that’s an intellectual learning thing. I really appreciate that. The head instead of the gut.

Kat: What about scripture? Does it matter how it is delivered? Does it matter which translation it is? Is it that it’s the word and that’s what it is? What does that ideally look like?

A: It comes back to connection. How can you connect with the people in the pews? The joke you made, it may have been off the cuff or whatever. John 1-34 and people sit there and think “Oh no, that’s a lot of Bible”. And you say, “But guess what, I found this knock off of Dr. Seuss of Lazerus”. And you read that, people knew the story of Lazerus, it got the point across, it led you to your sermon, and the key verse “Jesus wept” and the message was read. I love the message. The only Bible that I don’t enjoy is the Good News Bible representation, but if it gets it across, you got to go with it. If you’re reading from an old text, translated from Hebrew or whatever, and somebody’s just “What? That didn’t make sense” because it is convoluted since it has been translated so many times. A kid’s story, I got it, I know Lazerus, and the verse is “Jesus wept”. It took this many verses to get to the shortest verse and people would go home and say “I remember that” instead of sitting there and trying to follow along.

Kat: What about the people gathered around you ideally? S talked about this a little bit, in terms of the multigenerations connecting and stuff, but does it matter who is sitting around you?

A: As long as you don’t sit in somebody else’s seat if they have been sitting there a long time.

Sh: I like that we all have these sections, seating because you can sit around people that you enjoy being around. Like the youth and the youth’s parents all sit together and we have formed our little community, but our parents also connect with the older generation and the younger generation as well. I like that we sit around our home groups, but then we still branch off around the congregation.

J: I could sit around anyone, but I feel like we have always sat in the same seat and when we didn’t it was like…

Kat: Weird?

J: Yeah. “We’re supposed to be over there”.

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Sh: Even at Montreat, we do that. We sit right beside the back right door. Alabama is always in front of us, Kentucky is in front of them.

S: Growing up, we had the old ladies who would sit two rows behind us and you could hear them talking about everybody during church because they’re not quiet. They couldn’t hear. It was great.

Sh: Joan always sits by Mrs. Otem and they always have their conversations during church about what John is saying.

L: This is silly, but I don’t like sitting next to someone that can’t sing all that well. It’s distracting because I want to laugh. So the whole time instead of focusing on the singing, I am thinking “Keep it together, song is almost over”. I know that silly, but it’s also, because then not only am I thinking keep it together, I am also chastising myself.

Kat: What about peeps and squirms? Kids?

J: Oh, they’re hilarious.

L: It doesn’t bother me.

A: Cell phones, yes. Kids are kids.

S: I have a thing with technology in the sanctuary. I do not like it. I don’t like when kids bring books, I think it is wrong. I don’t like the activity pads for little kids. I think they get dismissed early enough that they should sit without being entertained. I do not like when people give kids their cell phones. I think it distracts from the whole point of family, congregation, being together. I hate it.

A: During the last hymn, this little girl stands up and she was in the young family side of the church and she had this thing and she was just going to town. I saw her and I was helping lead worship and I kept looking and I cracked up. I don’t know if anybody could tell, but I just lost it for two seconds. I don’t mind if you got your Bible on your phone or ipad, I’m okay with that because you’re saving paper, it’s easy access, it accessible, but after you are done reading the scripture, put it done. Focus on the present moment. Whenever you’re in this, you are not focused on the present moment. If you have to distract your kid to stay in church, you have a discussion with them about what we’re doing and why we’re not using the cell phone in church.

J: I don’t use my phone at all if we are at dinner, if we are at church, important things. I just feel like that’s a rule.

Kat: What about appearance of the sanctuary? The aesthetics, does it matter what the sanctuary looks like?

S: I don’t want to sit in a folding chair, I can tell you that. I would rather sit in a pew.

L: I like the closeness. I went to a church back in December when I was visiting my sisters. I was actually excited because it was a Catholic church and I had never been so I thought “This will be interesting” and all Catholic churches are pretty. We walked in and I thought “What is this?”, there are pews over here and there are pews over here and there was probably an aisle as big as these two tables put together between them and the church was long and I felt not connected to anybody. So I
like the closeness. We’re a big church, but we’re not that big. I like the curve of the church.

- **A:** It used to be a brick wall where the choir is. The sanctuary has a very unique design. I have been to a contemporary church and I feel like I am in a theater, but it never feels like church. Another reason it doesn’t feel like church is because we have a liturgical season here and there it was just like Christmas all the time, Christmas trees set up, big theater, set design. That’s great if you are doing a production. Are you producing church or are you worshipping? Granted, those people are worshipping, but I felt like I was in a production with a nice comfy chair, give me some popcorn.

- **Sh:** I don’t know if other people have noticed this, but stained glass is a big thing for me. During reformation, stained glass wasn’t in churches until after reformation and that is one of the main things that I remember from Sunday school. At the top above where you all stand, the curtains open up and they close and they do it at times that let light in and it’s almost as if it is light coming down from God when you are preaching. That’s something that I don’t know if a lot of people notice, but that is something that is impactful for me.

- **J:** The first time that I saw it, I was like “Mom, look! God’s watching!”

- **Kat:** The windows are open! The curtains are open!

- **J:** For me, it doesn’t really matter what the church looks like as long as they keep up with it or something. It’s not like “Oh, they don’t have my favorite mural of Jesus. We’re out of here.”

- **Kat:** I guess it is more like cleanliness. Is that going to impact you?

- **S:** Yeah.

- **J:** Yeah.

- **A:** I like when we take out the little partitions.

- **S:** It makes it seem more open.

- **A:** I almost wish that one Sunday we took it out. What would happen?

- **Kat:** Any other thoughts as where you sit, in terms of faith. Any other thoughts of how being a part of this in terms of your faith? I have gone through my questions. Thank you.
Appendix E: Invite a Friend Bulletin Inserts

August 2

What is a friend?
A friend is more than an acquaintance. A real friend cares about us, challenges us and helps us grow. A friend shares our sorrow or joy and makes a difference in our lives.

One of the greatest gifts we can give a friend is the opportunity to meet Jesus Christ and the community of faith that becomes his home.

In just four weeks on Sunday, August 30, we will celebrate Kick-Off/Invite-a-Friend Sunday with a special worship service and our annual church picnic.

We are asking everyone at St. Andrew to invite a friend or relative who doesn’t have a church connection to join us.

Begin to pray for Kick-Off/Invite-a-Friend Sunday and for the person you hope to bring. The difference you can make in your friend’s life may be the greatest gift of all.

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”
Luke 10:27


August 9

Do you have an unchurched friend?
Our invite-a-friend Sunday is coming in just three weeks. It’s a special day when all members of our church invite their friends, who don’t have a church connection, to join us for worship and fellowship.

Who will you ask? Have you talked to this person recently? Have you invited him or her to your home for a visit? Plan to get together with your friend this week, maybe for a meal together, a cup of coffee or a shared activity.

Continue praying for our invite-a-friend Sunday. And pray that God will speak to your friend’s heart. You may help your friend make the decision of a lifetime.

“A friend loves at all times…”
Proverbs 17:17

August 16

They will know we are Christians by our love.

On August 30 the pews of our church will be filled with guests. For many, this may be the first time they have attended a worship service. Others may have had an unpleasant experience or become distant from the church. Please do all you can on that special day—and every Sunday—to help our guests feel comfortable and welcome.

Let’s wear our nametags. Let’s demonstrate genuine Christian love. Let’s show guests to Starmount that we care. Let’s express Christ’s love in our smiles and in our conversations.

And remember, pray for your friend this week. Bring him or her to church August 30. Let’s show that we are Christians by our love.

“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” John 15:13


August 23

Last chance to invite your friend!

Next week the pews of our church will be filled with guests.

For many, this may be the first time they have attended a worship service.

Others may have had an unpleasant experience or become distant from the church.

Please do all you can next week—and every week—to help our guests feel comfortable and welcome. Wear your nametags. Demonstrate genuine Christian love. Show guests to Starmount that we care. Express Christ’s love in our smiles and in our conversations.

And remember, pray for your friend this week. Bring him or her to church next Sunday.

Let’s show that we are Christians by our love.

“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” John 15:13
A friend ... is important to me.

My dear friend, you are important to me. I'm able to discover more about myself because you accept who I am. I'm able to reach and stretch beyond myself because you have urged me to grow. I'm able to feel good about me because you have loved me unconditionally. And, very best of all, I'm able to draw closer to Christ, my gracious friend, because I see and feel His spirit living through you.

"Love one another with mutual affection; out-do one another in showing honor." Romans 12:10

Appendix F: Usher Training

Usher Training
Sunday, February 9, 11:15-1 pm

Agenda

• 11:15-11:45: lunch

• 11:45 - introduction to time together
  o why are we here?
  o Kathryn's DMin work - evangelism as relationship (invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome)
  o The pieces of "welcome" and "hospitality" are vital to the usher's role
  o Understand the bigger picture...the "why" we do what we do (show youtube video - approx. 15 minutes)

• 12:05 - conversation about the "why"
  o What do you understand about the "why" of what you do?
  o WHY do YOU usher?
  o Why should we have ushers?
  o What purpose do ushers play in a Sunday morning? Before worship? During worship? After worship?

• 12:25 - conversation about the "how" and "what" ("Nitty Gritty" - Role play, if needed)
  o knowing where the nursery, preschool Sunday School class, and K-4th Sunday School class are
  o if a family comes in late (after Children's Sermon), offering to take the family to the Sunday School class (ALTHOUGH BEING IN WORSHIP IS EQUALLY FINE)
  o walking people to their seats (everyone - newcomer, member, other), helping them sit down (asking members to move/let person by to sit down)
  o Microphones (clapping, on/off when in Narthex, resting on offering plate)
  o depending on time of year: shadows cast on wall behind pastors/video
- noise in the Narthex
- conversation with newcomers (welcome center desk, coffee, nursery/bathroom/etc.), helping to their seat
- interrupting conversations with ushering partners for bulletin distribution
- knowledge of times in service which are better for entry into sanctuary than others
  - easier to enter when people are sitting, but not during music or prayers
  - not during "passing of peace" (lots of movement, not sure where open spaces are)
For many, summer seems to be that time of year where invitations flood our virtual and physical mailboxes: wedding invitations, graduation party invitations, birthday party invitations, and invitations to the pool or an informal BBQ. But how many other invitations do we receive that we may seem to neglect, disregard, or not even notice?

- The “passive aggressive” invitation: “Maybe you want to grab a cup of coffee sometime?”
- The “direct, yet misunderstood” invitation: “We’d like you to come with us on this adventure…”
- The “conversation starter” invitation: “How about all of this rain lately?”
- The “overt, yet guarded” invitation: “I’d like for us to get together…when you are available.”

How many of these invitations do you hear in a day? A week? What is the invitation for? Do we miss opportunities to be in conversation and relationship with others because we are so busy with our own lives? Are there times in which you have been the one doing the inviting, just wanting a chance to connect with someone?

This Sunday, we will think about the invitations that are extended to each of us, as well as the invitations we can extend to others. I invite, and look forward to, seeing you in worship this Sunday!

Blessings,

Pastor Kathryn
“Hi! Great to have you here today!”
“Hi! Is there something I can help you find?”
“Hi! I’m so glad you’ve come to see us today!”

Where do you seem to hear these words so often?
What emotions does it evoke in you when you are greeted with them?
As a first-time guest, what is your impression of the place?

Am I talking about Wal-Mart? Or Harris Teeter? Or some other store? Or am I talking about Starmount?

We’ve done our job – we invited someone to church. But does it end there? Can we give ourselves a pat on the back and believe that our job is finished because we’ve invited someone? What’s the next step we should be thinking about as the invitee “darkens our doorstep”?

We’ll be looking at the concept of “welcome” as it is presented in the scriptures and what we can learn from that…how do we “welcome the stranger” into our (church) home?

Looking forward to seeing you in church!

Pastor Kathryn
G.3: Newsletter Article – Nurture

We have been invited to the Table to share in Christ's meal. We have welcomed those who come through our doors, helping them to feel a part of our Starmount family.

But what else is there?

As we continue to think about these concepts as they relate to Starmount and to one another, we take the next step this Sunday in thinking about how nurture comes into play – what, exactly, are we nurturing? What if I don’t wanna?

Not only will we examine the scripture’s understanding of “nurture” and how it relates to us, we will also be welcoming the Collins family to worship. As Starmount-supported missionaries to Thailand, Andy, Ellen, Christopher, and Jonathan will be sharing with us in the Minute for Mission about their work with the Christian Communications Institute in Chiang Mai. Following worship, they will be sharing in more detail about how their ministry with Christian Communications Institute seeks to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the people of Thailand using Bible stories and indigenous forms of dance and theater.

Looking forward to seeing you in church!

Pastor Kathryn
G.4: Newsletter Article – Hospitality

In a “manner” of speaking, my mother has always been my “Miss Manners”. Never being one to turn down an offer to host a party, my parents’ front door welcome mat is in constant need of replacing. From having a few friends over for dinner to a house full for New Year’s Day Brunch, the intention is the same – this house is open to you and may you feel like home.

How often does the proverbial welcome mat at Starmount need swapping out? How is it that we make sure that all who enter our doors feel the warmth extended to them, the visitor? How does it compare to seeing your oldest and dearest friend?

This Sunday, we will examine just that – we will focus on “hospitality”. What does Scripture say about it? How can we practice hospitality in our own lives – both at home and here at Starmount?

Looking forward to seeing you in church!

Pastor Kathryn
Whether I learned it from my mother or through my experiences in middle and high school youth groups, the lessons I learned while in my teenage years greatly influenced the person I am today. Throughout worship services in the last couple of months, I have shared some of those experiences through telling you the stories of "13 year-old me." With invitation, welcome, nurture, or hospitality serving as the themes of those stories, they all translate into how we encounter one another, both inside and outside the church walls.

So this Sunday, we look at them all under one theme: "evangelism." Although potentially an off-putting word for some, it's one I'm excited to have us think about as a community of faith in relation to how we invite, welcome, nurture, and provide hospitality to all who come to 3501 West Market Street.

Looking forward to seeing you at church!

Pastor Kathryn

p.s. For all of you attending the All-Church Retreat this weekend at Montreat Conference Center, safe travels and have a wonderful time!
G.6: November Newsletter Article – Pastor’s Letter

As you read this, I am in the final stages of the first Learning Unit of my Doctor of Ministry program. What does this mean? This means my stress level is a bit elevated. Come November 15, I will feel a sense of relief since this Unit will have been submitted to the powers that be at Western Theological Seminary.

"So, Kathryn, what have you learned?" Not only will those "powers" be asking that at Western, but I hope you will ask as well. Since June, I have been reading and discerning what the terms "evangelism," "invitation," "hospitality," "nurture," and "welcome" mean and have investigated what theologians have written about these terms, what they mean to me, and how they can be defined at Starmount.

The "Adventures of Thirteen-Year-Old Me" have been a part of that discernment process. This sermon series (of sorts) that detailed the stories of my growing up that have shaped me into who I am today, has allowed me to share with all of you how little it takes to “evangelize” here at Starmount. I have been able to figure out for myself that at the end of the day, it is all about relationships. If you show your genuine care and concern for someone, they will want to learn more about your life and what you are all about, including where you go to church and, perhaps, how they can be a part of it as well.

I look forward to sharing more as my studies continue with the next learning unit, which will be fully underway not long after the first finishes. And I will need your help – so I invite you to come along in my journey!
Appendix H: Sermon Series

H.1: Invitation

Date: July 7, 2013

Scripture: Isaiah 55:1-9; Matthew 11:27-30

- As a middle school student in New Jersey growing up, I couldn't get to youth group on a Sunday night fast enough.
- My brother, 6 years my elder, wasn't a youth group "junkie" when he was my age, and let me know early on that it was something I should be a part of from the beginning instead of the final 2 years of high school like he did.
- And boy, did I join!
- Getting to the "Oaken Bucket" at Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church, I became fully immersed in its culture.
- Having a wonderful time, I wanted all of my friends to be involved.
- One friend in particular, Mindy, was one of my two main "targets".
- Asking her to come to youth group was a main focus of our conversations.
- While I don't remember all of the details of my pursuits, I do remember her response one day to one of my invitations:
  - "Ok!" She said, quite exasperated. "I'll come, if you just stop asking me, ok?"
- So, perhaps, I was a bit overzealous or "aggressive" with my invitations to Mindy to come to youth group. Fortunately, that is NOT how invitation has to be.
- But why do you think that my 6th grade self wanted my friend to come to youth group so badly?
  - I was excited to have people be a part of something that I loved so much!
  - For me, inviting people to youth group became a part time job.
  - The invitation was something that came out periodically with a few of my friends...a few times a week they may hear: "Hey, wanna come to youth group?"
  - Based on Mindy's reaction, it probably sounded more like a toddler pulling on his mother's pant leg: "Wannacometomewannacometomewannacometo?"

- The ways in which invitation manifests itself in today's scripture readings are ones that, I think, come down somewhere in the middle of my middle school invitations of before and invitations you might receive to, say, a formal dinner party.
- In the passage from Isaiah which Parks read, the invitations are extended from the prophet to the reader almost immediately:
  - "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."
- The bold exhortation embedded in verse one’s thrice-repeated imperative verb “come … come … come” is to choose well. Come to the water; come to the banquet; come buy without money. In other words, don’t take what has value and waste it on nothing. Don’t settle for what doesn’t feed; take only what is good.
This theme of choice permeates the whole passage. Soon the food imagery recedes, and returning to the land is merged with returning to God (verses 6-7). Clear distinction between seeking God’s ways and failing to seek them is made in the final verses of the passage.

Because God’s ways are so radically different from human ways, because God’s thoughts are not human thoughts, they won’t be found by any other means than through this Godward journey.

God's power, love, and generosity, then, underline the hope for the future where the exiled community stood as witness to these things. The cost for the community was not money but a loving commitment to a covenant with God.

This covenant is one that Jesus is inviting his followers to in the gospel reading as well.

In the passage from Matthew, Jesus was extending the invitation to those "infants", as it states in earlier verses, who are not considered wise or important. These are the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the persecuted - all whom Jesus calls blessed earlier in this same gospel.

They are the sick and the lame, the lepers and demon-possessed, the tax collectors and sinners, who come to Jesus for healing of body and spirit. It is God's gracious will to act in ways that confound human wisdom (11:26), and so these "infants" see what the "wise" cannot -- that Jesus is sent by the Father and reveals the Father (11:27).

Jesus' prayer then turns to invitation: "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens and I will give you rest" (11:28). Who are the ones laboring wearily and heavily burdened? Again, it is the common people rather than their leaders.

Rest (anapausis) in the Septuagint can refer to Sabbath rest, the rest of death, or rest from war when Israel's enemies have been subdued. Rest also functions as an image of salvation, of what will be when the world is finally ordered according to God's purposes and enjoys its full and complete Sabbath. In promising "rest," Jesus promises life under God's reign in the new world that he is bringing into being.

Jesus further invites the weary: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (11:29-30).

The yoke was a familiar symbol of burden bearing, oppression, and subjugation. Yokes were laid on the necks and shoulders of oxen and also on prisoners of war and slaves.

The yoke could also be noted metaphorically in a positive way as well, as is the case in the scriptures when the yoke of wisdom if offered to some.

But what is the yoke Jesus offers? We might infer that it is his teaching, his way of discipleship, which is not burdensome but life-giving. He invites the weary to learn from him, for he is not a tyrant who lords it over his disciples, but is "gentle and humble in heart." His yoke is easy (chrestos, better translated "good" or "kind") and his burden is light. To take his yoke upon oneself is to be yoked to the one in whom God's kingdom of justice, mercy, and compassion is breaking into this world, and to find the rest for which the soul longs.
• The invitation Jesus is offering is not one that is necessarily easy. Following him will be full of risks and challenges, as he has made abundantly clear. Jesus calls us to a life of humble service, but it is a life of freedom and joy instead of slavery. It is life yoked to Jesus under God's gracious and merciful reign, free from the burden of sin and the need to prove oneself, free to rest deeply and securely in God's grace.
• This invitation is one that is extended to us daily. When accepting the invitation to take Jesus' yoke, through God's grace, we are new people each and every morning.
• By bearing this yoke, we can come to the table, as we will in a few moments, to partake in the meal which reminds us of that yoke. It reminds us that we are invited to live in a community of disciples who can challenge one another and be supportive of one another.
• However, we must remain mindful that discipleship involves living our lives with integrity and faithfulness to God. As we come to a greater sense of self, finding our identity in God, we realize that we are developing the markers of our faith as we deepen our theological understanding of discipleship in ways great and small in our daily living. The discipleship to which Jesus calls us not only offers us rest but also guarantees us persecution. So we must live with the conviction that we are being called to live into a new vision of who we are to be and what we are to proclaim from what we have learned from Jesus' teachings.
• So how does this discipleship translate to each of us gathered here at Starmount?
• Friends, a faith-filled theology of discipleship includes unpacking the gospel into living so that our theology of discipleship is not built on a partial gospel, producing ministries that are dying if not already dead.
• The vital discipleship to which Jesus calls us in this passage means that we must not place ourselves in the role of host or hostess in churches whose ministries are concerned only with when to do the next maintenance task, rather than how to construct places of welcome and sustenance.
• The discipleship to which Jesus invites us in this passage requires that we stretch into our ministries by focusing on his message and realizing that we will find rest for carrying the burden of the gospel by living out the unique mission to which Jesus calls each of us.
• "But I don't have a "ministry", Kathryn...I mean, I come to worship on Sundays when I can, and serve on a committee or two, but I don't have a "ministry".
• That's where I would like to challenge you, friends...your "ministry" - my "ministry", your "ministry", each one of our "ministries" is to be invitational.
• No, it doesn't have to be as "aggressive" as my invitations to Mindy so many years ago.
• A simple ask is all it takes. Just plant a seed of invitation - talk about what is going on here at church that excites you - that you want your friends and neighbors to be a part of.

• "So what ever happened with Mindy?", you may be asking...
• Yes, she did come to youth group that week. And the next week. And the next. And weeks became months.
• And months became years.
• And then she joined the confirmation class and was baptized and became a member.
• And her parents started coming to church as well.
• And they continue to grow in faith, more than 25 years later.
• And all I did was ask.

• Thanks be to God.
• Amen.
H.2: Hospitality

Date: August 11, 2013
Scripture: Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16; Luke 14:1, 7-14

- I can say this because she's not here.
- I can say this even if she was here.
- Ready? Here goes.
- I blame my mother.
- I blame my mother for so much of how I am that, in fact, I have a needlepoint that
  says, "Mirror, mirror, on the wall, I've become my mother after all."
- Yes. It's true.
- It's taken me years to accept this.
- But it's what makes me who I am today.
- Because of my mother, I am...hospitable.
- There. I said it.
- Why did you assume that what I blame my mother for was a bad thing?
- As I resume my mid-summer sermon series, we return to the adventures of 13-year-old
  me...and my mother.
- You see, while I was growing up, we were always having people over to the house.
- Whether it be for playing bridge, the annual Christmas brunch, or just having dinner,
  my mom always seemed to be preparing extra food for some event that was going to
  happen at the house.
- But it wasn't just the food - when you were welcomed into our home, you were part
  of the family.
- On Sundays, when the church seminarians interning with our congregation were up
  from Princeton for the day, not only did you get food, but there was a TV for you to
  watch and a couch or bed for you to nap on.
- And the hospitality didn't end when my parents retired and prepared to move to
  Virginia.
- Alerting friends and family to their transition from New Jersey to their current
  residence at Wintergreen Resort, my mom designed a mock Bed and Breakfast
  brochure inviting all who came down to a bed and a meal and, if requested, a tour
  guide for the Charlottesville area.
- For my mom (and dad as well - don't want to leave him out of this), hospitality is her
  way of reaching out...of showing love...to all whom she encounters.
- The author of Hebrews is encouraging those reading the letter to "Let mutual love
  continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have
  entertained angels without knowing it."²
- Showing hospitality to strangers is important - but it's not easy.
- "Despite this recurring biblical theme (and what I have been talking a lot about this
  summer), most of us are hesitant or outright resistant to living this out [this showing
  and extending hospitality to others]. We not only usually fear the stranger, but we

² Hebrews 13:1
teach our children to beware of strangers. Although this is a sad testimony to the reality of child predators, to continue as adults always to be suspicious and wary of strangers is to miss messengers from God (and maybe even Christ himself, according to Matt[hew]).

- You see, "Travelers of many sorts—itinerant preachers, letter carriers, Christians on nonchurch business, migrants, and others—were crucial to the spread of early Christianity and the sense that otherwise-isolated communities had of belonging to a much larger whole. Given the dangers and rigors of travel in the ancient world, these visitors needed secure lodging, food, and whatever encouragement their hosts could provide. Even those without letters of recommendation, it seems, were to be received on trust. A tall order! It is not surprising, then, that the author [of Hebrews] strengthens the injunction that hospitality not be neglected by grounding it in biblical precedent: in providing for strangers "some" have entertained angels [or (divine emissaries)] unknowingly. The allusion [of entertaining angels without our knowledge] is presumably to Abraham and Sarah, who entertained three "men" who turned out to have supernatural qualities (Gen. 18:1-15)."

- According to this Hebrews passage, we here at Starmount entertain angels all of the time.
- Is there rule and order to how we do it? Is there a certain way in which we should be extending hospitality to others?
- The parable that Jesus tells in the gospel passage this morning is about the "rules" of the day...the way in which we should behave understand invitation.
- In this case, Jesus is speaking about a wedding reception.
- "When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honour, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; [...] when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, “Friend, move up higher”; then you will be honoured in the presence of all who sit at the table with you."  
- "As helpful background, this [gospel] passage relies on some knowledge of Palestinian wedding feasts, in which the male guests recline on couches, with the center couch being the place of honor, its inhabitants chosen according to wealth, power, or office. If a more prominent man arrives late, as is often the case, someone of lesser rank is asked to move to a less prestigious location. Jesus is offering sound practical advice to choose the lowest place so that you can be invited up."

- In the case of both passages, the respective authors are speaking a lot about how we are to act, or receive, hospitality and invitation.
- As I've said before to many who I've talked to and in a number of sermons recently, Starmount does a very good job of being hospitable to all who enter our doors...one of

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Feasting on the Word, Hebrews

Feasting on the Word, Hebrews

Luke 14:8-10

Feasting on the Word, Luke
the most frequent compliments I hear about our congregation is how friendly and welcoming we are to everyone, making sure those who have never been here before feel comfortable being a part of whatever activity they have come for.

- That's a wonderful characteristic of our congregation.
- But let's think for a second - how hospitable are we to...each other? Those we see every Sunday (well, ok...almost every Sunday)?
- There is the smile and the head nod...the "good morning" and "how are ya" pleasantries exchanged.
- But do you know who you are saying good morning to? If they weren't wearing their name tag, would you be able to pick them out of a crowd and be able to say, "I go to Starmount with them?"
- Christina Pohl, theologian and author, has made conversations about hospitality her full time job.
- In her book "Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition", makes the point that in order to be hospitable to others, we need to be hospitable to those around us.
- Being hospitable to those around us, is about willing to be vulnerable...willing to open up and welcome new people into your own personal "bubbles".
- I'm not asking for you to form deep, rich friendships with each person in the congregation...while it would be a great thing to strive for, it's probably not very realistic.
- What I AM asking is that you DO know the names of the persons on your lefts and your rights as well as, perhaps, at least one thing about them.
- If we are, as Pohl asks us, to reclaim hospitality as a Christian tradition, then we need to go a little bit deeper.
- "But Kathryn, that seems like a pretty tall order...how do you propose I do that?" You may be asking.
- Well, I have an idea...more specifically, the Evangelism and Membership Committee has an idea of how to, perhaps, do that. And it's as simple as having dinner.
- In the next few months, the Evangelism and Membership Committee will be putting the final touches on a new ministry called "Starmount Connections". Starmount Connections is intended to do just that - connect one to another here at Starmount.
- And all you have to do is say yes to dinner.
- Everyone's gotta eat, right? Why not learn more about someone sitting nearby you in the process?
- The premise about Starmount Connections is that a host will call you and one other family to have dinner together.
- That's it.
- Simple as that.
- You just need to say yes. Show up to the host's house where you will engage in conversation and break bread together.
- Hospitality at its most basic form.
- Pohl states is thusly: "People are hungry for welcome but most Christian have lost track of the heritage of hospitality. [...] Reconnecting with the ancient tradition of Christian hospitality is enriching [...] because it takes us back [to the ways it played out in the biblical texts...]. As the biblical texts on hospitality are lived out, and as the
Scriptures illumine and interpret present practices, Christians find their lives infused with the presence of Christ.  

- And that, my friends, is what it is ultimately about.
- Not only are we inviting, being welcoming, and extending hospitality one to another, but we are also inviting, welcoming, and extending hospitality to God, thus deepening our personal relationships with Our Creator.
- "The realm of God is also about how God offers an invitation in our lives to receive a genuine blessing when we learn that it is crassly unfaithful to store up spiritual brownie points to note our goodness and then make it worse by ostentatious displays of that goodness. Receiving a blessing that invites us to grow into a deeper relationship with God is not something we can work our way into through acts designed to display our worth. No. God asks us to live into our createdness through our everyday acts toward each other and in and through our relationship with God and creation."

- Friends, we are wired to be in relationship with one another. We are called, by God, to look out for one another - to extend warmth and love through hospitality.
- So while there may have been some reluctance from 13 year-old-me from time to time (complete with whiny retorts of “again?” and matching eye rolls) for the seemingly revolving door of visitors and guests due to my mother’s offerings of food and drink, the experiences and opportunities it afforded me to learn about all of our guests and their lives have made me a better person today.
- And I only have my mother to blame – and thank - for that.
- Thanks be to God.
- Amen.

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7 Pohl, page 33-34

8 Feasting on the Word, Luke
H.3: Nurture

Date: July 21

Scripture: Proverbs 1:1-7, 3:1-8; 2 Timothy 1:1-14

- 13-year-old me moved from middle school youth group to high school youth group.
- And summers were what memories were made of.
- In the past few weeks, I have been sharing stories of how beyond enthusiastic 13-year-old me LOVED youth group and all things related to it.
- Nothing changed when I matriculated to high school youth group.
- Throughout the program year, the conversation had a lot to do with the annual mission trip to Maine.
- The question asked wasn't "how was the mission trip?" The question was "how was Maine?"
- The Carpenter's Boat Shop in Pemaquid, Maine, was the destination for the annual mission trip - same place, every year.
- Staying in the same place and always working with CHIP, the Community Housing Improvement Project, those who participated in the annual excursions were able to build relationships with those who lived in the area and check back in with them the following year.
- On the final day of the week-long journey, those students who attended for the first time received a Jerusalem cross, while those who attended all four years of high school received a T-shirt with Maine, their graduation year, and their name on it. These symbols were also received by those adult leaders who attended as well. In fact, for some of the youth leaders, they began receiving a shirt for 8, 12, and even 16 years of attending.
- So to say that "Maine" became tradition was an understatement.
- As is the case with those who have attended mission trips with Starmount and other congregations, we worked hard, shared in wonderful fellowship with one another, and learned a lot about our faith in the process.
- All of those years of tradition while building up one another in faith.
- When looking into the scripture readings for this morning, the experiences of teenage me and the church where I grew up came to mind.
- Tradition was important to the mission trips, yes, but it was also the support, love, encouragement, and - nurture - that drove the annual trip's success.
- Paul's second letter to Timothy discusses the ways in which Paul admires the letter recipient's faith which was passed on to him from his grandmother and his mother through love, support, and nurture.
- As is the case with what is also identified in the text from Proverbs that Mary read for us this morning, King Solomon, the author of this book, instructs the reader:
  - "My child, do not forget my teaching." At the most simple level, the metaphor of the parent teaching the child reinforces family as the most important building block of every society. Our first teachers are our parents. The love and instruction of father and mother ("Honor your father and your mother," the commandment goes)
are therefore the most important and most basic building block of society. God imparts knowledge and instruction through good parents."

- The nurturing of a child's faith is one of the more important tasks that a parent can undertake during their lifetimes.
- Paul, in writing to Timothy, recognizes and appreciates the work that was done by Timothy's mother and grandmother to nurture him in faith.
- But then what is Timothy supposed to do with the faith he has been taught and brought up in? What, exactly, is Paul asking him to do?
- Timothy [has been charged by Paul] "to transmit the faith he has received. It is to be the same faith, not a modified version of it. He is to transmit it to men who are known to be sound in the faith and also known to have the capacity to teach others. When Paul wrote, he had to depend on Timothy and those taught by Timothy for the transmission to the next generation of a sound understanding of the Christian faith." 

- What Paul is asking of Timothy is also what he is asking of us - we are to take the faith in which we have been raised and nurtured and pass it along.
- If Timothy (or we) do not tell others of the faith which we have been raised and nurtured in, then we are always only one generation away from extinction.

  - If one generation becomes ashamed of the gospel and does not risk (passing it along to others), how will the next generation know? This seems to be the ultimate concern here; at the end of his life, Paul needs Timothy to carry on for him." [...] 

  - Churches take this responsibility seriously when we provide Christian education classes to pass along knowledge of the Scriptures and faith to all ages. In addition, we hope to transmit a living faith that moves beyond creeds and memorization of Scripture, but how? 

  - In response to this query, in the early 2000s the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, seeking an update on today's religious practice, interviewed 35,000 Americans. Pew researchers discovered that 44 percent of all Americans have left the religious traditions in which they grew up and were nurtured by their families. Now, according to research, we shop for our religious or spiritual home, much as we shop for anything else. [...] The Pew [Forum] report suggests we leave our religious upbringing frequently as we move from place to place, with an estimated 40 million of us moving each year.

  - In this land of religious freedom and mobility, leaving the religion of our childhood and seeking a faith we can practice—a living faith community where we call one another "brother" and "sister"—seems an advantage. Without realizing it, some families pass along traditions that lack meaning. Therefore,

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9 thoughtfulchristian.org - Proverbs 3:1-8; "week 2"

10 Layman's Bible Commentary, vol. 23, p. 100

11 Ibid, p. 136
the children leave, seeking a faith that does nurture and give sustenance. Certainly families can pass along prejudices and hatreds just as easily as they can pass along love and the practice of welcoming the stranger.\(^\text{12}\)

- Welcoming the stranger...inviting others in...nurturing our faith...all are keys to how we, as a church, can continue to support one another in faith.
- In order for us to continue to grow as a church body in more ways than one, we need to find ways in which we can nurture and support one another. But what can that nurture look like? I think there are three points: Instruction, Dedication, and Love.

- We can nurture each other through nurturing ourselves - our faith lives - through instruction.
- In order to grow in faith, we need to continue to learn.
- I was reminded of this just after I had passed my national athletic training certification exam.
- Feeling like I was on cloud 9 because the weight of the world was lifted off of my shoulders with passing, one of my instructors said, "congratulations, you now know you have the minimum amount of knowledge necessary to be a nationally certified athletic trainer..."
- The moral of that story: we can NEVER rest on the knowledge we have of any one topic - we should always want to be learning...and learning about our faith should be at the top of that list.

- We can nurture each other through dedication - to one another.
- This dedication can take many forms, but most importantly it means that we will be in each other's lives, caring for one another in good and bad times.
- Faith is personal, friends, but it is never private.
- Within the passage from Proverbs, we are reminded that we are to adhere to the teacher's "instruction" and to observe the "commandments", that is, the individual admonitions (or prohibitions) that comprise the larger teaching.
- By adhering to the "instruction" of the teachers, we then can live a life of of "well-being". "Well-being refers to the state of contentment, pleasantness, health, welfare, and security in which good things are had and experienced without the stress of anxiety and fear."\(^\text{13}\)
- By being present in one another's lives, we are able to find a way to provide nurture for one another's well-being, which includes all of these things.

- The final way, I think, nurture can "look" is love.
- My definitions of "love" and "dedication" may sound a lot alike - and they are.
- But whom we are to love is the most important and is directed to certain specific audiences:

\(^{12}\) Ibid, p. 136, 138

\(^{13}\) Interpretation: Proverbs, Leo G. Perdue, p. 96-97, 2000
• Love of God.
• Love of self.
• Love of other.

Both of the scripture texts this morning have, at their crux, how important it is to keep God at the center and love God "with your whole heart, and mind, and strength".

But I also think that the scripture also is saying that if we are to fully love ourselves, then we continue to learn and strive to keep God at the center. This includes not being our own worst critics and providing space in our lives to breathe.

(Perhaps I'm speaking to myself with this last one, but I think there are many of you who may be able to agree...)

Love of "other" is to look around you and see one another with a Christ-like love. To be involved in one another's lives. To call one another by name and seek to learn each other's stories - everyone in their family, what they do for a living, what makes them tick.

In all of these cases, by starting here, in our own congregation, to nurture ourselves and one another, we will be able to nurture relationships with those who come newly into the fold.

We can include them in our traditions...

Which allows me to return to the traditions and nurture of Maine - those mission trips at my home church in New Jersey.

What makes the tradition of those trips so rich is that they continue on, more than 20 years later.

As sure as I stand here, another Maine trip concludes as the church returns home to Basking Ridge.

But what made this year so fun to observe from afar (on facebook), I read something very, very cool -

For (what I believe) is the first time in the church's history, a child of a previous Maine participant attended the trip for herself.

Friends...faith is passed on, from generation to generation.

What a wonderful way to witness God's continued work in the world.

Thanks be God.

Amen.
H4: Welcome

Date: July 14, 2013

Scripture: Matthew 25:31-46; 3 John

- As a participant of the Basking Ridge Presbyterian Church Youth Group, you would have to descend down the stairs of the church’s activities building into the “Oaken Bucket”. At the base of the stairs, a fire door split the space between the stairs and the main room.
- As you can envision your 13-year-old self approaching the base of the stairs, you may not be prepared for what is on the other side of the door: 13-year-old me.
- I will remind you from last week’s sermon that 13-year-old me was…well…a BIG fan of youth group.
- I wanted everyone I knew to be a part of something I loved and was so excited about.
- So if inviting friends and classmates to youth group was a part-time job, then welcoming them to youth group was another.
- At the bottom of the stairs I stood, almost as if the “gatekeeper”, ready with a smile and a hug.
- As I look back on it now, I think my overzealous teenage self could be likened to a golden retriever welcoming home its master at the front door.
- But whatever the visual you have, it happened.
- As soon as you made your way through the doorjamb, the welcome was ON.
- A hug, a greeting, a "Joe! So glad you're here!!" or “Sally – you made it!”
- Do you get the same greeting when you're here at Starmount?
- Today’s scripture passages can help us understand how the concept of welcome and hospitality translates in our lives.
- In the third letter to John that I read, the author of the letter addresses his remarks to Gaius, a brother in faith.
- The whole tone of the letter is one about...(pause/gesture)...welcome. How does the author think that Gaius should welcome those who come to his house or congregation?
- "Two principles inform the [author's] remarks. First, whatever work is done for siblings in the faith is an expression of love by their benefactors, who are themselves loved. Second, there is no distinction between loving work done for a fellow Christian and the activity of faith: “whatever work you perform for the brothers, you do faithfully.”"14
- This sentiment ties very well into the gospel reading which Libbi read for us earlier. In the Matthew passage, Jesus is speaking to those gathered about what some theologians consider a rather apocalyptic vision.
- "There are only two kingdoms: The Son of Man with his angels, the blessed righteous, and the kingdom of God prepared from eternity stand on one side; the devil

14 Ibid, p. 462
and his angels, the accursed, and the destiny prepared for the devil and his own stand on the other."\textsuperscript{15}

- "The scene encourages and warns the Christian reader that what will count in the judgment are deeds of love and mercy performed for the needy. Although the apocalyptic scene may picture "all the nations" and their treatment of Christian missionaries, the actual address is not to the nations, but to the Christians themselves."\textsuperscript{16}

- Jesus asks those gathered how they would treat someone who was hungry, or thirsty, or naked, or sick, or in prison? How would you treat the "least of these"?

- "The major issue concerning the “least of these” is whether they are (a) the world’s needy generally or (b) specifically Christian or Christian missionaries. It seems that all the evidence can be best accounted for as follows:

- The fundamental thrust of this scene is that when people respond to human need, or fail to respond, they are in fact responding, or failing to respond, to Christ. Yet this turns out to be a surprise for both groups. Those who provide food, drink, clothing, shelter for the needy and visit the sick and imprisoned respond entirely on the basis of the needs of “the least of these” and are surprised to learn at the judgment that there was a deeper dimension to their acts of human compassion. Thus the needy brother or sister is not restricted to Christians or missionaries, [for the Greek term for brother or sister], "adelphoi" is dropped in [the end of the passage] and is sometimes used elsewhere in Matthew of any person whose need calls for a response.

- But there is one more person that Jesus asks those gathered about how they treat...did you catch it? When did you see a stranger and welcome them?

- We here at Starmount are good at welcoming. If you were to ask any visitor that comes in the door their impressions of those of us gathered, one of the first things they would say is that they felt quite welcomed.

- But what does that welcome look like? Are we able to quantify it? Where does the welcome become too much? When it is not enough? Is there a point where we can say to ourselves, "I have said hello...my job is done - I've done my good deed for the morning?"

- Author and theologian Patrick Keifert wrote the book on it. Literally. His book, "Welcoming the Stranger" is one that discusses this very topic and how it can relate to our church as a collective body and our congregation individually.

- Throughout the text, Keifert discusses how churches can welcome each one who comes through the doors of a particular congregation – how a church “does welcome". There was one church, in particular, that was rather impressive to him...perhaps a church we can learn from. He writes:

- In the last several years, I have often traveled on weekends and find myself a stranger in strange congregations. Almost never has anyone welcomed me to the at-home

\textsuperscript{15} New Interp. Bible vol VIII, p. 455

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 456
service by helping me find the order of service or explained even in the most rudimentary manner the order of service.

- One exception was in Gettysburg, PA. Perhaps because the people are used to tourists, I found public worship there clearly designed to include visitors. In addition to a service folder that was most clear and helpful in describing the order of service and my responsibilities, the ushers were helpful in locating for me not only a seat but also the order of service.

- As I began to look through the liturgy, a product of liturgical renewal, an elderly woman sitting next to me asked if I was a member of the congregation. I said no. She volunteered in a most noninvasive manner to explain the order of service to me, renewing the main parts of the service. Above all, she neither left me to silent passive observation or insisted I take on an air of intimacy. She respected my private space but not some supposed right to silence. I felt honored as a person; that is, as someone who was to participate in the public activity called worship. Her tone was one of hospitality but not intimacy. She engaged me as a stranger but did not engulf me. 17

- When you saw a stranger (an unfamiliar face) here in this congregation, did you welcome them? Did you show explain the friendship pad to them more than what John or I can do from up here during the opening announcements? Did you show them the difference between the “Presbyterian Hymnal” and the “Sing the Faith”?

- Now there are some of you in the congregation who may be drooling at the thought of welcoming someone new to our fold (if you are, then you should consider serving on the Evangelism and Membership committee). Perhaps there are others of you who cringe at the thought - you are fine with being "nice" while here, but would rather not go out of your way...

- Now, let's put the shoe on the other foot for a moment: if you were to go and visit another congregation (perhaps while on vacation or something) - how would you like to be greeted, nay welcomed, upon arrival?

- Would a simple "hi - great to have you here" be enough? How would someone like the woman in the Gettysburg church make you feel?

- Not being a visitor at Starmount, how are you welcomed? It is by name? Do you know all of the names of those who sit around you? What about - gasp! - those who sit "over there"?

- I'm not asking for a Cheers-like "NORM!" for each of those who you encounter, but isn't it wonderful to be called by name?

- The author of 3 John [...], asks that greetings be conveyed to persons who are members of the same church as Gaius. The request that he greet them “by name” indicates that the author does not want them greeted as a group as in a congregation, but individually, one by one, showing the personal affection which he had for each of them. 18

- Friends...God does just that for each of us. The prophet Isaiah tells us that "God has called us by name...you are mine". We, as children of God, are called to be welcoming to each other.

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17 Kiefert, Welcoming the Stranger, p. 121

18 Ibid, 124
“Like the beloved Gaius [in Third John], we do well to receive [an unfamiliar face] at our doorstep, for the church knows, firsthand and repeatedly, what it means to have been a lonely stranger, embraced by God’s sheer goodness and tender mercy. We are able to make a home for others, because, through Christ, love first bade us welcome.”

"God created the world out of an abundance of love. Like a bubbling fountain, God is love and overflows with love. In creation, God gives something of self, and in sending Jesus and the Holy Spirit, God repeatedly and generously pours love out upon all people, showing us God's own self as well as who we are. Created in the image of this freely giving God, we freely share, because this is what it means to be created in God's image. In particular, we love those conventionally considered unable to give back, and we do not do so to earn God's love or anyone else's love, to [generate] favor, or to make sure we are considered righteous at the end of time. We give as an expression of the love that is inside of us, bubbling up, spilling over, and flowing out." 

And that's where we come back to the Oaken Bucket. When the 13 year-old me welcomed people to youth group, not only was it because I was (perhaps overly) excited to see them, but I was also excited for them to be there to share in the same experiences.

And so it should be the same with us now. We are welcomed to this place, and to this Table, to share in the experiences that God wants us to - together. Jesus calls us to help "the least of these" because Jesus, too, was a stranger to many.

Jesus said, God is here, in the messiness and ambiguity of human life. God is here, particularly in your neighbor, the one who needs you. You want to see the face of God? Look into the face of one of the least of these, as well as those sitting on your left and your right.

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

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19 Ibid, 469.
20 Ibid, 335
21 Ibid, 334
H.5: Evangelism

Date: October 6, 2013 (World Communion Sunday)

Scripture: Psalm 105:1-6; Romans 12:3-18

- 10:00. Every morning.
- No matter what you were doing, no matter where you were on the Boatshop grounds, you needed (and wanted) to stop what you were doing and make your way to the picnic tables next to the barn.
- Utilizing needle nose pliers to adjust the temperature on the oven and the same pans used every day for 30+ years, Ruth would present baskets full of muffins and hot tea for all who arrived at the picnic tables for tea.
- How do I know about this daily break?
- Because my 15-year-old teenage self experienced it while on our annual church high school mission trip.
- With the last few times I have stood in this pulpit, all of you here have been learning about "the adventures of 13-year-old me".
- In a sermon series of sorts, I have been sharing stories of a nerdy, slightly awkward, tomboy who was VERY excited to share her experiences with - well - ANYONE who walked in her path.
- The topics of each of those previous four sermons serve as a foundation of sorts for this morning. In case you missed one, or need a recap, the previous topics were:
  - Invitation: My (perhaps overly aggressive) way of inviting friends to youth group sounded something like this: "Wanna come? Wanna come? Wanna come? Wanna come?"
  - Extending hospitality: I learned everything from my mother - and that's not a bad thing at all. In this case, my mother's expression of hospitality was to make all feel a part of the family.
  - Providing welcome: Each person who walked in the Oaken Bucket, the youth group space in the church, was greeted and made to feel a part of things, regardless of whether it was their first or hundred and first time coming to youth group.
  - And to cultivating nurture: also discussing the annual youth group mission trip, the relationships and experiences that were all shared at the Carpenter's Boat Shop in Pemaquid, Maine, provided a space that not only developed relationships that have lasted for years, but also an environment where participants' children now can have similar experiences which will shape their lives as well.
- So, to bring the "13 year-old me" sermon series to a close this morning, the slightly awkward teenager is a bit older, just as nerdy and awkward, and most definitely just as excited about youth group and all of the experiences she has, especially when it comes to youth group.
- Returning to the opening anecdote and the reason behind the sermon's title, let's all go to the Carpenter's Boat Shop together as members of the Starmount
Presbyterian Church mission trip...even if it is, for this morning, as a journey in our minds...

- To set the scene, a brief word about the Carpenter's Boatshop:
  - Founded in 1979, the Carpenter's Boat Shop is an apprenticeship-school and community for all people. Whether apprentices are between college and life careers, jobs and new directions, alcoholism and sobriety, or simply transitioning into retirement, the Boat Shop provides a safe harbor before setting sail on a new course in life. While considering goals and directions, apprentices live in community and learn boatbuilding, carpentry, furniture making, sailing, seamanship, and perform community service. They also explore personal faith through reading, study, and discussion.
  - During the summer, when not hosting apprentices, the Boatshop would host churches from up and down the eastern seaboard to do work in the neighboring towns.

- As a participant on the mission trip, you stay on the grounds, sleeping on the floors in sleeping bags and eating meals around picnic tables.
- After breakfast each morning after making sandwiches for lunch, participants are split into groups to head off to work sites in and around the Pemaquid area. One work group, however, pulled chore detail around the Boatshop grounds.
- The Martha Crew - affectionately named for the biblical account of Jesus-centric Mary and her hard-working sister, Martha - was charged with cleaning the bathrooms, tending to garbage, and tidying up the sleeping areas, among other things. While seemingly a tireless job for the day, there was one perk...
  - That's right - a mandatory work stoppage at 10:00.
  - Tea break - complete with blueberry muffins.
  - Ruth Ives, the matriarch of the Boat Shop, would pull out the same set of pans as a part of her morning ritual to make the blueberry muffins. Utilizing needle nose pliers to adjust the oven temperature just so, when 10:00 rolled around, dozens of hot, fresh, steaming Maine blueberry muffins would find their way to the picnic table where everyone would gather for fellowship over a muffin and cup of tea.
  - Any and all who were on the boat shop grounds...and some who may have just happened to show up too.
  - The ministry of this fellowship is beyond measure - people gathered around a table, sharing stories and exchanging pleasantries.
- When thinking about all of the concepts we've discussed in the previous weeks, it dawned on me that the experiences of the blueberry muffin fellowship at the boat shop encompassed all of the previous sermon topics into one.
  - Invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome all fit into one greater concept which we examine this morning: evangelism.
  - Evangelism can be a term, for some churchgoers, that brings shivers to spines. Perhaps visions of a loud, outspoken man standing on a soapbox on the street corner shouting about "The End Being Near - Repent!" or a woman handing out tracts to anyone who walks by and asking "have you met Jesus?" enter your mind.
  - But isn't it great to also think about how sitting around a picnic table eating blueberry muffins can also fall under the same term?
Evangelism, in its most basic definition, is the spreading of the Christian gospel by public preaching or personal witness.

The psalm Nancy read for us this morning is the epitome of evangelism. Did you hear it?

"O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples. Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wonderful works."

Did you hear it?

"Make known his deeds among the peoples. Sing praises to him - tell of all his wonderful works."

The psalmist is talking to the Israelites who are dodging difficult situation after difficult situation.

But the Israelites do not stop praising God when they are in exile; they do not stop praising God when their temple is destroyed; they do not stop praising God even in the dark shadow of the Holocaust.

They do not give up looking for God's actions in history, even though the covenant seems to have been broken. The beautiful mystery of God's covenants is not that they are magical gifts of land or ancestry; rather, they are gifts of relationship.

Think about some of your strongest relationships.

Think about the emotions those relationships stir.

The stirring of feelings want to make you shout from the rooftops, right?

Isn't it the same as your relationship with God?

Isn't it?

No?

Well, why not?

We should be so excited about our relationship with God that we want to shout from the rooftops, just like our relationships with others.

But the wonderful thing is that we don't need to brush up on our bible knowledge (although it's never a bad thing in general) to shout from the rooftops about our relationships with God.

We don't need to find a soapbox or warm up the copy machine for the most recent tract.

There's the saying "Preach the gospel daily. When necessary, use words."

It's simple to "preach" each and every day...and I offer two ways that this can be done:

First, by using the gifts that God has given each of us.

Paul's letter to the Romans reminds us of those gifts that God has provided: "We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us..."

Sure - not all of us are able to go out and talk about our faith as eloquently as others...but does that not mean that we can't let our gifts speak for the love God has for us?

Secondly, we can "preach the gospel" every day by doing just as the Apostle tells us:

"Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend..."
hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse
them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in
harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do
not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but
take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it
depends on you, live peaceably with all.

- That's quite a list, isn't it.
- Sounds great, Kathryn, but I'm not quite sure how "preaching the gospel" has
  anything to do with blueberry muffins...
- I asked a number of my friends in the past week to share their memories of Ruth's
  blueberry muffins and the times shared while at the boat shop.
- One said: "Simple ingredients made magical, fresh Maine blueberries bursting in
  your mouth, taking a moment to relax at the outdoor picnic tables and share a story
  with someone you'd only just met."
- And another: "she made them for others, not herself... so whenever i make a batch
  i ALWAYS give away at least half..."
- Sharing of yourself and giving to others.
- What makes me smile and tear up equally when I think about them and the times
  we were able to have, is that Ruth passed away a number of years ago from brain
  cancer. And while that makes me sad, I smile because her legacy lives on...her gift
  and that time lives on.
- One of the adult leaders who has been to the boat shop every summer for work
  camp week for more than a decade, about the blueberry muffin experiences, shared
  this:
  - "For me, the whole tea time idea highlights the nuttiness of the
    mainstream idea of 'work'. The rat-race with only the bottom line in view, no
time for balance or grace. In recent years, we've been responsible for making
the muffins during workcamp week, and I love how easily the youth get into
the idea, making piles of muffins to share with whoever is there. I've made
them a few times, away from the boat shop, and they taste just as good hot out
of the oven slathered with butter. But the experience isn't close unless there's a
group of people around to share them with."
- In the same way that we as high school youth would gather around table for
  fellowship, we do the same this morning.
- Like millions of Christians around the world on this World Communion Sunday,
  we gather this morning to share the bread and the cup - the reminders of the ultimate
gift given for each of us - grace - given to us through the life, death, and resurrection
of Jesus Christ.
- Friends, evangelism isn't intended to be "scary" or intimidating...by sharing your
  God-given gifts and yourself with others, you are spreading the gospel of Jesus
  Christ. You are, indeed, evangelizing.
- It's as simple as that.
- Thanks be to God.
- Amen.
WELCOME TO MAINE
The Way Life Should Be
OPEN FOR BUSINESS
Appendix I: Retreat

I.1: Leader’s Guide

Friday Night: Welcome

Opening Prayer:
Most good and gracious God, as we gather here to study your Word, may our hearts be open to how the Holy Spirit is working and moving and living and breathing not only in ourselves, but in the group as a whole. Allow what we say to each other through this discussion be pleasing to you. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

Reminder: Kathryn's Introductory Questions
What comes to mind when you hear the word "welcome"?
What is the definition of the word "welcome" to you?
Does the definition change when you think of the word as a verb vs. a noun? Why or why not?
What does it mean if someone makes you feel "welcome"?
How does being "welcomed" make you feel?
For you, what is a simple way for someone to make you feel "welcome" when you are new to a place?

Small Group Time:
Check In:
Go around the circle introducing yourself.
As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and (briefly) one bad travel experience.
Read Scripture: Read Luke 15:11-32. (NRSV)
What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
Many of you have heard this story before. Is there something new that stuck out to you in hearing it this time? If so, what was it?
Questions about Scripture and "Real Life Application"
Think back to one of the first times you left home for a short period of time. Why did you leave home? How did people respond when you came back?
When thinking about "welcomed", how do you think the younger son felt to be welcomed that way by his father? How do you think the father felt in seeing (and welcoming) the son home?
What concerns did the younger son have about going home? Do you think he still had the same concerns upon the welcome by his father?
When he returns, how does his father greet him – with anger? with "I told you so"? with love?
What does the father do to make the son feel at home and welcomed?
Look at the father’s reaction in verse 20. What clues do you find that show the father has been waiting for his son’s return? (“But while he was still far off, his father saw him . . .”)

In verses 20-24, what strong, emotional words do you see that describe an extravagant welcome? What did the son do to deserve such a wonderful welcome? Why did the father welcome him like this?

Imagine yourself as a first time guest at a new place, like going to a new church. What concerns do you have as you pull into the parking lot? (Do you even make it to the parking lot? Have your concerns disallowed you from going at all?)

How can we, Christians, welcome each guest like the father, making each person feel like the younger son returning home?

Do you see yourself reacting more like the older son or the father when welcoming someone? Why? Please explain.

Debrief
Any "a-ha" moments?
Anything to share?

Closing Prayer
Most good and gracious God, thank you for this conversation we have just concluded. We also give you thanks that you are always there for us with your arms outstretched wide to welcome us back. May we continue to greet all we encounter with love in our hearts and a spirit of welcome that makes everyone feel like they, too, are home. For it is in Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

Saturday Morning - Part 1: invitation

Opening Prayer:
Most good and gracious God, as we gather here to study your Word, may our hearts be open to how the Holy Spirit is working and moving and living and breathing not only in ourselves, but in the group as a whole. Allow what we say to each other through this discussion be pleasing to you. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

Reminder: Kathryn's Introductory Questions
What is "invitation"? How do you define it?
What does it mean to "invite" someone to something? Can there be more than one way to do so?
What are some obstacles you have to inviting someone to something you're going to?
What about, more specifically, to church worship or a church event?
What does it mean to you, emotionally, to be invited to something?

Small Group Time:
Check In:
As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and the most unique event you've ever been invited to.

Read Scripture: Read Luke 14:15-24. (NRSV)

What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.

When knowing that the topic of this bible study is "invitation", what do you hear about that topic in this passage?

Questions about Scripture and "Real Life Application"

How credible are the invited guests' excuses for not coming? (14:18-20) Who do the invited guests in the parable represent?

Have you ever been able to tell when an excuse that someone gives you for not accepting an invitation is false? How does that make you feel?

Why is the host angry? (14:21)

Have you ever been angry when invitations are not accepted? Why or why not?

The host commands his servant to invite the poor and outcast both inside the town and outside in the rural areas. Who do these two groups probably represent?

Why is the host urgent about his invitation in verses 21-23?

What kinds of feelings would go through you if you had planned an extra-special banquet and your guests gave excuses why they could not come?

What was one of the more recent special occasions to which you were invited? Why did you go or not go?

How did being invited make you feel?

As you look back through your life, what are one or two different ways God has given you invitations? How did you respond to His invitations?

Are those invitations which God has given different than invitations you receive from those around you? Why or why not?

Does this passage make you think differently about inviting people to church or a church event? Why or why not?

Put yourself in the shoes of the invitee? Can an invitation seem "threatening" or "intimidating"? Why or why not?

What are different ways we can invite someone that do not appear that way?

Debrief

Any "a-ha" moments?

Anything to share?

Closing Prayer

Dear God, you provide us with invitations every day. May our hearts be open to them. May we, through those invitations, be willing to invite others to understand the overflowing love you have for us. Whether it be to grab a cup of coffee or to come to worship, may our invitations be extended with your Spirit and love in mind, so that we may continue to see each other like you see us. For we ask all of this in Jesus' name. Amen.
Saturday Morning - Part 2: Hospitality

Opening Prayer
Most good and gracious God, as we gather here to study your Word, may our hearts be open to how the Holy Spirit is working and moving and living and breathing not only in ourselves, but in the group as a whole. Allow what we say to each other through this discussion be pleasing to you. In Jesus' name we ask it. Amen.

Reminder: Kathryn's Introductory Questions
What is "hospitality"? How do you define it?
What makes someone "hospitalable"?
What makes somewhere "hospitalable"?
Do you practice hospitality easily, or is it difficult? Discuss what factors make it easy or difficult for you.
What is the greatest act of hospitality you have ever shown? Did you receive anything from this experience?

Small Group Time:
Check In:
As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and your most favorite and least favorite chore to do around the house.
Read Scripture: Read Luke 10:38-42. (NRSV)
What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
Did anything different stick out to you about the passage this time? Explain.
Questions about Scripture and "Real Life Application"
Two types of hospitality are provided in this passage. Can anyone identify them? (one provides hospitality by putting guest first; one works to provide the home they think the guest wants, including food, drink, place to sleep)
What type of hospitality are you more comfortable with providing for a guest? Explain.
Do you know anyone like Martha? Share the things you like about her. Is there anything you don’t like?
Do you know anyone like Mary? Share the things you like about her. Is there anything you don’t like?
Who are you most like—Martha or Mary? Why?
How can you be more like the other in your day to day life?
In what ways do you sometimes find yourself busy, upset, and troubled like Martha?
What patterns and practices could you institute in your daily life that would make you more like Mary?
Return to Luke 10:41. What was it Mary choose that was "better"?
Was what Martha did wrong? Why or why not?
What is risky about hospitality? What is inconvenient?
(Referencing the two types of hospitality from above:) Is one type of hospitality "right"? Does this passage and this conversation make you think any differently about hospitality? About how you extend hospitality to guests in your home? What about how you extend hospitality to guests at church (both worship and at church functions)? How might God be present for you as you extend yourself in creating hospitality for another, whether in your home or at church?

Debrief
Any "a-ha" moments?
Anything to share?

Saturday Evening: Nurture

Reminder: Kathryn's Introductory Questions
What is "nurture"? How do you define it?
"Nurture" is both a noun and a verb: does its definition or meaning change for you when thought of as a noun? As a verb? Why or why not?
What are different "things" you can nurture?

Small Group Time:
Check In:
As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and your most favorite comfort food, briefly telling you why it is your favorite and how it makes you feel when you eat it.
Read Scripture: Read Luke 10:25-37. (NRSV)
What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
Many of you have heard this story before. Did anything new and different stick out to you this time as you heard it? Why or why not?
Questions about Scripture and "Real Life Application"
In what ways did the Samaritan help the victim?
Based on our earlier conversation, would you consider what the Samaritan did as "nurturing"? Why or why not? Explain.
Based on the passage, would you add any other definitions for the word?
What resonates most with you about the story of the Good Samaritan?
How are we tempted to refuse compassion out of personal security?
Based on this conversation, how might you nurture those around you in a new and different way?
Why is it difficult sometimes to nurture relationships with others?
In today's society of "me" and "I", what emotions can stir inside when providing nurture to someone else?
What are some ways you might nurture the relationships of those whom you consider to be very close? Your family? Your friends?
Think about one or two people in your congregation that you don't know as well. How might you nurture those relationships? Would you even want to? Explain.
How can we all express more compassion and care for one another?
Debrief
Any "a-ha" moments?
Anything to share?

Sunday Morning: Evangelism

Reminder: Kathryn's Introductory Questions
What do you think of when you hear the word "evangelism"?
How do you define the term?
(Depending on how the conversation leads depends on how this question is phrased:)
Why does the term "evangelism" get such a bad rep?
Why is being an "evangelist" seen as a negative in so many places these days?
Can each of the four terms discussed this weekend (invitation, hospitality, nurture, welcome) find a "home" within the term "evangelism"? Why or why not? If so, how? Explain.

Small Group Time:
Check In:
As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and your most favorite Halloween costume as a kid.
Read Scripture: Read Genesis 18:1-8. (NRSV)
What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
Questions about Scripture and "Real Life Application"
Who are the characters in the passage? Do they represent anyone or anything in particular?
What did Abraham do for the three men who came to him?
How did Abraham show hospitality to the guests? Notice the verbs and adverbs that describe Abraham's actions, the participation of his household in serving, and the content of the meal. What does this event show about Abraham and his family?
What elements of hospitality does Abraham show even to visiting strangers?
Based on your earlier conversation, in what ways, if any, is Abraham being an evangelist?
Which of the four "virtues" (invitation, hospitality, nurture, welcome) did Abraham extend to their guests? Specifically identify what he did for each virtue identified.
Why is it important for Christians to welcome strangers? Is it something that is easy to do? Why or why not?
What is our response to the opportunity to serve our God as evangelists? Are we enthusiastic, giving God our best?
Evangelism, in this case, is important to think about in regards to the relationships we build, one with another. If we invite people into our lives, provide welcome and hospitality to them when we encounter them, and nurture relationships with them, then chances are great that they will want
to learn more about us and what makes us "tick". This could not only include what we do and 
more about us, but also what is important in our lives, including where we worship. By 
creating 
a true and authentic relationship with the other, you are extending Christlike love to them, 
seeing them as God sees them. 
How can you develop deeper, more authentic relationships with those already in your 
close circle of friends? 
Should we encounter strangers (or not-as-well-known acquaintances) in the same way we 
encounter our friends and family? Why or why not? 
Describing friendly people sometimes, the phrase "s/he's never met a stranger" can be 
used. When thinking about evangelism in terms of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and 
welcome, does this phrase take on new or different meaning? Can this phrase be helpful 
when encountering those you don’t know? 
How can you take what you’ve learned during the conversations over this weekend and 
apply it to those we encounter on a day-to-day basis? 

Debrief 
Any "a-ha" moments? 
Anything to share?
I.2: Small Group Leader Questions

**Friday Night: Welcome**

*Reminder: Kathryn's Introductory Questions*

- What comes to mind when you hear the word "welcome"?
- What is the definition of the word "welcome" to you?
- Does the definition change when you think of the word as a verb vs. a noun? Why or why not?
- What does it mean if someone makes you feel "welcome"?
- How does being "welcomed" make you feel?
- For you, what is a simple way for someone to make you feel "welcome" when you are new to a place?

**Small Group Time:**

- Check In:
  - Go around the circle introducing yourself.
  - As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and (briefly) one bad travel experience.
- Read Scripture: Read Luke 15:11-32. (NRSV)
  - What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
  - Many of you have heard this story before. Is there something new that stuck out to you in hearing it this time? If so, what was it?
- Questions about Scripture and "Real Life Application"
  - Think back to one of the first times you left home for a short period of time. Why did you leave home? How did people respond when you came back?
  - When thinking about "welcomed", how do you think the younger son felt to be welcomed that way by his father? How do you think the father felt in seeing (and welcoming) the son home?
  - What concerns did the younger son have about going home? Do you think he still had the same concerns upon the welcome by his father?
  - When he returns, how does his father greet him – with anger? with "I told you so"? with love?
  - What does the father do to make the son feel at home and welcomed?
  - Look at the father’s reaction in verse 20. What clues do you find that show the father has been waiting for his son’s return? ("But while he was still far off, his father saw him . . .") In verses 20-24, what strong, emotional words do you see that describe an extravagant welcome? What did the son do to deserve such a wonderful welcome? Why did the father welcome him like this?
  - Imagine yourself as a first time guest at a new place, like going to a new church. What concerns do you have as you pull into the parking lot? (Do you even make it to the parking lot? Have your concerns disallowed you from going at all?)
  - How can we, Christians, welcome each guest like the father, making each person feel like the younger son returning home?
  - Do you see yourself reacting more like the older son or the father when welcoming someone? Why? Please explain.
Saturday Morning - Part 1: invitation

Reminder: Kathryn's Introductory Questions
- What is "invitation"? How do you define it?
- What does it mean to "invite" someone to something? Can there be more than one way to do so?
- What are some obstacles you have to inviting someone to something you're going to? What about, more specifically, to church worship or a church event?
- What does it mean to you, emotionally, to be invited to something?

Small Group Time:
- Check In:
  - As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and the most unique event you’ve ever been invited to.
- Read Scripture: Read Luke 14:15-24. (NRSV)
  - What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
  - When knowing that the topic of this bible study is "invitation", what do you hear about that topic in this passage?
- Questions about Scripture and "Real Life Application"
  - How credible are the invited guests' excuses for not coming? (14:18-20) Who do the invited guests in the parable represent?
  - Have you ever been able to tell when an excuse that someone gives you for not accepting an invitation is false? How does that make you feel?
  - Why is the host angry? (14:21)
  - Have you ever been angry when invitations are not accepted? Why or why not?
  - The host commands his servant to invite the poor and outcast both inside the town and outside in the rural areas. Who do these two groups probably represent?
  - Why is the host urgent about his invitation in verses 21-23?
  - What kinds of feelings would go through you if you had planned an extra-special banquet and your guests gave excuses why they could not come?
  - What was one of the more recent special occasions to which you were invited? Why did you go or not go?
  - How did being invited make you feel?
  - As you look back through your life, what are one or two different ways God has given you invitations? How did you respond to His invitations?
  - Are those invitations which God has given different than invitations you receive from those around you? Why or why not?
  - Does this passage make you think differently about inviting people to church or a church event? Why or why not?
  - Put yourself in the shoes of the invitee? Can an invitation seem "threatening" or "intimidating"? Why or why not?
  - What are different ways we can invite someone that do not appear that way?
Saturday Morning - Part 2: Hospitality

Reminder: Kathryn's Introductory Questions
- What is "hospitality"? How do you define it?
- What makes someone "hospitable"?
- What makes somewhere "hospitable"?
- Do you practice hospitality easily, or is it difficult? Discuss what factors make it easy or difficult for you.
- What is the greatest act of hospitality you have ever shown? Did you receive anything from this experience?

Small Group Time:
- Check In:
  - As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and your most favorite and least favorite chore to do around the house.
- Read Scripture: Read Luke 10:38-42. (NRSV)
  - What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
  - Did anything different stick out to you about the passage this time? Explain.
- Questions about Scripture and "Real Life Application"
  - Two types of hospitality are provided in this passage. Can anyone identify them? (one provides hospitality by putting guest first; one works to provide the home they think the guest wants, including food, drink, place to sleep)
  - What type of hospitality are you more comfortable with providing for a guest? Explain.
  - Do you know anyone like Martha? Share the things you like about her. Is there anything you don’t like?
  - Do you know anyone like Mary? Share the things you like about her. Is there anything you don’t like?
  - Who are you most like—Martha or Mary? Why?
  - How can you be more like the other in your day to day life?
  - In what ways do you sometimes find yourself busy, upset, and troubled like Martha?
  - What patterns and practices could you institute in your daily life that would make you more like Mary?
  - Return to Luke 10:41. What was it Mary choose that was "better"?
  - Was what Martha did wrong? Why or why not?
  - What is risky about hospitality? What is inconvenient?
  - (Referencing the two types of hospitality from above:) Is one type of hospitality "right"?
  - Does this passage and this conversation make you think any differently about hospitality?
  - About how you extend hospitality to guests in your home? What about how you extend hospitality to guests at church (both worship and at church functions)?
How might God be present for you as you extend yourself in creating hospitality for another, whether in your home or at church?

Saturday Evening: Nurture

Reminder: Kathryn's Introductory Questions

- What is "nurture"? How do you define it?
- "Nurture" is both a noun and a verb: does its definition or meaning change for you when thought of as a noun? As a verb? Why or why not?
- What are different "things" you can nurture?

Small Group Time:

- Check In:
  - As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and your most favorite comfort food, briefly telling you why it is your favorite and how it makes you feel when you eat it.
- Read Scripture: Read Luke 10:25-37. (NRSV)
  - What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
  - Many of you have heard this story before. Did anything new and different stick out to you this time as you heard it? Why or why not?
- Questions about Scripture and "Real Life Application"
  - In what ways did the Samaritan help the victim?
  - Based on our earlier conversation, would you consider what the Samaritan did as "nurturing"? Why or why not? Explain.
  - Based on the passage, would you add any other definitions for the word?
  - What resonates most with you about the story of the Good Samaritan?
  - How are we tempted to refuse compassion out of personal security?
  - Based on this conversation, how might you nurture those around you in a new and different way?
  - Why is it difficult sometimes to nurture relationships with others?
  - In today's society of "me" and "I", what emotions can stir inside when providing nurture to someone else?
  - What are some ways you might nurture the relationships of those whom you consider to be very close? Your family? Your friends?
  - Think about one or two people in your congregation that you don't know as well. How might you nurture those relationships? Would you even want to? Explain.
  - How can we all express more compassion and care for one another?
Sunday Morning: Evangelism

Reminder: Kathryn's Introductory Questions

- What do you think of when you hear the word "evangelism"?
- How do you define the term?
- (Depending on how the conversation leads depends on how this question is phrased:)
- Why does the term "evangelism" get such a bad rep?
- Why is being an "evangelist" seen as a negative in so many places these days?
- Can each of the four terms discussed this weekend (invitation, hospitality, nurture, welcome) find a "home" within the term "evangelism"? Why or why not? If so, how? Explain.

Small Group Time:

- Check In:
  - As a means of introduction, tell everyone your name and your most favorite Halloween costume as a kid.
- Read Scripture: Read Genesis 18:1-8. (NRSV)
  - What stuck out to you about the passage? Explain.
- Questions about Scripture and "Real Life Application"
  - Who are the characters in the passage? Do they represent anyone or anything in particular?
  - What did Abraham do for the three men who came to him?
  - How did Abraham show hospitality to the guests? Notice the verbs and adverbs that describe Abraham's actions, the participation of his household in serving, and the content of the meal. What does this event show about Abraham and his family?
  - What elements of hospitality does Abraham show even to visiting strangers?
  - Based on your earlier conversation, in what ways, if any, is Abraham being an evangelist
  - Which of the four "virtues" (invitation, hospitality, nurture, welcome) did Abraham extend to their guests? Specifically identify what he did for each virtue identified.
  - Why is it important for Christians to welcome strangers? Is it something that is easy to do? Why or why not?
  - What is our response to the opportunity to serve our God as evangelists? Are we enthusiastic, giving God our best?

- Evangelism, in this case, is important to think about in regards to the relationships we build, one with another. If we invite people into our lives, provide welcome and hospitality to them when we encounter them, and nurture relationships with them, then chances are great that they will want to learn more about us and what makes us "tick". This could not only include what we do and more about us, but also what is important in our lives, including where we worship. By creating a true and authentic relationship with the other, you are extending Christlike love to them, seeing them as God sees them.
  - How can you develop deeper, more authentic relationships with those already in your close circle of friends?
Should we encounter strangers (or not-as-well-known acquaintances) in the same way we encounter our friends and family? Why or why not?

Describing friendly people sometimes, the phrase "s/he's never met a stranger" can be used. When thinking about evangelism in terms of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome, does this phrase take on new or different meaning? Can this phrase be helpful when encountering those you don't know?

How can you take what you've learned during the conversations over this weekend and apply it to those we encounter on a day-to-day basis?
Appendix J: Bible Study Surveys

J.1: Initial Bible Study Survey

Name: __________________________________________  Date: __________________

Survey #1: Understanding of Christian Practices

Part 1:
We have been exploring and discussing Christian Practices of Relationship; in particular, invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome. On a scale of 1-5 (1 = I strongly disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 5 = I strongly agree), please rank yourself on the following statements:

I understand what Christian Practices are.  1  2  3  4  5
I understand the importance of Christian Practices in my life.  1  2  3  4  5
Christian Practices are important in my daily life.  1  2  3  4  5
I currently utilize this Christian Practice in my interactions with others in my daily life.  1  2  3  4  5
I currently utilize this Christian Practice in my interactions with others at Starmount.  1  2  3  4  5
After thinking, discussing, and reflecting on today’s topic, I feel that I have a better understanding of how I can apply this Christian Practice to my life.  1  2  3  4  5
After thinking, discussing, and reflecting on today’s topic, I feel that I have a better understanding of how I can apply this Christian Practice to my interactions with others.  1  2  3  4  5
By utilizing this Christian Practice in my daily life, I can help Starmount grow as a church body.  1  2  3  4  5
If everyone utilized this Christian Practice in daily living, Starmount would grow as a church body.  1  2  3  4  5

Part 2:
Between now and August 15, I will attempt to put tonight’s topic into practice by:

• __________________________________________________________________________

• __________________________________________________________________________

• __________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for participating in this study. As a reminder, you will be mailed a survey on or around August 15 to follow up on what you learned this evening.
J.2: Follow Up Bible Study Survey

Name: __________________________________________  Date: __________________

Survey #2: Christian Practices – Applied in the “Real World”

Part 1:

The bible study/studies you attended explored and discussed Christian Practices of Relationship; in particular, invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome. On a scale of 1-5 (1 = I strongly disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 5 = I strongly agree), please rank yourself on the following statements:

I understand the importance of utilizing the Christian Practices in my life.

1 2 3 4 5

Since the Bible Study, I have recognized how I can put the Christian Practices to use in my daily life.

1 2 3 4 5

Since the Bible Study, I have been able to put the Christian Practices to use in my daily life.

1 2 3 4 5

I believe my faith has grown deeper by being able to put the Christian Practices to use in my daily life.

1 2 3 4 5

I believe my faith has grown deeper through participation in this Bible Study.

1 2 3 4 5

Part 2:

From the Bible Study to now, how have you put the Christian Practices into practice? Please give examples, if able (please use the back, if necessary).

•  
•  
•  
•  

Thank you for participating in this study!
Appendix K: Focus Group Follow-Up Survey

Focus Group Follow Up Survey

Starting in the Summer of 2014, Starmount has been introduced in numerous ways Pastor Kathryn’s concept of “evangelism through relationship” and its four Christian Practices of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome. As you think of your experiences and participation in Starmount’s community, please take a moment to think about your engagement of these themes over the last two years.

For the sake of these questions, “Christian Practices” are: invitation, hospitality, nurture, welcome

For the sake of these questions, “training” is any/all of the following: sermons, newsletters, retreat, bible study, conversations with Kathryn, usher training

- Since first being introduced to the Christian Practices, how do you think and feel about them?
- Since first being introduced to the Christian Practices, how do you think about being called to use them?
- What have you learned about yourself when thinking about the Christian Practices?
- What have you learned about practicing your faith when thinking about the Christian Practices?
- What have you learned about the congregation and its use of the Christian Practices?
- How did your behavior change at Starmount since learning about the Christian Practices at Starmount? At home? At work? In the community?
- How have you utilized the Christian Practices since being introduced to them?
- What impact do you see this training having on you and your faith?
- What impact do you see this training having on Starmount as a whole?
- What impact do you see this training having on the community at large?
- As you think back over these last two years, what might be beneficial to future learning and engagement in them for yourself and the congregation as a whole?
Appendix L: Narrative x Osmer Matrix Data Analysis

Narrative/Osmer

*Chronology x Descriptive Empirical – what is going on?*

*What is going on with Silent Generation?*

**Bible Study Written Response**
- Most comments indicate that the members of the Silent Generation will do what they need to do to help put the CP into action.\(^{22}\)
- One commented that she needs to think of how to do it more effectively, indicating that she (probably like others) might not know the best way to incorporate these CP into their daily lives.
- Another indicated that it is about listening, thinking, and then acting – many in this Silent Generation seem to be that there is a methodical, pointed examination of how to put the CP to use – not doing so flippantly.
- Some concrete responses, some specific to faith

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
- The SG works hard to “do” the CP and integrate them into their daily lives
- They report successes
- They report praying for ways to be used by God

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**
- The SG has opinions of what worship and the church should be
- The SG is sharing their thoughts and reflections on the questions being presented; with a foot in the past and a foot looking forward

**Focus Group Follow Up**
- The SG is indicating that they already incorporate the CP into their daily lives
- The SG is indicating that the learnings/conversations assisted in being reminded of what they are and why they are important
- The SG is doing what they can to apply the CP to their lives
- The SG is not necessarily going out of their way to do anything “extra” to do any of the CP – they are just emphasizing what they are already doing.

*What is going on with Baby Boomers?*

**Bible Study Written Response**
- The BB are busy
- The BB are doing what they are going to do.
- The BB, if they attend, are going to be sensitive to the needs of others.
- The BB are responding in the same way as the other generations: identifying ways that they can execute the CP in their lives.

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
- The BB are doing what they can to be more invitational, hospitable, nurturing, and welcoming.
- The BB were not necessarily successful, but did make them think

**Focus Group – Baby Boomer**

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1. Comments in red indicate author’s reflections and not actual responses of participants.
• The BB are reflecting on the questions asked with thoughtfulness
• The BB are thinking about how the church is influential in their lives – both personally and through their faith
• The BB are thinking about how the church impacts their family
• The BB are thinking about what they like in worship (music, aesthetics, etc.)
• The BB are identifying the ways they think about the church in their lives

**Focus Group Follow Up**
• The BB are thinking about the CP in the midst of their busy lives
• The BB are doing the CP in any ways that they can with what they are already doing
• The BB incorporate the CP into their non-church (community) encounters
• The BB are using the CP as ways to live a Christian life

**What is going on with Gen X?**

**Bible Study Written Response**
• As with the other generations, Gen Xers are trying to do what they can to put the CP in use

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
• Gen X did not participate in the written response of the follow up survey

**Focus Group – Gen X**
• Xers are busy.
• Xers are trying to balance work and home life
• Xers are transitioning from life of learning into life of doing – school, etc. to career
• Xers are (in some cases) navigating a relationship – perhaps with children
• Xers are “doing church” when they can, as it fits into their schedules

**Focus Group Follow Up**
• Xers are sensitive to how they can be perceived by others
• Xers have long memories – and, when negative, do what they can so it doesn’t happen to others
• Xers are thinking about how the CP can be passed on to their children
• Xers are reflective of the impact they have on the lives of those around them

**What is going on with Gen Y?**

**Bible Study Written Response**
• Gen Y did not participate in the bible study

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
• Gen Y did not participate in the bible study

**Focus Group – Gen Y**
• Gen Y is still in high school (for some)
• Gen Y is in college/grad school (for some)
• Gen Y is out of college and starting a family (for some)
• Gen Y is connecting what they have on their plates (work, school, life) with how their faith with interconnect with it.

**Focus Group Follow Up**
• Gen Y thinks about how the CP impact their lives and how it can then, in turn, impact the lives of others
• Gen Y is sensitive to how they can make a lasting legacy of good things through teaching and example
• Gen Y has thought about the CP and their impact in their own personal lives

**Chronology x Interpretive – why is this going on?**

**Why is this going on with Silent Generation?**

**Bible Study Written Response**

• *Sticking true to their Words to describe this generation include: hard workers, savers, frugal, patriotic, loyal, private, cautious, respectful, dependable, stable, and intolerant.*\(^{23}\)

• *Research reveals that the Silent Generation spent much of their time around school and the church.*\(^{24}\) While they may not talk a lot about their faith\(^{25}\), members of the Silent Generation were trained to regularly attend worship and Sunday school for spiritual growth and for its social aspect. With the majority believing in God, most in this generation have a strong duty to God and country.\(^{26}\)

• So, the SG is attempting to attend worship and Sunday school and work to bring people to church so “their church” won’t die.

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**

• Because church is so instilled and important to them, the SG are probably taking full responsibility for whether or not they have success in the CP.

• It is important for them to see that the next generation has the church in their hands – they are getting older, so they want to keep working and doing and being, but they are getting older and tired, so they have to react and “deal with” letting go and allowing younger generations to do the things they used to do.

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**

• This is going on with the SG because they are deeply rooted in the church; what they grew up with is what they believe should continue to be instilled in the generations behind them

• This is going on with the SG because they know what they like when it comes to worship; what it is that fills them and allows them to grow deeper in their faith

**Focus Group Follow Up**

• This is going on with the SG because they are deeply rooted in the church; what they grew up with is what they believe should continue to be instilled in the generations behind them

• This is going on with the SG because they know what they like when it comes to worship; what it is that fills them and allows them to grow deeper in their faith

**Why is this going on with Baby Boomers?**

**Bible Study Written Response**

• *Words to describe this generation include: educated, media-oriented, independent, cause-oriented, fitness conscious, rock music fans, activists, quality conscious, and questioners of authority.*\(^{27}\)

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\(^{23}\) Gary McIntosh, *One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2002), 38-41

\(^{24}\) McIntosh, 37.

\(^{25}\) McIntosh, 40.

\(^{26}\) McIntosh, 37.

\(^{27}\) McIntosh, 83-87.
• The faith Boomers identify as their personal theology used for guidance seems to be deeply rooted for members of the Baby Boomer Generation. However, this personal faith is not necessarily being lived out while connected to a faith community.28

• Because most do not have children at home, they are not attending something that may interfere with their schedules; the BB that did attend indicated how they would try to implement CP into their daily lives.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response

• BB seem to have done what they could do implement CP into their daily living; however, most indicated that, if they did utilize them, that it was pragmatic

Focus Group – Baby Boomer

• The BB in this focus group fit the descriptions above: educated, independent, cause-oriented, and quality conscious.

• The BB’s faith is deeply rooted in what their parents/older generation taught them

• The BB want to make sure to implement that to their children

Focus Group Follow Up

• The BB in this focus group fit the descriptions above: educated, independent, cause-oriented, and quality conscious.

• The BB’s faith is deeply rooted in what their parents/older generation taught them

• The BB want to make sure to implement that to their children

Why is this going on with Gen X?

Bible Study Written Response

• Seeking a faith that is tailored to their needs, the faith community of X-ers tend to influence their decision of where to be a part as well. Valuing true family atmosphere29, X-ers want their faith communities to meet real and practical needs of others, involved with “the social, political, and environmental issues of their local communities.”30

• Most Gen X are doing things that allow them to have their social network and their church combine – if they like it, then others they are friends with will like it as well; relationship, relationship, relationship.

• Do they not see the bible study as something of value? Do they see the church as a family atmosphere?

• What is it that Gen X are looking for when it comes to structure, deeper understanding?

• Retreat conversation: they like ideas, but want others to execute – because they are too busy. But then, when it does get off the ground, then they don’t want to/can’t participate because it doesn’t fit in their schedule.


29 McIntosh, 137.

30 McIntosh, 137.
Although one Gen X, in that same conversation, did hear me and indicate that she was going to make a concerted effort with her husband to participate—“because if I don’t, then who will?”

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
- Gen X did not participate in the written response of the follow up survey

**Focus Group – Gen X**
- As indicated by definition above, Xers are wanting church to be modeled and shaped into their lives, not making it a priority or non-negotiable.
- Xers want something that speaks directly to them—although, when presented, they do not necessarily participate

**Focus Group Follow Up**
- As indicated by definition above, Xers are wanting church to be modeled and shaped into their lives, not making it a priority or non-negotiable.
- Xers want something that speaks directly to them—although, when presented, they do not necessarily participate

**Why is this going on with Gen Y?**

**Bible Study Written Response**
- Words to describe this generation include: entrepreneurial, technologically savvy, neotraditional, superfragmented, sophisticated, interactive, demanding, diverse and tolerant, wanting to be connected, and group reliant.\(^{31}\)
- When it comes to their faith lives, research comes to establish the rise of the “nones”: among 18-to-24 year olds, 32 percent prefer no religion, whereas only seven percent of people 75 years old and over prefer no religion.\(^ {32}\) This generation’s faith is shaped by their experiences at churches, relationships, understanding of other faith traditions, and what their parents have taught them about Christianity.\(^ {33}\) Like their generational predecessors, relationships are the key to forming community, with loyalty to friends being very high on their priority list, while still wanting to maintain their individualism.\(^ {34}\)
- Gen Y did not participate in the bible study—based on generational description, then that’s to be understood, right?

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
- Gen Y did not participate in the bible study

**Focus Group – Gen Y**
- This focus group is biased, because they are all members of the congregation and participate in worship and activities.

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\(^{31}\) McIntosh, 170-176.


\(^{34}\) Kinnaman and Lyons, "182 of 2834," Amazon Kindle edition.
• Gen Y does want to be connected (generational description above)
• Gen Y is sophisticated

Focus Group Follow Up
• This focus group is biased, because they are all members of the congregation and participate in worship and activities.
• Gen Y does want to be connected (generational description above)
• Gen Y is sophisticated

Chronology x Normative – what ought to be going on?
What ought to be going on with Silent Generation?

Bible Study Written Response
• I think that what ought to be going on with the SG did go on – they dutifully showed up to the bible study, listened to the pastor, and did what they could to answer the questions. There is a bible study at church: they attend.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• I think what ought to be going on with the SG did – they tried. Some had success, some didn’t. But they did what they had to do to help their congregation and what the pastor asked.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• The SG ought to be responding how they are – however, it would be desired that all be like CK, who understands that other generations and their needs in worship should be met as well.
• The SG ought to be reflecting on what was (individually, not necessarily collectively as a congregation) and responding accordingly

Focus Group Follow Up
• The SG ought to be responding how they are – however, it would be desired that all be like CK, who understands that other generations and their needs in worship should be met as well.
• The SG ought to be reflecting on what was (individually, not necessarily collectively as a congregation) and responding accordingly

What ought to be going on with Baby Boomers?

Bible Study Written Response
• BB ought to see that they are the next “elders” of the church. However, as the Gen Xers gain a voice and understanding that they are not getting any older, the BB are feeling threatened by the Gen Xers and what they want to see in their church
• BB should be working with Xers, learning from them, just as Xers should be learning from them.
• BB should be doing what they can to work and be a part of the congregation, as their schedule allows. But with that schedule, church should be a priority more than the dates that they have for family milestones (weddings, baptisms, etc.)

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• BB ought to be responding in the ways that they were – by indicating that they tried to accomplish the CP in their daily lives. However, there are admittances of not having time.
• But how does their faith integrate with this?
• How do they transition from pragmatic people to pragmatic people who connect it to their faith? (this is the question for all…)

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• The BB ought to be responding how they are – however, it is interesting to think about the comments of KK, who (at first) thought about how the low-attendance people who consider themselves “regular attenders” could do that, but now that he’s an empty nester, he’s ok with that – why not challenge your fellow congregants to be present?
• The BB ought to be reflecting on what was (individually, not necessarily collectively as a congregation) and responding accordingly

Focus Group Follow Up
• The BB ought to be responding how they are – however, it is interesting to think about the comments of KK, who (at first) thought about how the low-attendance people who consider themselves “regular attenders” could do that, but now that he’s an empty nester, he’s ok with that – why not challenge your fellow congregants to be present?
• The BB ought to be reflecting on what was (individually, not necessarily collectively as a congregation) and responding accordingly

What ought to be going on with Gen X?

Bible Study Written Response
• Gen X should be realizing that they are not getting any younger and that they are the new leadership of the church. Because their children (wide age range: some infants, some high schoolers, depending on when they started having children)
• Gen X should be stepping into leadership positions and attending things like this bible study because they want to be the church and set the table for the next generations, including their children

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• Gen X did not participate in the written response of the follow up survey

Focus Group – Gen X
• Gen X should be realizing that they are not getting any younger and that they are the new leadership of the church. Because their children (wide age range: some infants, some high schoolers, depending on when they started having children)
• Gen X should be stepping into leadership positions and attending things like this bible study because they want to be the church and set the table for the next generations, including their children

Focus Group Follow Up
• Gen X should be realizing that they are not getting any younger and that they are the new leadership of the church. Because their children (wide age range: some infants, some high schoolers, depending on when they started having children)
• Gen X should be stepping into leadership positions and attending things like this bible study because they want to be the church and set the table for the next generations, including their children

What ought to be going on with Gen Y?

Bible Study Written Response
• Gen Y did not participate in the bible study
• Gen Y ought to be participating in the study. If they are not participating in the study, then they should be using these CP as a way to engage their friends and help define and shape their faith as they think less about themselves and more about others around them.
• While I understand that many Gen Y engage with their peers and the many different faith backgrounds, they don’t talk about it at school – it’s just not a thing. So how do they think about it now so it can shape them in their interactions moving forward?

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• Gen Y did not participate in the bible study

Focus Group – Gen Y
• Gen Y should be stepping out on their own about their faith
• Gen Y should be recognizing that they are making pragmatic decisions for themselves
• Gen Y should be engaging faith in ways that allow for it to be a life-long practice, not pushing it to the side until convenient for them again.

Focus Group Follow Up
• Gen Y should be stepping out on their own about their faith
• Gen Y should be recognizing that they are making pragmatic decisions for themselves
• Gen Y should be engaging faith in ways that allow for it to be a life-long practice, not pushing it to the side until convenient for them again.

Chronology x Pragmatic – how will we respond?
How will Silent Generation respond?

Bible Study Written Response
• SG will respond as dutifully as they will – as ones who go out and feel challenged by what the pastor has to say about how they can better themselves and better their congregation.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• SG will respond as dutifully as they will – as ones who go out and feel challenged by what the pastor has to say about how they can better themselves and better their congregation.
• SG will continue to work to integrate CP into their lives so they can better understand their church and its context.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• The SG will respond “selfishly” – in such a way that they think about themselves and what others around them are (or are not) doing and how it affects them
• The SG will respond “dutifully” – if there is an event going on at church, they will be there (as their schedule allows); they will respond in a way that is respectful to the moderator, who happens to be their pastor

Focus Group Follow Up
• SG will respond by discussing how they are already doing a lot of the things that they are/were being asked to do
• SG will indicate where, if any, places that they “messed up” and did not achieve what they think the ideal being asked of them and want to provide/seek opportunity for doing it right the next time
• SG will be confident, whether they do it right or wrong

How will Baby Boomers respond?

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Bible Study Written Response
- BB will respond by doing it – but on their own terms.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- BB will do it as they are able, as it fits to their schedule.
- BB will do it less in their church environments, because that’s not where they want to be.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
- BB will respond by thinking more about how worship style effects them; in fact, one BB in this focus group had since thanked me for playing the “original” doxology…
- BB will respond by thinking critically about why they attend worship and are members (specifically) of Starmount Presbyterian Church

Focus Group Follow Up
- BB will respond by thinking about how the CP have been utilized and practiced in their lives, as well as the lives of others in the Starmount community

How will Gen X respond?

Bible Study Written Response
- Gen X will respond by thinking it’s a good idea, but not really doing anything about it because they are too busy to do it or think about it with all that they have going on in their lives with their families.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- Gen X did not participate in the written response of the follow up survey

Focus Group – Gen X
- Gen X will respond by thinking it’s a good idea, but not really doing anything about it because they are too busy to do it or think about it with all that they have going on in their lives with their families.
- Xers will get excited about an idea or the thought of things, but will not necessarily participate when provided with the thing of which they are excited

Focus Group Follow Up
- Xers will respond by thinking about how the CP have impacted themselves and their family (although, it’s what they were asked to do and reflect on)
- Xers will reflect deeply on the negative experiences they have had (if any) and provide their own work/experiences about how they will work to not let others feel the same way

How will Gen Y respond?

Bible Study Written Response
- Gen Y will respond by understanding the concepts, should they participate in the event; but the event/concepts need to be shaped in such a way that they will want to listen and act – what does that look like?
- Gen Y did not participate in the bible study

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- Gen Y did not participate in the bible study

Focus Group – Gen Y
- Gen Y will respond in ways that look like they take an “activist” slant – wanting and expecting change
- Gen Y will seek change or go to a place that will expect it
Focus Group Follow Up

- Yers will respond by thinking of how their work and use of CP impact others and the world around them – how are they being “philanthropic” about using them?

  **Function x DE – What is going on?**

  *What is going on with Men and Women?*

Bible Study Written Response

- **Men**
  - The men who are attending are listening and sorting out for themselves how they will successfully use CP in their daily lives.

- **Women**
  - Women who attend are listening and sorting out for themselves how they will successfully use CP in their daily lives.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response

- **Men**
  - Men are responding in surprising ways – some are doing things that I wouldn’t foresee them doing – baking brownies, sitting with others at bible study (call this sexist – sure)

- **Women**
  - Women are indicating that they talked to people, wrote notes, did things that they know how to do to enact CP in their daily lives.

Focus Group – Silent Generation

- **Men**
  - One of the men was very vocal (in general), but was explicit about his past experiences with faith and how they shape who he is today (and what he is seeking in a faith community).

- **Women**
  - The women spoke of being vocal with friends and family
  - The women indicated what they appreciated in worship and what they would like to see different, although they were less vocal about what they didn’t want
  - One indicated hesitation on teaching something, which I find interesting and (unfortunately) indicative of gender differences

Focus Group – Baby Boomer

- **Men**
  - Very analytical.
  - Indicating very black and white things that are seemingly clear-cut

- **Women**
  - Feelings are attached to the comments being made
  - Deep-rooted connections and emotions are what allow them to be connected to the congregation and worship.

Focus Group – Gen X

- **Men**
  - Spoke freely
  - Provided strong opinions
  - Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming

- **Women**
Focus Group – Gen Y
• Men
  o Spoke freely
  o Provided strong opinions
  o Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming
  o Indicated that they were assertive in their thoughts about participating in the life of a church

• Women
  o Spoke freely
  o Provided strong opinions
  o Strong reactions to type of music, aesthetics, programming

Focus Group Follow Up
• Men
  o Men are thinking about how it is impacting them and the lives of those with whom they interact
  o Men are working intentionally on engaging the CP in their daily lives, both at the church and in other situations
  o Men are admitting that they are not always thinking actively about how to incorporate CP into their daily lives
  o Men are sensitive to how their interactions with others can be perceived

• Women
  o Women are thinking about how the CP can assist the church in growing in strength, solidarity, and number
  o Women are more aware of how they are representing themselves as Christians and members of the church in their interactions outside of church
  o Women are using the CP to shed light on their interactions with others
  o Women are thinking about the CP and how they can impact their lives professionally

What is going on with passive and active members?

Bible Study Written Response
• Passive members (those who do not attend worship and/or only attend worship) are not doing anything other than going to worship – why are they going to worship? Is “just” going to worship enough to sustain their faith?
• Active members are participating in many things at the church – some might say too many. They are participating in the bible study, thinking of the ways that they can (legitimately) integrate the CP into their daily lives.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• Passive members (those who do not attend worship and/or only attend worship) did not participate in the bible study, therefore, they would not have responses to the survey.
• Active members did what they could to take the CP to heart and do what they could to integrate them into their daily lives. Active members did things like bake brownies, invite people, ask questions, write notes, engage people.
Focus Group – Silent Generation

- Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.
- Interestingly enough, one of the focus group participants is no longer a member of the congregation, he and his wife departing because of the PCUSA’s change in stance over gay marriage.
- These active members continue to participate in activities, although I am hearing from non-focus group church members of the same generation, it is getting more and more difficult to “get up and moving” in the mornings, making it difficult to get to Sunday school.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer

- Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.
- Interestingly, it is admitted that some of the active members, now that they are empty nesters, are becoming less active (line 178)
- Active members are engaged in the ways they know how to be engaged. There are other aspects of the church life that they do not recall or know about, because it is not of interest to them – “blindness”

Focus Group – Gen X

- Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.
- These active members may not be considered active by older generations, due to attendance trends.
- These active members know what they want and what they are seeking; they are strongly tied to solid relationships, but will do what is best for self/family.

Focus Group – Gen Y

- Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.
- These active members may not be considered active by older generations, due to attendance trends.
- These active members know what they want and what they are seeking, steeped in tradition and being a part of a community.

Focus Group Follow Up

- Each of these focus group members would be considered “active” (vs. passive), although with differing levels of participation.
- Focus group members have different levels of CP engagement.
- Focus group members are engaging fully with the congregation in ways that allow them to recognize when a face is unfamiliar.

What is going on with those with no responsibility vs. those with responsibilities?

Bible Study Written Response

- Those with no responsibility (leadership “status”) are not necessarily doing anything different than those with responsibilities – not having responsibilities is not the same as being passive…
Those with responsibilities (leadership “status”) are (hopefully) taking what they have learned and thinking about how it may pertain to the session and the committee on which they serve.

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**

- Those with no responsibility (leadership “status”) are not necessarily doing anything different than those with responsibilities – not having responsibilities is not the same as being passive…
- Those with responsibilities (leadership “status”) are (hopefully) taking what they have learned and thinking about how it may pertain to the session and the committee on which they serve.

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**

- Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory. Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.

**Focus Group – Baby Boomer**

- Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory. Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.
- Those who have had leadership continue to have leadership, but in different ways (KK – was youth leader, now is Sunday School teacher for his peers)

**Focus Group – Gen X**

- Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory. Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.
- Those who have had leadership continue to have leadership, but in different ways (teaching, leading youth group, serving on committees, etc.)

**Focus Group – Gen Y**

- Those with responsibilities (leadership) have engaged others and done what they could to be fully participatory.
- Those who are no responsibilities have had responsibilities in the past and take their role and participation on committees, in classes/activities, and in the choir very seriously.
- Those who are “no responsibilities”, at times, take advantage, only attending worship when obligated by those responsibilities.

**Focus Group Follow Up**

- Those with no responsibility (leadership “status”) are not necessarily doing anything different than those with responsibilities – not having responsibilities is not the same as being passive…
- Those with responsibilities (leadership “status”) are (hopefully) taking what they have learned and thinking about how it may pertain to the session and the committee on which they serve.

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**Function x Interpretive – Why is this going on?**

*Why is this going on with Men and Women?*
Bible Study Written Response
- This is going on with Men because men are more attuned to the pragmatic implications of the CP
- This is going on with Women because women are going to be more sensitive to the feelings of the others with whom they are interacting. However, women are more sensitive to their own feelings, so they may be more reluctant to make themselves vulnerable for fear of being perceived as “pushy” or “nosy”

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- This is going on with Men because men are more attuned to the pragmatic implications of the CP
- This is going on with Women because women are going to be more sensitive to the feelings of the others with whom they are interacting. However, women are more sensitive to their own feelings, so they may be more reluctant to make themselves vulnerable for fear of being perceived as “pushy” or “nosy”

Focus Group – Silent Generation
- This is going on with women (hesitation to teach certain aspects of lesson) because of anxiety to challenge and sound overly critical (wanting to be liked)
- This is going on with men (assertiveness) because of role in the relationship in this generation – men are the head of household and much more assertive and authoritative than their female counterparts.
- Two women in this group are widows of (at least) six years – kind-hearted, but not afraid to speak their minds and hold positions of leadership. Is this due to the fact that they have been their own head of household? Or just a product of who they are?

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
- This is going on with men and women because they are engaging in the things that bring them interest – less about their gender and more about their personalities.

Focus Group – Gen X
- This is going on with men and women because they are engaging in the things that bring them interest – less about their gender and more about their personalities.
- This is going on because they are opinionated and know what they want
- This is going on because of the life experiences they have had to this point and how they want to see things moving forward

Focus Group – Gen Y
- This is going on with men and women because they are engaging in the things that bring them interest – less about their gender and more about their personalities.
- This is going on because they are opinionated and know what they want
- This is going on because they know that they desire to be a part of a community, and make sure to integrate into the life of the congregation
- This is going on because they are seeking some sort of tradition for themselves

Focus Group Follow Up
- This is going on with Men because men are more attuned to the pragmatic implications of the CP
- This is going on with Women because women are going to be more sensitive to the feelings of the others with whom they are interacting. However, women are more
sensitive to their own feelings, so they may be more reluctant to make themselves vulnerable for fear of being perceived as “pushy” or “nosy”

- This is going on with women because they are sensitive to the fact that this is their church family and they want their family to be successful in the same way that they want their nuclear family to be successful.

**Why is this going on with passive and active members?**

**Bible Study Written Response**

- This is going on with passive members because they are not putting church/worship as their priority. They may be putting their faith as a priority, but they are doing it in other means (outside of worship).
- This is going on with active members because they are just that – active. They are engaged and engaging. They are always thinking about the church and how they are involved in the life of the congregation. Hopefully, they are also thinking about how to engage others in a way that would make them interested in coming to worship where they worship…

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**

- Nothing is going on with passive members because they are not attending the bible study…
- This is going on with active members because they are doing what they can to think of ways to integrate CP into their daily lives. This is to improve the church as a whole – something they are wanting to make happen (just by way of being as engaged as they are)

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**

- This is going on with active members because they care about their congregation and want to have an impact and influence in what happens in their church family.

**Focus Group – Baby Boomer**

- This is going on with active members because they, taking on the (“negative”) characteristics of the baby boomers, are selfishly thinking about their own impacts and interests.

**Focus Group – Gen X**

- This is going on with active members because they want the best for themselves, their families, and their church (in that order)
- This is going on with active members because they are making their thoughts and opinions known

**Focus Group – Gen Y**

- This is going on with active members because they want the best for themselves, their families, and their church (in that order)
- This is going on with active members because they are making their thoughts and opinions known

**Focus Group Follow Up**

- A couple of the focus group members (Yers) could be considered passive because one is in college and one (admittedly) hasn’t been attending Starmount for a while (due to geographical limitations)
- This is going on with active members because they are doing what they can to think of ways to integrate CP into their daily lives. This is to improve the church as a whole
something they are wanting to make happen (just by way of being as engaged as they are)

**Why is this going on with those with no responsibility vs. those with responsibilities?**

**Bible Study Written Response**
- This is going on with those with no responsibility because they are engaged, but not “plagued” with responsibilities of official church leadership – they like to be a part of the congregation and its life, but do not have the need to attend meetings.
- This is going on with those with responsibilities because they are fully engaged, thinking about church all of the time, just through the lens/filter of their committee which they lead. **OR**
- This is going on with those with responsibilities because they are tired and plagued by what they are needing to do with their committees and are feeling fatigue due to those responsibilities.

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
- This is going on with those with no responsibility because they are engaged, but not “plagued” with responsibilities of official church leadership – they like to be a part of the congregation and its life, but do not have the need to attend meetings.
- This is going on with those with responsibilities because they are fully engaged, thinking about church all of the time, just through the lens/filter of their committee which they lead. **OR**
- This is going on with those with responsibilities because they are tired and plagued by what they are needing to do with their committees and are feeling fatigue due to those responsibilities.

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**
- This is going on with those with no responsibility because of age and restrictions of health and means of getting to activities
- This is going on with those with responsibilities because of their dedication and desire to make their church a better place – both for themselves and for those whom they care about

**Focus Group – Baby Boomer**
- This is going on with those with responsibility because they do take their responsibilities seriously.
- This is going on with those with responsibility because while taking their responsibilities seriously, they are thinking more about themselves and what they need for themselves and for their family

**Focus Group – Gen X**
- This is going on with those with responsibility because they do take their responsibilities seriously.
- This is going on with those with responsibility because while taking their responsibilities seriously, they are thinking more about themselves and what they need for themselves and for their family

**Focus Group – Gen Y**
- This is going on with those with responsibility because they do take their responsibilities seriously.
• This is going on with those with responsibility because while taking their responsibilities seriously, they are thinking more about themselves and what they need for themselves and for their family

Focus Group Follow Up
• This is going on with those with no responsibility because they are engaged, but not “plagued” with responsibilities of official church leadership – they like to be a part of the congregation and its life, but do not have the need to attend meetings.
• This is going on with those with responsibilities because they are fully engaged, thinking about church all of the time, just through the lens/filter of their committee which they lead. **OR**
• This is going on with those with responsibilities because they are tired and plagued by what they are needing to do with their committees and are feeling fatigue due to those responsibilities.

**Function x Normative – What ought to be going on?**

*What ought to be going on with Men and Women?*

Bible Study Written Response
• Men ought to be doing what they can to connect with other men in the community while utilizing the CP in their lives.
• Women ought to be doing what they know how to do to engage others in their community.
• However, in a perfect world, men and women shouldn’t be doing anything differently other than that they are men and women – there shouldn’t ideally, be a gender disparity.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• Men ought to be doing what they can to connect with other men in the community while utilizing the CP in their lives.
• Women ought to be doing what they know how to do to engage others in their community.
• However, in a perfect world, men and women shouldn’t be doing anything differently other than that they are men and women – there shouldn’t ideally, be a gender disparity.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• Men ought to be speaking their minds, while allowing for space for their female counterparts to do the same (not speaking specifically in this focus group, but in general)
• Women ought to be speaking from their truths, just as they did in this focus group, not withholding information for fear of judgment.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• Men and women ought to be speaking from their own truths, representing themselves and their families equally
• There should not be any repression of feelings or comments due to gender imbalances – there were not any perceived in this group

Focus Group – Gen X
• Men and women ought to be speaking from their own truths, representing themselves and their families equally
- There should not be any repression of feelings or comments due to gender imbalances – there were not any perceived in this group

Focus Group – Gen Y
- Men and women ought to be speaking from their own truths, representing themselves and their families equally
- There should not be any repression of feelings or comments due to gender imbalances – there were not any perceived in this group

Focus Group Follow Up
- Men ought to be doing what they can to connect with other men in the community while utilizing the CP in their lives.
- Women ought to be doing what they know how to do to engage others in their community.
- However, in a perfect world, men and women shouldn’t be doing anything differently other than that they are men and women – there shouldn’t ideally, be a gender disparity.

What ought to be going on with passive and active members?

Bible Study Written Response
- What ought to be going on with passive members is that they find ways to be engaged with the congregation of which they are a member. If you’re a member of a church, why don’t you want to do more than “just” go to worship? What it is about that menial of a connection that finds you remaining engaged?
- What ought to be going on with active members is that they should be doing what they can to think of how they can successfully integrate the CP into their daily lives.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- What ought to be going on with passive members is that they connect with the congregation in another way outside of worship (or come to worship, since some don’t come at all).
- What ought to be going on with active members is that they successfully implemented and integrated the CP into their daily lives; as they continue on (after this bible study), they ought to continue to think of “other” and how they can be in relationship with them.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
- What ought to be going on with passive members is that they become more engaged in the life of the church which will, in turn, allow them to be more engaged, one with another.
- What ought to be going on with active members is just what they are doing – participating in the life of the church. However, the desire of what they ought to be doing is looking outside of themselves and “see” other – those around them, whether they be new people or those other (younger) members whom they do not know, attempting to engage them and encouraging them with the CP

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
- What ought to be going on with passive members is that they become more engaged in the life of the church which will, in turn, allow them to be more engaged, one with another.
- What ought to be going on with active members is just what they are doing – participating in the life of the church. However, the desire of what they ought to be
doing is looking outside of themselves and “see” other – those around them, whether they be new people or those other (younger) members whom they do not know, attempting to engage them and encouraging them with the CP

Focus Group – Gen X

- What ought to be going on with passive members is that they become more engaged in the life of the church which will, in turn, allow them to be more engaged, one with another.
- What ought to be going on with active members is just what they are doing – participating in the life of the church. However, the desire of what they ought to be doing is looking outside of themselves and “see” other – those around them, whether they be new people or those other (older) members whom they do not know, attempting to engage them and encouraging them with the CP

Focus Group – Gen Y

- What ought to be going on with passive members is that they engage in the life of the congregation
- What ought to be going on with passive members (should they still be living at home with parents) is be instructed to go to church - no option
- What ought to be going on with active members is just what they are doing – participating in the life of the church. However, the desire of what they ought to be doing is looking outside of themselves and “see” other – those around them, whether they be new people or those other (older) members whom they do not know, attempting to engage them and encouraging them with the CP

Focus Group Follow Up

- What ought to be going on with passive members is that they find ways to be engaged with the congregation of which they are a member. If you’re a member of a church, why don’t you want to do more than “just” go to worship? What it is about that menial of a connection that finds you remaining engaged?
- What ought to be going on with active members is that they should be doing what they can to think of how they can successfully integrate the CP into their daily lives.

What ought to be going on with those with no responsibility vs. those with responsibilities?

Bible Study Written Response

- What ought to be going on with those with no responsibility is that they should be engaged in the same ways that those with responsibilities are – just, perhaps, in different ways that support those with responsibility (or the committees which they serve).
- What ought to be going on with those with responsibilities is that they should be engaging the CP both for themselves and for the committees which they serve – taking the information they have learned in the bible study and challenging those on the committee (regardless of whether or not they attended the bible study) to think critically about how they could/should be using the CP in their daily lives and interactions.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response

- What ought to be going on with those with no responsibility is that they should be engaged in the same ways that those with responsibilities are – just, perhaps, in
different ways that support those with responsibility (or the committees which they serve).

- What ought to be going on with those with responsibilities is that they should be engaging the CP both for themselves and for the committees which they serve – taking the information they have learned in the bible study and challenging those on the committee (regardless of whether or not they attended the bible study) to think critically about how they could/should be using the CP in their daily lives and interactions.

Focus Group – Silent Generation

- Same as BS written response – what ought to be going on should be the same between those with and those without responsibilities – responding to the questions with thoughtfulness and engagement.
- What ought to be going on is that those with or without responsibilities be engaged and active in the life of the congregation, thinking of others outside of self and how they might be able to engage in the CP in their lives to do so.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer

- Same as BS written response – what ought to be going on should be the same between those with and those without responsibilities – responding to the questions with thoughtfulness and engagement.
- What ought to be going on is that those with or without responsibilities be engaged and active in the life of the congregation, thinking of others outside of self and how they might be able to engage in the CP in their lives to do so.

Focus Group – Gen X

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- What ought to be going on is that those with or without responsibilities be engaged and active in the life of the congregation, thinking of others outside of self and how they might be able to engage in the CP in their lives to do so.

Focus Group – Gen Y

- Same as BS written response – what ought to be going on should be the same between those with and those without responsibilities – responding to the questions with thoughtfulness and engagement.
- What ought to be going on is that those with or without responsibilities be engaged and active in the life of the congregation, thinking of others outside of self and how they might be able to engage in the CP in their lives to do so.

Focus Group Follow Up

- What ought to be going on with those with no responsibility is that they should be engaged in the same ways that those with responsibilities are – just, perhaps, in different ways that support those with responsibility (or the committees which they serve).
- What ought to be going on with those with responsibilities is that they should be engaging the CP both for themselves and for the committees which they serve – taking the information they have learned in the bible study and challenging those on the committee (regardless of whether or not they attended the bible study) to think critically about how they could/should be using the CP in their daily lives and interactions.
critically about how they could/should be using the CP in their daily lives and interactions.

**Function x Pragmatic – What will be going on?**

*What will be going on with Men and Women?*

**Bible Study Written Response**

- Men and women (alike) will be identifying the ways they believe they are able to put the CP into practice.

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**

- Men and women (alike) will be understanding how they can continue to implement the CP in their daily lives, as well as connecting it to their faith.
- They will see ways to engage people that assist in building relationships that can, in turn, strengthen not only their faith, but the lives of the ones whom they are encountering.

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**

- Men and women will be thinking more critically about what worship and the life of the church mean to them
- Men and women will be thinking about the various elements of worship and how they might affect their participation and engagement in worship.

**Focus Group – Baby Boomer**

- Men and women will be thinking more critically about what worship and the life of the church mean to them
- Men and women will be thinking about the various elements of worship and how they might affect their participation and engagement in worship.

**Focus Group – Gen X**

- Men and women will be thinking more critically about what worship and the life of the church mean to them
- Men and women will be thinking about the various elements of worship and how they might affect their participation and engagement in worship.

**Focus Group – Gen Y**

- Men and women will be thinking more critically about what worship and the life of the church mean to them
- Men and women will be thinking about the various elements of worship and how they might affect their participation and engagement in worship.

**Focus Group Follow Up**

- Men and women (alike) will be identifying the ways they believe they are able to put the CP into practice.

**What will be going on with passive and active members?**

**Bible Study Written Response**

- Passive members will continue to be passive. However, perhaps they will be less passive because those active members are engaging them in the CP as a means to seek better/deeper relationships with them…
- Active members will be thinking of the ways that they can pragmatically use the CP in their daily lives.

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**

- Passive members will, perhaps, be less passive because of the way that active members engaged them in the CP
• Active members will continue to be active, continuing to find ways to be a part of the congregation of which they are a part.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• Unless they change their minds, passive members will continue to be passive. If, due to this conversation, changes occur in worship, then they may become more engaged and committed to the life of the congregation.
• Unfortunately, within this demographic, SG will continue to grow older, causing it to be more difficult to participate in worship. Therefore, active members (despite their best desires), will become more passive due to physical limitations.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• Unless they change their minds, passive members will continue to be passive. If, due to this conversation, changes occur in worship, then they may become more engaged and committed to the life of the congregation.
• BB will continue to determine their level of participation based upon how the church can fit into their schedule – not unlike their younger counterparts

Focus Group – Gen X
• Unless they change their minds, passive members will continue to be passive. If, due to this conversation, changes occur in worship, then they may become more engaged and committed to the life of the congregation.
• Xers will continue to determine their level of participation based upon how the church can fit into their schedule, not unlike their BB counterparts

Focus Group – Gen Y
• Unless they change their minds, passive members will continue to be passive. However, some passive members may become more engaged as they get older, or to a different stage/chapter in their life (family, children, etc.)
• Yers will continue to learn how the church fits into their lives, and vice versa

Focus Group Follow Up
• Active members will continue to think about how the CP can be used in their daily lives as they interact with others
• Passive members will continue to be passive, should they not change the ways they engage the church

What will be going on with those with no responsibility vs. those with responsibilities?

Bible Study Written Response
• Those with no responsibility will be engaged, because they are not passive, they “just” don’t have responsibilities.
• Those with responsibilities will be thinking about how the CP can used in their context.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• Those with responsibilities will continue to provide leadership and guidance to the rest of the congregation.
• Those with no responsibilities will continue to engage at the level they deem important to their engagement in the life of the congregation. However, as was stated above, this generation will continue to “age out” and become less and less active, due to health restrictions.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• Those with responsibilities will continue to provide leadership and guidance to the rest of the congregation.
• Those with no responsibilities will continue to engage at the level they deem important to their engagement in the life of the congregation. But as they are offered opportunities to take weekend trips and other things that fill their schedule, they may find themselves taking them.

Focus Group – Gen X
• Those with responsibilities will continue to provide leadership and guidance to the rest of the congregation.
• Those with no responsibilities will continue to engage at the level they deem important to their engagement in the life of the congregation. But as they are offered opportunities to take weekend trips and other things that fill their schedule, they may find themselves taking them.

Focus Group – Gen Y
• Those with responsibilities will continue to provide leadership and guidance to the rest of the congregation, provided they do not leave for college or move due to professional opportunities for themselves or their families
• Those with no responsibilities will continue to engage at the level they deem important to their engagement in the life of the congregation.

Focus Group Follow Up
• Those with no responsibility will be engaged, because they are not passive, they “just” don’t have responsibilities.
• Those with responsibilities will be thinking about how the CP can used in their context.

Storytelling (look for differences/generalities) X DE (what is going on?)
Differences/Generalities in what is going on?

Bible Study Written Response
• There are not a number of differences in what is going on
• Generalities include:
  o Indications of invitation
  o Indications of changing behavior that might fall under CP (wear nametag, etc.)
  o Indications of talking to someone new – whether at church or in the neighborhood

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• There are not a number of differences in what is going on
• Generalities include:
  o Indications of actually inviting someone (some came, others did not)
  o Indications of changing behavior that might fall under CP (wear nametag, etc.)
  o Indications of talking to someone new – whether at church or in the neighborhood
  o Indications of thinking differently about themselves and others in relation to CP

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Gen X
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Gen Y
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group Follow Up
• Differences
  o Some are making changes where they note marked differences in their behavior
  o Some are using them, while others are not
• Generalities
  o People see the benefit of the CP in use
  o People understand how using them can benefit the church at large
  o People recognize that others should use them as well
  o People acknowledge that each member of the church using them can benefit in the growth of the church in number, strength, and faith

Storytelling (look for differences/generalities) X Interpretive (why is this going on?)

Differences/Generalities in why this is going on?

Bible Study Written Response
• This is going on because they have been made aware of what CP are and how they can look at them through the lens of faith
• This is going on because they attended the bible study and were asked.
• This is going on because there are times when things that are so common to everyday life that they need to be elevated in a new/different way

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• This is going on because people attempted to put CP to practice
• This is going on because God is at work
• This is going on because people need words and definitive tasks to identify as ways to “do” their faith

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Gen X
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Gen Y
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group Follow Up
• This is going on because people attempted to put CP to practice
• This is going on because God is at work
• This is going on because people need words and definitive tasks to identify as ways to “do” their faith

**Storytelling (look for differences/generalities) X Normative (What ought to be going on?)**

**Differences/Generalities in what ought to be going on?**

Bible Study Written Response
• What ought to be going on is that people successfully identify how to put CP into action

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• What ought to be going on is that people successfully attempted to put CP into action
• What ought to be going on is that, by putting them into action, they were able to strengthen their faith
• What ought to be going on is that, despite being “unsuccessful” (by their assessment), they understand the benefit of doing them

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Gen X
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group – Gen Y
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic. More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

Focus Group Follow Up
• What ought to be going on is that people successfully identify how to put CP into action

_Storytelling (look for differences/generalities) X Pragmatic (What will be going on?)_

**Differences/Generalities in what will be going on?**

**Bible Study Written Response**
• What will be going on is that people participate in the bible study
• What will be going on is that people identify the ways that they can put CP into action
• What will be going on is that people will make attempts to put the CP into action

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
• What will be going on is that people made attempts to put CP into action
• What will be going on is that people had successes
• What will be going on is that people had “failures”
• What will be going on is that some people didn’t do it at all
• What will be going on is that some people see the benefit of the CP in their daily lives
• What will be going on is that some people see how their faith has been changed/strengthened because of it

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic.
  More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

**Focus Group – Baby Boomer**
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic.
  More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

**Focus Group – Gen X**
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic.
  More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

**Focus Group – Gen Y**
• There are not differences or generalities in what is going on within this demographic.
  More will be examined to understand differences/generalities in what is going on comparatively to other demographics.

**Focus Group Follow Up**
• What will be going on is that people attend the focus group
• What will be going on is that people actively participate in the focus group through listening, conversation, and reflection
• What will be going on is that people go and use the CP
• What will be going on is that people actively engage the CP in their daily lives
• What will be going on is that people find themselves thinking more deeply about their faith
• What will be going on is that people go forward in their lives and interactions thinking about the CP and how they can be applied.

_**Sequence – what is the order? In what order do things happen? X DE (What is going on?)**_
What is the sequence of what is going on?

Bible Study Written Response
- People attend the bible study
- People participate in the bible study
- People reflect on the bible study

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- People leave the bible study
- People attempt to put the CP into action as they identified in the survey
- People have successes/missteps
- People reflect on them
- People respond to the survey

Focus Group – Silent Generation
- There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
- There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Gen X
- There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Gen Y
- There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group Follow Up
- People participate in the focus group
- People go back to “normal life”
- People receive the follow-up survey
- People reflect on the questions being asked
- People respond to the survey (some don’t)
- People return the survey

Sequence – what is the order? In what order do things happen? X Interpretive (Why is this going on?)

What is the sequence of why this is going on?

Bible Study Written Response
- This is going on because people attended the bible study
- This is going on because people are doing what they can to put the CP into practice

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- This is going on because people put the CP into practice
- This is going on because people reflected on how the experience was
- This is going on because they were asked.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Gen X
• There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Gen Y
• There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group Follow Up
• This is going on because people put the CP into practice
• This is going on because people reflected on how the experience was
• This is going on because they were asked.

**Sequence – what is the order? In what order do things happen? X Normative (What ought to be going on?)**

What is the sequence of what ought to be going on?

Bible Study Written Response
• People attend the bible study
• People actively participate in the bible study through listening, conversation, and reflection
• People reflect on the bible study experience
• People go and use the CP

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• People leave the bible study
• People actively engage the CP in their daily lives
• People find themselves thinking more deeply about their faith
• People go forward in their lives and interactions thinking about the CP and how they can be applied.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Gen X
There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group – Gen Y
There isn’t a sequence to what is going on in regards to answering questions in a focus group. However, the sequence of how and why they came to Starmount may be interesting.

Focus Group Follow Up
- People attend the focus group
- People actively participate in the focus group through listening, conversation, and reflection
- People go and use the CP
- People actively engage the CP in their daily lives
- People find themselves thinking more deeply about their faith
- People go forward in their lives and interactions thinking about the CP and how they can be applied.

Sequence – what is the order? In what order do things happen? X Pragmatic (What will be going on?)
What is the sequence of what will be going on?

Bible Study Written Response
- People attend the bible study
- People actively participate in the bible study through listening, conversation, and reflection
- People reflect on the bible study experience
- People go and use the CP

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- People leave the bible study
- People actively engage the CP in their daily lives as they indicated they would in the first survey
- People begin to get back to their daily lives
- People forget to use the CP
- People are only engaged in the CP when they are reminded of them.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
- People join the church
- People actively participate in the life of the church
- People raise their families in the church
- The children move on from the church (in most cases)
- People grow older in the church
- People retire from their careers, allowing them to become engaged in the life of the church in new and different ways
- People continue to grow older, causing them to no longer participate in the life of the church as they would hope and desire

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
- BB get married
- BB join the church
• BB participate in the life of the church as their schedule affords
• As BB’s children leave the house, their participation dwindles or shifts, based upon their interests and schedules

Focus Group – Gen X
• Xers find the church, usually because they are in new marriage and wanting faith-based grounding
• Xers join the church, primarily so their children have place to be baptized and grow up
• Xers participate in the life of the church as their schedule affords

Focus Group – Gen Y
• Yers grow up in the church
• Yers are shaped by their families and the church family and their friends
• Yers (most) go through confirmation class, becoming members of the church at completion
• Yers (many) disappear from the congregation once becoming members OR Yers (many) continue to participate in the life of the church, being active in youth group and other activities
• Yers go to college; some take that time “off”, while others engage in a campus ministry program or other activity
• Yers graduate from college and begin “life” – participating in a congregation, depending on their life status (married, single), and their experiences in high school

Focus Group Follow Up
• People will think (again) about their participation in the focus group
• People will think (again) about the CP
• People will reengage the CP in their daily lives, both inside and outside of the church.
Appendix M: Osmer x Kirkpatrick Matrix Data Analysis

Osmer DE (what is going on?) x Kirkpatrick’s Four Questions:
This is what people are learning

Bible Study Written Response
- People are learning, in this bible study, how to put the CP into practice.35
- There will not be overt responses in this matrix question, since the written responses asked “between now and…” – most responses were in future tense – see Osmer/Kirkpatrick “pragmatic”

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- People are learning how they were able to put the CP into use and move forward into the future utilizing them in their daily lives.
- Evangelism as indirectly inviting others to church. I do better when can have a conversation and can talk about church family and how wonderful and then invite more often to events other than church service. Most of my friends and a lot of neighbors are part of their own church family. I don’t want them to perceive I am trying to get them to abandon their church for mine.
- For those of us who’ve grown up in the church – maybe not there every time the doors opened – but there often, it’s more of a refresher course or perhaps a new perspective. There’s a more thoughtful intentionality. (When you ask this of an OCD-type, it’s hard to differentiate.)
- The invitational part is still the most difficult – learning to recognize opportunities. I invited Bob + Jackie Hood to the E&M luncheon!

Focus Group – Silent Generation
- People in this demographic have identified that they connect with the sermons
- “squirmability” allows for people to grow in their faith (line 107)
- This generation understands that they need to do more than just worship on Sundays – one way to connect with others in the congregation (line 140)

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
- BB have learned that shared experiences are what they look for in a group of friends.
- BB have learned that they look for support in a group of friends.
- BB have learned what they like and are specifically looking for in a church – personal preferences for themselves and their family are known quantities.
- BB have learned that the place they like to go for church provides a sense of comfort
- Some of the BB have found that they deepen their faith through worship, while others do it through teaching or attending Sunday School

Focus Group – Gen X
- Xers have learned that making friends is difficult and not always based upon common interests, other than shared experiences (work, children, etc.)
- Some Xers have learned that church can be a feeling of home mixed with feelings of identifying autonomy

1. Comments in red indicate author’s reflections and not actual responses of participants.
• Xers are learning that people can make the difference in what shapes their church experience

Focus Group – Gen Y
• Yers range in age from still in high school through young adult (and, in one case, married with children)
• Yers learn from their parents about what their faith can be for them
• Yers have learned from their grandparents
• Yers have learned from tradition
• Yers have learned that they want sermons that they can glean something from

Focus Group Follow Up
• Practicing Invitation is not always easy for me. I tend to be shy unless confident in a situation….or ready to step out of my comfort zone. I feel I have more gifts to share in the areas of nurture and welcome.
• God calls us to use these Christian Practices. When we do, our faith is strengthened.
• I feel our congregation does a good job in these areas. Different people have stronger abilities in different areas. Together, we form a strong set of practices.
• I have learned that if I let those principles be at the center of my life, I become a more grounded, empathetic person.
• I will repeat something I wrote earlier, which is that I’ve begun rethinking how I see evangelism. When I used to hear the word, Evangelism, I would cringe. To me that meant, doing cold calls around neighborhoods with the youth group at my father’s church. Literally, going up to someone’s house, knocking on the door, and asking if whomever answered was saved. Honestly, I never went on any of these excursions (whew!), but the thought of doing so, TERRIFIED ME! Small examples like that one held me back from sharing my faith simply because I was taught that that was the only way to do so. However, I now understand evangelism as action rather than verbal invitation. For instance, I talk to my non-church friends, colleagues, and even my girlfriend about what I do at church (volunteer at the community garden, work with the youth, etc.) and why I do it. I believe this to be a form of evangelism; I’m sharing my faith by letting others know that I have found a place of faith to which I belong and why it is that I cling tightly to that place.
• That Starmount is a very welcoming place that extends invitations for all sorts of fellowship activities. Once you are in Starmount, the people nurture you through fellowship, food, and your called talents. People, in other words, approach you to serve on various committees or elicit your help for particular events. I see these as nurture. Those people might just need another body in a chair, but they more likely are seeing something in you; calling you for to be that particular body in that particular chair.
• SLOW DOWN! LISTEN! Realize that there are times, even when one is living in "The Suck", that I must stop, look and listen to others because in the voices of others I may hear the voice of God.
• That everyone has their own struggles. If we remain and open and welcoming it may be a vehicle for people to enter the faith, or simply dip their toe in the shallow end as they search for a place of belonging and fellowship.
• The PC(USA) as well as other established religions are slowly dwindling in numbers and have been for many years. We are slowly, but surely, learning that we can no
longer sit in the same pew seat we have sat in since our great-grandparents' time at
the church. We must extend the "right hand of welcome" to all new faces. We must
invite people to events, and not immediately press them to be on a committee or
volunteer their time, as have been past practices, but simply set a place of welcome
where the new persons can find a place of belonging and fellowship.

- I think I have become more aware of my role as a representative of my church – I
  have observed that others judge you without realizing that they are judging and
  making assumptions about your faith just based on your practices. Therefore, it is
  important to show these as underlying parts of your personality – without having to
  be a false representation. In other words, I’m allowed to use four letter colorful
  language and have tattoos, as long as I’m aware of how that impacts those around
  me. And as long as they aren’t offended and I’m a living, hospitable, inviting,
  nurturing Christian – there isn’t a stigma against Christians and being stuck up.

- I find it important to dispel assumptions people have about “Christians” and help
  them to see that Christians are just people too. My faith is an open and inviting one,
  not one that requires excessive work and lifestyle changes. There are some whose
  faith requires these things – and that doesn’t mean that they can’t share the same faith
  as me, but that we need to be open and accepting of others through hospitality and
  invitation.

- One of my more recent learnings was that our church family is still a family – just
  like the one you have at home. It’s not a strict school environment with a
  teacher/principal who governs all that you do. We all contribute to the family – like a
  strong marriage, not that we are all children who have to listen to dominating
  parents. We are a strong church because we are the church – mental image of all
  those people fingers inside the church steeple who make up the church. The pastor
doens’t make the church… yes, it can set a tone, but a strong church family is about
  the people. We are inviting., welcoming and caring – because of who we are, not
  what we are told to do.

- I will always need to learn and share these practices. I feel God has kept me here to
  use these CP and to share them with others.

- It has strengthened my faith as each one are important in your faith.

- I think our congregation has grow a great deal with the nurturing of our refugee
  families in many ways --fifty years ago it would have never welcomed these families.

- I feel good working what I do with Christian Practices.

- I feel that our congregation uses Christian Practices in a big way through all that they
do.

- I am more sensitive to newcomers and go out of my way to acknowledge them. It is
  not always comfortable to do this, but I remember my experience from the past and
don’t want anyone to ever say that they experienced this in our church.

- It is a biblical mandate to “go into the world and preach the gospel.” While I might
  feel uncomfortable “witnessing” to others in a “Bible-Thumper” type format, all of us
  who profess to be Christians should show our faith by living a life that exemplifies
  these characteristics because we follow Christ. If people can’t see these attributes in
  us, then we need to do something about it.

- I’ve learned how important it is for congregations to adopt and implement these
  practices at every opportunity. We have to move out of our comfort zones to
welcome others into our congregation. Through some of our transition studies, I’ve learned that our church is particularly good in these areas and are known for our welcoming style. We have to be careful, however, to guard from becoming complacent. We can’t afford for a visitor or member to ever experience a “cold and unwelcoming” congregation when they worship with us. They’ll never forget it….

- It is always good to step back and take a personal look at one’s self, especially if you have a measuring stick like the Christian Practices. I am not sure about learning anything specific, but am trying to be more aware of my actions.
- It is always easier to practice my faith when I have the Christian Practices to be a guide.
- I can’t say I have learned anything about the congregation and its use of Christian Practices as I find it hard to discern if they are trying the various aspects of CP or our congregation is just that kind and engaging. We are blessed with what I think is a very open and loving congregation.
- I do not think broadly enough about Christian Practices but focus on specific interest such as music.
- My person practice is too self-centered. I need to reach out more to others.
- The Starmount congregation uses Christian Practices well and seems to have an ever-expanding program of activities that foster the use of Christian Practices.
- That I enjoy people and talking with them but am hesitant to start conversations with those I do not know well. The exception is I try to speak to new faces when I recognize them in church.
- That being a Christian is a 24/7 life style. Friends know of my commitment to my church and all my behavior, day in and day out, show some one what a Christian is suppose to be or not be. I think I am more aware of the kindness relayed with a smile or hello and listening to the response.
- Our congregation has varied groups in it. This is good in that the many interest make Starmount the committed church that it is. Music, garden, mission, Christian Education, church officer and volunteer commitments and others I am sure I have not mentioned are areas where people serve. Unless you have worked in the same areas, sometimes, you do not have or make the opportunity to get to know those other members very well. The small group meals and fellowship programs, I think, help bridge some of the members. Our members are very gracious to each other in times of need, card, meals, visits etc. These acknowledgments of concern are very welcome. Both the circles and and the caring committee do a good job of keeping in touch with our shut ins. This evaluation comes from hearing friends in other churches being surprised at the coverage we provide for our shut ins.

This is what people are doing

Bible Study Written Response
- People are not going to have overt written responses to what they are doing, since they are being asked what they will do in the future.
- Therefore, most responses were in future tense – see Osmer/Kirkpatrick “pragmatic”

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- People should be identifying how they utilized the CP in their daily interactions and conversations.
I help J. Lee with the organizing and carrying out of First Monday Starmount Suppers at River Landing – takes patience to work with people who constantly forget whether they have committed to attend or not! I do help Barbara Hochuli as much as I can.

We have talked with friends and neighbors about our church, telling them of different events that are here and invite them to come.

We’re both very social and continue to meet new people and seek common ground to attend functions together.

We both try to help people in our community of Howard’s Walk to make them feel welcome and encourage them to get involved in our communities activities.

Warm Welcome to All

Greeting in church

Phone calls to those missed.

Intentionally invited a neighbor to invite a friend Sunday. She didn’t accept invitation but I did invite. Invited another friend and she did attend.

Inconsistently pray to be more extrovert and invite friends to events at Starmount. Invited a new member to an event.

Having written several cards to grieving or sick members but always feel badly that I didn’t do more.

I have baked brownies of 2 of our 3 sets of new neighbors and visited the 3rd set but no brownies for them yet! These visits were NOT invitations to church but I hope those will come soon.

From the choir loft it’s difficult to “sneak” into the congregation either before or after our service to greet those folks I may not recognize. Since our choir is loaded with outgoing, gregarious members it might be nice to find some mechanism for them to greet folks.

Promoted church worship attendance to acquaintances

Encouraged family prayer

Been more prayerful in daily life myself

Taken a nurturing approach toward strangers who appear to be hurting or angry

Inviting friends to Starmount’s unique Sunday worship services

I speak to children and adults in my shopping each week and always take some time (if possible) to engage in light conversation.

I try each day to do one kind deed to help someone. Sometimes a smile helps more than we realize.

I try to always thank God for the many blessings in my life and not take some things for granted.

I invited a family member to church (and he CAME to church)

I invited a neighbor for wine and snacks


I do try to find time daily for quiet and reflection to seek God.

I continue to invite my friend to come to church with me and as yet am unsuccessful.

I’ve gotten to know others from our table discussions. I’m hoping to entertain and get to know them better!

Have talked about Starmount to former members and encouraged them to try again.

Always say hello to a new face.
• By giving to and helping others whenever possible thru mobile meals, church participation on many committees to name a few.
• By praying for those in need when the situation arises.
• By trying to keep in mind – “What is the Christian thing to do in various situations.”
• Making sure that I wear my nametag on Sundays
• Searching out strangers in church and welcoming them
• Taking more time (slowing down) to listen to others
• Talking to friends about our programs and encouraging attendance
• Looking for new members I met at bible study
• Being aware of welcoming behavior, smiles, welcomes, not only at church but all the time
• Sharing with friends what a warm family we have at Starmount
• Share the “helping” mission SPC takes part in
• More of a “doer” – helping neighbor (who is hard to be around); drove to Penn, picked up mom and sister – took them to Buffalo to our old church. Then, stayed in Penn. To attend mom’s bible study
• Trying to be supportive to family and neighbors
• We have issued invitation to a neighbor, who is mentally unstable and hard to be around; we have had her over to eat and just to visit. – we have to remember, she is one of God’s children.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• Talking about Bach’s lunch (line 182)
• Talking about Starmount with others (line 175)
• They are becoming members and getting involved
• They are becoming members of a church to assist in deepening their faith

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• BB are going to church because it is what they do
• BB are committed to the church in which they are a member (line 234)

Focus Group – Gen X
• Xers are going to church when it is able to fit into their schedule
• Xers are going to church to serve as an example to their children
• Xers are going to church when they are not exhausted from the week’s activities

Focus Group – Gen Y
• Yers are attending worship when they can (and still consider themselves regular attenders)
• Yers are attending with their families (whether as a child or as the parent of children)
• Yers are becoming members because it’s about being connected to the community and involved in it

Focus Group Follow Up
• I have been more observant of my actions….areas where I may be hesitant and areas where I need to work more. I feel I became more intentional in my actions.
• I have been more intentional in my actions.
• These Christian Practices reshaped how I saw mission. Again, because of the church environment in which I was raised, mission was always some across the seas trip to help the poor, unsaved souls. Now, I see mission as an integral part of one’s local
community. For me, it is staggering to see so many people be food insecure, especially children, right in your local backyard. For me, mission work—the work of being hospitable, inviting, and nurturing—is desperately needed in my community and mission isn’t necessarily about saving souls but nurturing those souls that God already has a plan for. So, I’ve begun teaching my college freshman about food insecurity and have begun to think about how to integrate lessons of food insecurity into my teaching and research of Renaissance literature. My newfound understanding of mission, hospitality, and nurture, thanks to Kathryn’s evangelism re-vamping, has phenomenally transformed me, my interest in the community, and at work. At home, I believe these practices have shaped how I interact with my girlfriend/partner. They make me see when I’m being selfish, what I can do to help nurture her self-growth or her life journey. They also allow me to see how I nurture myself so that I can be the person God calls me to be.

- I’ve used these practices to go out into the community and serve (through the Starmount Community Garden, Out of the Garden Project), to become a better teacher who raises students’ awareness about the world around them, and to improve my life and wellbeing.
- Difficult to answer since I have been gone from Starmount for over a year. I will state that The Guinness and the Good News fellowship seems to be welcoming new members and remains and inviting place for all. I will also say that, in conversations with the associate pastor, Starmount seems to be moving forward on progressive issues involving the LGBTQ community in opening its doors.
- Daily. They should be a part of one's daily life. These simply are practices of being a decent human.
- I’m not sure I would say it has. Although, I am more aware of my actions within Starmount and the role I play as a strong member of that community.
- Not directly. Although, I would honestly state that I have always been someone who represents these traits.
- I don't think my behavior has changed as I* have been blessed with sharing my love from Jesus with all and everywhere I go.
- I have used them as a reminder as to what the good Lord wants me to do.
- Not sure that my behavior did change. Maybe doing more.
- Reaching out more as a Christian.
- My behavior changed in that I have become more mindful of the need to show these practices in my daily life. If we profess to be Christians, yet act in a manner outside of these practices, we’ve done more damage to the faith than we’ve prevented. One bad experience with a “Christian” may be all it takes to turn someone away from the church forever. What a shame that would be…
- During passing of the peace, I make a point to greet and speak to those around me. I always try to search out faces I don’t recognize and introduce myself to them during church functions.
- I am not sure my behavior has changed, but I do find myself aware and try to be sure I try to apply those attributes of CP if I find myself in a situation where it might be a little harder to be as loving and compassionate as I should be.
- At Starmount I have a better behavior guide towards others and also in the community.
• This one is a little harder to answer as self evaluation all ways is. I was open to inviting people I do not know to my home for meals. I am much richer because of the friendships and respect that grew out of those visits. I was able to do this because I did not feel judgment about how or what I did for the evening. The invitation and welcome part became the most important to me. Among neighbors and friends I continue to tell about the various programs or mission outreach that we do. Our music programs have provided the opportunities to invite others to church.
• Your programs emphasized how important little acts of kindness are to others. This has made me want to be more in tune to reaching out to others.

_Bible Study Written Response_

• People are reacting to the questions, identifying the ways that they can utilize the CP (what they’ve learned) in their daily lives.
• Invitation
  o We have 6 churches in our neighborhood. They are fighting for new blood. We are trying!!!
  o How to think about how to do this more effectively – know I could improve
  o Try to get out of my comfort zone
  o Praying for God’s guidance
  o When faced with obstacles to reaching out to others, using mindful prayer: “You must do this God, I cannot.”
  o Reminding myself, daily, that each attempt to be more authentically invitational, charitable, and sensitive to others helps me grow nearer to God in this life.
  o More approaching and inviting
  o Friendly
• Hospitality
  o Recognize the Martha and welcome the Mary
• Nurture
  o Not to feel overwhelmed of trying to nurture all I see
  o I will be intentional in speaking to members at church and do more than just great. I will try to move out of my comfort zone
  o Be more interested in others situations and need
  o Be more open to discussion and listening and responding
  o Look for those opportunities – take the time
  o Being more aware of others needs and my capabilities
  o As the heart is ready – remove obstacles to communication, building in new and different ways
• Welcome
  o Work through my shyness and move out of my comfort level to be more welcoming of others in a group setting
  o Work towards intentionally building relationships
  o Finding more qualities in myself that I can improve on to be more welcoming
• Evangelism
  o Actions speak louder than words
Bible Study Follow Up Written Response

- The hope is that people will react positively in the responses, indicating that they were successful in identifying the ways they put the CP to use. They may react “negatively”, being critical of the fact that they weren’t successful as they hoped to be (in their eyes).
- Growing up in a church that strongly pushed studying scriptures and catechism, taking part in group studies outside my church like church camp, young life, college discussions and as adult my faith has stayed strong. I find that this study has helped me to focus on what I church need. I have said before, that I reach people in our hood to offer to take part in our church. We are still trying to reach out.
- This program/study on Christian Practices caused me to think critically and a-fresh opportunities that I encounter and how to deal with them and how to look for these opportunities with different views. And continue to realize at the “ripe old age” of 84 years there are still opportunities to be improving Christian Practices. Thank you for the sessions!
- It’s easier to recognize opportunities to serve (Martha) than it is to be still and listen (Mary). However, I’ve been doing lots of listening serving on the Personnel Committee.
- Nurturing is the “easy” assignment for me. It usually translates to listening and affirming.
- The Bible Study helped me to focus on these practices in all of my relationships. My goal is to apply them daily. I am most recently aware of the benefits of these practices in my work and family relationships.
- Hopefully I have used the Christian Practices all my life! I loved attending your bible study as just a reminder of how we should live!!
- Being more tolerant of small disagreements to put myself in someone else’s shoes
- I believe the example I set in trying to show and live my faith in life tells other the kind of Christian I strive to be.
- I am more able to consider others’ viewpoints, I think.
- I know what I should do, but haven’t been able to dive into extended time away from home until yesterday!
- Are you a Martha or a Mary? The responses to that were interesting! Why didn’t Jesus ask Martha to join in and everyone would then help in preparing the feast?!!

Focus Group – Silent Generation

- It is important to be a member of a congregation (line 210, 218, 225)
- The “aha” moments do not necessarily happen in a church, but it assists in deepening faith (line 255)

Focus Group – Baby Boomer

- BB are reacting those around them in different generations not being in church but considering themselves “regular attenders” (line 178ff)
- BB are reacting to church attendance (line 189)
- BB are reacting to the worship experience, including liturgy and style of worship (line 354)
- BB are reacting to what it means to be a part of SPC (line 214)

Focus Group – Gen X
• Xers do not like being “stalked” – although well-intentioned, making a phone call when not present for three consecutive Sundays is not appreciated (line 254ff)
• Xers are members of a church because they want to be a part of something – particularly that expresses their faith
• Xers use ritual to help deepen their faith – usually thanks, in part, to their kids
• Xers consistently react with humor and sarcasm

Focus Group – Gen Y
• Yers are reacting to the questions being asked of them in confirmation (if applicable)
• Yers are reacting to the way worship is led
• Yers are seeking out other ways to be connected to each other and to God (Montreat)
• Yers are reacting to the size of the church (don’t like big)
• Yers are reacting to whether they are going or not – they can be the ones that drive the family’s faith
• Yers are reacting to how others around them are responding in worship (line 32)

Focus Group Follow Up
• I have been more observant of my actions….areas where I may be hesitant and areas where I need to work more. I feel I became more intentional in my actions.
• I have been more intentional in my actions.
• These Christian Practices reshaped how I saw mission. Again, because of the church environment in which I was raised, mission was always some across the seas trip to help the poor, unsaved souls. Now, I see mission as an integral part of one’s local community. For me, it is staggering to see so many people be food insecure, especially children, right in your local backyard. For me, mission work—the work of being hospitable, inviting, and nurturing—is desperately needed in my community and mission isn’t necessarily about saving souls but nurturing those souls that God already has a plan for. So, I’ve begun teaching my college freshman about food insecurity and have begun to think about how to integrate lessons of food insecurity into my teaching and research of Renaissance literature. My newfound understanding of mission, hospitality, and nurture, thanks to Kathryn’s evangelism re-vamping, has phenomenally transformed me, my interest in the community, and at work. At home, I believe these practices have shaped how I interact with my girlfriend/partner. They make me see when I’m being selfish, what I can do to help nurture her self-growth or her life journey. They also allow me to see how I nurture myself so that I can be the person God calls me to be.
• I’ve used these practices to go out into the community and serve (through the Starmount Community Garden, Out of the Garden Project), to become a better teacher who raises students’ awareness about the world around them, and to improve my life and wellbeing.
• Difficult to answer since I have been gone from Starmount for over a year. I will state that The Guinness and the Good News fellowship seems to be welcoming new members and remains and inviting place for all. I will also say that, in conversations with the associate pastor, Starmount seems to be moving forward on progressive issues involving the LGBTQ community in opening its doors.
• Daily. They should be a part of one's daily life. These simply are practices of being a decent human.
I’m not sure I would say it has. Although, I am more aware of my actions within Starmount and the role I play as a strong member of that community.

Not directly. Although, I would honestly state that I have always been someone who represents these traits.

I don’t think my behavior has changed as I have been blessed with sharing my love from Jesus with all and everywhere I go.

I have used them as a reminder as to what the good Lord wants me to do.

Not sure that my behavior did change. Maybe doing more.

Reaching out more as a Christian.

My behavior changed in that I have become more mindful of the need to show these practices in my daily life. If we profess to be Christians, yet act in a manner outside of these practices, we’ve done more damage to the faith than we’ve prevented. One bad experience with a “Christian” may be all it takes to turn someone away from the church forever. What a shame that would be…

During passing of the peace, I make a point to greet and speak to those around me. I always try to search out faces I don’t recognize and introduce myself to them during church functions.

I am not sure my behavior has changed, but I do find myself aware and try to be sure I try to apply those attributes of CP if I find myself in a situation where it might be a little harder to be as loving and compassionate as I should be.

At Starmount I have a better behavior guide towards others and also in the community.

This one is a little harder to answer as self evaluation all ways is. I was open to inviting people I do not know to my home for meals. I am much richer because of the friendships and respect that grew out of those visits. I was able to do this because I did not feel judgment about how or what I did for the evening. The invitation and welcome part became the most important to me. Among neighbors and friends I continue to tell about the various programs or mission outreach that we do. Our music programs have provided the opportunities to invite others to church.

Your programs emphasized how important little acts of kindness are to others. This has made me want to be more in tune to reaching out to others.

These are the results

Bible Study Written Response
- Each of the responses are “results”, but because the written responses asked “between now and…” – most responses were in future tense – see Osmer/Kirkpatrick “pragmatic”

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- These results are their reports of what they did (or did not do) to put the CP’s into practice in their daily lives between the bible studies and the follow up survey administration.
- Intentionally invited a neighbor to invite a friend Sunday. She didn’t accept invitation but I did invite. Invited another friend and she did attend.
- Having written several cards to grieving or sick members but always feel badly that I didn’t do more.
- I invited a family member to church (and he CAME to church)
• I’ve gotten to know others from our table discussions. I’m hoping to entertain and get to know them better!
• Looking for new members I met at bible study
• More of a “doer” – helping neighbor (who is hard to be around); drove to Penn, picked up mom and sister – took them to Buffalo to our old church. Then, stayed in Penn. To attend mom’s bible study
• We have issued invitation to a neighbor, who is mentally unstable and hard to be around; we have had her over to eat and just to visit. – we have to remember, she is one of God’s children.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• Being a member of a church reinforces your faith (line 225)
• Being a member is an outward expression (line 234)
• Being a member provides commitment to learning and continuity (line 232)
• They are coming to church
• They are serving as a part of the greater community

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• BB are proud of the church of which they are a part
• BB are engaged in what they are doing (teaching SS, volunteering)
• BB are committed to their church and its mission
• BB feel good about being a part of their church
• BB are motivated to be good examples for their children
• BB are going to church and worship to deepen their faith (line 310)

Focus Group – Gen X
• Xers want to have their own part in the world
• Xers want to make an impact that leaves their mark
• Xers want to make their children’s lives the best they know how

Focus Group – Gen Y
• Yers want something that connects to them and with them
• Yers want community
• Yers want thrive on tradition

Focus Group Follow Up
• I have been more observant of my actions….areas where I may be hesitant and areas where I need to work more. I feel I became more intentional in my actions.
• I have been more intentional in my actions.
• These Christian Practices reshaped how I saw mission. Again, because of the church environment in which I was raised, mission was always some across the seas trip to help the poor, unsaved souls. Now, I see mission as an integral part of one’s local community. For me, it is staggering to see so many people be food insecure, especially children, right in your local backyard. For me, mission work—the work of being hospitable, inviting, and nurturing—is desperately needed in my community and mission isn’t necessarily about saving souls but nurturing those souls that God already has a plan for. So, I’ve begun teaching my college freshman about food insecurity and have begun to think about how to integrate lessons of food insecurity into my teaching and research of Renaissance literature. My newfound understanding of mission, hospitality, and nurture, thanks to Kathryn’s evangelism re-vamping, has
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Your programs emphasized how important little acts of kindness are to others. This has made me want to be more in tune to reaching out to others.

**Osmer Interpretive (Why is this going on?) x Kirkpatrick’s Four Questions:**

**Why is this kind of learning happening?**

**Bible Study Written Response**

- This learning is happening because they are being informed of the CP’s (by definition), how they can be put into practice, and how they can successfully utilize them in their daily lives.

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**

- This learning is happening because since the bible study, they have become more aware of the specific CP and what they can do to influence and impact their faith and their congregation, as well as their interactions. As one person wrote, it caused them to look outside of themselves and think of other more often.

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**

- This learning is happening because it was instilled in them as children (going to church)
- This learning is happening because they are hearing the scripture in conjunction with what is going on in the world today (490, 495)
- The learning that is happening is based upon the foundation upon which they were raised – their theological viewpoints and ideas about the world are slanted to hear and learn what they want to

**Focus Group – Baby Boomer**

- This kind of learning is happening with the BB because it is what was instilled in them by their parents
- This kind of learning is happening because they understand that worship and going to church is foundational to their faith

**Focus Group – Gen X**

- This kind of learning is happening with the Xers because it is what they know to be true for themselves
- This kind of learning is happening with Xers because they are coming to realize that they are the new generation of adults, doing what they can to make their voices heard while still wanting to respect their elders

**Focus Group – Gen Y**

- This kind of learning is happening because of family influence
- This kind of learning is happening because of the experiences they have had
- This kind of learning is happening because of the traditions of their family

**Focus Group Follow Up**

- This kind of learning is happening because they were introduced/made aware of the CP
- This kind of learning is happening because since it was made something to be focused on, they are thinking of how it can impact their lives and the lives of those around them (and their faith)

**Why are people doing what they are doing?**

**Bible Study Written Response**
People are doing what they are doing because they are being made aware of what the 
CP’s are, how they are defined, and how to put them into use, using theological 
language to support their using of them.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
People are doing what they are doing because they have been made aware of what the 
CP are, how to utilize them in their lives, and then go out and do it.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
People are doing what they are doing because it is what they know to be good and “right”
People are doing what they are doing because they were taught that as children
People are doing what they are doing because they understand how going to church is 
important in the bigger picture of deepening their faith and being a part of a faith 
community
People are doing what they are doing because it is an expression of commitment (line 234)
People are going to church because the bible tells them to (line 252)
People are doing what they are doing because of the things that bring them “joy” in 
worship – the music, the aesthetics, etc.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
People are doing what they are doing because it is what they have always done
People are doing what they are doing because they believe in it
People are doing what they are doing because they are attempting to set examples for their children.

Focus Group – Gen X
Xers are caught in a middle ground – still trying to appease their parents, but wanting 
autonomy while also attempting to raise children, work, and have a family
Xers are doing what they are doing because they want to have a voice – it is difficult 
to be seen as an adult when the older generations are not acknowledging it

Focus Group – Gen Y
Yers are doing what they are doing because they are steeped in tradition
Yers are doing what they are doing because they are still living under their parents’ rules
Yers are doing what they are doing because they are establishing new family rules, 
which includes church
Yers are doing what they are doing because they are well-educated and ready/willing 
to make concrete decisions for their own lives

Focus Group Follow Up
People are doing what they are doing because they have been made aware of a new 
and different way to think about evangelism and the concepts of the CP

Why are people reacting this way?

Bible Study Written Response
People are reacting this way because they have been made aware of what the CP are and how to use them in their daily lives and interactions, one with another.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
People are reacting because they are either proud of themselves for putting the CP into practice (and/or recognizing how they have been doing it all along) or they are disappointed because they have not done what was being asked of them (or what they were asking of themselves)

Focus Group – Silent Generation
- People are reacting this way because they came as couples
- People are reacting this way because they have a certain understanding of what it means to be a member of a congregation.
- The bible says so (line 252)
- People are reacting this way because the bible feeds them (line 268)
- People are reacting this way because they are inspired by others (line 298)
- People are reacting this way because they understand that in order to grow, you have to be flexible (line 425)
- People are reacting this way because it was how they were raised (line 459, 476)
- People are reacting this way because it is what they like to hear (sermon content)
- People are reacting this way (children acting up in worship) because they were raised to not make a noise in worship (line 564)

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
- People are reacting this way because they understand that they are the “edge of the generation” (line 366), liking both the contemporary and traditional
- People are reacting this way because they know what they want and what they are looking for (line 63)

Focus Group – Gen X
- Xers are reacting this way because they have strong opinions
- Xers are reacting this way because they know what they want
- Xers are reacting this way because they are concerned for their children and their future

Focus Group – Gen Y
- Yers are reacting this way because they are learning what they want
- Yers are reacting this way because they are still living with their parents
- Yers are reacting this way because they are well-educated
- Yers are reacting this way because they are building their faith foundation

Focus Group Follow Up
- People are reacting this way because they were introduced to the CP

Why are the results like they are?
Bible Study Written Response
- The results are like they are because the people are answering the question they have been asked, identifying the ways that they will put the CPs into practice in the upcoming months.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- The results are like they are because people self-reported on what they did or did not accomplish in regards to living out the CP in their daily lives.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
- The results are like they are because going to church is “a part of my body” (line 328)
• The results are like they are because people are willing to understand that it’s bigger than them (line 425; 434)
• The results are like they are because they are old-fashioned (line 453)
• The results are like they are because they attend worship and are not afraid to reflect on what it is that brings them to deeper faith or detracts them from it
• The results are like they are because they can hear and see the elements of worship (line 598)
• The results are like they are because they go to Starmount – they choose to go to Starmount; they don’t go to Westover or another church of a larger size (line 606)

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• The results are like they are because this is what they know to be true for themselves
• The results are like they are because they are reminiscent
• The results are like they are because they are reflective
• The results are like they are because they appreciate tradition

Focus Group – Gen X
• The results are like they are because Xers have strong feelings about things
• The results are like they are because the Xers in this focus group were not afraid to talk, sharing their truths and opinions

Focus Group – Gen Y
• The results are like they are because Yers are not afraid to share opinions about their faith
• The results are like they are because Yers were able to engage in conversation and “debate” about what it is that they like/do not like about worship and being a part of a congregation

Focus Group Follow Up
• The results are like they are because they were asked to think about the CP and evangelism
• The results are like they are because people are applying the CP to their daily lives and thinking about them in relation to their faith

Osmer Normative (What ought to be going on?) x Kirkpatrick’s Four Questions: What kind of learning ought people be doing?

Bible Study Written Response
• Participants ought to be learning how to better put the Christian Practices to use in their daily lives.
• Participants ought to be learning how to engage, one with another, to brainstorm ideas for putting the CP to use

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• Participants ought to be indicating the learning done during the time period between the bible studies and the follow-up survey; showing ways that they utilized the practices and put them to use.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• Based upon the demographic’s characteristics, the learning that ought to be going on would reinforce what they have known about their faith for so many years.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
Based upon the demographic’s characteristics, the learning that ought to be going on would reinforce what they have known about their faith for so many years.

Focus Group – Gen X
- The learning Xers ought to be doing is thinking about how they successfully transition to being leaders in the church – how can their thoughts, opinions, and ideas translate to leadership in today’s congregation?
- The learning Xers ought to be doing is understanding how their attendance (or lack thereof) impacts programs and perceptions in the church

Focus Group – Gen Y
- The learning Yers ought to be doing is thinking freely for themselves, outside of their parents’ sphere of influence, about what makes their faith important to them.
- The learning Yers ought to be doing is shaping their faith lives in such a way that it improves their quality of life

Focus Group Follow Up
- Participants ought to be indicating the learning they did from being first introduced to the CP and participated in the focus groups; showing ways that they utilized the practices and put them to use.

What should be going on with what they are doing?

Bible Study Written Response
- What should be going on is indicated ways that they plan to put the CP to use in their lives

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- What should be going on is displaying definitive ways that the CP’s were put to use in their everyday interactions

Focus Group – Silent Generation
- What should be going on with what they are doing is that they should be thinking about what it is that makes and shapes their faith
- What should be going on with what they are doing is recognizing what those who are younger may need to be engaged in their faith and have a willingness to allow those things to happen in worship from time to time (CK)
- What should be going on with what they are doing is reaching out to young families and others that they desire to be the next leaders of the church, engaging them in conversation and relationship.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
- What should be going on with what they are doing is that they should continue to be instilling faith in their children (BB’s children range in age)
- What should be going on with what they are doing is that they should be thinking about how they can be interacting with others outside of their demographic
- What should be going on with what they are doing is that they should be thinking about how to work with the younger generations, as they begin to understand that they are not the youngest and most knowledgeable in the congregation

Focus Group – Gen X
- What should be going on is thinking about how their actions influence the congregation as a whole
• What should be going on is thinking about how, while their ideas are good ones, they need to follow through and execute/participate/attend the fruit of their ideas’ labor

Focus Group – Gen Y
• What should be going on is thinking about their faith and its impact on their lives as individuals, not regurgitating their parents’ thoughts
• What should be going on is that the thinking they do about their faith reflects on traditions and what is influential in their faith

Focus Group Follow Up
• What should be going on is thinking about the CP and how their introduction to them could be applied not only to their own lives, but the lives of the Starmount community as well.

How should people be reacting?

Bible Study Written Response
• People should be reacting positively – feeling encouraged that they already do a lot of the CP in their daily lives.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• People should be reacting positively – feeling encouraged that they already do a lot of the CP in their daily lives.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• People should be reacting with fond feelings of what the congregation (and its worship) mean to them
• People should be reacting with constructive feedback when they are asked about things that they may not like about their congregation or worship

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• People should be reacting with constructive feedback about worship, the music, and elements of church
• People should be reacting to the different questions being asked of them; thinking about the ways in which faith has shaped them, including their attitudes toward worship and church

Focus Group – Gen X
• People should be reacting with constructive feedback about worship, the music, and elements of church
• People should be reacting to the different questions being asked of them; thinking about the ways in which faith has shaped them, including their attitudes toward worship and church

Focus Group Follow Up
• People should be reacting positively – feeling encouraged that they already do a lot of the CP in their daily lives.

What should the results look like?

Bible Study Written Response
• The results should acknowledge that they are (now) aware of the CP and how they can be used in their lives in the upcoming months.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
• The results should indicate that the respondents DID, in fact, utilize the CP in their situations and circumstances
• The results should indicate that their faith grew from the experience.

Focus Group – Silent Generation
• The results should look like many opinions and feelings about worship and “meaty” (and honest) responses to the questions being asked.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
• The results should look like many opinions and feelings about worship and “meaty” (and honest) responses to the questions being asked.

Focus Group – Gen X
• The results should look like many opinions and feelings about worship and “meaty” (and honest) responses to the questions being asked.

Focus Group – Gen Y
• The results should look like many opinions and feelings about worship and “meaty” (and honest) responses to the questions being asked.

Focus Group Follow Up
• The results should acknowledge that they are aware of the CP and how they can be used in their lives and the lives of the church community.

Osmer Pragmatic (what will be going on?) x Kirkpatrick’s Four Questions: What learning will people be doing?

Bible Study Written Response
• The learning people will be doing is understanding and identifying ways that they can concretely put the CP into their daily lives and interactions.

• Invitation
  ○ Inviting a family to kick-off Sunday
  ○ By inviting a friend to an event that they have an interest (ex: Bach’s Lunch)
  ○ Being more welcoming and inviting when meeting new people
  ○ Be happy
  ○ Inviting someone to a church function
  ○ Pray to be more inviting
  ○ Try to get out of my comfort zone
  ○ Looking for opportunities to invite
  ○ Actually inviting someone
  ○ Keep asking
  ○ Praying for God’s guidance
  ○ Listening, thinking, and then acting
  ○ Inviting friends to the unique Sunday worship services
  ○ Inviting a family member to church
  ○ Inviting a friend to join me at worship
  ○ Inviting friends to come to worship
  ○ Inviting someone to join me in worship
  ○ Wearing my nametag
“Talking up” Starmount
- Being more aware of how I can help Starmount Presbyterian Church
- Being more aware of how I can help others
- Sharing Starmount’s activities with friends
- Being more open in invitations
- Being more honest when I must decline an invitation
- Being more open to inviting others to Starmount
- More approaching and inviting
- Friendly
- Being more generous with my invitations
- Being more considerate when issued an invite

**Hospitality**
- Calling people by phone and listening
- In conversations at church concentrating on listening
- Welcoming new folks
- Smiling as if I like it here!
- Listening more
- Daily activities and interaction with people in my environment
- Keeping the ways to accomplish this in my mind
- Do more
- Asking: “Is holiness here?” and reach out to others – speak and act
- Being friendly with my neighbor
- Being available
- Praying always to be the kind of person that God wants me to be in welcoming everyone
- Inviting somebody for a casual meal
- Be more a Martha!
- Invite God into my thoughts more often
- Be open to more ways to show hospitality at home and church!
- Listening for God to tell me more when to be more “Martha” and when to be more “Mary”
- Practice becoming more hospitable with others within the church and everywhere
- Encouraging people (friends) to attend Starmount.
- Welcoming newcomers at church
- Listen better
- Take more time for others
- Being a more understanding Christian
- Being more courteous to all people
- Being more understanding to all people
- Attempting to be more of a Mary as I am more a Martha
- Being more hospitable at church
- Being more of a doer
- Being friendlier to people I don’t know

**Nurture**
- Meet a new person, extend opportunities to get to know the person
- I am going to visit a family, whom I do not know, around the corner. This morning I saw a Disaster One truck in their drive.
- Being open and friendly
- Invite someone to lunch
- Write two caring letters to grieving and/or sick members
- Prayer
- Conscious thought
- Seek out ____________ church and community that I have stayed away from
- Looking for opportunities to nurture
- I will be intentional in speaking to members at church and do more than just great. I will try to move out of my comfort zone
- I will work to nurture my relationship with my husband by being kind and intentional in my actions.
- Be less about me and more about others
- Being open to God’s leading
- Paying attention
- Be more interested in others situations and need
- Be more open to discussion and listening and responding
- Look for those opportunities – take the time
- Being more aware of others needs and my capabilities
- WWJD
- Trying to meet new members
- Nurture the friends ____ I started with some today
- As the heart is ready – remove obstacles to communication, building in new and different ways
- Getting a lawyer (?) for my neighbor
- I will call my sister-in-law who is peeved at me
- Offering assistance to a friend
- Writing a hand-written letter
- Reaching out to people I don’t know (at church)
- Better with names of old and new members
- Watchful where I can help
- In visiting my homebound and facility members I will keep nurture
- Asking God to help me (be) a better nurturer

• Welcome
  - Making honest contact
  - Eye contact
  - Greeting guests at church
  - Work through my shyness and move out of my comfort level to be more welcoming of others in a group setting
  - Work towards intentionally building relationships
  - Thinking of others before self
  - Look to God for opportunities to be welcoming
  - Be alert of/for opportunities and participate/act
  - Finding more qualities in myself that I can improve on to be more welcoming
  - Taking initiative to greet newcomers
Try to read people better so as not to scare them off
Try to engage people in church

Evangelism
- Actions speak louder than words
- Continue to develop relationships in my community
- Be more interested in the other person than yourself
- More intentional in asking others to church activities
- Try to go outside my comfort zone to practice these
- Baking brownies for new neighbors
- Being intentional about Christian practices knowing it is evangelism in action perhaps leading to evangelism in word (sharing my faith)
- Being more intentional in applying these Christian practices daily
- Greeting attendees at church, those that I know, and those that I don’t know
- Spending more time in conversation and relationship with guests and members
- Spending more time coming and going conversations with guests and members
- Moving around the sanctuary on Sundays so that I can talk to different people – until choir starts again
- Drop a hint to a random person
- Just let someone know where I attend church
- Intentionally approaching friends/family with 4 practices
- Being more hospitable!
- Speak to a couple that have been here twice – I missed them last Sunday!
- “being” my faith
- Being warm to others
- Offer more invitations to church/get-togethers/etc.
- Build relationships
- Invitations to Starmount activities
- Include talk of what SPC is doing in social conversations
- Working on putting those 4 practices into my daily activity with others
- Concentrating on using these practice with a family.

Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- The learning in the written response will be what they will be doing from this point forward, understanding that they did or did not accomplish what they hoped to do in the interim time (between the studies and the follow up survey).

Focus Group – Silent Generation
- The learning that will be going on would be during reflection as they listen and process what others in the focus group are saying.

Focus Group – Baby Boomer
- The learning that will be going on would be during reflection as they listen and process what others in the focus group are saying.

Focus Group – Gen X
- The learning that will be going on would be during reflection as they listen and process what others in the focus group are saying.

Focus Group – Gen Y
- The learning that will be going on would be during reflection as they listen and process what others in the focus group are saying.

**Focus Group Follow Up**
- The learning that will be going on continues to be about how to apply the CP and further learning of using them in their lives and the lives of their congregation.

**What will people learn?**

**Bible Study Written Response**
- People will learn how to take the CP that they’ve learned about and put them into practice in their daily lives.

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
- Because there isn’t a further formal learning period, it is hoped that people will learn how to continue to put the CP into use so they move from knowing they don’t know to knowing they know to automatically utilizing the CP in their everyday lives and interactions.

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**
- People will be learning what others think about the same things of which they are being asked.

**Focus Group – Baby Boomer**
- People will be learning what others think about the same things of which they are being asked.

**Focus Group – Gen X**
- People will be learning what others think about the same things of which they are being asked.

**Focus Group – Gen Y**
- People will be learning what others think about the same things of which they are being asked.

**Focus Group Follow Up**
- People will learn how to take the CP that they’ve learned about and put them into practice in their daily lives.

**How will people be reacting?**

**Bible Study Written Response**
- People will be reacting to the bible studies and to the CP – perhaps some will be “negative” or hard on themselves about what they should do or will do; others will react with an “I’ll try…”

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
- People will be reacting by either stating that they did successfully complete the CP-related tasks that they did, or they will say that they didn’t. A lot will depend on what and how they did the CP-related tasks in better understanding whether the feelings/responses/reactions will be positive or negative (mainly on their own accomplishments or not.)

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**
- People will be reacting to the questions being asked.
- People will be reacting in, potentially, a “mob mentality”, where the conversation can be quite positive or quite negative, based upon how the flow and pattern of the conversation goes.
• People will be reacting in ways that are reflective, hopefully engaging in constructive and positive dialogue between focus group members.

**Focus Group – Baby Boomer**
• People will be reacting to the questions being asked.
• People will be reacting in, potentially, a “mob mentality”, where the conversation can be quite positive or quite negative, based upon how the flow and pattern of the conversation goes.
• People will be reacting in ways that are reflective, hopefully engaging in constructive and positive dialogue between focus group members.

**Focus Group – Gen X**
• People will be reacting to the questions being asked.
• People will be reacting in, potentially, a “mob mentality”, where the conversation can be quite positive or quite negative, based upon how the flow and pattern of the conversation goes. However, due to the strong opinions of this focus group, it is less likely to occur.
• People will be reacting in ways that are reflective, hopefully engaging in constructive and positive dialogue between focus group members.

**Focus Group – Gen Y**
• People will be reacting to the questions being asked.
• People will be reacting in, potentially, a “mob mentality”, where the conversation can be quite positive or quite negative, based upon how the flow and pattern of the conversation goes. However, due to the strong opinions of this focus group, it is less likely to occur.
• People will be reacting in ways that are reflective, hopefully engaging in constructive and positive dialogue between focus group members.

**Focus Group Follow Up**
• People will be reacting to the questions asked, thinking about how they can be applied in their future interactions with others

*What will the results look like?*

**Bible Study Written Response**
• The results will look like responses to allow for people to provide and identify ways in which they will engage the CP in their daily lives

**Bible Study Follow Up Written Response**
• The results will look like the listing of both successful accomplishments and “excuses” as to why they don’t think they successfully achieved putting the CP into practice.

**Focus Group – Silent Generation**
• The results will look like a conversation and responses to questions among people of a similar age who are all members of the same church family.

**Focus Group – Baby Boomer**
• The results will look like a conversation and responses to questions among people of a similar age who are all members of the same church family.

**Focus Group – Gen X**
• The results will look like a conversation and responses to questions among people of a similar age who are all members of the same church family.
Focus Group – Gen Y
• The results will look like a conversation and responses to questions among people of a similar age who are all members of the same church family.

Focus Group Follow Up
• The results will look like people who have been introduced to the CP and evangelism and were given time to think about how they have used them and how they will continue to use them
Appendix N: Methodology

Introduction

To better understand how people respond to the Christian Practices under the umbrella of evangelism, it is necessary to collect information from participants. Once collected, the same information can be examined from different methods of analysis. Through the use of appreciative inquiry, narrative inquiry, and Richard Osmer’s method of practical theology, the success of the various methods of introduction to the Christian Practices was ascertained to gain a better understanding.

Qualitative Research Method

The qualitative research method by which information collected for this project was through Appreciative Inquiry. This method contains four stages: discovery, dreaming, designing, and doing. Through this methodology, the researcher desired for a change in the congregation’s societal mindset: a transformational change that translates to a new way of thinking, being, doing, and communicating.

Beckhard and Pritchard attribute seven areas of transformative change of an organization, all which are intertwined:

1. “Change in the kind of work done within the organization and how it is done in the pursuit of producing the organization's service or product;
2. Change in the roles people hold and the relationships they have with each other;
3. Change in the identity of the organization in the marketplace;
4. Change in the relationship of the organization to customers and the outside world;
5. Change in the mission of the organization;
6. Change in the culture of the organization; and
7. Change in the organizations processes for adapting to continuous shifts in the organization's environment.”

Through the four stages of appreciative inquiry, the organization can better understand its new identity, claiming it as its new way of being, doing, and living.

Discovery

The discovering task of the Appreciative Inquiry works to do two things. The task seeks to “develop an in-depth understanding of (a) the ‘life-giving properties’ that are present in those exceptional moments when the organization is performing optimally in human, economic, and organizational terms and (b) of the structures, dynamics and other associated conditions that allow those ‘life-giving properties’ to flourish.”

This task of discovery was completed successfully through the use of focus groups, questionnaires, and surveys. The purpose of this inquiry was to learn how evangelism existed through the Christian Practices of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome are being lived out at Starmount.

Focus groups were administered. Cross sections of the congregation were gathered and selected. The groups, consisting of Starmount members, were selected and held based on the four major demographics of the congregation: the Silent Generation (b. 1925-1945), the Baby Boomers (b. 1946-1964), Generation X (b. 1965-1979), and Generation Y (b. 1979-1996).
Questions attempted to glean from the focus groups what attracted them to Starmount and what they like about being a member of the congregation. Each focus group was approximately one hour in length and was both video and audio recorded. Upon collection, the groups’ conversations were transcribed. These focus groups were by invitation, explaining to each group member what the focus group was going to discuss. By agreeing to serve as a member of the focus group, consent to participate in the group is implied (Appendix O). A follow-up survey was administered to understand the impact of the introduction of the concepts and the training of how to use them.

A multi-week bible study including lecture, discussion, and small group conversation was held to identify how members of Starmount understand Evangelism and the Christian Practices of Invitation, Hospitality, Nurture, and Welcome. After acquiring Informed Consent (Appendix P) from willing participants, at the conclusion of each Bible study in the 6-week series, participants were asked to take a survey. The survey sought to understand how much was learned and comprehended by the participants, including what they did to enact each practice. Following the completion of the 6-week study, participants received a follow-up survey assessing how respondents put the Christian Practices into action, thus “doing evangelism”.

Dreaming

The dreaming task of Appreciative Inquiry asks the question of “what might be”. This task assists in helping this researcher and the congregation seek to “create shared images of what their organization would look, be, feel, and function like if those

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‘exceptional moments’ and the ‘life-giving properties’ in the system became the norm rather than the exception.”39 This task intends to understand and imagine what best practices are in Starmount after identifying what Starmount is currently doing. Where and how can Starmount better put language, understanding, and execution of the Christian Practices of Invitation, Hospitality, Nurture, and Welcome?

Throughout the project, the researcher engaged the data and information to imagine what may be, what respondents may be asking, and how to understand a greater picture of who God is calling Starmount Presbyterian Church to be, not only to newcomers, but also to the greater Greensboro community.

Designing

The design task of Appreciative Inquiry works to give form to values and ideals, asking the question “what should be?”, the researcher and the congregation “agree on the principles that should guide changes in the organization’s sociotechnical architecture and develop the details of whatever changes are thought to be needed, based on the previously articulated guiding principles.”40

The design task included Bible studies, a sermon series, newsletter articles, a weekend-long retreat, usher training, and an understanding of successful social media use in the congregation. These tools assist the congregation in changing the understanding and, in turn, the DNA of the organization.


40. Ibid, 36-37.
Destiny

Destiny, the final task of the Appreciative Inquiry model of qualitative research, has three dimensions to it: recognizing and celebrating what was derived, the initiation of cross-functional projects and innovations to put the findings and plans into place, and is a systematic application to the programs and systems throughout the congregation. This stage asks the question “what will be?”

This task of Appreciative Inquiry sought to implement a theology of evangelism through the four Christian practices of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome into the DNA of Starmount Presbyterian Church. This task was fulfilled by identifying what was done in the past, understanding what it was already doing, and deciding what new activities could take place in the future. The activities completed that were analyzed from the design stage included: weekly newsletter articles, a sermon series, a women’s retreat, a Bible study series, and a Bible study series of that assisted with training the congregation to identify further and embody the Christian Practices of Evangelism.

Data Analysis

Certain biases were present when conducting this research: I am a white, upper-middle class American female with multiple Masters Degrees. As Associate Pastor of Starmount Presbyterian Church, I recognize there is a power dynamic: being a staff person and clergy to the parishioners, they may feel the inability to say “no”. As I reiterated during the Bible study, people did not have to participate in the survey to participate in the Bible study. Bible study participants that did not desire to participate in the survey would not affect how I interacted with them as their pastor either.
Methods of Data Analysis

There are multiple ways the data was analyzed and examined: through Kirkpatrick’s four-level training, narrative inquiry, and Osmer’s practical theology. Each allowed for multiple perspectives in attempts to glean insight and understanding of how the DNA of the organization could change.

Donald Kirkpatrick Four-Level Evaluation Model was also a tool utilized in data analysis. The four levels of interpretation are reaction, learning, behavior, and results. When utilizing this evaluation model in conjunction with Osmer and Kirkpatrick, the data produces rich results.

Level one of Kirkpatrick’s model is Reaction. How did the people respond to the training taking place? To better understand if the training program is valuable is essential to determining if changes will be made in future programs or should the program continue at all. To understand the reaction is to understand how better to improve the program, including any items or topics that were missed in the first program’s attempt.41

Level two of Kirkpatrick’s model is Learning. How much has learning increased because of the training? Do the learning objectives translate across ages and backgrounds? How do different ages of people react and respond to the training? Does gender play a role? All are important questions to answer when examining this step in Kirkpatrick’s model.

The third level of Kirkpatrick’s model is Behavior and Motivation. After determining that learning took place, it is important to understand if those undergoing the training process display that learning in practical ways. How do the trainees apply and put

to use the information they learned? It is important, however, to understand that just because learning has taken place and identified in the first two steps, the behavior may not change unless provided with opportunities to put the learned materials to use.\textsuperscript{42}

The final level of analysis in Kirkpatrick’s model is Results. When examining outcomes, it is important to understand what the outcomes are that have taken place, as well as how the benefit the organization.\textsuperscript{43} It is also important, when using this level of analysis, to attempt to determine if the changes in the organization are because of the training model or other possible factors.

Osmer’s Practical Theology model is also used to analyze data. There are four tasks in this model of interpretation. The first is the Descriptive-Empirical task. In this task, information is collected and processed in a way that identifies patterns from which we can learn. Many times, this task is done informally in everyday conversations and listening. This task enables the researcher to gain a clearer picture of what the organization (or congregation) looks like.

The second task of Osmer’s practical theology is the Interpretive task. This task looks at theories of different disciplines in the arts and sciences to better understand the patterns identified in the descriptive-empirical task.\textsuperscript{44} It is important, in this task of sagely wisdom, which the researcher seeks to better understand the many ways and angles that the data could be construed.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Osmer, 92 of 3256.
The third task of Osmer’s practical theology is the Normative task. This task’s most important aspect is theological and ethical interpretation. The normative task “interprets particular episodes, situations, or contexts, constructing ethical norms to guide our responses, and learning from ‘good practice.’” By discerning and identifying best practices for the organization, the normative task can assist the organization, wondering what ought to be going on.

The final task of Osmer’s Practical Theology interpretation model is the Pragmatic task. This task focuses on forming ways to answer the question of “what will be?” By assisting in strategies of forming an organization’s identity, mission, culture, and operating system, the task will allow leadership to influence what the future of the organization will look like.

Narrative Inquiry provides this researcher with ways to sort data, using the stories, notes, surveys, interviews, and life experiences as the way to better understand the meaning which has been created. Utilizing Polkinghorne’s chronological method of analysis, the data is understood through analysis of each response on its own, seeking out themes in the various responses. The analysis is summarized from the individuals in these groups, deriving the various groups’ summaries about how people understand Christian Practices. Summary pages will be developed for each focus group generation, identifying the similarities and differences in the various groups.

45. Ibid, 1654 of 3256.
46. Ibid, 92 of 3256.
47. Ibid, 2088 of 3256.
A “Conversation”

There are eight specific data sets that will be analyzed for the sake of this project:

- Bible Study Written Response
- Bible Study Follow Up Survey Response
- Bible Study Follow Up Written Response
- Focus Group – Silent Generation
- Focus Group – Baby Boomer
- Focus Group – Generation X
- Focus Group – Generation Y
- Follow Up Survey for Focus Group Participants

Each of these data sets will be examined and analyzed through the methods identified above. The three methods will interact, or have “a conversation”. This “conversation” will allow for Kirkpatrick’s method of data analysis to engage and interact with Osmer’s method of practical theology. Another “conversation” will engage and interact narrative inquiry with Kirkpatrick’s method. Finally, the third “conversation” will be between Osmer’s method of practical theology and narrative inquiry.

Kirkpatrick’s method of data analysis and Osmer’s method of practical theology will cross the two sets of questions together when examining the eight data sets. The questions, when combined for examination, are as follows:

*Osmer’s Descriptive Empirical Task (What is going on?) by Kirkpatrick’s Four Questions:*

- What are people learning?
- What are people doing?
- How are people reacting?
What are the results?

Osmer’s Interpretive Task (Why is this going on?) by Kirkpatrick’s Four Questions:

- Why is this kind of learning happening?
- Why are people doing what they are doing?
- Why are people reacting this way?
- Why are the results like they are?

Osmer’s Normative Task (What ought to be going on?) by Kirkpatrick’s Four Questions:

- What kind of learning ought people be doing?
- What should be going on with what they are doing?
- How should people be reacting?
- What should the results look like?

Osmer Pragmatic Task (What will be going on?) x Kirkpatrick’s Four Questions:

- What learning will people be doing?
- What will people learn?
- How will people be reacting?
- What will the results look like?

Kirkpatrick’s method of data analysis and narrative inquiry will cross the two sets of questions together when examining the eight data sets. The questions, when combined for examination, are as follows:

Narrative Inquiry (Chronology) by Kirkpatrick’s Reaction:

- How do members of the Silent Generation react?
- How do members of the Baby Boomer generation react?
- How do members of Generation X react?
• How do members of Generation Y react?

Narrative Inquiry (Chronology) by Kirkpatrick’s Learnings:
• How do members of the Silent Generation learn?
• How do members of the Baby Boomer generation learn?
• How do members of Generation X learn?
• How do members of Generation Y learn?

Narrative Inquiry (Chronology) by Kirkpatrick’s Behavior:
• How do members of the Silent Generation behave?
• How do members of the Baby Boomer generation behave?
• How do members of Generation X behave?
• How do members of Generation Y behave?

Narrative Inquiry (Chronology) by Kirkpatrick’s Results
• What are the outcomes for members of the Silent Generation?
• What are the outcomes for members of the Baby Boomer generation?
• What are the outcomes for members of Generation X?
• What are the outcomes for members of Generation Y?

Narrative Inquiry (Function) by Kirkpatrick’s Reactions:
• What are the reactions of males versus the reactions of females?
• What are the reactions of passive members (those who do not participate in the life of the congregation) versus the reactions of active members (those who participate in the life of the congregation)?
• What are the reactions of those with no responsibilities in leadership versus the reaction of those with responsibilities in leadership?
Narrative Inquiry (Function) by Kirkpatrick’s Learnings:

- What are the learnings of males versus the learnings of females?
- What are the learnings of passive members (those who do not participate in the life of the congregation) versus the learnings of active members (those who participate in the life of the congregation)?
- What are the learnings of those with no responsibilities in leadership versus the learnings of those with responsibilities in leadership?

Narrative Inquiry (Function) by Kirkpatrick’s Behavior:

- What is the behavior of males versus the behavior of females?
- What are the learnings of passive members (those who do not participate in the life of the congregation) versus the behavior of active members (those who participate in the life of the congregation)?
- What are the learnings of those with no responsibilities in leadership versus the behavior of those with responsibilities in leadership?

Narrative Inquiry (Function) by Kirkpatrick’s Results:

- What are the results of males versus the results of females?
- What are the results of passive members (those who do not participate in the life of the congregation) versus the results of active members (those who participate in the life of the congregation)?
- What are the results of those with no responsibilities in leadership versus the results of those with responsibilities in leadership?

Narrative Inquiry (Storytelling) by Kirkpatrick’s Levels of Analysis:

- What are the differences in reactions? What are the generalities in reactions?
• What are the differences in learnings? What are the generalities in learnings?
• What are the differences in behaviors? What are the generalities in behaviors?
• What are the differences in results? What are the generalities in results?

Narrative Inquiry (Sequence) by Kirkpatrick’s Levels of Analysis:

• What is the order of reactions?
• What is the order of learnings?
• What is the order of behaviors?
• What is the order of results?

Osmer’s method of practical theology and narrative inquiry will cross the two sets of questions together when examining the eight data sets. The questions, when combined for examination, are as follows:

Osmer’s Descriptive Empirical Task (What is going on?) by Narrative Inquiry (Chronology):

• What is going on with members of the Silent Generation?
• What is going on with members of the Baby Boomer generation?
• What is going on with members of Generation X?
• What is going on with members of Generation Y?

Osmer’s Interpretive Task (Why is this going on?) by Narrative Inquiry (Chronology):

• Why is this going on with members of the Silent Generation?
• Why is this going on with members of the Baby Boomer generation?
• Why is this going on with members of Generation X?
• Why is this going on with members of Generation Y?

Osmer’s Normative Task (What ought to be going on?) by Narrative Inquiry (Chronology):
• What ought to be going on with members of the Silent Generation?
• What ought to be going on with members of the Baby Boomer generation?
• What ought to be going on with members of Generation X?
• What ought to be going on with members of Generation Y?

Osmer’s Pragmatic Task (How will we respond?) by Narrative Inquiry (Chronology):
• How will members of the Silent Generation respond?
• How will members of the Baby Boomer generation respond?
• How will members of Generation X respond?
• How will members of Generation Y respond?

Osmer’s Descriptive Empirical Task (What is going on?) by Narrative Inquiry (Function):
• What is going on with males? What is going on with females?
• What is going on with passive members (those who do not participate in the life of the congregation)? What is going on with active members (those who participate in the life of the congregation)?
• What is going on with those with no responsibilities in leadership? What is going on with those with responsibilities in leadership?

Osmer’s Interpretive Task (Why is this going on?) by Narrative Inquiry (Function):
• Why is this going on with males? Why is this going on with females?
• Why is this going on with passive members (those who do not participate in the life of the congregation)? Why is this going on with active members (those who participate in the life of the congregation)?
• Why is this going on with those with no responsibilities in leadership? Why is this going on with those with responsibilities in leadership?
Osmer’s Normative Task (What ought to be going on?) by Narrative Inquiry (Function):

- What ought to be going on with males? What ought to be going on with females?
- What ought to be going on with passive members (those who do not participate in the life of the congregation)? What ought to be going on with active members (those who participate in the life of the congregation)?
- What ought to be going on with those with no responsibilities in leadership? What ought to be going on with those with responsibilities in leadership?

Osmer’s Pragmatic Task (What will be going on?) by Narrative Inquiry (Function):

- What will be going on with males? What will be going on with females?
- What will be going on with passive members (those who do not participate in the life of the congregation)? What will be going on with active members (those who participate in the life of the congregation)?
- What will be going on with those with no responsibilities in leadership? What will be going on with those with responsibilities in leadership?

Osmer’s Tasks by Narrative Inquiry (Storytelling):

- Descriptive Empirical Task: What are the differences in what is going on? What are the generalities in going on?
- Interpretive Task: What are the differences in why this is going on? What are the generalities in why this is going on?
- Normative Task: What are the differences in what ought to be going on? What are the generalities in what ought to be going on?
• Pragmatic Task: What are the differences in what will be going on? What are the generalities in what will be going on?

Osmer’s Tasks by Narrative Inquiry (Sequence):

• Descriptive Empirical Task: What is the sequence of what is going on?
• Interpretive Task: What is the sequence of why this is going on?
• Normative Task: What is the sequence of what ought to be going on?
• Pragmatic Task: What is the sequence of what will be going on?

When answering all of the questions throughout these “conversations”, further analysis will take place to determine what teaching and learning took place and what changes can be made to produce successful education and learning within a congregation in the future.
Appendix O: Implied Consent

Implied Consent

May 16, 2016

You are invited to participate in a follow-up study of evangelism. I hope to learn how invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome are important to building relationships in the church. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you previously participated in a focus group for this project, are a member of Starmount Presbyterian Church, and within a specific generational demographic.

Because you agreed to participate in the focus group, this form is a reminder of your implied consent. Your replying to the emailed questions indicates your implied consent for this survey as well. As a reminder, the focus group was designed to understand the thoughts and beliefs about the church, worship, and being a congregational body as it pertains to specific generational demographics. This follow-up survey should not take more than about 30 minutes. No benefits accrue to you for answering the survey, but your responses will be used to better understand the similarities and differences in generations of the congregation. Any discomfort or inconvenience to you derives only from the amount of time taken to complete the survey.

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

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relationships with Starmount Presbyterian Church or Reverend Kathryn Campbell. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

If you have any questions, please ask. If you have additional questions later, contact Kathryn Campbell at pastor.kathryn@gmail.com or 336.740.0555.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kathryn G N Campbell
Appendix P: Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: Christian Practices of Relationships

You are invited to be in a research study of understandings of Christian practices of relationships. You were selected as a possible participant because you decided to attend the 6-week bible study. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Kathryn Campbell as part of my doctor of ministry (D.Min.) project at Western Theological Seminary. My advisor is Rev. Dr. John Schmidt.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is: to gain a better understanding of what participants’ understandings of the concepts of invitation, hospitality, nurture, and welcome are to their own lives and the life of their congregation. Through surveys, information will be gathered to determine comfort levels with each of these concepts. Through bible study, participants will gain a working definition of the above terms and to think critically of how they can be applied to their interactions with others.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following: at the beginning of each bible study, complete a survey regarding your understanding of the evening’s topic. Participate in the bible study (as many as your schedule allows). At the completion of the bible study (approximately 1.5 hours in length), complete a second survey regarding understanding of the evening’s topic. At the end of the 6-week bible study course, I will deliver another survey asking your continued understanding and growth based on the study (or studies) in which you participate. Each survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The study has no intended risks. However, there may be changes of heart, mind, and behavior.

There is no direct benefit of participation.

Indirect benefits to yourself/or the general public of participation are deeper personal faith growth; contribution of knowledge to other participants; improved community relationships.

In the event that this research activity results in an injury, treatment will be available, including first aid, emergency treatment, counseling, and follow-up care as needed. However, payment for any such treatment must be provided by you or your third party payer, if any, (such as health insurance, Medicare, etc.).
If there are psychological risks, this researcher recommends the Presbyterian Counseling Center (3713 Richfield Rd, Greensboro, NC 27410; (336) 288-1484) or other like agency for referral.

**Confidentiality:**

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

If anyone besides the researcher will have access to the raw data, these persons must be identified.

Raw data will be retained but all identifying information removed by July 29, 2018.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Kathryn Campbell, Western Theological Seminary and/or with other cooperating institutions, including Starmount Presbyterian Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Kathryn Campbell. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at Starmount Presbyterian Church; 3501 W. Market Street, Greensboro, 27403.

Email: pastor.kathryn@gmail.com or kathryn@starmountpres.org.

Phone: 336.740.0555 or 336.299.8131.

You may contact the student’s (Kathryn’s) advisor at: johnedwinschmidt@gmail.com.

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

**Statement of Consent:**

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

Signature __________________________________________ Date________

Signature of parent or guardian _________________________________ Date________

Signature of minor subject’s assent ______________________________ Date________
Signature of investigator ___________________________ Date ________

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

Signature ___________________________________________ Date ________
Appendix Q: Thank You’s

- To God for the call placed on my life and heart. To Jesus Christ as my Savior. To the Holy Spirit for the continued ways that you work and move and live and breathe in my life, conversations, and relationships each and every day.

- To my husband, Austin: I give thanks for your steadfast love, strength, and support through this whole process. For all of the hours that were not spent with you because I was reading, writing, and studying cannot be reclaimed. However, I share and celebrate this project with you.

- To our daughter, Avis Dare: you have never known Mommy as anything but a Doctor of Ministry student. As cliché as it sounds, I did this now so I could spend more time with you as you continue to grow and develop your own faith, your own thoughts, and your own sense of self. I love you and cannot wait to see the mighty things you will dare to do in the years to come.

- To my family: thank you for pitching in, whether it be helping Austin with Avis while I was in Michigan, cooking a meal, or just trying to understand what it is that I’m doing – thank you. I love you all.

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