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An Evolving Work of Art:
Leadership Development among Early Career Adults

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Abstract

An Evolving Work of Art: Leadership Development among Early Career Adults

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THE PROBLEM: Based on actual and anecdotal data, early career adults are less likely to make themselves available as leaders in their communities and congregations. Likewise, as society becomes even more secularized, there are fewer opportunities for early career adults to explore the intersection between work and faith. Even among those who are active in their faith communities, there are few opportunities for young adults to dig deeply into questions of purpose, character, and call, especially as these questions relate to their specific careers. How might that reality impact the future of our communities, families, congregations, and places of employment?

RESEARCH QUESTION: Will an intensive, cohort-based program of small group and one-on-one engagement significantly affect the way early career adults see the intersection between faith and life and effectively equip them for community engagement/leadership?

SUMMARY: Eight early career adults (ages 27-37) were invited into an intensive cohort experience rooted in spiritual formation, self-reflection, vocational discernment, and leadership training. The nine-month program used a three-pronged strategy to EQUIP participants with a theological framework (four months of weekly gatherings and two retreats), CONNECT participants with vocational mentors (five months with a vocational mentor), and MOBILIZE participants to be faithful change-agents in their vocation and community.

CONCLUSIONS: Based on leader observations and extensive group and individual assessment, the pilot program was effective in (1) forming a strong sense of belonging; (2) provoking robust conversation about the intersection of faith and work, (3) providing helpful tools for self-assessment, (4) building desire for vocational mentoring, and (5) amplifying the need for faithful leadership among early career adults. What is not known is the program's long-term impact on participants, especially as to whether or not they become more faithfully engaged as community leaders.

An Evolving Work of Art:
Leadership Development Among Early Career Adults

By

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All summer
the mockingbird
in his pearl-gray coat
and his white-windowed sings

flies
from the hedge to the top of the pine
and begins to sing, but it's neither
lilting nor lovely,

for he is the thief of other sound—
whistles and truck brakes and dry hinges
plus all the songs
of other birds in his neighborhood;

mimicking and elaborating,
he sings with humor and bravado,
so I have to wait a long time
for the softer voice of his own life

to come through. He begins
by giving up all his usual flutter
and settling down on the pine's forelock
then looking around

as though to make sure he's alone;
then he slaps each wing against his breast,
where his heart is,
and copying nothing, begins

easing into it
as though it was not half so easy
as rollicking,
as though his subject now

was his true self,
which of course was as dark and secret
as anyone else's,
and it was too hard—

perhaps you understand—
to speak or to sing it
to anything or anyone
but the sky.

Mary Oliver, *Mockingbird*

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Introduction: *An evolving work of art*

We are, all of us, a lovely, evolving work of art.

My seventh-grade confirmation teacher -- name long-since-lost -- dramatically described God's revelation as a signpost pointing to the Kingdom of God. I can picture him holding up a large arrow to make his point.

I wish it was that easy to discern God's plan and purpose for my life and this world.

We have been seeking such divine self-disclosure for centuries, which has led the church into the formation of creeds and confessional statements, rooted in the Gospel-writers narrative about the greatest self-disclosure of all, Jesus of Nazareth. Such profound, revelatory moments no doubt have shaped the church and the world, offering Christians and non-Christians alike a particular worldview, a lens through which one might see the world.

As a Christian, I am the gracious recipient of all that broad, general revelatory "stuff," shared with me by parents, pastors, Sunday School teachers, camp counselors, and faith mentors who did their best to honor Jesus' plea in Matthew 28: to make disciples who make disciples.

As a pastor, I'm motivated by the same plea, called to guide fellow travelers into a better understanding of God's general revelation, while considering ways in which God is, even now, revealing God's self within a particular context.

But it's not easy, and the signposts are not always so obvious.

Revelation in context. In late September 2019, our congregation hosted the pastor of Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem in order to sign a formal covenant between the two congregations. Along with a handful of other Palestinian Christian theologians, the Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac has helped to form a distinct Palestinian theology in the midst of conflict. Much of the theology was fleshed out during the second intifada in the early 2000s, when the conflict between Israel and Palestine was particularly intense, killing thousands. In a turning point moment, Palestinian militia hid inside the Church of the Nativity, which was quickly surrounded by Israeli tanks and hundreds of soldiers. Three blocks away, tanks and bulldozers surrounded Christmas Lutheran Church, threatening to remove a portion of it for security purposes. Standing between bulldozer and church in the middle of the night, the Christmas Lutheran's pastor began to form a new kind of theology rooted in a mutual will to share the land. He credits it entirely to God's revelation in the streets of Bethlehem.¹

In 2014, our congregation was developing a three-year strategic plan, meeting with 25 community leaders to help identify the community's trends, opportunities, and needs. We were stunned to hear a common concern, articulated most clearly by the director of prisons: third grade reading, a measuring stick used in forecasting the size of a community's prisons. A very large percentage of our community's third graders were not reading at grade level, which has enormous implications on future academic success, poverty, and imprisonment. We did not expect to move in that direction with our strategic plan, but after significant prayer and consideration, we identified the moment as revelatory – God revealing a portion of God's self

¹ Raheb, Mitri. *Bethlehem Besieged: Stories of Hope in Times of Trouble*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 2004).

through vulnerable, at-risk third graders in our community. It has since become a significant part of our congregation's ministry, rooted in what we discerned as God's self-disclosure.

Three years later, we were developing another strategic plan, meeting again with the community's leaders for direction. Again, we were fascinated to hear a common theme, this one focused on leadership. In particular, there was/is growing concern over the lack of young leaders who feel compelled and/or prepared for community engagement and leadership. We have felt the same concern at St. John's, which led us to meet with two different groups of early career adults. Of the fifteen who were convened, there was strong consensus about two concerns: lack of direction and the need for mentoring.

Our strategic plan was built upon three legs. One was leadership, with a particular emphasis on building leaders among early career adults.

Revelation or "Idolatrous Manipulation"? Although we could hardly be accused of what John Calvin labeled "idolatrous manipulation" – the manipulation or control of revelation² – we were cautious against forming a strategic plan that, ultimately, was self-serving. Is our concern for leadership development so that we can fill committee chairs and the congregation's other functional responsibilities? Is our ultimate concern for long-term survival? Viability? Although a congregation must take seriously its own sustainability, is God overly concerned with revealing a will and purpose that is motivated by selfish intentions? Would such a purpose reveal God and God's intentions to a broad audience? Would it be a signpost to the Kingdom of God?

² Migliore, Daniel L. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004).

As we tried to clarify our intentions, I was led to a continuing education event at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City. We would spend a week studying Redeemer's Center for Faith and Work. In preparation for the course, I read Tim Keller's book, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work*. The book and conference gave me clarity and a vocabulary that helped me better understand the yearnings of these early career adults. They were searching for a better understanding of identity and purpose within their vocational careers, a vocational identity that is clearly connected to their spiritual identity.

God worked through this strategic planning process and the conference to bring each of us to greater clarity and confidence in our mission regarding leadership: we would invite early career adults into a period of intensive study, small group engagement, and vocational mentoring so that they might be equipped for community engagement and leadership. More specifically, we discerned that our congregation's purpose, in part, is to create space for early career adults to identify and interpret God's revelatory acts in their lives.

This paper outlines that journey, in which eight early career adults were invited into a time of deep self-reflection amidst intensive community in order to make room for God's grace-filled revelation. As Migliore writes, revelation can bring someone to a place of "unveiling" ... "a crucial experience of new insight and self-discovery" based on their own very specific contexts, which includes, among other things, vocation and community.³

³ Ibid., 30.

Hoped-for Outcomes. As we journeyed through this nine month “unveiling,” we anticipated a number of outcomes for our participants:

1. A greater understanding of one’s identity in relation to God’s identity;
2. Trust in God and one another;
3. Recognize the importance of narrative as we learn to listen attentively to one another;
4. To identify ways in which participants might bear the light of Christ in places other than the church;
5. To know that this process offers participants a glimpse into the Kingdom of God and a way of seeing the incarnate God in their very particular contexts;⁴
6. The recognition that this “unveiling” is not a static moment of discovery, but a dynamic process that is continuously unfolding.⁵

I am reminded of the preface to the parable of the Prodigal Son. Luke writes that the tax collectors and sinners were “gathering around” Jesus (Luke 15:1, NIV). When we see the verb “gathering around” as a verb of continuation, we see an added layer of beauty in the story – that those who were outside the “norm” of the church were beginning to follow Jesus in greater and greater numbers. They followed *and continued to follow*. Martin Luther wrote that “we are not yet what we shall be, but we are growing toward it; the process is not yet finished, but it is going on; this is not the end, but it is the road.”

⁴ Niebuhr, Richard. *The Meaning of Revelation*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press), 2006, pp. 31-41.

⁵ Niebuhr, 70.

Among many other things, it is my hope that this project/journey will reveal a very basic truth: that we are, all of us, a lovely and *evolving* work of art.

Chapter 1: Setting the Stage

It's a good question: Is there need for *another* project focused on millennials?

As the most analyzed generation in history, it seems that there's not much left to discuss about these youngish adults. There have been more books, articles, and dissertations written about millennials than any other topic in the social sciences. The "hover generation" of parents has become the "hover generation" of researchers, saturating bookshelves, airwaves, and blogs with nuanced answers to the somewhat tired question, "What are we going to do with them?"

This project will not add to the broad mix of millennial research but seeks to address a much more specific question faced by congregations and communities that are starting to turn over the keys to this younger generation: How might early career adults be effectively and faithfully equipped for leadership?⁶

Before that question can be answered, it's useful to draw from current research about millennials. Within that field are three topics that significantly affect their preparation for leadership:

1. Cultural shifts
2. The work-faith dilemma
3. Changing trends in leadership development

⁶ This project distinguishes between millennials and early career adults. Although often one-in-the-same, our focus is on a subset of millennials who have been engaged in their career of choice between 2-6 years, thus "early career." The expectation is that they are somewhat settled in their profession and beginning to ask deeper questions of purpose and calling.

Cultural Shifts

Robert Wuthnow and Sharon Daloz Parks have contributed greatly to our understanding of millennials and faith.⁷ They, and many others, give significant attention to the changing world of young adults: delayed marriage, children (fewer and later), uncertainties of work and money, higher education (older students, more debt), social relationships, globalization, and the information explosion.⁸ Of those, dramatic shifts in social relationships are evident as social media and online dating have proven. Young adults have a much broader field of social relationships, but a much narrower field of “significant” relationships.⁹ They are less likely to engage with civic organizations, but more likely to engage with volunteer opportunities. They are more likely to sit at home and watch Netflix, while maintaining a list of social contacts that literally reaches around the world. Of particular note, “for many young people, the scramble to get on their feet financially shapes nearly every other aspect of their lives.”¹⁰

Parks contends that this cultural shift has significantly affected the depth at which young adults engage with the world around them.

“A growing concern is that too many of our young adults are not being encouraged to ask the big questions that awaken critical thought in the first place. Swept up in critical assumptions that remain unexamined (and economic assumptions that function religiously), they easily become vulnerable to the conventional cynicism of our time or to the economic and political agendas of a consumption-driven yet ambivalent age.”¹¹

⁷ Wuthnow, Robert. *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings are Shaping the Future of American Religion*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) and Parks, Sharon Daloz. *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

⁸ Of note: Scores of books and journal articles have been written about millennials and faith. Because the research is relatively new and continues to evolve, I have chosen authors who represent a very broad theological perspective, so as not to be overly generous to a particular viewpoint.

⁹ Wuthnow, 37.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

¹¹ Parks, xii.

As a result, Parks writes that there is a critical need for mentors and “mentoring environments” that can help young adults “feel grounded in a world with shallow roots.”¹²

David Kinnaman adds to the discussion by analyzing extensive research surrounding young adults and Christianity.¹³ His study uncovers a variety of challenges, leading him to conclude that “Christianity has an image problem.”¹⁴ Of those challenges, several jump out: that young adults exhibit little trust in the Christian faith, there is a lack of respect for Christ-followers, and the opinions they have about Christianity are strong and mostly negative.¹⁵ A survey respondent from Mississippi summarizes the wide-spread opinion of young adults about the church: “Christianity has become bloated with blind followers ... and become a juggernaut of fearmongering that has lost its own heart.”¹⁶

Based on the research above, is it time for the church to rebrand itself in hopes of attracting more young adults?¹⁷ Maybe, but that’s not the focus of this project. Our ultimate goal is not to be more popular or to fill more seats in our sanctuaries, but to be effective agents of spiritual transformation in the lives of young adults *so that they might faithfully and effectively lead our congregations and communities.*

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Kinnaman, David and Gabe Lyons. *Unchristian: What a New Generation Thinks about Christianity ... and Why it Matters*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007).

¹⁴ Ibid., 11.

¹⁵ Ibid., 13.

¹⁶ Ibid., 15.

¹⁷ The question is somewhat tongue-in-cheek. Young adults are particularly savvy at recognizing new lipstick on old sows. After all, they’ve been the object of intensive, targeted advertising all their lives, surrounded by shallow marketing schemes that prioritize image and flashiness over substance. Churches that follow a similar, market-drive approach do so at their own peril. A hypothesis of this project is that young adults are (1) craving relationships (individual and corporate) that are authentic and meaningful, and (2) eager for conversation that is purpose-filled and dares to address the deeper questions of life and faith.

The Work-Faith Dilemma

Increasingly, life is pigeon-holed, separated in neatly distinct categories of family, social relationships, work, and faith. As society becomes even more secularized, there are fewer opportunities for adults early in their careers to explore the intersection between work and faith. Even among young adults who are active in their faith communities, there are few opportunities for them to dig deeply into questions of purpose, character, and call, especially as these questions relate to their specific careers.

Dorothy Sayers and Timothy Keller write passionately about the risk of further separating the realms of work and faith, especially among a communities' youngest leaders -- a risk that will have dramatic effect on communities, families, congregations, and places of employment.¹⁸

Keller contends that the church is seriously underdeveloped in taking seriously the realm of work as a ministry expression. He connects one's work to God's plan for renewing the world that originated with the divine call to Israel, a people chosen to show forth God's purpose in life *and work*. In that light, work becomes a calling when it is "reimagined as a mission of service to something beyond merely our own interest." The purpose of work is elevated "from making a living to loving our neighbor and at the same time releases us from the crushing burden of working primarily to prove ourselves."¹⁹

¹⁸ Sayers, Dorothy L. *Why Work? Discovering Real Purpose, Peace, and Fulfillment at Work. A Christian Perspective*. (Out of print; originally published in 1949) and Keller, Timothy, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work*. (New York: Riverhead Books, 2012).

¹⁹ Keller, 4.

Sayers, writing 50 years earlier, makes the same claim:

“The habit of thinking about work as something one does to make money is so ingrained in us that we can scarcely imagine what a revolutionary change it would be to think about it instead in terms of the work done” ... such that “work is not, primarily, a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do.”²⁰

Kester Brewin contributes to the discussion by claiming that young adults are crying out for an organic, bottom-up vision for church that gives less attention to the gathered nature of the church -- evident primarily in Sunday morning worship -- and more attention to the scattered church, i.e., the ways in which God’s people are scattered throughout their communities via life *and work*.²¹

Changing Trends in Leadership Development

Leadership is another topic that has received wide-spread attention in the last several decades. A traditional model of leadership embraces patriarchal efforts to exert authority and control over subjects, while contemporary models seek the exact opposite, such that subjects/others aren’t controlled, but empowered.

But Margaret Wheatley boldly claims that “in the past few years, ever since uncertainty became our insistent 21st century companion, leadership has taken a great leap backwards to the familiar territory of command and control.”²² Whether right or wrong, the claim amplifies the need for better and more intentional leadership development, especially among young, early career adults.

²⁰ Sayers, 11.

²¹ Brewin, Kester. *Signs of Emergence: A Vision for Church that is Organic, Networked, Decentralized, Bottom-up, Communal, Flexible, Always Evolving*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2004).

²² Wheatley, Margaret. “How is Your Leadership?”, *Margaret J. Wheatley*, 2005, <http://www.margaretwheatley.com/articles/howisyourleadership.html>

There are lots of opinions about what that should look like. Four trends are particularly interesting, especially within the faith community.

Leaders who are vulnerable. Brené Brown makes a compelling argument that contemporary leaders need to dispel the cultural myth that vulnerability is weakness. Being vulnerable, she explains, helps leaders connect more authentically with their core emotions and more honestly with the experiences that bring purpose and meaning to life.²³

Leaders who boldly seek the common good. A *New York Times* bestseller and hit movie go a long way to highlight Bryan Stevenson's cry for a new kind of leadership, one that dares to focus on justice and mercy for all.²⁴ Greg Ellison agrees, writing that it takes fearless courage to seek the common good, insisting that a new generation of leaders is needed to draw on the community's collective voice in order to find real solutions to chronic problems.²⁵

Leaders who lead from a place of relationship. Jesus is the perfect example of relationship-based leadership, carefully and intentionally nurturing his relationships with God, his disciples, and the broader community around him. Marva Dawn looks to this relationship-oriented Jesus as a model for leadership, using Romans 12 as a prescription. The result will be communities that are healthier and more joyful. "Intimacy and neighborliness are on the wane in our culture," she writes, which leads to "individuals and nations not knowing how to relate to one another." "The Christian community could offer an alternative society," one that is rooted in joy and that seeks "to become more loving toward others."²⁶

²³ Brown, Brené. *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to be Vulnerable Transforms the way we Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*. (New York: Gotham Books, 2012).

²⁴ Stevenson, Bryan. *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption*. (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015).

²⁵ Ellison II, Gregory C. *Fearless Dialogues: A New Movement for Justice*. (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2017).

²⁶ Dawn, Marva J. *Truly the Community: Romans 12 and How to Be the Church*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992).

Leaders who embrace inclusivity. John Pavlovitz draws a compelling analogy when describing the future of the church: a bigger table. Leaders must be willing to reach beyond established cultural and ethical norms if they are to make room for a broader audience, especially among young adults. After all, he writes, while the present-day church sets goals for inclusivity, younger generations assume it. Leaders who embrace inclusivity refuse to “let folks eat alone,” thereby helping to build more authentic, hopeful community.²⁷

It’s exciting to note that these four trends reflect what Kinnaman claims are four core values among the millennial generation: authenticity, justice, community, and inclusivity. The hope is that early career adults will learn to lead from these values in ways that will dramatically affect their communities, families, and congregations.

Before a plan could be developed, it was critically important to take a close look at these cultural shifts, the work-faith imbalance, and some trends in leadership development. With that work behind us, we move forward in forming a team and building a plan, the focus of chapter 2.

²⁷ Pavlovitz, John. *A Bigger Table: Building Messy, Authentic, and Hopeful Community*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2017).

Chapter 2: Building the Plan

Although chapter 1 set the stage for why it matters to focus on building leaders among early career adults, it should be noted that the idea did not originate in a vacuum. Emory's Doctor of Ministry program requires participants to dive deeply into a highly contextualized community and congregational analysis. The focus on early career adults came from that analysis, as both community and church leaders identified the crying need for young adults to engage more fully in community and congregational leadership.²⁸ To test whether this perceived need was worth addressing and whether proper resources were available to do so, I engaged in a two-step process:

1. Community-based Participatory Research
2. The congregation's potential buy-in

²⁸ This project has a particular context: St. John's Lutheran Church in Salisbury, North Carolina. St. John's is a large, historically significant church in the exact center of town, a community of 34,000 people within a county of 140,000. Founded in 1747, St. John's was "Salisbury's first church," born of German immigrants who had travelled from Pennsylvania through the Shenandoah Valley before settling in North Carolina's Yadkin Valley. 95 percent of St. John's members are white, which is not a good reflection of the community's demographic (Salisbury: 55 percent white, 35 percent black, 10 percent Hispanic; Rowan County: 73 percent white, 17 percent black, 8 percent Hispanic). Like the community, St. John's draws its leadership from a subset of people who are mostly retired and almost exclusively upper middle class, hardly reflective of a community with low household income (Salisbury's median household income is \$36,701; \$43,069 in the county) and high poverty (30.5 percent in Salisbury, 18 percent in the county). The congregation has a long history of active community engagement. Highlights include a 180 student Child Development Center that serves mostly low- and middle-income families; significant engagement with the community's public schools; and the St. John's Community Ministry Center (CMC), a former law office building that the congregation purchased in 2012. The CMC provides rent-free space to six non-profit groups that are consistent with the congregation's vision: Young Life, the Boy Scouts local and district offices, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Narcotics Anonymous, and a local food cooperative. The congregation worships on Sunday mornings in three distinct styles within three distinct worship venues: a small, intimate chapel service, a large contemporary worship service in its Faith Center (completed in 2015), and a highly traditional service in its main sanctuary (dedicated in 1927) that embraces the fulness of Lutheran liturgy.

Community-based Participatory Research

Before making too many assumptions about early career adults and leadership, I wanted to gather input among the millennials in my own congregation. To do so, I conducted a careful inventory of young adult engagement at St. John's and then interviewed two groups of young adults regarding leadership.

Inventory. I inventoried all those at St. John's who fall in the 22-40 age group and then listed their areas of leadership, differentiating between functional leadership (e.g., serving on a finance committee) or ministry leadership (e.g., directing Vacation Bible School).

Interviews. I hosted information-collecting gatherings with two different age groups, 22-33 (younger millennials) and 33-40 (older millennials). I hosted the gatherings at a local pizza restaurant and had pizza and drinks on hand for all the participants. Each gathering lasted one hour, although both groups could have continued the conversation with ease. I tried to gather groups of 5-7, with half the participants considered "disengaged" in positions of leadership and the other half considered "engaged" or "highly engaged" in leadership. I invited seven younger millennials, among whom five attended. I also invited eight of the older millennials, among whom four attended. Addendum 1 describes the participants of both groups. Although I preferred personal/group interviews, four participants (all from the older millennial group) asked if they could respond by email because they would be out of town. I added their responses to the interview summaries. It should be noted that the invitation email indicated that the conversation would be focused on questions of leadership. After a brief introduction to the project, I asked for general comments, then guided participants through the questions

(Addendum 2). I served as notetaker so as not to bias the conversation. Two observations are worth noting.

Observation 1: The two groups define leadership in very different ways.

It was striking the very different ways in which the two groups approached the questions, even though both are labeled “millennials.”²⁹ Many researches prefer labeling this “older millennial” group as its own micro-generation because of the wide age range (nearly 20 years) and the distinct differences between the two. One factor worth noting, and perhaps the most important factor: all those from the “older millennial” sample are parents with children between the ages of 5-15. As you will notice, their responses were reflective of highly involved parents and their families. Addendum 1 provides demographic background for each of the participants. Henceforth, the “older millennials” are labeled as Group A and the “younger millennials” as Group B.

“Define leadership.” When asked to define “leadership” and/or share a word or image that comes to mind when they hear “leadership,” Group A was quick to respond with anxiety: “Stressful,” “huge commitment,” “a lot of time.” In fact, the group provided no positive feedback regarding the word, while Group B immediately responded with positive words and feelings: “Becoming more involved in something you’re passionate about”; “a process of showing people what to do and how to do it”; “a process that takes time”; “it involves good mentors.”

²⁹ A quick Wikipedia search shows that the millennial generation includes those born between the years 1984-2004, although some have narrowed that span to include 1981-1997.

Admittedly, some responses may reflect the group's dynamic; but it is worth noting that Group B focused much of their attention on the importance of good mentors in leadership development, often using the words "coach" and "teacher." In describing leadership qualities they admire most (question #2), they focused on leaders who are immitatable,³⁰ willing to walk alongside those they lead ("invest" was a word often used), more interested in the process than the product, flexible, authentic, unafraid to fail, while willing to "own up to mistakes they've made."

While Group B focused on the leader as mentor, Group A valued leaders who are efficient administrators. They define strong leaders as highly organized, good communicators, dependable, "pleasant to be around," and non-stressed. My hunch was that Group A participants responded out of their own baggage with good/bad leaders. Group B responded with more self-reflection, recognizing their own need for mentoring.

Interestingly, Group B was more entrepreneurial in their responses, eager to grow and learn and think through new strategies and ministries. Perhaps that's reflective of being young. It brought to mind Dudley and Ammerman's observations regarding church leaders who navigate change effectively. Of the seven habits they identify, six were phrases identified by Group B in their list of effective leadership qualities: honesty, curiosity ("open to new ideas"), experimentation (i.e., "entrepreneurial"), hospitality ("someone who is genuinely interested in me as a person"), and embracing conflict ("willing to make a mistake ... and own up to it").³¹

³⁰ Although a non-word, "immitatable" is a word we have chosen to include in our congregational lexicon, reminding one another that a key aspect of discipleship is a life and ministry that is "immitatable."

³¹ Dudley, Carl S. and Nancy T. Ammerman. *Congregations in Transition: A Guide for Analyzing, Assessing, and Adapting in Changing Communities*. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), pages 8-10.

Observation 2: Both groups face significant stumbling blocks to leadership.

After discussing their experience with leadership, each group was asked if they had ever been hindered in exercising leadership. Both groups were consistent in listing “time” as the major stumbling block. One 30-year-old male participant made the keen observation that he is not often asked to exercise leadership. “When I’m personally asked to participate in or lead something, I’m far more willing to do it.” If that’s the case across the board, there has been a break-down in identifying our young adults as *assets* to our mission and vision. Identifying them as human and social capital is a step beyond the hand-wringing that often accompanies conversation about millennials.³²

A rather sad comment followed, when each of the participants of Group A acknowledged that they currently find little joy in the ministries they help to lead. Because of the age of their kids, each are heavily invested and involved in children’s ministry, activities, and sports. They are glad to be involved – there seemed to be a tinge of guilt in their response – but they were all drawn to the comment, “I look forward to the time when I can reach beyond my kids’ activities.”

An image that came to mind is parallel play. In parallel play, preschool kids play in close proximity to one another with the same toys or activity, but their play is independent. It represents an important developmental transition from independent to community work. I sensed that these parents – and they are surely not alone – were going through the motions of their kids’ activities, “playing” the same game in close proximity but with little sense of

³² Green, Gary Paul and Anna Haines. *Asset Building and Community Development, 3rd edition*. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2012). Of particular interest are chapters 6 and 7 on human and social capital.

community. Part of the challenge is that these parents and kids are over-committed. But perhaps there's more to it than that. Peter Block writes that "people will be accountable and committed to what they have a hand in creating."³³ Further, parents may feel burdened and burned out because of their personal loss of social capital, sacrificed at the altar of maintaining a fairly status quo list of children's activities and ministries. Given the group's interest in entrepreneurial engagement, Block may be on to something when he writes that "the real challenge is to discover and create the means for engaging citizens that brings a new possibility into being."³⁴

It is possible that the major hindrance to these parents' potential leadership is that they feel they are playing the same game next to the same people with very little sense of community and very little room for creative possibility-thinking.

The final question produced some fascinating responses. "Would you be interested in further developing your skills via a yet-to-be-designed process of leadership development at St. John's?"

Group A said yes, but all three were concerned about the time commitment (a consistent theme). "I don't have time to think about myself that way," was the collective response.

Group B quickly answered "yes." "I want to grow." "I want to grow beyond my comfort zone." They each added a proviso: "as long as it's worth it."

³³ Block, Peter. *Community: The Structure of Belonging*. (San Francisco: Berrett-Kohler Publishers, Inc., 2009), 24.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 79.

That led to the follow-up question, “What should it look like? What would entice you?” Both groups were in agreement when they focused on good teaching and the effective use of mentors. One person added the phrase “minimal commitment” as something that would entice her. The others quickly jumped in: “I don’t have time for another shallow commitment. The only way it works for me is if it’s meaningful.” “I’m tired of shallow,” added another participant. “We’re not afraid of the effort or the challenge.” “Give me depth!”

Group B shared other ways to fine-tune a leadership development process: flexible scheduling, web-based options, “the right mentor, not just any mentor.” A final comment served as a good summary: “Take seriously the relationships that are being formed.” Again, for this generation, the process is at least as important as the product.

Conclusions

In reflecting on the conversation, a participant in Group A made the following comment: “Older generations were taught that to survive meant to be in community. We’re in a generation that has been taught to find personal success and fulfillment at the expense of community. It’s all about us. Our circles are so small now, and I don’t like it one bit.”

Much has been written about the dwindling sense of community and shallowness of relationships among millennials. Whether that’s true or not may be up for debate, but these two small samples brought to light two desires that will be incorporated into our plan (see chapter 3): a hunger for community and depth in conversation. The bottom line, at least among those in this small sample group: *There’s an eagerness to be relationally connected to*

*something that matters – community and content -- rather than something that's just going through the motions.*³⁵

The congregation's potential buy-in

We often say at St. John's that ministry decisions don't require a vote, but it's helpful when they have buy-in. Early buy-in provides momentum and, ultimately, sustainability. We are not averse to ministry ideas that arise from a single member-disciple, but one of the first questions asked will be, "Is there any congregational buy-in?" It can be broad or limited to a small group of people with like-minded interests. It is particularly helpful if that small group of people has access to a broader constituency, but not necessary.

It was important to ask the same question regarding this project idea: Is there current congregational buy-in? In many respects, I already knew the answer, although some surprises were looming.

1. Our strategic plan identified leadership development as a priority. In 2017, our congregational leadership approved a 20-year Sustainability Plan that was two years in the making. Its rather audacious goal was to look twenty years into the future and, based on what we know and what we can predict about our congregation and community, determine what steps are necessary to sustain quality, community-based ministry.

³⁵ Community-based Participatory Research may well be the most useful way to gather information about leadership development within each demographic, especially among younger generations.

Strategies were placed within three buckets: Ministry, Membership, and Financial Health. Within the area of ministry, leadership development was given high priority.³⁶

By the end of 2017, a strong team was meeting to map out a specific plan and platform for leadership development at St. John's. I was not at all surprised that the team quickly embraced the idea of targeting early career adults. What *was* surprising was the enthusiastic response of three of the team members who asked to be involved. One was a retired college professor who often taught education and business classes on leadership. The other was a retired CFO of a major soft drink company. Both had great interest and significant capacity to commit to such a project. Later on, another team member joined our subgroup to head up the project's mentoring piece. A retired biostatistician, he is actively engaged as a mentor-disciple to groups of young men who are new to faith. The team was in place.

Clearly there was significant buy-in regarding the project: a viable Sustainability Plan and the presence of three respected and highly skilled early-adopters.

³⁶ The specific goal is as follows: "As we step into the future, the congregation must be highly intentional about discipling lay leaders for ministry through a focused leadership development process.

- Invite a lay leader to serve in association with pastoral staff to lead this process.
- Determine criteria important for a ministry's long-term success.
- Develop mentoring pathways into ministry leadership positions.
- Emphasize the intersection between faith and work.
- Advertise the opportunity, while being highly intentional about identifying members' talents and leadership potential.
- Encourage leadership by creating a clear path for members to give of their talents and resources.
- Connect congregation members with meaningful and appropriate opportunities for involvement in the life of the congregation and community.
- Actively plan for succession of leaders to support the long-term success of the congregation's discipleship ministry."

Building the Curriculum

Our Young Leaders Task Force began meeting in February 2019 by addressing three key questions (see notes from the first two meetings, addendum 3):

1. What is our desired outcome?
2. How do we define young adults?
3. How do we effectively and faithfully engage young adults?

The questions led to a broad range of ideas and opinions, as is evidenced in the notes. It was important to consider a wide variety of approaches, confident that the right plan would emerge. Task Force members shared the ideas with young adults in their families to gather feedback. A common question became a rather comical aha moment for us: *Are any young adults in your visioning process?* The answer: no, so we began to actively identify and recruit a young adult participant.³⁷

The decision was to focus our pilot project on millennials between the ages of 25-35 who have been in their careers long enough (at least two years) to begin asking questions about purpose and “What’s next in my life?” In this first pilot, we decided that participants would have some kind of connection to St. John’s, either through membership or a family relationship. In addition, we decided that all participants should be self-identified as Christian, since content will represent a Christian context and worldview.

Reflecting Parks’ research on young adults (see chapter 1), we chose to pursue a plan that introduces “big questions that awaken critical thought” and takes seriously the desire for

³⁷ Although enthusiastic about being invited into the visioning process, the young adult participant was rarely able to attend one of our meetings. It should be noted that he and his wife ended up being a part of the cohort.

mentoring relationships, a desire/need that was identified by our two focus groups and the broader research.

Eight early career adults would be invited into an intensive, nine-month journey of leadership development that dares to incorporate a high level of commitment and depth. Our prevailing question is whether an intensive, cohort-based program of small group and one-on-one engagement (mentoring) will significantly affect the way participants see the intersection between faith and work, while preparing them for community engagement and leadership. The plan and curriculum reflect both.

The Plan

Our plan takes its basic shape from a three-pronged strategy developed by the Center for Faith and Work at Redeemer Presbyterian Church (New York City): equip, connect, and mobilize.³⁸ Our plan uses the same three-pronged strategy, but it has been narrowed into two parts that cover nine months.

Equip – During the first five months of small group/cohort work (Part 1), we will provide:

1. A theological foundation/vision for a gospel-centered worldview
2. A close examination of spiritual gifts and the five-fold ministries.³⁹

³⁸ See the Center for Faith and Work at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City. The Center is one of the finest examples of a congregationally based, grass roots ministry that boldly seeks to impact significant change in its community. Visit www.faithandwork.com.

³⁹ A brief comment is in order as to why we are giving so much attention to spiritual gifts. In their book *Exploring Ecclesiology: an Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction* (Ada, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2009), Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger insist that the gifts facilitate an encounter with Jesus Christ and his grace in order to build up the church for service. The purpose of the gifts is not simply to accomplish the work of the church but to relate Christ and his grace to others. “This relational grace transforms believers into persons who desire to help accomplish the goals of the church.” For the church to function well, “individual believers need to be aware of their particular spiritual gifts.” Furthermore “It would seem that discovering one’s spiritual gifts is something that should take place relationally by the recognition of others” (163).

3. Specific tools for leadership
4. Targeted questions and exercises that help participants advance God's kingdom within their own particular context
5. A strong sense of community

Connect – During the final four months (Part 2), participants will be yoked with a trained vocational mentor who serves as a model and guide in connecting faith and work. The following will take place to prepare for the experience:

1. Identifying/yoking participants with mentors
2. Training mentors
3. Begin to foster mentor-mentee relationships that are rooted in trust

Mobilize – at the end of the four months, mentors will invite participants to develop a specific plan for how they might mobilize change in their vocation and/or community.

The curriculum is included as Addendum 4, “Young Leaders Cohort: Plan, Curriculum, and Schedule.” Part 1 includes weekly engagement, bookended by two weekend retreats. On most occasions, participants were invited to view a short video clip or movie in advance of the weekly gathering. The videos were entertaining and provided a good jumping-off point for discussion.

It is important to note that the curriculum in Part 1 is designed to prepare participants for the 1x1 mentoring relationship they will encounter in Part 2. Because of the time

constraints of this project, only Part 1 will be fully evaluated in this paper. Part 2 will be fully evaluated by the Young Leaders Task Force, once completed.

Choosing Participants

There were four criteria for participating in the cohort:

1. Fall within the target age range (25-35)
2. Have at least two years of experience in one's chosen vocation
3. Have a connection with St. John's, either through membership or family relationship.
4. Identify as a Christian

Our first attempt was to make the opportunity known and invite interested persons to make inquiry. We produced a 3.5-minute video that introduced the idea and then shared the video in worship and through our Facebook page. The video script is included as Addendum 5.

As expected, the general invitation did not generate any commitments, so we sent targeted invitations to members of the congregation who fit the criteria. Eventually we received eight commitments from what we consider "active" members of St. John's: three couples and two singles. Each understood the high level of commitment to the schedule and the curriculum.

Of note about the participants:

- We assumed participation would be limited to eight *individuals*, not couples (even though an individual could be married). Very quickly we discovered that couples wanted to participate together, so we set a new goal to include four couples. Because of the fourth couple's late withdrawal, we opened the group to

two interested individuals (neither of whom are in a married relationship). Our evaluation will determine the positives and negatives of a “mixed” group.

- We hoped that the group would be diverse. Although not ethnically diverse, there was significant socio-economic and vocational diversity.
- One of the individuals had to drop out following the retreat because of a medical emergency. His absence created logistical and emotional challenges, no doubt, especially since it was too late to add an eighth participant. It is his/our hope that he joins a future cohort.

Chapter 3 addresses the cohort experience (Part 1), including observations from Task Force members, all of whom served in a teaching/leading capacity. Also included is our method for measuring the program’s impact.

Chapter 3: Observations and Measurement

Excursus: *A bit about me*

I grew up as a Lutheran pastor's kid during the 1970s and early 80s. Our world was centered in the church, from Sunday worship to youth ministry to any number of music ensembles. We mowed the grass, helped decorate the church, and, well, showed up whenever the doors were opened.

Most important to me was competitive swimming and my congregation's youth group, including weekend and summer camping experiences at Lutheridge, the Lutheran camp and conference center near Asheville, North Carolina. Youth ministry provided terrific opportunities to serve in leadership on the congregational and synodical levels, participate in a denominational assembly in Toronto, and eventually serve as a counselor at Lutheridge. Along the way I made friendships that have literally carried me through life.

Not surprisingly I ended up at a Lutheran college, Lenoir-Rhyne, in Hickory, North Carolina, and found myself surrounded by many like-minded young adults. That path would eventually lead me to seminary and a decision to enter parish ministry. It's what I knew best.

24 years later, I've served two different congregations in two very different contexts. In both, ministry among the unchurched and millennials has dominated a lot of our attention. It's a different day and age, we've been told. Younger generations are formed in vastly different ways. Social media, the information explosion, and Starbucks have changed everything, producing challenges and opportunities that have been researched, written about, agonized over, and critiqued *ad nauseum*. Sure enough, this project tries to take those challenges

seriously, adding yet another entry to the corpus of research we might label “The most analyzed generation in history.”

It remains to be seen how impactful our efforts will be.

Early on, I made a very simple discovery. During our cohort’s first retreat, a time when we’re trying to build buy-in, commitment, and a strong sense of belonging, I listened to the very honest stories of our participants. Some were loaded with hardship, others with great anxiety. At least one included a teary story of rejection and fear. Three of the eight included stories about their return to the church after years of absence.

Later that evening, I found myself reflecting about my own growing up years, in particular my relationship with my middle sister. While I was heavily invested in my congregation, she had a far more difficult time with that level of involvement. I say that with no hubris whatsoever. My sister simply had a different path towards faith maturity.

Without knowing it in those days, her path opened my eyes to a much more common faith journey. While mine was pretty steady, hers included terrific bouts with unbelief, significant peer influence from non-Christian friends, exploration with drugs and alcohol, and a series of boyfriends who slowly pulled her farther and farther away from her love of God and church. It was a long journey that became very difficult for my family, particularly my parents, but it was a path that eventually led her to a truer sense of self and relationship with God.

To us, hers was a unique experience; but I’m slowly discovering that her wrestling match with "an irrelevant church" is the same one many young adults face today.

A Framework for Measurement

As described, my project involves an eight-month pilot program of leadership development among seven early career adults. The hope is that this time of deep self-reflection, spiritual formation, and leadership training will motivate cohort members to connect faith and work and become more actively engaged in community and church leadership. With that in mind, we incorporate a three-pronged strategy during the cohort:

1. **Equip** participants with a theological foundation for mission while providing tools that help assess one's personality, giftedness, and leadership, all within the bounds of a strong sense of community.
2. **Connect** participants with a trained vocational mentor who serves as a model and guide in connecting faith and work.
3. **Mobilize** participants who are armed with a specific plan for how they might faithfully and effectively engage their vocation and/or community.

As we journey through this period of training and discovery, we anticipate a number of outcomes for our participants (see Introduction, p. 5):

1. A greater understanding of one's identity in relation to God's identity;
2. Trust in God and one another;
3. Recognize the importance of narrative as we learn to listen attentively to one another;
4. To identify ways in which participants might bear the light of Christ in places other than the church;

5. To know that this process offers participants a glimpse into the Kingdom of God and a way of seeing the incarnate God in their very particular contexts;⁴⁰
6. The recognition that this “unveiling” is not a static moment of discovery, but a dynamic process that is continuously unfolding.⁴¹

First things first: *Beginning from a place of community*

It is important to note that this small group/cohort experience is relationship-driven, providing space for members to build strong, faithful social relationships that are rooted in core, Christ-centered values. The approach is consistent with what we have learned about early career adults, principally that they are driven by an inclusive set of values, purpose-oriented work, and a strong sense of relationship. In addition, because cohort participants identify themselves as Christians, our approach is different from a *Survivor*-oriented approach to strategic relationships, in that members are encouraged to begin from a place of Christ-centered community rather than an isolated sense of self. As a result, members are encouraged to dive deeply into their own spiritual well-being while making strategic relationship connections with like-minded Christians/leaders *so that* they might be more effective at work, play, and as leaders in their communities.

Such a method assumes the careful, persistent kneading of what John Paul Lederach calls “social yeast.” Effective, long-lasting, systemic change takes time, he writes, beginning

⁴⁰ Niebuhr, Richard. *The Meaning of Revelation*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press), 2006, pp. 31-41.

⁴¹ Niebuhr, 70.

from a committed group of values-driven individuals who see through the lens of community, rather than self.⁴²

The value of context

Our approach also places great value on innovative rather than incremental methods of change since cohort members are invited to discern their own unique gifts and their community's unique context.

Why? Ultimately, we want these early career adults to be actively engaged in community leadership, rooted in a theological framework that takes seriously Jesus' command to "make disciples" (Matthew 28), Paul's call to "imitate me as I imitate Christ" (the call to mentor in 1 Corinthians 11:1), and the church's call to be good stewards of Christ's mission by raising up current and future leaders of the church (1 Peter 4:10). It also addresses our particular community and congregational context in which we've seen a noticeable absence of young leaders.

Measuring change: *impact over results*

Regarding our desire to raise up new leaders for the common good (community and church), perhaps it's as simple as measuring how many were "leaders" prior to the cohort experience (0) and how many jump into leadership roles after the experience is completed. No doubt, this results-driven measurement is an important indicator of whether or not we should

⁴² Malcolm Gladwell offers a similar prescription in John Paul Lederach's book, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. (New York: Oxford), 2005, p. 90.

invest time and energy in such a project; but I won't be able to provide that kind of measurement until long after the "project" is completed.

So, what impact can we hope for in the meantime? In order to provide discipleship training for these early career adults, we've chosen a two-part path that gives focused attention to the value of group and 1x1 mentoring. Part 1 is a four-month, cohort-based study that is ultimately preparing students for Part 2, when participants are welcomed into a four-month 1x1 relationship with a trained, Christ-centered vocational mentor. For the sake of this project, we will measure whether Part 1 is properly preparing participants for part 2, with the firm belief that it is in the 1x1 relationship (Part 2) where participants will be motivated to adopt what they have learned and form it into a life plan.

A comment about informal measurement. Before we discuss our formal tools of measurement, it is important not to underestimate informal observations. For example, there was full participation in both of the weekend retreats, and, of the nine weekly cohorts, there was only one absence among all of the participants. Participation goes a long way in helping to form community; it also provides intangible affirmation that participants have committed to the process and desire to be present. Likewise, participants regularly use journals provided at the first retreat to record observations and notes during the weekly gatherings. The hope was that the journals would invite participants into a deeper sense of self-reflection. It appears as though that is happening.

Our measuring sticks. To effectively measure the project's impact on participants, six measuring sticks were chosen that reflect the key parameters of the project's Plan, as outlined

in chapter 2. The measuring sticks are designed to prepare participants for the mentoring journey in Part 2. They include:

1. **Language.** What language have participants learned regarding leadership and the intersection of work and faith?
2. Is their **mirror** a faithful reflection of who they are?
3. Do they understand their **core ministry**, as Paul describes in the five-fold ministries?
4. Are they able to identify **key tools for effective leaders**?
5. Is the **Learning Circle** a skill they are using?
6. Have they grasped the other **Life Shapes** as tools for discipleship?

Measuring Change: *Tools for measurement*

The mirror. Throughout Part 1, participants were adding details to their mirrors. The final cohort gathering gave heightened attention to the participants' now-completed mirrors. Using the Learning Circle (a tool introduced earlier), participants identified an "aha" or surprise that God was/is beginning to reveal, and then asked: What is God saying and What am I going to do about it?⁴³ The hope is that the mirror and the Learning Circle will be lenses through which participants look as they evaluate and reflect upon future opportunities and challenges, perhaps with much greater depth and a sense of purpose.

Spirituality inventory. Measuring spiritual growth is particularly difficult, nevertheless we invited each participant to take a "spirituality inventory" (SAIL) prior to the first retreat. The result became part of a robust conversation about one's faith maturity and, we hoped, would

⁴³ The Kairos Circle is a shape/tool developed by Mike Breen in his book *Building a Discipling Community*, 2011.

help participants identify a baseline from which to grow. The original plan was to administer the same test at the second/final retreat to determine if spiritual growth is noticeable, but upon evaluation, we decided that the survey did not provide a noticeable contribution to our stated goals.

Structured interview. During the final retreat, participants will participate in a structured interview, conducted in small groups of 3-4. Ultimately the question is, Do you feel prepared for Part 2? If so, how? The interviews were recorded so that facilitators could be fully attentive to the discussion. At the conclusion of the retreat, the leadership team reviewed the tapes, identified themes, and began to draw conclusions in an attempt to determine growth and impact. A draft of those conclusions is included in the appendix. It is considered a draft until Part 2 is completed and further interviews are conducted.

Written survey. In addition to the group interviews, participants were given a project evaluation to complete and submit anonymously.

Personal mission statements. The final and culminating activity of the Part 1 cohort experience is when participants write their own mission statements. Armed with a mission and the six tools outlined above, participants enter into Part 2, their 1x1 mentoring relationship.

The mentor relationship. The first part of this cohort experience is designed to prepare participants for an even more meaningful and robust relationship with their vocational mentor. Although not part of this particular project, it is important to note that part 2 will invite participants to: (1) contextualize what they've learned by defining their particular "community;" (2) perform a community asset map related to their particular community; (3)

form an action plan for how they will engage as leader, connecting the community's need with the participant's gifts and passions, as revealed in his/her mirror.⁴⁴

Some conclusions

It is important to note that this project's intent is not to offer broad strokes about the millennial generation. Our goal was to build a platform of leadership development for early career adults. To build the platform, we challenged two basic assumptions about millennials: their lack of commitment and resistance to deep self-reflection. Indeed, from the very beginning participants understood that this cohort experience would require a high level of commitment and a willingness to engage in honest self-reflection. It remains to be seen as to whether these requirements helped or hindered our stated goals.

Having said that, a few summary observations are evident:

Community matters. Younger generations understand that the church is not perfect. They have observed and many have experienced unhealthy Christian community. For most, the jury is still out on what that looks like, but one thing is clear: community matters. That's particularly true for a generation that is becoming increasingly cynical, isolated, and alone, thanks to technology, information, and consumerism. Our cohort experience provided space for early career adults to form deep relationship and healthy community. They came from very

⁴⁴ Of note: An unforeseen crisis affected the completion of Part 2 in time for this project's publication: the Covid-19 pandemic. Through the beginning of March, participants were working alongside their mentors; by mid-March, orders to "quarantine in place" brought these relationships to a standstill. As a result, evaluation of Part 2 and of this project in general will be delayed until a later date.

different backgrounds and belief systems, but through this cohort, they helped to craft a new understanding – a new narrative – about what Christian community looks like.

Simple, not shallow. From the planning stage and beyond, we were sensitive to a concern expressed by Sharon Parks and others, “that too many of our young adults are not being encouraged to ask the big questions that awaken critical thought in the first place.”⁴⁵ The answer, we posit, is not to create ministry, messages, and programs that are shallow, but ones that are loaded with depth and authenticity, *as long as they are rooted in life-giving, joy-filled community.*⁴⁶ We have attempted to simplify language without dumbing it down.⁴⁷ We have avoided providing universal “steps for success” by creating a curriculum/journey that is highly organic.⁴⁸ And we have tried to build a solid platform of leadership development that is based upon a simple formula: *My Gifts* connected to *My Community’s Needs* leads to *My Opportunity for Leadership.*⁴⁹ In other words:

My Gifts + My Community’s needs = My Opportunity for Leadership.

New funnels are needed. I went to a small, church-affiliated, liberal arts college in North Carolina. Three years ago, the college hired a well-respected, state champion high school band director to build a marching band program. I have enjoyed watching the band grow to over 100

⁴⁵ Parks, xii.

⁴⁶ See Marva Dawn, *Truly the Community*.

⁴⁷ See Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture: How to release a missional movement by discipling people like Jesus did.* (Pawleys Island, SC: 3 Dimensional Ministries, 2011).

⁴⁸ See Kester Brewin, *Signs of Emergence*.

⁴⁹ While this formula is not part of Rainer and Geiger’s argument, they have made a compelling case that the church must find ways to simplify our work in making disciples. See Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God’s Process for Making Disciples.* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006).

members, adding great energy and entertainment to fall football games. No doubt, it has been a successful venture. Recently I asked the college's president why they chose such a risky and costly venture. He began by saying that small colleges are facing enormous challenges to recruit good students while sustaining their unique role in liberal arts education. His next statement I wrote down as quickly as I could: "We have to find new funnels through which students become connected to our mission and surrounded in deep, meaningful relationship."

The same is true for the church. This cohort experience has convinced me that the church must find new funnels of engagement with younger generations – a generation that is not averse to the church's ancient mission, but seeks meaningful community that is organic, authentic, simple, trustworthy, faithful, loving, inclusive, joyful, and, yes, even Christ-centered.

A generation that, like the church, is an evolving work of art.

ADDENDUM 1
Participants in the two millennial study groups

Group A (33-40 years of age)

Stacey is a 36-year old married mother of three kids, 6, 12, and 14. She works part time as a nurse, is a long-time member of the congregation, and has been involved in a variety of leadership areas, almost exclusively in children's ministry.

Lauren is a 32-year old married mother of two boys, 4 and 7. Her kids are actively involved in our children's ministry, but she has exercised her leadership more in women's ministry. Most recently, she chaired the women's retreat team.

Stephanie is a 39-year old married mother of two boys, 11 and 15. She is heavily involved in her kids sports and scouting activities. She is a former leader of our Weekday Church School program.

Kelly is a 36-year old married mother of two children, 7 and 10. She is the preschool director of another church, and her kids are actively engaged in our children's ministry. She helps with our Weekday Church School ministry.

Group B (22-32 years of age)

Nathan is a recently married 25-year-old. A long-time member of the church, he and his new wife are trying to find ways to become involved in a church with very few young couples.

Chris is a 22-year old who will graduate from a local college on May 12. A life-long member of the church, he has remained active throughout his college enrollment.

Michael is a 32-year old father of one boy. His wife is our former pastor of discipleship, who has recently accepted a position in our bishop's office. He grew up Virginia, having always maintained an active church involvement.

Jennifer is a 31-year old mother of two, both under the age of two. Employed full time, she and her husband met at St. John's and were married here three years ago. They are both actively involved in leadership and activities of the church.

ADDENDUM 2
Interview questions

Both groups were asked the identical questions

1. How do you define leadership?
2. What leadership qualities do you admire most?
3. What leadership experiences have you had: in the community? At St. John's?
 - If none, have you attempted?
 - Has anything hindered your attempt?
 - Have any particular factors kept you from attempting?
 - Do you find joy in your current area of leadership?
4. Would you be interested in entering a process of leadership development that would help to define and engage your skills for leadership and ministry?
 - If so, what kind of leadership training would be helpful?

ADDENDUM 3 Young Leaders Task Force Notes

Notes from February 15, 2019

What is our desired outcome?

- In general, our desire is to equip people for the sake of God's Kingdom.
- More specifically, we hope to engage young adults with better leadership skills, provide an opportunity for personal discernment, and share an unapologetic approach to how one might lead from a place of faith.

How do we define "young leaders"?

- We acknowledged that St. John's is very limited in the number of people generally considered young adults, especially early career adults in their 20s. As a result, we divided our target into two groups:
 1. Young adults who have been engaged in their careers long that they're beginning to ask purpose-filled questions like, "What's next?" (generally after 3-7 years of employment). The age of this group normally would be between 25-30. It is not expected that this group of adults be connected to St. John's.
 2. Young adults ages 30-40 who are connected to St. John's and interested in participating in an intensive cohort that explores issues of discernment, purpose, and Christ-centered leadership.

How do we engage these two groups? Some initial thoughts:

THE FIRST GROUP. The image that came to mind was a large funnel. It's our guess that young adults would be attracted to a fellowship/service event (the mouth of the funnel) at a location that is non-threatening and "in their social neighborhood" (e.g., Morgan Ridge Brewery). A successful event would do the following:

1. It would be a collaboration between the host, St. John's, and other community partners.
2. Attract a large enough group that participants could get lost in or enveloped by the crowd.
3. It would include a "Ted Talk" address focused on a topic that would engage the audience described in #1 above (e.g., Made for More, Unleashed, Loving your community)
4. It would include a significant service component (e.g., Stop Hunger Now, Sole Hope)

From there, the funnel narrows with an invitation for participants to leave their email or social media address for follow-up posts and notification of next-events. They would also be introduced to the idea of a 4-6 month cohort-based journey that includes:

- A weekend discernment retreat
- A 4-6 month cohort/huddle
- A celebration retreat

THE SECOND GROUP would be invited into a 4-6 month cohort-based journey described in #6 above. Of note: the two groups would be separate.

Items to consider:

1. When do we invite young adults into this visioning process? Who would they be? Community members like Chris Eller (Lee Street Theatre) came to mind.
 2. Recognizing that the vast majority of young adults won't jump on board immediately, are multiple events needed?
 3. What is our capacity to manage this process?
 4. How do we generate TRUST among folks in the first target group? Why would they accept the invitation?
 5. Do we need to write/produce a Ted Talk that better defines the invitation?
-

Notes from March 1, 2019

Notes:

- Our circle of young adults is larger than we think
- We might not see the fruit of our labor for a long time.
- What do we want to convey?
 1. We're building servant leaders
 2. We have to take seriously that this age group has a very different way of thinking. For example, Mark lifted up the work of Ken Wilbur (see One Taste) about, for example, the desire for young adults to think differently about issues of science and faith.
- We're actually talking about three groups:
 1. Engaged (at St. John's) and huddled (indicating a certain depth in spiritual formation) and ready to step into the pipeline for leadership training
 2. Engaged but not huddled, which means that their entry point is spiritual formation
 3. Millennials (around 25-35) who have been in their careers long enough to begin asking questions about purpose and "what's next?" Their entry point is an invitation into a pilot cohort that is tentatively planned for Fall 2019.

ADDENDUM 4

Video Script introducing the Early Career Adults Cohort

When I was in California a few years ago, I heard a pastor describe the challenges he faced as a young college student wondering about issues of faith. What he feared most, he said, was that it would make his life smaller rather than larger – less fun, less joy, less wonder.⁵⁰

I'll admit, that's not what I faced as a young person who grew up in the church, and yet I think he has a point. We live in a world where people are questioning their faith because it's too small and not very relevant to the bigger, complex issues of life. Or maybe they haven't rejected faith, but they've placed it in a small cubbyhole right next to cubbyholes labeled work, play, family, future.

What would it look like if the lines between those cubbyholes were erased? What would it look like if faith and work and life were connected, rather than separate?

We'd like to invite you to wrestle with those very questions – to explore more deeply how your faith might inform your work, and how God might be eager to reveal greater purpose in your daily life and your daily work. You might be surprised by what you discover.

There's a great analogy Tod Bolsinger shares about our future stories. He wrote an entire book about the Lewis and Clark expedition – a journey Thomas Jefferson commissioned soon after he finalized the Louisiana Purchase, which expanded American territory from the Appalachian Mountains all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

Here's what you might find interesting: they thought, like everyone thought, that the “unexplored west was the exact same geography as the familiar east.”⁵¹ In fact, they firmly believed that there was a water route that connected the Mississippi to the Pacific, and that finding the route would bring enormous prosperity to their country and secure their place in history. They followed the great Missouri River to the West, climbing to the top of the first crest of the Rocky Mountains, canoes in tow, because they believed with all their heart that from the top of the mountain they'd be able to climb in their canoes and float all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

They could not have been more disappointed. Before them was not a “gentle slope down to a navigable river running to the Pacific but the Rocky Mountains. Stretching out for miles and miles as far as the eye could see was one peak after another.”⁵²

⁵⁰ Labberton, Mark. *Called: The Crisis and Promise of Following Jesus Today*. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2014).

⁵¹ Bolsinger, Tod. *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory*. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2015), p. 13.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Maybe you're beginning to discover that the world in front of you is radically different from everything you expected, and you're beginning to ask what gear you'll need to make the journey. A canoe? Climbing gear? A bullet-proof vest?

One tool we know you'll need is faith. And here's the question I'd like to explore with you: How might that tool, that gift of faith, guide you into your future story? That's what we'd like to spend these next few months discovering. We hope you'll join us.

3 min, 20 seconds.

ADDENDUM 5
Plan, Curriculum, and Schedule
Part 1: Fall 2019

Strategy: We will incorporate a three-pronged strategy during this nine-month cohort:

Equip – During the first five months of small group/cohort work (Part 1), we will provide:

1. A theological foundation/vision for a gospel-centered worldview
2. A close examination of spiritual gifts and the five-fold ministries.
3. Specific tools for leadership
4. Targeted questions and exercises that help participants advance God’s kingdom within their own particular context
5. A strong sense of community

Connect – During the final four months (Part 2), participants will be yoked with a trained vocational mentor who serves as a model and guide in connecting faith and work. The following will take place to prepare for the experience:

1. Identifying/yoking participants with mentors
2. Training mentors
3. Begin to foster mentor-mentee relationships that are rooted in trust

Mobilize – at the end of the four months, mentors will invite participants to develop a specific plan for how they might mobilize change in their vocation and/or community.

Teaching Elements

Learning Circle
Triangle of relationships
Semi-circle (work-rest) } From *Building a Discipling Culture*

Values
Life Gifts
Spiritual Gifts
Personality Type
Passion
Personal Mission Statement } From *Discover Who You Are*

Five-fold Ministry
Leadership training elements – specific tools for leadership

Teaching Schedule (Part 1)

9.6-9.8 – Retreat: *Why are you here?* (specific retreat schedule follows)

- The purpose of the retreat is to foster group formation and to create a strong sense of belonging and buy-in. The primary teaching element is about personal values. Extended time is spent in introductions, ice breakers and fun group exercises/initiatives.
- Saturday morning teaching is focused on personal values.
- At the end of the morning, Rhodes introduces the first shape on work-life balance.
- Saturday afternoon is spent in a large group initiative and free time.
- Dinner is designed and prepared by the group (not the leaders).
- On Saturday evening, the group viewed Rick Warren’s Ted Talk that prompts the question, “What are you going to do with what you’ve been given?”
- Vespers includes the wire exercise, in which participants individually sculpt a long, thick wire to reflect significant life moments/shifts.
- Sunday morning ends in making a group covenant and worship.

9.23 – Cyndi reconnects to retreat and covenant, Mark teaches Five-Fold Ministry Pentagon shape. Assignment: watch *Secret Life of Bees* and identify the five-fold ministries you see present among the characters.

9.30 – Follow up Five-Fold Ministry teaching with their www.fivefoldsurvey.com results (Cyndi or Mark), discuss the movie *Secret Life of Bees* and any additional Five-Fold teaching (Rhodes). Read Acts 9:1-9 for next session.

10.7 -- skip

10.15 – Learning Circle. Video assignment prior to cohort: *The Danger of a Single Story*, Chimamanda Adichie, Ted Talk, July 2009. Rhodes to unpack video and connect to the day’s topic. Mark to teach the Learning Circle

10/21 – Learning Circle II. Video assignment prior to cohort: *Bono and Eugene Peterson on the Psalms*, Fuller Studios, 2016. Rhodes leads. Cyndi closes with a single leadership insight.

10.28 - Skip

11.4 – Life Gifts. Video assignment prior to cohort: *The Power of Vulnerability*, by Brene Brown. Ted Talk, June 2010. Cyndi opens with conversation about the video, then teaches from book chapter 2. Mark leads the exercises in workbook.

11.11 – Continued work on Life Gifts. Rhodes begins with a summary of where we’ve been:

- 5-fold ministry (*The Secret Life of Bees* – the way systems work together)
- The importance of a rest-work balance
- The Learning Circle
- *The danger of a single story* (the way we listen to one another and that we all live in a very particular context)
- Leadership begins from a place of relationship (Bono and Eugene Peterson), humility (Cyndi) and vulnerability (Brene Brown).

- “I am enough.” You are enough because you have particular life gifts that were not given to you by accident. They are there for a purpose, but it’s surprising how many people don’t know what their life gifts are and/or how to use them in their work and in their life.

Divide into your six hexagon groups. Pull out the workbook, pages 5-10. Which of the life gifts best fit you? Which of the gifts do you use on a consistent basis? Where are places in the community or church where these life gifts can be utilized? What is it that you’d like the other groups to know about “our” group? Each group reports back on the last two questions. Cyndi then unpacks the Life Sentence. Next week: spiritual gifts. Watch *Karate Kid* in advance. ALSO – invitation into a mentoring relationship. Next week we’ll ask them to decide.

11.19 Spiritual Gifts. See *Discover Who You Are*, chapter 3, and workbook.

- Check-in and prayer (10 min)
- “Raise your hand if you’ve always known what you’re good at?” View scene from *Mr. Holland’s Opus*, “I just want to be good at something.”
- Review (40 min) – Rhodes introduces spiritual gifts from a biblical perspective. We’ve talked about Life Gifts, gifts used to be good at what we do in our particular context/vocation (claim one/person). Today – spiritual gifts, gifts given to each of us by God for a specific purpose: to advance God’s kingdom. Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and highlight the following:
 - 3 unique characteristics of Spiritual gifts: 1, given for the sake of the common good; 2, given, not earned; 3, ... so that we’ll use it
 - Spiritual gifts are divided into 4 categories (per Kise, beginning on page 82): Heart, proclamation, action, inspiration
 - It’s natural to be confused by the spiritual gifts or to think that you don’t possess a particular gift. See “Sand on, sand off” scene from *Karate Kid*. Small groups: how does this relate to spiritual gifts (focus: mentoring and discovery).
- Discovery (30 min) – Mark guides cohort through the spiritual gifts exercise on pages 13-18 of the workbook. He begins with the story of Lean and Rob Hunter, their two children, unborn baby, dependent grandmother, and the medical crisis they’re in. What are their needs? Which of these needs would you like to provide? These are ways you are already living into your spiritual gifts *for the common good*. 15 minutes to complete workbook. As large group, what is your primary category? Which 1-2 gifts jump out?
- Process (10 min) – Cyndi guides them into three small groups. How will you use these gifts at work? In your community?
- Invite participants to indicate whether they’d like a 1x1 mentoring relationship.
- Prayer

12.02 – Continued work on spiritual gifts (see above). Cyndi identifies 3-4 leadership traits.

12.09 – Closing dinner at the Woollys. Participants to complete the personality types survey in the workbook prior to class. What surprised you about the survey? What didn’t surprise you at all? Connect their discoveries/surprises to the Learning Circle. Most of today’s session will be spent in small groups walking around the circle in large and small groups.

1.10 – 1.11 Retreat 2: *Commissioning* (specific details are below)

- In advance of the retreat, participants watch the 9-minute video, “Does Life have a Purpose?” from the *Explore God* series.
- Also in advance, mentors will have been assigned – and agreed to by the mentee -- and the mentor-mentee will have had their first formal contact, normally by email.
- Rhodes to review and introduce the relationship Triangle.
- Mark to teach from chapter 6, Passions. Key theme and distinguishing feature of Christ-centered leadership: *We lead from a place of relationship.*
- On Saturday, Cyndi guides group through a prioritizing exercise and introduces the idea of one’s personal mission, connecting to the now-completed “mirror” in their workbooks (pages 20-21). Time is given for a short “free write” in their journals that invites participants to reflect on their mirror and answer the question, “When my life comes to an end, what do I hope to have accomplished in life?”
- Mark provides guidelines for writing personal mission statements. Rhodes centers them in prayer and scripture, then invites them to spend 45 minutes writing their mission statements. The first 5 minutes are to be spent in quiet prayer and meditation. After 20 minutes, participants are invited to check-in with a partner to share initial thoughts (10 minutes), followed by 15 of putting their mission statement in final form.
- After lunch, an hour is given to measuring impact of the cohort experience via facilitated small group dialogue. The conversations will be tape recorded so that facilitators can fully listen without taking notes *and* so that each member of the task force can hear the participants’ contributions. A separate written evaluation follows.
- *Commissioning.* The weekend ends with a closing ritual that includes Holy Communion and invites participants to write a prayer petition for a partner’s mission statement.

ADDENDUM 6

Fall Retreat | September 6-8, 2019 | Still Point

FRIDAY

- 5:00 begin arriving, moving in
- 6:30 dinner (provided)
- 7:30 Group initiatives – Cyndi (90 minutes)
- 9:00 wine and cheese

SATURDAY MORNING

- 8:00 Breakfast: continental (we provide)
- 9:30 Saturday Morning Session:
 - Intro to this Learning Journey (Overall time, 3 hours) -- Cyndi
 1. Revisit Friday night experience (15 min)
 2. Comfort and trust
 3. Comments and Questions
 4. Summary: Created by God, God within, Purposes of God, Uniquely equipped
 - Overview of Learning Journey: Finding Purpose and Meaning (10 min) – Mark
 1. Discovering your unique gifts (equipped) and your unique purpose (passion/call)
 2. Three resources we will unpack:
 - a. You are the primary resource – experiences, values, style
 - b. Life Shapes
 - c. Your five lenses, from *Discover Who You Are*: life gifts (naturally), spiritual gifts (endowed), style (fit), values (meaning), passion (purpose)
 3. Hoped for outcome – insight into your core; Being versus Doing
 4. Watch 3-minute video clip from *Akeelah and the Bee* (the Marianne Williamson quote)
 - Unpack the SAIL Assessment (participants completed in advance) (30 min) – Cyndi
 - Break (15 min)
 - Values Exercise (55 min) -- Mark
 1. Sort into 3 columns, narrow down to 8 core values (30 min)
 2. Discussion about their core values - How did these values get shaped? (10 min)
 3. Narrow the 8 values down to 3 core by seeing that some are sub-values (10 min)
 4. Stand and state their 3 core values (5 min)
 - Break (10 min)

Time chart exercise (45 min) -- Cyndi

1. Overview of handout
2. Divide pie chart based on activities
3. Assign values to activities
4. Discuss what you want more of/less of and strategies for changes

12:30 Lunch: deli tray and salads (we provide)

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

1:45 large group initiative (45 minutes)

2:30-5:00 Free time

5:00-6:30 Dinner prep (cohort plans and prepares)

6:30 Dinner

7:30 "Plus Delta" – Cyndi (15 minutes)

8:00 Vespers, including the 7' wire activity and Rick Warren's Ted Talk that prompts the question, "What are you going to do with what you've been given?" – Rhodes

SUNDAY MORNING

8:00 big breakfast (provided)

9:30 covenant-making exercise – Cyndi

10:00 worship and covenant ritual – Rhodes

11:00 departure

ADDENDUM 7

Winter Retreat | January 9-10, 2020 | Still Point

Note: In advance of the retreat, participants are asked to reconnect with their mirrors and watch the 9-minute video, “Does Life have a Purpose?” from the *Explore God* series.

FRIDAY EVENING

6:15 pizza and salads

7:00 Evening session

Ice breaker (15 min) – Cyndi

The Relationship Triangle (15 min) – Rhodes

Teaching from chapter 6, Passions – Mark

Participants add their passions to their now-completed mirrors

- workbook, pages 20-21

Focus: We lead from a place of relationship.

9:00 Social time

SATURDAY MORNING

8:30 Healthy, sit-down breakfast (eggs and avocado toast)

9:30 Writing your mission statement

- Cyndi guides group through a prioritizing exercise and introduces the idea of one’s personal mission, connecting to the now-completed mirror in their workbooks. Time is given for a short “free write” in their journals that invites participants to reflect on their mirror and answer the question, “When my life comes to an end, what do I hope to have accomplished in life?”
- Mark provides guidelines for writing personal mission statements. Rhodes centers them in prayer and scripture, then invites them to spend 45 minutes writing their mission statements. The first 5 minutes are to be spent in quiet prayer and meditation. After 20 minutes, participants are invited to check-in with a partner to share initial thoughts (10 minutes), followed by 15 of putting their mission statement in final form.

12:30 Lunch (deli trays)

1:30 Evaluation: *Measuring the impact of this experience*

- After lunch, an hour is given to measuring impact of the cohort experience via facilitated small group dialogue (2 groups of 3 and 4, facilitated by Cyndi and Rhodes). The conversations will be tape recorded so that facilitators can fully listen without taking notes *and* so that each member of the task force can hear the participants’ contributions. A separate written evaluation follows.

3:00 Closing worship and commissioning. The weekend ends with a closing ritual that invites participants to write a prayer petition for a partner’s mission statement.

ADDENDUM 8

Recorded Interviews: A Summary of Impact and Insights from Part 1

The following summary is drawn from two separate group evaluations at the end of the second retreat (January 11, 2020). Each group was asked to respond to the same set of questions. Responses were recorded. These comments reflect common themes from each group.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FAITHFUL LEADERS

All agreed that the study of the characteristics (Vision, modeling, appreciation of others, trust, service, empowerment, integrity and pioneering) helped to identify which characteristics are being used, which have potential but are not yet being used, and which ones need to be developed. A keen insight was interdependent the characteristics are

- “The characteristics broke it down and helped me to see areas of natural inclination and then see other elements that are just as important. Areas that I could work on to be a better leader.”
- “I see how I could use them (the characteristics of faithful leadership) more intentionally in places besides work, such as with my spouse and in the community.”
- “For me, I am much more of a settler. I need to figure out this visioning and pioneering. Fortunately, I am surrounded by those people who can do that at one of my jobs.”
- “Visioning and pioneering are not used regularly in my job. I could definitely dream bigger.”
- “I feel more grounded as a leader. I trust that I am there for a reason. If I lead through these tenets, I am doing what I should be doing.”

IMPACT OF THE SELF REFLECTION EXERCISES: THE MIRROR

Most were surprised at how validating the reflections were.

- “The personality descriptions fit me to a tee!”
- “(The mirror) put it all together and then it looked back at me. I try to be aware of my talents and use them. These (descriptions) fit me to a tee. I was surprised at family and stability in my values, but I can see that in me. The mirror clarified a fuzzy mess.”
- “I used to say, this is just how I am. Now I claim it and consider how I can make it work.”
- “I thought I would be a prophet, but after my analysis, it was clear that I’m a teacher. After discovering that, I could see how my other gifts contributed to that, and I included it in my mission statement.”

A keen insight was how important it is to understand *others’* values better

- “I want to understand others better, what type they might be. I’m especially interested in people who are different than me and how they work.”
- “When we looked at the hexagon of types, I saw how diversity is a strength. I want to be part of a balanced team.”

- “I really appreciate my coworker’s integrity and humility now, more so than before.”
- “I’m viewing others differently now. I used to think ‘introvert’ was a bad thing. Why do you want to be alone? I never understood it. Now, I understand its OK. People like this have good things to bring to the table.”
- “I’ve chosen to be more reflective instead of negative. I’m trying to quit having instant reactions so that I can better understand people and where they come from.”

IMPACT of SHAPES:

The work-rest semi-circle: The importance of work and rest

The Triangle: finding balance in our up-in-out relationships

The Kairos Circle: The importance of self-reflection

- “It’s important to prune some of the stuff in my life and learn how to abide so that I can optimize my ability to lead effectively.”
- “My whole life, it has been about the importance of work, work, work, work... I learned how important it is to rest.”
- “Being aware of the triangle, I can live a more balanced life. I have done that more since we started, even though ‘in’ is where I am most of the time, I see myself looking up more and wanting to go out.”
- “I always went from observe to act (Kairos moment). Now I’m learning to slow it down and ask ‘what does it mean?’”
- “I don’t notice... I don’t always pay attention to things that are happening and see them as meaningful. The circle reminds me to pay attention. God could be trying to speak to me.”

PROGRAM IMPACT: *“I found the why!”*

- “I thought I knew my purpose, but maybe it has changed. I’m in my 30’s, in my early career, and I sorta think that I and many of my peers have lost their sense of purpose. I think to reflect on my life now as we have done, has allowed me to come back to purpose and learn new things about myself and where I am now. I think this will make me a more effective leader and live a fuller life. To know my purpose and be intentional about it.”
- “To know where I am in my career and my life and to understand why I am the way I am and why I have chosen the path I have chosen, I can take those two things and move forward more intentionally. I think that it is very, very healthy process because it is easy to forget certain parts of it and just go through life without knowing what you are doing.”
- “Young professionals just want a job to make good money and make my life easy. It’s easier to think about that than to think about what matters. This has helped me think about what matters, what is important. The Kenya guy example was powerful – what

this does for you it shows you what your purpose is and why you are here and I am very glad that I did this... Everyone should know what their purpose is.”

- “This experience has affirmed a lot of things I was doing. It’s helped me have a mission statement. I know why I have all those gifts. I never thought about what to do with them.”
- “I saw service everywhere in my gifts, both life and spiritual. This experience has helped me see how important it is to write a mission statement that’s written through the lens of my spiritual gifts and values.”
- “I like to think about this stuff and wanted to experience with this community. I did not expect to be challenged. I did not expect things to come to the surface that felt more truthful and honest than identities that I have taken on for myself.”

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