

DO NOT NEGLECT THE GIFT YOU HAVE:
THE BLESSINGS AND CHALLENGES OF EQUIPPING MINISTRY

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THESIS ABSTRACT

“Why don’t more people volunteer?”

“Why is getting congregational involvement in ministry like pulling teeth at times?”

“Why does my church have 20% of the people doing 80% of the work?”

These questions and others like them have been asked by many congregations as they seek to keep their ministries alive. However, “surviving” in ministry is a lot different than “thriving” in ministry. Something needs to change.

This thesis presents the following truth: While faithfulness to the gospel and truth of the Word dare not change, the way we deliver the Word from our God to people must change, as well as the way we engage members in service.

This thesis also presents a solution: Equipping Ministry. Equipping Ministry is not just one more program to add to the mix, but a core value that must be championed by the congregation. Equipping Ministry changes the existing church culture to one that recognizes and rejoices in the Biblical imperatives to equip people for works of service. Equipping Ministry helps people discover their spiritual gifts and strengths, and prepare, connect, and equip them for ministry. Equipping Ministry helps get the right people in the right place at the right time for the right reason. Equipping Ministry helps ministries not only survive, but thrive.

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PART I: FAITHFULNESS TO THE GOSPEL AND THE TRUTH OF THE WORD DARE NOT CHANGE

The Bible is the true and holy Word of God. Thankfully, this is not an issue up for debate in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. The Bible is holy because it comes from God himself. We believe and confess that the men who wrote the Bible were divinely inspired, speaking from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.¹² The Bible is true for the same reason: these are God's words. We believe and confess that God's Word is inerrant – that the promises and accounts he has revealed to us in his Word are not just fables with morals that encourage us to live lives of civic righteousness, but rather true historical accounts of men who walked on this earth, lived, and died just as we do.

Most importantly, we believe and confess the gospel truth that God has graciously revealed to us in his holy and inerrant word. This is a message we dare not change: the good news of salvation through God's Son, Jesus Christ. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace."³ This is the message the prophets shared with God's Old Testament people as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. This is the message Jesus and his apostles shared in the New Testament. This remains the message we share today.

We dare not stray from the truth of God's Word! We confess with Peter in Acts chapter 4, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."⁴

PART II: THE WAY WE DELIVER THE WORD FROM OUR GOD TO PEOPLE MUST CHANGE

While God's Word never changes, the way we connect and share his word with others does change, and not always easily. People are generally cautious and nervous about change.

¹ All Scripture references will be taken from NIV 84.

² 2 Peter 1:21

³ Ephesians 1:7

⁴ Acts 4:12

This is recognized in our circles to the extent that we even have jokes which capitalize on the fact German Lutherans and change generally don't get along. Some may feel like the way they worshiped growing up is the way worship *should be* and *always has been*, but this just isn't the case. Worship changes to fit the needs of the people. While we dare not change the message of Christ crucified, the way that message has been delivered to those hearing it does change to better connect people with the gospel. As we look through history we can see some very important changes which took place to better connect people with God's Word.

As we search the New Testament we find various glimpses of early worship. In Acts 2, Luke describes the fellowship of believers following Pentecost:

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.⁵

In Colossians, Paul mentions using music in worship to teach and admonish one another.⁶ In Luke, as Jesus is taken up into heaven, we are simply told that the disciples worshiped and continually praised God at the temple.⁷ While the essence of worship (praising Christ) did not change, aspects of how worship was done did vary. William Willimon writes:

There is no one New Testament view of early Christian worship. The liturgical picture of the early church is one of diversity rather than uniformity. The free operation of the Spirit within the church manifested itself in a variety of ways: preaching, prophecy, speaking in tongues, baptism, and intercessory prayer. However, on the basis of New Testament evidence, it is reasonable to assume that the primary context for these various acts of worship was the weekly Sunday evening gathering for the Lord's Supper.⁸

The Apostle Paul is a good example of how worship changes to fit the needs of people. Paul did not try to take the same approach with every group he spoke to. In fact, Paul stressed meeting the people in the way they could best relate.

⁵ Acts 2:42-47

⁶ Colossians 3:16 "“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”"

⁷ Luke 24:50-52

⁸ William H. Willimon, *Word, Water, Wine and Bread – How Worship Has Changed over the Years* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1980), 22.

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men...⁹

Paul also gave his reason for doing this. “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.”¹⁰ Paul reminds us of our goal. We want to bring souls to Christ. The way we deliver the gospel changes to best meet that goal.¹¹

Ironically, one of the greatest changes to how worship was done came from the Lutheran church’s namesake, Martin Luther. Luther recognized how far the Catholic Church had strayed from the truth of God’s Word, and he sparked the great Reformation of the church. In addition to bringing the true gospel message out in the open where it belongs, Luther changed many things that would help that message connect with the people better.

Among many errors of the Catholic Church was the incorrect treatment of the Lord’s Supper. The early church of around the 4th Century AD, had transformed the Lord’s Supper into a ceremony of awe, mystery, and distance. Chrysostom even referred to the Lord’s Supper as the “shuddering hour” and the “terrible and awful table.”^{12 13} The Catholic Church also treated the Lord’s Supper as a *opus bonum*, a good work that humans did for God, rather than recognizing it as something God does for us. Additionally, the Catholic Church treated the Lord’s Supper as a proprietary sacrifice, a “re-sacrificing” of Jesus, which goes against what Scripture clearly teaches.¹⁴ This fear and misunderstanding concerning the Lord’s Supper was something

⁹ 1 Corinthians 9:19-22a

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 9:22

¹¹ One should also note Paul’s warning in the next chapter. Paul writes in 1 Cor10:23-24 “‘Everything is permissible’—but not everything is beneficial. ‘Everything is permissible’—but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.” We do want to meet people where they are at and make necessary changes to do so. However changing simply because we have the Christian freedom to do so is not a wise idea. See the footnote about Carlstadt on page 4 as someone who should have listened to Paul’s Words more carefully.

¹² Willimon, 44.

¹³ Willimon suggests that the transformation of how the Lord’s Supper was viewed was largely a response to several controversies that had sprung up in the early church, such as Donatism, Pelagianism, and Nestorianism. Heresy bred an overreaction against the heresy, and led to viewing the Lord’s Supper with fear instead of joy.

¹⁴ Hebrews 10:14, “because *by one sacrifice* he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”

important which Luther set out to change. However, as Luther sought these necessary changes, he did so very tactfully and carefully.

In the beginning Luther was reluctant to tamper with the liturgy out of a concern, as he said “for the weaker brethren.” He first advocated and helped develop a weekday service of Scripture reading and preaching which was to educate people in true doctrine and to prepare them for more meaningful participation in the Sunday Mass. But in 1523, when one his disciples, Andreas Carlstadt, began to make radical changes in the Mass,¹⁵ Luther was compelled to publish his own ideas on worship reform lest reform be undertaken by (in his words) “ignorant and mindless innovators.” This *Formula Missae* was a conservative revision of the Mass.¹⁶

Luther also recognized that not treating the spiritual problems he saw would be wrong. He also recognized that change needed to be edifying, not damaging. In walking the “narrow Lutheran middle,” Luther moved that the bread and wine be prepared during the singing of the Creed so as to eliminate any hint that the offertory was prelude to a proprietary sacrifice. However, Luther soon realized his first attempt at revision in his *Formula Missae* failed to meet the worship needs of the reform movement. The Mass was still in Latin instead of the vernacular German, and was too conservative for many. So, in 1526, Luther issued his *Deutsche Messe*, a vernacular mass he could use to educate those to whom he ministered.¹⁷ Luther made several other edifying changes. In addition to moving worship into the language of the people, Luther translated the Bible into German so the common person could read God’s Word for himself. To help the truths of Scripture stick in people’s minds, Luther wrote many hymns to common tunes that the people could easily pick up. Luther was returning worship to the people.

The Reformation may have been the beginning of several changes, but it certainly was not the end. Many changes in worship were still to come, as people tried to connect the gospel with others in the best possible way. It might sound surprising to 21st century churchgoers, but *even the organ* was once a strong point of conflict in public worship when it was introduced! In 1903, Professor J. W. McGarvey shared his thoughts on the matter in his article, “What Shall we do About the Organ.”

¹⁵ On Christmas Day, Carlstadt showed up to lead worship in street clothes, had people take the bread/body of Christ in their hands, and consecrated the elements in the vernacular language. The people were not ready for so many drastic changes at once. (Note: Many of these changes are things we do without hesitancy now!)

¹⁶ Willimon, 63.

¹⁷ Willimon, 65.

My dear brother: Your sad letter, giving an account of the trouble that has sprung up in your congregation in regard to the use of an organ in its public worship and propounding to me a number of questions on the subject, has been carefully considered... That a vast amount of evil has been occasioned by the introduction of instrumental music into Christian worship is undeniable. Beginning with the first instance of it among us which I can remember—that which caused a schism in the church in St. Louis in the year 1869 – its progress has been attended by strife, alienation, and division, with all their attendant evils, in hundreds of congregations. ...

You ask: “How can I most successfully show that the use of the organ in the worship is wrong? What are the strong points of the argument?” ... I begin by arguing that the practice belongs to a class of things expressly condemned in the New Testament. Jesus said in reference to certain additions which the Pharisees had made to the ritual of the law: “In vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.” In these words he propounds the doctrine that all worship is vain which originates in human authority; or, to put it negatively, that no worship is acceptable to God which he himself has not authorized. Paul echoes this teaching when he condemns as “will worship” the observance of, ordinances “after the precepts and doctrines of men.” (Col. 2:20-23, R.V.) The Greek word here rendered “will worship” means worship self-imposed, as distinguished from worship imposed by God; and the practices referred to in the context are condemned on this ground, thus showing that all self-imposed worship is wrong in the sight of God.

Now it is universally admitted by those competent to judge that there is not the slightest indication in the New Testament of divine authority for the use of instrumental music in Christian worship. He who employs it, therefore, engages in “will worship” according to Paul, and he offers vain worship according to Jesus.¹⁸

This excerpt shows us that Professor J. W. McGarvey did not have a clear understanding of Christian freedom in worship. It also demonstrates through the history of the organ how worship and sharing God’s word changes over time. The organ went from being skeptically accepted at best, to eventually being beloved. Now it seems to be almost passé in several churches; being restricted to the traditional service, or simply not used at all. Data from the National Congregations Study shows the use of the organ on a swift decline, with 70% of churches using the organ for worship in 1998 to only 56% in 2012.¹⁹

The introduction of the organ to the worship service is hardly the only change to the “modern” worship service. The vernacular language has changed once more. Services are in English now instead of German. The Wisconsin Synod has adopted different styles of worship

¹⁸ J.W. McGarvey, *What Shall We Do About the Organ?* (Nashville: McQuiddy Printing Company, 1903) n. p.

¹⁹ “National Congregations Study Material,” <http://www.soc.duke.edu/natcong/Docs/SummaryTables.pdf#page=28> [accessed November 18, 2016].

and different worship settings to help meet the needs of the people. Many different worship services are utilized, such as Common Service, Service of the Word, Morning Praise, and Evening Prayer to name a few. Different worship settings correspond with different parts of the church year, such as special Advent or Lent services. The Lectionary and Pericope provide variety and walk the congregation through the church year. Classic hymns are incorporated from the Christian Worship hymnal, as well as hymns from the Supplement and songs that are in neither. Many Wisconsin Synod churches have adopted “blended worship” to incorporate different music and variety.

As society moves into a more technology based era, we incorporate new developments into our worship. Projectors, screens, and televisions display the worship service so many people no longer make use of hymnals or bulletins. Social media is used both in the service (e.g. showing a YouTube video as a visual aid to a sermon) and out (e.g. posting the sermon online).

Why all of these changes? It all comes back to what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9. We become all things to all men in order that we might save a few. Worship and delivering the truths of God’s Word change to connect with people where they are at, in order that the gospel might be effectively shared. If one does not accept the way we deliver the truths of God’s word to people must change, it would be very hard to accept that the way we engage members in service must also change.

PART III: THE WAY WE ENGAGE MEMBERS IN SERVICE MUST CHANGE

Just as worship changes to meet the needs of God’s people, so also the way we engage members in service must change to be done in the most effective way possible. How is this done? Equipping Ministry provides the answer. Part III of this thesis will focus on the following areas: 1) Biblical Foundations 2) What does it Mean to be an Equipping Church? 3) What’s Wrong with the Way Things Are? 4) How does Equipping Ministry Happen? 5) What does Equipping Ministry Look Like? 6) The Challenges and Blessings of Equipping Ministry

1) Biblical Foundations

With any activity we do, and especially with ones directly related to church and ministry, we want to return to God’s Word and see what biblical foundations he gives us. This is also certainly true with Equipping Ministry.

We are commanded by God to become “equipping churches.” The *sedes doctrinae* for this thesis is Ephesians 4:11-16.

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Verse 12 gives the biblical mandate to equip. The NIV 1984 translation above says “to prepare God’s people for works of service.” NIV 2011 translates “to equip God’s people for works of service.” When we turn to the Greek, we see these translations coming from the word *καταρτισμὸν*. BDAG tells us this word has a nuanced meaning of “setting of a bone,” but gives “equipment, equipping” as the more general translation.²⁰ *Καταρτισμὸν* has *καταρτίζω* as its root verb, which provides us with two main verb usages: 1) to cause to be in a condition to function well, *put in order, restore*. 2) to prepare for a purpose, *prepare, make, create, outfit*.²¹

As one examines each verb definition, it’s easy to see how one word could be used to describe both setting a bone and equipping someone. In either case, you are trying to put something (or someone) in just the right place so that it can function to the best of its ability. That’s what Equipping Ministry is all about – fitting someone in his proper place so he can perform his proper function. Or as Trinity Lutheran Church²² describes Equipping Ministry, “Getting the right person in the right place at the right time for the right reason.”²³

What is the goal in equipping congregation members for service? Paul describes it in verse 13, “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and

²⁰ Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. (2000). *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature* (3rd ed.) (526). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

²¹ Arndt, et al, 526.

²² Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church is located in Crete, Illinois and is a congregation of just over 1000 members with over 800 communicant members. In 2007, Trinity recognized the need for a change in the way ministry was run and invested in making equipping a core value of the congregation. God blessed Trinity with an Equipping Ministry that continues to thrive 10 years later.

²³ Lori Lorig, interview by author, Crete, IL, August 22, 2016.

become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” The goal of an Equipping Church is Christian maturity and growth as a body of believers.

Verse 16 shows us how that body works best. “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” God desires the work he has entrusted to believers to be an activity of the whole, not just a few parts. We want as many members as possible involved in ministry. Pastor Ron Heins writes, “Underlying these materials is a key biblical understanding: no person is complete in themselves. God’s people were designed by their creator to be complementary parts. We are complemented by each other.”²⁴

God provides us with other scriptural truths that we want to take ownership of as we equip our members for ministry. First of all, a ministry of serving others is an act of love and devotion to Christ. “Any member ministry program should emphasize this aspect of serving others. Ministry above all else, is an act of worship.”²⁵ Peter reminds us that as Christians, we are also priests. “You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”²⁶ “All Christians –clergy, non-clergy, staff, members, leaders, followers, men, women, children, physically fit, and disabled – are “priests,” the communication links God and those he loves.”²⁷ Paul describes our activities as priests in Romans 12:1-2,

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ² Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Paul goes on to describe how we offer our bodies as living sacrifices – by using the unique gifts God has given us. Again, Scripture uses the analogy of a human body to describe the body of believers.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members,

²⁴ Ron Heins, *Who Will Come and Serve Today?* (Parish Assistance, 2005) 2.

²⁵ Heins, 23.

²⁶ 1 Peter 2:5

²⁷ Heins, 24.

and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.²⁸

God has given us all unique talents, with which we can share his word. Both Peter and Paul make a great point in discussing the use of the gifts God has given us. Peter writes, "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ."²⁹

Paul devotes an entire chapter of the Bible to discussing the gifts God has given us with which we can fulfill our calling as priests. As we use the gifts God gives us, we accomplish his will. God has given us gifts with which we can do the good works God prepared for us to do.³⁰ As each of us is unique, so are the gifts God gives us. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul writes,

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.³¹

It should be noted that 1 Corinthians 13, the great love chapter of the Bible, is placed right in-between 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, which talk about spiritual gifts. As we use the gifts God has given us to serve him, the church, and our community, we want to do it out of love. If our service doesn't come out of love, we are nothing more than a resounding gong or a clanging symbol.³² Love is a key to both why people serve and how people serve.

²⁸ Romans 12:3-8

²⁹ 1 Peter 4:10-11b

³⁰ Ephesians 2:10

³¹ 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

³² 1 Corinthians 13:1

2) What Does It Mean to Be an Equipping Church?

God has given biblical foundations for Equipping Ministry. He has given the mandate to prepare (equip) people for works of service. But what does it mean to be an Equipping Church?

Sue Mallory and Brad Smith describe Equipping Ministry:

Equipping Ministry prepares people to understand their gifts and live out their calling in every area of their lives – church, community, family, marketplace, and mission. It is discipleship that include both knowledge and action, resulting in group maturity. Church leaders must count equipping ministry as their primary goal.³³

Something that can be difficult when studying Equipping Ministry, but that is crucial to understand, is Equipping Ministry is not as much a “ministry,” as we usually use the term, but a *core value*.

Equipping is not a program we ladle on to a large stack of other programs, but a “North Star” by which we measure and redirect all of our programs. It is a return to the biblical priority established for church leaders, which allows them to simplify their work around the essential tasks God has defined for them.³⁴

Being an Equipping Church means a paradigm shift in both how congregation thinks about ministry, and how your church does ministry. It’s a change in church culture, “the environment of expectations, values, and often-unwritten rules that surround everything your church does.”³⁵ Church culture is very important because it “powerfully determines people’s actions and their acceptance or rejection of new things...However, internal culture can and must be changed and proactively built up in order to provide a healthy underpinning for the task of equipping people for ministry.”³⁶ It is also a change to the church system, how the church is structured and carries out ministry. I will discuss system and culture change later in this paper.

As a core value of the church, Equipping Ministry is a part of *every* ministry area.

If you make equipping just another ministry department – like youth ministry, children’s ministry, or worship ministry- then it never really takes off. But when a church considers equipping a value – and not just a means for recruiting cheap labor – then the equipping value becomes a part of *all* the other ministry areas. As long as equipping is a program,

³³ Sue Mallory and Brad Smith, *The Equipping Church Guidebook* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001) 13.

³⁴ Mallory and Smith, 14.

³⁵ Mallory and Smith, 61.

³⁶ Mallory and Smith, 61.

an appendage of the church instead of a value, it'll never be enough to significantly change the church. It's got to become a horizontal value, not a vertical program.³⁷

What does the above quote mean by “vertical programs?” Lori Lorig, the Coordinator for Personal Member Ministry³⁸ at Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church describes them as “pillar ministries” or “silo ministries.”

When I started at Trinity I recognized very much that we had silo ministries.... We line them up and each person has their share of responsibilities but it all fits right here. In a staff setting there was no interchange of ideas. [The Pastor] does worship, [and] this [other] person doesn't give input on something that wasn't theirs. But then PMM³⁹ came in and worked across all ministries.⁴⁰

The really cool thing about Member ministry is that it works across all ministries of your congregation. So you find out who has the gift of music, [and you find] who might be singing in blended worship. [You find] who likes to work with children, [and you find] who might like to work in your Sunday school program. So member ministry, if you do it well, works across all areas of your church and needs to become a core value of your congregation.⁴¹

As they went through the process of becoming an equipping church, Trinity adopted a personal ministry definition. “Living out in Christ the special role that God has prepared for me and prepared me for.”⁴² The focus of Equipping Ministry is just that. It strives to reconnect ministry to the people so that they can use their God given gifts. Ron Heins writes,

Today God is on the move again. The “stadium church” with a few on the field and many in the stands commenting on how well the few are doing is being brought toward death. It appears our God is again bringing another reformation into the landscape of church history. While the first reformation gave the Word back to the people, the second reformation is giving ministry back to the people.⁴³

3) What's Wrong with the Way Things Are?

Equipping Ministry is not just one more program among many. It's more than just volunteer management or “filling the slots.” Unfortunately, this seems to be the approach that

³⁷ Alan Nelson, *Me to We* (Loveland: Group, 2007) 75.

³⁸ The title that Trinity chose for the Director of Equipping Ministry.

³⁹ Personal Member Ministry. This is what Trinity decided to name their Equipping Ministry program.

⁴⁰ Lorig, interview.

⁴¹ Lorig, interview.

⁴² Lorig, interview.

⁴³ Heins, 2.

many churches take. How does an average church equip its members? Just say “the Word works!” and leave it at that? Welcome members to church and hope they are paying attention whenever a sermon text touches on service or using our God given gifts? Are these biblical approaches and do these approaches fully utilize the gifts God has given both to the leaders of the church and the congregation?

After talking about spiritual gifts, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14:40, “But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.” If a church’s equipping plan is simply not to have an equipping plan, that is not fitting and orderly. Perhaps a more common problem is that the pastor is the sole “equipping plan.” Congregations or even the pastors themselves can set unrealistic expectations that the pastor can do it all. “Our pastors can set themselves up for burnout by not preaching on and living out spiritual gifts and that *everyone* can be involved in ministry.”⁴⁴ If the pastor is where the buck starts and stops with ministry, then there are a lot of people who are either ignorant of their spiritual gifts or ignorant of how to use them! That’s not a good thing.⁴⁵ Alan Nelson writes, “The role of the pastor in the local church is to act like a fuse that ignites the church to reach its potential. [The pastor is] the catalyst, not the center of ministry.”⁴⁶ He also writes,

I do think that most of us [pastors], by nature, get caught up in a codependant relationship with our congregations. We perform ministry services for them, which they applaud, so we do more. But all the while, we’re creating a dependent relationship, so that our parishioners never really mature spiritually. They become spiritual consumers, full of knowledge, but light on application.⁴⁷

Much of this problem stems from our modern culture’s view on what a “member” is and does. In non-religious organizations, becoming a member is about what the organization does for you. People become members for their enjoyment, and for the clout that comes with membership. If you are a member of an organization and choose not to participate, that is also your right. Someone can become a member of a gym and decide for themselves how much they will utilize their membership. The organization exists to serve the member. This consumer mind-

⁴⁴ Lorig, interview.

⁴⁵ Romans 12:1 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”

⁴⁶ Nelson, 37.

⁴⁷ Nelson, 21.

set is a stumbling block to Equipping Ministry. Many come to church with a “serve-us” mind-set instead of a “service” mind-set. It is part of the old church culture that must be overcome as the church embraces equipping as a core value.

At first glance, equipping ministry sounds very simple: essentially building an internal culture that values gift-based service, then creating ways to help people move from where they are not to where they should be. But the problem centers on where we start. Most people walk into your church with a consumer mind-set. We live in a consumer culture where we are used to going to megastores, Web sites, and highly specialized vendors who provide us with many choices and services so we can get exactly what we want. Many choose a church by looking for the one that gives them the best “religious goods and services,” since they are a consumer of “religious goods and services.” It is hard to move people from a consumer mind-set to a servant lifestyle when so much in their world militates against this transition. Yet, it is exactly this transformation that will provide them with the greatest joy and maturity. To build an equipping culture in a sea of opposing forces requires bold prayer, careful strategy, and persistent, never-ending work.⁴⁸

As many churches move forward, they are beginning to notice a problem. The old way of “equipping” (or lack thereof) either just does not work, or does not work well. Lori Lorig describes when Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church recognized the need for change.

Where Member Ministry began at Trinity is really out of our vision planning process. And it really was identified as “We need more people involved. 20% of the people are doing 80% of the work. We need to fill some slots! We’ve got some empty spots, we need to fill the slots. We want more volunteers, we want someone who will get people to do stuff.” That was originally basically my job description.⁴⁹

It should be noted again that Equipping Ministry is *not* about simply filling slots. In an effort to “survive,” filling slots may very well be what brings churches to Equipping Ministry at first. However, this is *not* the goal. Heins reminds us, “The goal is to help God’s precious children learn, discover, and develop the ministry that God has prepared for them at each stage of their lives. The focus is not filling constitutional or institutional roles.”⁵⁰

Trinity certainly is not the only church to ever struggle with recognizing the need for change. During a phone interview, an anonymous WELS pastor in Michigan described his church’s equipping culture when he arrived,

⁴⁸ Mallory and Smith, 15.

⁴⁹ Lorig, interview.

⁵⁰ Heins, 2.

How it worked was if you wanted to serve, then you did it. And if you didn't want to, there was no equipping process at all, *on a purposeful note*. [To equip members] I have been trying to invite members and teach them what to individually do. Let me share a few examples with you. I spent four weeks training someone on how to put together the bulletins. Just printing, folding, and stapling the bulletins. Not a large task, but it took me over four weeks to go through that with her.

Another problem we ran into was that we recently had a relatively newer Christian on our Board of Elders. He ended up quitting the church because he didn't know what he was getting into. So I ended up going through the book *The Shepherds Assistant* with my Board so they would be able to understand the responsibilities of the ministry they're in.

Whenever I ask someone to do something I always try to make sure they have what they need to do it. I give them a description of what I want them to do and I make sure to check if they have any questions or need any help. I've also found that one of the things that really blocks ministry is when you have one or two people doing everything.⁵¹

The pastor quoted above recognized the need to equip his members. In fact many of the things he mentioned are important things for Equipping Ministry to happen. However despite his best efforts, his church as it is has neither the culture nor the system in place to have an efficient Equipping Ministry, and to accomplish things in a "fitting and orderly way." A wise congregation will strive to have Equipping Ministry as a core value to prepare God's people for works of service.

4) How does Equipping Ministry Happen?

So then, how does Equipping Ministry actually happen? Where do you begin? There are a lot of parts and pieces that move and work together. There is also a lot of new information and new changes, which can make Equipping Ministry seem quite intimidating. Because it is such a large undertaking, it's wise to approach Equipping Ministry the same way one would approach eating an elephant – taking it one bite at a time. The three biggest "bites" that need to be taken to make Equipping Ministry happen are a) Building an Equipping Culture b) A Director of Equipping Ministry who will build teams and integrate roles, and c) Building Support Systems.

Without each of these three main parts, Equipping Ministry will not work efficiently.

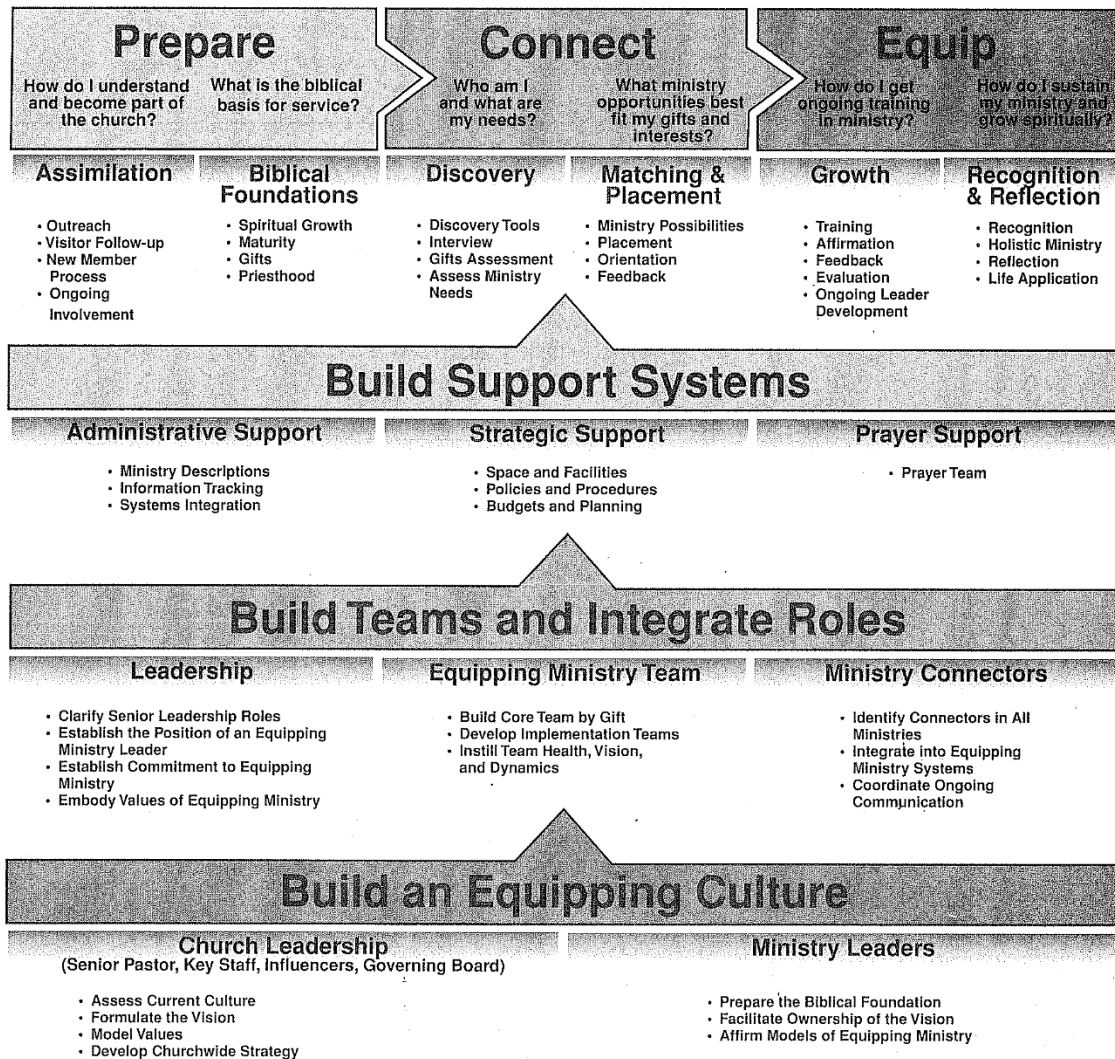
Alan Nelson writes,

There are three things that will hamstring a church from becoming an equipping church. One is a pastor who does not fully embrace or model it. The second is not having an

⁵¹ Phone interview with anonymous pastor, November 18, 2016.

equipping partner who'll champion this value throughout the other ministries. The third is a lack of structure that enables equipping, so that it never gets organized or becomes a part of the church culture.⁵²

When each of these parts work together, the church is able to prepare, connect, and equip its members for ministry. The chart below⁵³ serves as a guideline to help visualize an equipping ministry system and then develop a model and a strategy for Equipping Ministry. The key to application is to create a system that allows each person to navigate the complete process with



⁵² Nelson, 118.

⁵³ Mallory and Smith, 65.

clear, identifiable “next steps.”⁵⁴ The first step for Equipping Ministry is building an equipping culture among your church leadership as well as ministry leaders.

a) Building an Equipping Culture

The foundation for Equipping Ministry is building an equipping culture. This is absolutely essential for Equipping Ministry to succeed. The best laid out plans for Equipping Ministry will not work if the congregation has not embraced equipping as a core value. Jeff Jones writes in *The Leadership Baton*,

Here’s what I discovered: If the culture isn’t ready, even the best ideas and strategies are doomed to failure. Before we try to import new ideas, improved systems, and high-quality tools for doing better leadership training, we first need to prepare the soil in our church. We need to do the hard work of embedding new values deep into our church culture.⁵⁵

So how does one “prepare the soil” for Equipping Ministry? Equipping Ministry begins with the church leadership. It is very important that the church leadership be on board and united in the vision for an equipping culture.

We started this very much with the staff. And understand that if your entire staff is not on board with engaging more people and empowering them, equipping and empowering, if your entire staff is not on board it’s not going to work as efficiently as it should.⁵⁶

At its start, Equipping Ministry involves a lot of behind the scenes work with the leadership of the church. “The reason is because you’re most interested in helping build an equipping *culture*. Remember, this is not a program or a quick fix. It’s something that will forever change your church both internally and externally. You want to do it right.”⁵⁷

The role of the leadership in building the equipping culture is to assess the current church culture, formulate the vision for the future, and embody the values that they want in the new culture to have. This means that the leadership of the congregation (i.e. pastor or pastors, governing board members, key staff members) as well as other ministry leaders, must be grounded in the Biblical foundations of Equipping Ministry. This is a good time for the leaders of the church to study the Biblical imperatives for equipping and using the spiritual gifts God has

⁵⁴ Mallory and Smith, 60.

⁵⁵ Rowland Forman, Jeff Jones, and Bruce Miller, *The Leadership Baton* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 30.

⁵⁶ Lorig, interview.

⁵⁷ Nelson, 123.

given for service. In the case of Trinity, there was behind the scenes work, research, and study for 18 months before going before the congregation with a sermon series, Bible classes, and Discover classes.⁵⁸

Formulating the vision for the future means reviewing the church's current mission and vision statement. Does the current statement or vision include equipping the members to serve and grow as Christians? If not, then a new statement will be needed. As a church explores its vision statement, it will want to answer the questions "How do we want to move forward," "To whom do we minister," and "What values does our church want to demonstrate?"

Vision casting is extremely important for Equipping Ministry. Ron Heins shares two critical components to vision casting – helping people feel the need, and helping people see the dream.

Use quotes from the needs survey so people can hear what others are saying about being burned out by serving in the wrong place, or having a great deal to offer but not seeing a place to serve. Help people understand what happens in a way that awakens compassion, and develops a passion for meeting them.

Give people clear, detailed, realistic pictures of what quality service in ministry can be. Make it clear that current needs are tremendous opportunities to make a difference in other people's lives.⁵⁹

The vision will be cast again and again so people become aligned in their understanding of the direction the church is going. Wayne Corderio writes,

The strength of any vision lies in alignment – that is, vision caught and shared by every person involved...If you want to build a strong team, you have to get everyone pulling together for the same cause...What happens when people lack a common vision? Simply this: Even though you are together, you have no idea where you are going...Without a clear and compelling vision, all will fail and the ministry will go to waste. Such a ministry will bear little fruit, because the people won't know where God is leading them. They won't know what purpose they are meant to fulfill...To build alignment, you must first let the people know where they are supposed to be headed. Alignment begins when every member understand your direction and echoes it in his or her heart.⁶⁰

It's important to recognize that more changes than the church vision will also be necessary. This includes system changes which will be addressed in section 4c. In the case of Trinity, the former church constitution did not address or enable the way Trinity wanted to go

⁵⁸ Lorig, interview. More on Discover classes later.

⁵⁹ Heins, 67.

⁶⁰ Wayne Corderio, *Doing Church as a Team*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2001), 150.

forward with Equipping Ministry, and so it was suspended for a time while the equipping culture and systems were being put in place.

Finally, the church leadership and ministry leaders change the culture by modeling the change they want to see.

When changing programs, facilities, or even leadership structures, you can move quickly from vision to strategy because the critical element of change is the ability to clearly explain what is new. When changing an internal culture, however, the longest and most critical step is for leaders to embody or model what they have envisioned. Culture is changed by example, not by words, and articulating a new lifestyle is a much longer process than articulating a new idea, program, or physical location. Whenever there is a shortcut at the “embody” stage, no matter how well the change is explained and even verbally mimicked by the congregation, real change doesn’t occur because people perceive from the example of their leaders that the change is more about words than about actions.⁶¹

b) The Director of Equipping Ministry

Shifting your church’s paradigm to having an equipping culture and system is a very big undertaking. Because there are so many things involved with Equipping Ministry, it needs someone who will own what they are doing. “When you develop a Personal Member Ministry in your congregation, you are changing the culture of your congregation. When you’re changing the culture of your congregation, you need somebody to own it.”⁶² Owning the lead role of Equipping Ministry is not something that can or should be added to the duties of the pastor. While pastors have certainly been called to “equip God’s people for works of service,” they largely do this by championing the values of equipping and making sure the biblical foundations and biblical imperatives about using spiritual gifts are being taught in sermons, Bible classes, and modeled in the way they go about their lives.⁶³ Nelson describes the pastor’s role in Equipping Ministry:

When pastors think equipping or ministry involvement is just one more program they have to run, it’ll never get off the ground because they’re already juggling all these ministry balls. Besides, it would be sort of hypocritical if the pastor had to be the person who did all the equipping, organizing, and leading. This is about team; utilizing multiple people in roles that fit their gifts.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Mallory and Smith, 64.

⁶² Lorig, interview.

⁶³ See Appendix C for Trinity’s congregational launch week document.

⁶⁴ Nelson, 79.

Basically the pastor is the social architect for a church, the cultural catalyst...To become an equipping church, you need to see the big picture so you can help coach your partner and his or her team. You'll be more involved in the beginning, helping change church culture, and less involved as the church progresses; but you will want to be aware of what needs to happen for your church to succeed.⁶⁵

Who then takes up the lead when it comes to Equipping Ministry? A church that is interested in having a strong equipping culture will need to hire a Director of Equipping Ministry who will report to the senior pastor. The Director of Member Ministry will work very closely with the senior pastor as the equipping culture and system are put into place. There are several reasons for this.

Member ministry represents a departure from past operational methods employed by most churches. A ministry that truly involves members according to their talents and gifts needs to be continuously championed and supported by the Pastor and requires ongoing vision casing from the pulpit. A direct reporting relationship to the Pastor communicates the importance of member involvement to the church leadership and encourages congregational support for the program. A close working relationship with the Pastor is necessary if the director is to be truly responsible to the needs of the congregation. The director needs to be in a position to readily inform the pastor of issues and concerns of the members.⁶⁶

Because of the close relationship the Director of Equipping Ministry has to the senior pastor, Nelson describes the relationship as being the pastor's "partner."⁶⁷ However, there is no official "correct" title for this position. "As a rule of thumb, titles generally reflect the function of the position, its preferred style of operation, and the culture of your church."⁶⁸ Different resources about Equipping Ministry refer to this position by different names. For example, Trinity Lutheran Church gives this position the title "Coordinator of Member Ministry." For uniformity of discussion, this thesis will refer to this position as the Director of Equipping Ministry.

The Director of Equipping Ministry is a full-time job and needs to be given the full attention that it deserves. Because of this, the Director of Equipping Ministry will need to be someone who devotes the needed time into creating and maintaining the equipping culture and system. Mallory and Smith warn, "Employees who split their time among competing

⁶⁵ Nelson, 119.

⁶⁶ Heins, 52.

⁶⁷ Heins, 79.

⁶⁸ Mallory and Smith, 147.

responsibilities often find themselves squeezing equipping ministry into an already crowded schedule, thereby short-changing support to people and skimping in the time-consuming coordinating functions.”⁶⁹ Mallory and Smith go on to describe time requirements for the Director of Equipping Ministry:

The ideal option for establishing and facilitating equipping ministry is to hire a full-time director. For churches with nine hundred or more members worshipping weekly, this option is especially effective. The position requires considerable attention to detail and full knowledge of church operations. Because of budgetary constraints or the desires of the director, many churches have initiated and continue to facilitate equipping ministry with staff persons working half-time to three-quarter time in the churches or during the development phases of the position in larger congregations. Some churches divide the work responsibilities of an employee to include half-time leadership of equipping ministry with half-time responsibility for another work area, such as Christian education, small group ministry, and the like. Generally speaking, this option is less effective than either of the other two.⁷⁰

It is suggested that the Director of Equipping Ministry be a paid position. This adds accountability to the director and also shows a serious dedication to having equipping as a core church value. Ron Heins describes the cost of a Member Ministry system in a setting more familiar to the average WELS congregation.

With under 185 in worship, churches tend to make this an unpaid position. Churches with 185 to 550 in attendance at weekend services tend to employ part-time directors. Salaries and benefits for part-timers averaged \$21,687. Part-time was defined as anywhere from 20 to 30 hours of work weekly. Funds allocated for travel, professional development, office supplies, retreats, and member recognition events and programs averaged \$2,340. Many responses indicated that it was difficult to identify the support budget accurately because many expenses are carried by the general budget of the congregation.

Defined as 600 to 1000+ in attendance at weekend services, larger congregations generally employ full-time directors, or directors who share the member management responsibility with one other work area; however, the vast majority of directors are dedicated member ministry leaders. These directors earn, on average, \$39,100 annually. Support funds were incrementally greater as well. Larger churches earmark an average of \$6,612 for member ministry and also report that many expenses are absorbed in the church’s operating funds.⁷¹

Important qualities for a Director of Equipping Ministry include being able to juggle many tasks simultaneously, enjoying a challenge, being someone who loves others, being

⁶⁹ Mallory and Smith, 148.

⁷⁰ Mallory and Smith, 148.

⁷¹ Heins, 54.

someone who desires to match people to ministries based on their gifts, being someone who is committed to the values of equipping ministry, and being someone who can plan, organize, work with and through others, and do consistent follow-through.⁷² Lori Lorig describes her experience in being approached to be the Director of Equipping Ministry at Trinity:

In 2008 I was hired as the Coordinator of Member Ministry at Trinity. My background experience is 25 years of coordinating volunteers, either through Lutherans for Life, elementary CLPA days, Booster Club days, but I have been working on getting the right person in the right place for 25 years. Early on I didn't understand the value of that. Today [I am] so appreciative of it and wish I had gotten it then and that it didn't take quite so long. So being able to help people understand that early on is kind of a huge launching off point.⁷³

Because of her past experiences within the church, her natural leadership abilities, and her eagerness to help God's people realize their gifts, Lori was a natural choice for Trinity's Director of Equipping Ministry. Lori was hired for 32 hours a week (though in reality it was often more than that) at \$15 an hour.⁷⁴

What responsibilities does the Director of Equipping Ministry have? Mallory and Smith provide a sample ministry description in the quote below. See Appendix A for Ron Heins' sample ministry description for Director of Equipping Ministry.⁷⁵

As a member of the leadership staff team, the [Director of Equipping Ministry] will assist [the congregation] in broadening the base of ministry...by developing the base of ministry throughout the congregation by developing and leading a core team of people who are committed to creating and sustaining lay-driven systems that serve, support, and engage people in spiritual growth through the use of their God-given gifts, talents, and passions.⁷⁶

The Director of Equipping Ministry is constantly in a state of training.

Initially there are spiritual gifts workshops, followed up by one on one interviews. Then every ministry is required to have a training component for new people, as well as periodic continuing education for those already on the team. The director of equipping is constantly training and helping others create effective training.⁷⁷

⁷² Mallory and Smith, 188.

⁷³ Lorig, interview.

⁷⁴ Lorig, interview.

⁷⁵ Heins, 61.

⁷⁶ Mallory and Smith, 152.

⁷⁷ Nelson, 80.

At the start of Equipping Ministry, the training begins with the leadership as they begin to study and model the values of equipping. The Director of Equipping Ministry's role in leader development is not to do all the training of the leaders, but to facilitate the process and draw attention to the importance of leader development as a value in equipping culture.⁷⁸ After the groundwork is laid, the Director of Equipping Ministry (with input from the senior pastor and other church leaders) will need to train a Core Equipping Team.

The Core Equipping Team help prepare, connect, and equip people for ministry and are led by the Director of Equipping Ministry. The Core Team is heavily involved with both the initial behind the scenes work of getting the systems in place for the various aspects of Equipping Ministry, as well as maintaining them once the congregation is brought on board.

The equipping ministry team should be an active, doing, working team. Its members help develop and organize record-keeping systems, interview people, meet with groups and individuals to facilitate the writing of ministry descriptions, assist with various hospitality arrangements, celebrate the accomplishments of those who actively serve – the list goes on and on. The critical factor is to develop a team of people with diverse gifts who share the vision and shoulder the work. *You can't do it alone!* Jesus didn't carry out his ministry alone...and neither should you.⁷⁹

Your equipping ministry team should be made up of people gifted to carry out each of the functions in your equipping ministry system. This group is the team that's focused on facilitating the development of an authentic, gift-based equipping ministry system for all the church's ministries. If you don't take the necessary time and care to build this team, you may well slow the growth of the ministry. This team and the director are *not* the gatekeepers; they are the support and foundation that create the infrastructure for all the ministries to become healthier.⁸⁰

The members of Trinity's Core Equipping Team were paired up with one of Equipping Ministry's six key areas, shown under the top level of the chart on page 15 of this thesis.⁸¹ One or two members of Trinity's core equipping team would take ownership of one of the areas and help champion that section of Equipping Ministry. The members of the core equipping team in turn train other implementation teams under the different ministries that fall under each of the six key areas.

⁷⁸ Mallory and Smith, 242.

⁷⁹ Mallory and Smith, 206.

⁸⁰ Mallory and Smith, 210.

⁸¹ The six key Equipping Ministry areas are: Assimilation, Biblical Foundations, Discovery, Matching & Placement, Growth, Recognition & Reflection. These will be looked at more in depth in part 5 of this thesis.

Typically each implementation team reports to one of the core team members and helps implement one part of the equipping ministry system. While the core team's role is to build the overall system, the implementation team's role is to build a piece of the system in such a way that it fits with the other pieces. These are active teams that help develop and organize record-keeping systems, interview people, meet with groups and individuals to facilitate the writing of ministry descriptions, assist with various hospitality arrangements, and celebrate the accomplishments of those who actively serve – and the list goes on and on. The key for the core team is to develop multiple teams of people with diverse gifts who share the vision and shoulder the work.⁸²

“Every member of every team needs to be accountable to each other, to make sure that team development and equipping are taking place within them.”⁸³ The communication between the core team and the other ministry teams are done by “ministry connectors.” Ongoing communication between the core team and the ministry connectors is very important. Ministry connectors can go to the core equipping team with questions, request for support in areas of need, and provide a vital communication link between the core equipping team and those who participate in the ministries of the church. The ministry connectors help communicate the vision and values of equipping ministry to each church ministry.

A connector is a warm friendly face that is going to walk alongside of a new person in that ministry and make them feel welcome; is going to provide the orientation and the training that that person needs to feel a part of that ministry. Is going to introduce them to other people, is going to answer all the odds and ends and questions [they may have]. That person is really going to walk alongside of them.⁸⁴

Mallory and Smith describe the important relationship between the ministry connectors, the core equipping team and the individual ministry teams.

One of the critical success factors in equipping ministry is building and maintaining the relationships between the equipping ministry team and the program ministry teams throughout the church. A clear understanding and ownership of the vision and values of equipping ministry by the leaders and teams involved in the ministry programs lay a foundation on which connector relationships can be built.

In every church, irrespective of structure, each area of ministry is led by a group of committed people under the guidance of a leader. “Connectors” are those people designated to provide the communication and feedback between their team and the equipping ministry team. These “touch points” between ministries are essential as

⁸² Mallory and Smith, 71.

⁸³ Nelson, 126.

⁸⁴ Lorig, interview.

equipping ministry becomes aligned with the vision of the church and infused into the operations of all the ministry programs.⁸⁵

Nelson goes as far as to describe the Ministry Connectors as the ligaments that hold the church body together:

[The Ministry Connectors] are the ligaments that hold the body together, mentioned in Ephesians 4. It's one of those key points that gets overlooked unless you develop a churchwide system that integrates ministries. I can't emphasize how important these team members are in terms of constantly communicating and keeping track of ministry-team staffing. The more people involved in service, the more challenging it becomes to communicate clearly. Therefore, you need more people whose responsibility it is to do this.⁸⁶

Facilitating ongoing leadership training, championing the values of equipping, training the core equipping team and getting the ministry connectors in place are all very important jobs of the Director of Equipping Ministry. Another key factor for success in Equipping Ministry that the Director of Equipping Ministry will be involved in is building the support systems of Equipping Ministry.

c) Building Support Systems

Making sure that the systems are in place to support Equipping Ministry is one of the responsibilities of the core equipping team, working under the leadership of the Director of Equipping Ministry. Even though the culture was addressed first in this thesis, it's important to recognize that culture and system change are both need to be built together.

Equipping ministry requires building both the culture and system together. If you try to build a system in a culture that is not aligned with the core values of equipping ministry, the system is quickly marginalized. If you express the values of equipping ministry without building an equipping ministry system, people can easily begin to substitute the "words" of equipping for the actions, or else their enthusiasm may explode and then wane again as their expectations are not met. The work of shifting your church culture toward an equipping vision and the task of building and implementing a system have to happen simultaneously.⁸⁷

What is involved with building support systems in Equipping Ministry? One very important piece is making sure a ministry description is available for each area of ministry.

⁸⁵ Mallory and Smith, 214.

⁸⁶ Nelson, 143.

⁸⁷ Mallory and Smith, 77.

Ministry descriptions make it clear what the expectations and commitments are for each area of ministry. “A ministry description is essentially a description of the work to be performed, the expectations for the position, and the relationship of the position to the mission of the congregation and to other programs or ministries within the church.”⁸⁸ Lori Lorig describes ministry descriptions:

It’s an invitation document, the ministry description. They just asked me to serve on the school’s Personnel Committee last night. I’m like, “Do you have anything written about this? Is there anything that tells me what my responsibilities are?” “No, I’m just going to tell you what your responsibilities are.”

Ok, then I’m not going to have much that I’m going to be held accountable for if it’s just you and I [sic] having a conversation. If it’s written down, then ok, I know what my responsibilities are. It’s a training tool. Have I covered [what I need to]? These are your responsibilities, I should train and equip you to know [what you need to know for this ministry].⁸⁹

Ministry descriptions are beneficial for several reasons. When done well, ministry descriptions communicate the expectations and responsibilities of each ministry to those invited to participate in them. They also help ministries not fall through the cracks when someone leaves the ministry. Suppose a church had a person or two who completely took care of a ministry on their own. If they were to move away or get called home to heaven, someone would have to reinvent the wheel for that ministry. Ministry descriptions help keep the system streamlined. Ministry descriptions help get the right people in the right place at the right time for the right reasons – matching the gifts of the congregation members with the needs of the church.

When we put ministry tasks in front of people, we tend to use people. When they don’t perform as we’d like, we feel disappointed in them. This creates both obvious and unconscious resentment, which strains relationships and causes people to feel unappreciated. Many churches lose people who rotate out of ministry, never to return, because they did a lousy job helping people find a place of significance that matched their gifts from the start.⁹⁰

Finally, ministry descriptions help each individual ministry recognize where they fit into the church’s vision, and how they fit under wherever they are located in the church. For ease of access and understanding, Trinity chose to have these ministry descriptions available for anyone

⁸⁸ Mallory and Smith, 232.

⁸⁹ Lorig, interview.

⁹⁰ Nelson, 83.

who would want to read what any ministry is about, and put a link on the church website for ease of access. See Appendix B for a sample ministry description from Trinity. Note how the ministry description clearly shows how the ministry fits into the mission statement.

The other big part of building the support system for equipping ministry is getting tracking systems in place to actually plug people into ministry. With many different congregation members who have many different gifts, the church will want to have some kind of data base of the different gifts of their members.

As you acquire information, remember that it will need to be entered into a database of some kind. Develop approaches that ensure accuracy, reasonable speed of entry, and ease of access. As you create your tracking system in order to capture the skills and interests of people, remember that this information will be optimally useful only if there is a system whereby you can match abilities and interest with opportunities.⁹¹

Trinity uses the Shepherd's Staff program to meet their database tracking needs.⁹² Getting the tracking system set up is not something that the Director of Equipping Ministry needs to get done personally. But like many other responsibilities in building the culture or system of Equipping Ministry, the Director of Equipping Ministry and Core team need to be working to make sure these goals get accomplished. When a church is comfortable in the preliminaries of getting the culture and system in place they can begin to prepare, connect, and equip people for ministry.

5) What does Equipping Ministry Look Like?

So far this thesis has largely looked at the “behind the scenes” portion of Equipping Ministry. This next section looks at launching Equipping Ministry in the congregation at large and will examine the six key areas of Equipping Ministry: Assimilation, Biblical Foundations, Discovery, Matching & Placement, Growth, and Recognition & Reflection. These key areas are split under the umbrellas of “Prepare,” “Connect,” and “Equip.”⁹³

In every effective equipping ministry system, three broad components are found in some form or other, namely, *Prepare*, *Connect*, and *Equip*. The [six key areas of Equipping Ministry] under each of these three broad components each represent an element that

⁹¹ Mallory and Smith, 230.

⁹² More information about Shepherd's Staff church management software can be found on their website <https://www.concordiatechnology.org/shepherds-staff>

⁹³ Mallory and Smith, 65.

people experience as they progress through the system. [Building Support Systems and Building Teams, including getting a Director of Equipping Ministry] indicate the support and development functions necessary to create and sustain a well-functioning system. The equipping culture, once established, is the supporting foundation for the entire system.⁹⁴

a) Prepare

Prepare is the first of three key processes through which new people are assimilated into the church and through which you come to know people so that they may serve and be served. *Prepare* involves informing new people about the church, discovering information about them, and teaching the biblical foundations of gift-based ministry⁹⁵

Under the broad process of *Prepare* are two of the six key areas of Equipping Ministry. These are Assimilation and Biblical Foundations. Assimilation is the process of integrating people into your church culture, and when done effectively goes a long way for retaining new members. “Assimilation systems are one of the processes that are often already successfully implemented in churches even before an equipping ministry program is launched,”⁹⁶ and so many things may be able to remain the same. Assimilation may involve things like a tour of the church, or how things work at the church. Changes need to be made when looking at assimilation. This includes making sure that the assimilation process goes hand in hand with the church’s equipping culture. This means helping new members connect to a bible study and ministry opportunity, after an interview process to find out more about them and their gifts.

Assimilation often goes hand in hand with the other area of *Prepare*, which is Biblical Foundations. The equipping culture may be alive in the present congregation members, but unless that culture is retained and also shared with new members, it could fade. Biblical Foundations involves “helping people understand Scripture and come to trust that God has gifted them and called them to ministry and that they will grow spiritually as they use their gifts in service.”⁹⁷ For new members Biblical Foundations would certainly be shared in a Bible Information Class. In addition, for new or current members the Biblical Foundations of equipping ministry are shared from the pulpit, bible classes or sermon series. After *Prepare*

⁹⁴ Mallory and Smith, 64.

⁹⁵ Mallory and Smith, 244.

⁹⁶ Mallory and Smith, 245.

⁹⁷ Mallory and Smith, 245.

comes *Connect*, a very exciting part of Equipping Ministry where members can discover their gifts and help get placed somewhere to use those gifts for service.

b) Connect

Every Christian wants to serve. Every Christian has that new man who wants to serve God, so every Christian has that part of them that wants to serve.

While it must be emphasized that good works play absolutely no role in determining human righteousness in God's sight or acquiring rewards from God apart from salvation, there is a natural obligation, based upon the nature of the human creature (as created and as reborn through the power of the Holy Spirit) to do good works.⁹⁸

If every Christian has a new man who wants to serve, why is it so difficult at times to get people to serve? Why do we not see people serving? Of course our sinful nature is always still present, and the devil certainly will try everything in his power to get that sinful nature to overwhelm us. But is that the only reason people don't serve?

One reason people do not serve may be because their past experiences hold them down. Someone can be so focused on something someone said or did many years ago that they think they are simply not capable of service. They might even have had a bad experience serving in a ministry that required gifts they did not have, or in one that they were not able to use the gifts they do have. Bruce Bugbee uses the analogy of an elephant tied to a stake.

During one of the breaks, Bobb [sic] started chatting with the man who trains the animals for Hollywood movies. "How is it, he asked, "that you can stake down a ten-ton elephant with the same size stake that you use for this little fellow?" (The "little fellow" weighed about three hundred pounds.)

The trainer answered with a smile, "It's easy when you know two things: elephants really do have great memories, but they really aren't very smart. When they are babies, we stake them down. They try to tug away from the stake maybe ten thousand times before they realize that they can't possibly get away. At that point, their elephant memory takes over, and they remember for the rest of their lives that they can't get away from the stake."

In some ways, we humans are like elephants. As children, we may hear that we aren't very smart or that we are clumsy or a slob. Or, maybe as a teenage someone said about us, "He's not very handsome," or "She's not very pretty" or "They're not very good leaders," and *zap!* our minds drive a mental stake into the ground. Often, even though we are adults, we are still held back by some inaccurate one-sentence "stake" that was

⁹⁸ Charles P. Arand, Robert Kolb, and James A. Nestingen, *The Lutheran Confessions*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012) 194.

hammered into our minds when we were years younger. Those stakes have limited our self-understanding and image.⁹⁹

Another reason people may not serve is simply because they do not know how they could serve, or what their spiritual gifts and talents even are.

One of the most common excuses people give for not getting involved in ministry is that they just don't have the abilities to offer. Nothing could be further from the truth: Many national studies have proven that the average person possesses from five hundred to seven hundred skills! The real problem is twofold. First, people need some process of skill identification. Most people are using abilities that they are unaware that they have. Second, they need a process to help them match their abilities with the right ministry.¹⁰⁰

The next key process in Equipping Ministry is *Connect*, and involves helping people realize that they do have spiritual gifts and talents, and recognizing what those gifts and talents are. Afterwards, each person is matched and hopefully placed somewhere where they can use their gifts for service.

The first key area under *Connect* is Discovery. In this area of Equipping Ministry the church helps discover things about its members. This is done through interview processes as well as a gifts assessment. For new members, an initial interview is a key component of the assimilation process and serves as a welcome to the church. The initial interview helps discover people's stories – what brought them to the church, what needs they have, and what concerns they bring.¹⁰¹

The interview process is not only for new members. When setting up the Equipping Ministry system, a church will want to interview all of its members, beginning with the leadership and members of the core equipping team. Interviewing the church leadership helps to “build bridges, develop team relationships, and strengthen the vision.”¹⁰²

The interview begins the equipping ministry process. It is the church's opportunity to discover another person's faith history and the life experiences he or she brings to his or her community of faith. As you come to know another member of the body of Christ, you begin to discern how each person can work together to build the church and to spread her impact in the community.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Bruce Bugbee, *What You Do Best in the Body of Christ*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005) 134.

¹⁰⁰ Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message and Mission*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) 72.

¹⁰¹ Mallory and Smith, 260.

¹⁰² Mallory and Smith, 261.

¹⁰³ Mallory and Smith, 261.

Other interview processes in the Equipping Ministry System are placement interviews, which will be discussed later in this section, and exit interviews. An exit interview helps to provide feedback on whatever ministry the person was involved in. It is also an opportunity to show appreciation to the individual for his or her service.

As previously stated, all Christians have spiritual gifts, and all Christians have the desire to do good works of service. However, as Paul reminds us in Romans 12, we are all different members of the same body. Different people have different gifts, strengths, and personalities. The gifts assessment portion of the Discovery process helps identify what gifts, strengths and personality traits are unique to each member of the congregation.

Realizing one's strengths and being engaged in something one enjoys is very important in the congregation as well as the business world. *Strengths Finder 2.0* from Gallup describes the less than ideal situation where someone is not in a position to work from their strengths:

And for those who do not get to focus on what they do best – their strengths – the costs are staggering. In a recent poll of more than 1,000 people, among those who “strongly disagreed” or “disagreed” with this “what I do best” statement,¹⁰⁴ not one single person was emotionally engaged on the job. In stark contrast, our studies indicate that people who do have the opportunity to focus on their strengths every day are six times as likely to be engaged in their jobs and more than three times as likely to report having an excellent quality of life in general.¹⁰⁵

Since Equipping Ministry is about getting the right person in the right place at the right time for the right reason, the church will certainly want to make sure it knows the strengths of its members!

There are many different gift assessments that can be used to determine strengths and spiritual gifts. Mentioned in the quote above is *Strengths Finder 2.0* from Gallup which after a series of questions will present someone with their top five strengths. Marita Littauer's book *Wired that Way* describes four main personality types and includes a Personality Profile Quiz in the back of the book. And the Wisconsin Synod's own David J. Vallesky's *Gifted to Serve* Seminar provides a Biblical study on different spiritual gifts as well as a gifts assessment.

A resource that tackles all of these areas is *S.H.A.P.E.* by Erik Rees. The different letters of the book stand for Spiritual Gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experience. Each of these

¹⁰⁴ Agree or disagree: “At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day”

¹⁰⁵ Tom Rath, *Strengths Finder 2.0*, (New York: Gallup Press), iii.

areas comes with an assessment to help someone discover their own strengths in each area.¹⁰⁶ Trinity went with an amalgamation of many of these resources and made their own *S.H.A.P.E.D.* class, with the D standing for “Doing.” This class was a key part of Trinity’s Discovery area in Equipping Ministry and helped people recognize their gifts. After a congregation member had taken the class, they would have an interview to discuss their gifts as well as what they got out of the class. This interview would also serve as the way to gather information on each member’s gifts and strengths, which could then be recorded in the tracking database. During this interview, suggestions would be made based on the strengths and desires of the individual of where they might be interested in ministry and be a good fit. This brings us to the other key area of Equipping Ministry under *Connect* – Matching and Placement.

Matching and Placement is the next step after discovering one’s gifts. This step involves inviting someone to participate in ministry and involves several other areas of Equipping Ministry that have already been discussed. The database holds the information from each member’s interview, showing their strengths and interests. The ministry descriptions are in place, which will be shared with the person being invited to participate in a ministry. And finally, the ministry connector is the warm friendly face who will work with and answer any questions the person may have about the ministry. Lori Lorig describes how to invite someone to ministry:

Training people on how to do the asking is what’s really key. And that was one of the things that I found that people didn’t know how to do, or when to do the asking. You want to train them on how to do it. If you give a ministry position description they are going to understand clearly what to ask. The best person to do the asking is someone already serving in that area of ministry. That doesn’t necessarily mean that the person leaving that position is the person that should do the asking, generally that’s not the right person, but it’s somebody serving in that in that area of ministry. So understanding who should do the asking is important. But it’s also important to understand when to do the asking. The worst time to do the asking? Sunday morning. Never voicemail or email, not newsletter or bulletin ads. Always face to face – that’s the best way to make an invitation. Pray for the person you are inviting beforehand. That really allows for that process to be more intentional. And then encourage that person to pray about their decision. When you invite you want to inspire, you want to get that person excited about being invited into that ministry.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ The SHAPE assessment can be taken online at http://www.wherenewlifebegins.org/hp_wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/SHAPE-Assessment.pdf

¹⁰⁷ Lorig, interview.

Part of Matching and Placement is obtaining and adjusting to feedback. Part of this is making sure there are exit interviews when someone leaves a ministry, as discussed previously. Another part is adjusting when someone still is not in the right fit for ministry after placement. Mallory and Smith advise:

When you prepare staff members and leader to work with people in ministry capacities, be sure they know how to redirect people back to the equipping ministry office if the match is not appropriate for all concerned. Again, ministry connectors are key for making this process work smoothly...just because a connection isn't perfect doesn't mean anyone is a failure; it simply means the right ministry position hasn't been found. Advise your ministry leaders to direct people back to [The Director of Equipping Ministry's] office graciously, without damaging the person's ego or communicating a sense of failure. There is a place for everyone in the body of Christ.¹⁰⁸

c) Equip

Mallory and Smith provide an overview of the last key processes in Equipping Ministry:

Equip is the third of three key processes in your system. The elements of *Equip* deepen the commitment to serve and thus become one of the most important factors in retention. *Growth*, which includes training, affirmation, feedback, evaluation, and ongoing leader development, is the cornerstone of this process. To achieve the goal of whole-life ministry and spiritual development, the encouragement of faith in action is achieved through effective *recognition* and the provision of *reflection* opportunities.¹⁰⁹

Growth involves looking back as well as looking forward. The church will want to look back and examine how the different areas of Equipping Ministry are working, taking note what works well and what needs improvement. Part of Growth involves ongoing leadership development. How is the church staff growing, both as a team as well as individual personal growth? What can be done to help growth and retention in Equipping Ministry? Board retreats, guest speakers, book discussions and strategic vision planning are important parts of helping Equipping Ministry grow.

Recognition and Reflection make up the other part of *Equip*. Recognition promotes growth and continued involvement. Recognition greatly helps with retention because it lets people know that they are appreciated.

Recognition is more than saying thank-you for a job well done. It is a personalized response to an individual, acknowledging his or her unique contribution to the body of

¹⁰⁸ Mallory and Smith, 301.

¹⁰⁹ Mallory and Smith, 325.

Christ. It is valuing the individual, making his or her service visible, and supporting him or her in both the joys and struggles of working to build the kingdom.¹¹⁰

Reflection is a step back for the congregation members to examine their service.

Reflection walks congregation members through their ministry experience and asks their input on various things. Was the ministry description for this area of ministry accurate? Do any changes need to be made? What can the staff do to make people's serving time more effective?¹¹¹

These three key processes, *Prepare, Connect, Equip*, give a glimpse into what is involved with Equipping Ministry, and what Equipping Ministry looks like on a congregational level. Although there are recognizable benefits in Equipping Ministry, there are also blessings and challenges.

6) The Challenges and Blessings of Equipping Ministry

Like many other areas of life, Equipping Ministry is not without its challenges. However, when done correctly, the blessings of Equipping Ministry far outweigh the initial struggles.

a) Challenges

An obvious challenge of Equipping ministry is that it's not simply adding one more program among many: it's changing the way the church thinks about ministry. Equipping Ministry seeks to change the very culture of a church. This is not something that can be done overnight. Nelson advises, "Remember, you're not starting a *program*. This is a long-haul *process* to change your church culture. Think marathon, not sprint."¹¹²

When changing a church culture, or church system, feathers are bound to be ruffled. As discussed in Part II of this thesis, as well as Part III.4, people are hesitant about change. It's a break from the comfortable and a break from the familiar. Equipping Ministry is a threat to the status quo.

With any change there is always the fear of the perception of loss. Loss of control, loss of tradition, loss of "the way we've always done it." Rarely is there a focus on what we will

¹¹⁰ Mallory and Smith, 342.

¹¹¹ Lorig, interview.

¹¹² Nelson, 170.

gain. It is important to honor the fears and honor the past, but continually in big and small ways to paint the picture of what will be gained from the change. Bathe this time in prayer. Pray for the leadership and their willingness to serve in the tension. Pray for the people, that God may soften their hearts and see his vision for the church.¹¹³

As the church moves forward in Equipping Ministry, it must meet this fear of change by taking away the aspect of the unknown. Endings must be articulated and losses specifically identified. Let the congregation know what the changes will be, and help them to see those changes are necessary as we seek to carry out the Biblical imperatives God has revealed to us in his Word.

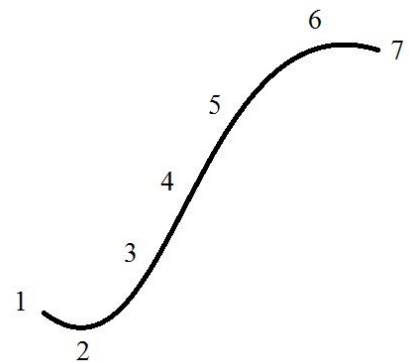
Another challenge of implementing Equipping Ministry is entering what Mallory and Smith describe as the “neutral zone.”

Bridges defines the neutral zone as the “nowhere between two somewheres.” In this state of limbo it seems that nothing works quite right. Neither the old ways nor the new ways are satisfactory. Problems in the system seem to reappear, anxiety is high, signals keep getting crossed, and people are polarized, with some who want to return to the old ways and others who want to rush headlong into the future.¹¹⁴

Recognizing the “neutral zone” exists is important, because then you can prepare for it. The greater the paradigm shift, the greater the time and space required for the neutral zone. As previously said, Equipping Ministry is not a sprint.

Most churches allow anywhere from nine to eighteen months before expecting to see visible results from equipping ministry. Some of this time is devoted to setting up systems, piloting various options for record keeping, and carrying out other tasks; some is devoted to working with staff members and leaders to help them understand the new way of involving people in the life and work of the church. It’s also a valuable time for church members to make the transition. It’s critical to allow sufficient time for this phase, in accordance with the culture and systems in place in your church.¹¹⁵

Nelson describes the “neutral zone” in terms of the “S-curve,” a model used in businesses circles (and others too) to chart change.



¹¹³ Mallory and Smith, 219

¹¹⁴ Mallory and Smith, 221.

¹¹⁵ Mallory and Smith, 221.

Nearly every organization, project – and even our lives – goes through a life cycle that reflects and S-Curve... At point 1, it's the time for dreaming. This is like when you find out your wife is pregnant, or you begin brainstorming an innovation, or you come to a new church. It's a time of excitement and idealism. Then, reality hits; point 2. You have your first worship service but instead of 200 people showing up, you have 80. It's the 2 a.m. feeding, or year two of a new pastorate, when you realize that whatever it is that you were dreaming about is going to be harder than you thought. The good news is that if you persevere, you begin to make progress and see some growth and results of your hard work; point 3. Then if you continue to restructure, more growth takes place, point 4, and you start enjoying the fruit of your hard work – whether it's a business, marriage, kids, or exercise program. That's point 5 on the S-curve. Then eventually you'll begin to lose momentum, point 6, and decline will eventually set in, leading to death, point 7.

That's an overview of the S-curve, but you need to understand the potential danger in the section you're in during this change initiative. Just as a new venture, idea, or innovation begins at point 1, the biggest threat comes at point 2, the trough. That's where you face your first real problems. It's when people start questioning your new idea. You don't have much success yet, so there's little payoff, making it more difficult to convince people that the new way is better than the existing. You may feel depressed tired and stressed. The danger of the trough is the temptation to give up. That's where most people exit a new idea, because it's easier than pushing through it.¹¹⁶

Again, being aware that these challenges are there helps prepare for them. The church will want to continue championing the values of Equipping Ministry, continue setting up the ministry system and culture, and make its way through the trough to the other side. One note of encouragement is that it is a lot easier to maintain the equipping system and culture once they are in place, than the initial change of setting everything up.

Another challenge which was addressed previously in this thesis, is making sure that neither the equipping culture, nor equipping system gets too far ahead of the other. When the culture is too far ahead of the system, the congregation could end up replacing equipping “words” with actions – getting excited about the prospect, but never getting involved. The reverse also provides challenges for a church. A church could have an excellent equipping system in place, but without the culture of recognizing what God's word says about spiritual gifts and equipping, many members will not be involved.

¹¹⁶ Nelson, 174.

b) Blessings

There are many blessings that come from Equipping Ministry. The first is simply the fact that Equipping Ministry provides a way that churches can effectively carry out God's biblical imperatives to equip members for works of service. Equipping Ministry helps congregation members grow in their walk of faith and participate in the "good works that God prepared in advance for them to do."¹¹⁷

Many blessings come from the Discovery portion of Equipping Ministry. Through Equipping Ministry, members will discover their spiritual gifts and strengths. Bruce Bugbee describes some of the personal benefits when spiritual gifts are used.

Once you know and use your spiritual gifts, you will know your spiritual job description. When you know your spiritual job description, your ministry will be more focused. Otherwise it is easy to get involved with other activities to the neglect of your specific area of contribution. In addition to knowing your spiritual job description, your ministry will be more fruitful and fulfilling when you know and use your spiritual gifts. Our spiritual gifts make it possible for us to get the kind of results that will not only glorify God, but will edify others.¹¹⁸

Earlier this thesis mentioned a quote from *Strengths Finder 2.0* that is worth repeating. When people get to do things that allow them to use their strengths and individual gifts, they are more often engaged in what they do. This is certainly a truth that the church wants to take advantage of through Equipping Ministry.

And for those who do not get to focus on what they do best – their strengths – the costs are staggering. In a recent poll of more than 1,000 people, among those who "strongly disagreed" or "disagreed" with this "what I do best" statement,¹¹⁹ not one single person was emotionally engaged on the job. In stark contrast, our studies indicate that people who do have the opportunity to focus on their strengths every day are six times as likely to be engaged in their jobs and more than three times as likely to report having an excellent quality of life in general.¹²⁰

Equipping Ministry helps more congregation members recognize their gifts and use them for service. Before Trinity Lutheran Church championed equipping as a core value, they had about 50 involved in ministry. Lori Lorig describes the ministry numbers change:

¹¹⁷ Ephesians 2:10

¹¹⁸ Bugbee, 40.

¹¹⁹ Agree or disagree: "At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day"

¹²⁰ Rath, iii.

Trinity Lutheran church, where we developed it, [is a] congregation of about 1100 people, worshiping about 375 to 400 members. When I left [the position of Director of Equipping Ministry] we had about 350 people actively engaged in some level of ministry, which really correlates somewhat with what you see in the pews.¹²¹

Some truly amazing things have happened at Trinity Lutheran Church since implementing Equipping Ministry. The church has been able to help get more of the right people in the right place at the right time for the right reasons, leading to a ministry boom. Many new ministries were created, as people discovered their strengths and spiritual gifts.¹²² Many new relationships were made as people could connect while serving their Lord.

Equipping Ministry is a blessing not only to individual congregations but to the communities they serve. Jesus commands us to “Go make disciples!” Equipping Ministry uses spiritual gifts and individual strengths as ways to witness. Many ministries are not carried out in the church but in the community. Trinity’s Faith in Action Day highlights service outside the church, as members do everything from cleaning out gutters, to painting, to volunteering at the food pantry, to just about any ministry you can imagine. It’s an amazing one day a year where every ministry functions from about 8am to 1pm, and hundreds of people use their gifts for service.

God has blessed Trinity in an amazing way through Equipping Ministry. However, the way Trinity carries out Equipping Ministry will probably not be the exact same way another church carries it out. Equipping Ministry is not “one size fits all,” but something that must be tailored to how an individual church seeks to equip their members for service. Different congregations will have different challenges with different results. However, many of the blessings will be the same. Implementing Equipping Ministry will give the congregation who uses it a uniform equipping system in place which removes many roadblocks along the way. It will help create a culture that champions equipping as a core value. And finally, it will help its members to grow in their Christian life as they discover their spiritual gifts and are prepared, connected and equipped for service.

¹²¹ Lorig, interview.

¹²² Trinity put this in place in their equipping system by creating a “Request for New Ministries” document.

CONCLUSION

Each Christian is a member of the body of Christ. God has given us each unique spiritual gifts and strengths. He reveals to us in his Word that he has prepared good works for us to do, and he commands pastors to “equip their members for works of service.”

Equipping Ministry provides an answer to God’s biblical imperatives. It helps each member discover their unique gifts in the body of Christ and equips them to use those gifts for ministry.

Equipping ministry is a major paradigm shift. It changes the existing culture of the congregation to be one that holds equipping as a core value. It takes time, effort and patience. With the help of the Director of Equipping Ministries and a core equipping team, Equipping Ministry permeates through every existing area of ministry in a congregation and helps connect them to each other.

Equipping Ministry changes the way things had been done in the church, helping set up a uniform system designed to stimulate ministry growth. Ministry descriptions, ministry connectors, and a tracking database help to connect each member to a place where their strengths can be best utilized and where they can grow in their spiritual life.

Equipping Ministry helps prepare, connect, and equip people for ministry.

Equipping Ministry helps get the right person at the right place at the right time for the right reason.

Equipping Ministry is a necessary change to help ministry thrive.

APPENDIX A¹²³

DIRECTOR OF MEMBER MINISTRY **Possible Position Description**

The Director of Member Ministry will help the members of the congregation to identify and develop their spiritual gifts and match their interests, skills, gifts, and abilities with the needs of the church and community

Qualifications

1. Is a mature Christian
2. Possesses skills in communication
3. Has gifts in organization
4. Is skilled in interpersonal relations
5. Has the ability to relate to the feelings, needs, and hurts of others
6. Is a person of action, compelled by love

Relationships

1. Is a part of the leadership team as member or advisor
2. Has a ministry team to assist in the execution of this work
3. Reports to the pastor
4. Operates under the teachings and policies established by the congregation

Major Responsibilities

1. Help each church member identify his or her God-given spiritual gifts, interest, and talents to discover areas in which to use them.
2. Relates to groups in the church as a resource for personnel and help to accomplish their programs and goals.
3. Assess volunteer needs of the church and community and match these needs with the needs, interests, and gifts of the member servants.
4. Keep updated records of active member ministries as a resource for the leadership, staff, and programs of the church.
5. Help new members assimilate into the congregational life of service within one month of their joining
6. Have clear position descriptions for every role in which a person is offered an opportunity to serve
7. Secure or conduct training at a level appropriate to ministry position for those in service
8. Show appreciation to those who serve on an ongoing basis.
9. Maintain open communication with the congregation's leadership, with those engaged in service, and with the pastor(s) to listen to the needs, assess continuing fit, and evaluate the appropriateness of the service in light of the congregation's mission

¹²³ Heins, 61.

APPENDIX B¹²⁴

Board of Adult Spiritual Growth

Board Member

Mission Statement: God encourages us in His Word, “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 3:18); therefore, Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church assists and nurtures adults in growing in God’s Word for the strengthening of their faith and life in Christ through Adult Spiritual Growth Ministry.

Description: Three men are elected to this position and provided the opportunity to strategically plan for and oversee the area of Adult Spiritual Growth at Trinity. This board empowers others to carry on the Adult Spiritual Growth programs. The Administrative Pastor serves as the advisor.

Qualifications:

- God has set forth the qualifications for church leaders in 1Timothy 3:8-10, 12-13:
 - worthy of respect = has the confidence of the congregation
 - sincere = speaks truthfully
 - not indulging in much wine = uses alcohol in moderation; self-controlled
 - not pursuing dishonest gain = honest
 - keeps hold of deep truths of the faith = knowledgeable of the truths of God’s Word
 - keeps hold with a clear conscience = believes the truth of God’s Word
 - tested = sets a good example
 - nothing against him = good reputation
 - husband of one wife = morally upright
 - manages his children well = faithful father
 - manages his household well = faithful caretaker of his family

Responsibilities:

1. Actively grow as a leader through regular worship and Bible study, training opportunities, personal reading and other growth opportunities.
2. Pray regularly for the members, staff, and ministries of Trinity.
3. Participate in the Annual Board Retreat to identify three year core strategic priorities and one year plans in keeping with the congregation’s vision.
4. Develop strategies to execute the Adult Spiritual Growth plan within the scope of the congregation’s mission. (Note: Board members are not envisioned to be the actual workers who do the ministry but those who organize and enable others.)
 - a) Determine priorities.
 - b) Develop action plans.
 - c) Establish operational policies.

¹²⁴ Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, “Notes from Trinity Meetings” (Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church, Crete, IL, 2016.)

- d) Appoint as many work groups, action committees, task forces, and coordinators as necessary to carry out the work.
5. Be proactive in overseeing ministries assigned to the Adult Spiritual Growth Board.
 - a) Monitor the well-being of the ministries.
 - b) Maintain regular contact with, and serve as mentors to, leaders of ministries.
 - c) Assure ongoing development and evaluation of the ministries.
 - d) Conduct Annual Ministry Review and submit report.
 - e) Secure funding for the training and equipping of members involved in ministries.
6. As opportunities arise, work with Personal Member Ministry to help develop new ministries that support the Adult Spiritual Growth vision, as outlined in the document, "Process for Beginning a New Ministry at Trinity Lutheran Church."
7. Attend and participate in all board meetings and complete assigned tasks.

Time Commitment:

- 4 hours per month for meetings and assigned tasks
- 3-year term (by election), may succeed himself once






Relationships: Board members and the Administrative Pastor work as a team; represent, serve, and oversee ministries and ministry leaders within the area of Adult Spiritual Growth; report to the Church Council via the Adult Spiritual Growth Chairman; are responsible to the voters and members of Trinity.

Training: Board members are provided with training through the yearly board retreat and other ongoing leadership development opportunities.

APPENDIX C¹²⁵

We are God's Workmanship Molded to Minister – Shaped to Serve			
Date	Emphasis	Scripture	Bible Classes
April 11	<p>We are God's Workmanship</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We are created anew and saved in Jesus 2. In Jesus we are created for good works 3. Special good works have been created for us to do 	<p>📖 Ephesians 2:8-10</p> <p>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, <u>created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.</u></p>	<p>📖 Ephesians 2:1-10</p> <p>📖 Story of Esther</p> <p align="center">Joe Archer</p>
April 18	<p>Priesthood of All Believers (Molded to Minister)</p> <p>God has given the ministry to all of us not just called workers.</p>	<p>📖 1 Peter 2:9</p> <p>But you are a chosen people, <u>a royal priesthood</u>, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.</p>	<p>📖 Universal Priesthood</p> <p align="center">Mark Blauert</p>
April 25 (Confir - mation)	<p>In View of God's Mercy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God enables us to serve through faith (Week 1) 2. He has given the ministry to us (Week 2) 3. Do we want to serve? Yes! - because of God's mercy 	<p>📖 Romans 12:1,2</p> <p>Therefore, I urge you, brothers, <u>in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices</u>, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing, and perfect will.</p>	<p>📖 Isaiah's calling – Is. 6</p> <p>📖 Life of Isaiah</p> <p align="center">Tim Rimpel</p>
May 2	<p>God Gifts Us for Personal Ministry (Shaped to Serve)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. God wants us to serve (Weeks 1 and 2) 2. We want to serve (Week 3) 3. God has given us special spiritual gifts with which to 	<p>📖 1 Peter 4:10,11</p> <p><u>Each one should use whatever gift he has received</u> to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.</p> <p>📖 Romans 12:6-8</p>	<p>📖 Biblical Examples of people demonstrating three spiritual gifts</p> <p align="center">Matt Heyn/Jeff Uhlenbrauck</p>

¹²⁵ Trinity, "Notes from Trinity Meetings."

	<p>serve</p> <p>4. And some of those gifts are....</p>	<p>We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. <u>If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it</u> in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.</p>	
<p>May 9</p> <p>(Mother's Day)</p>	<p>Every Gift Is Important for Personal Ministry</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No matter what our gift is – it is not less important than someone else's. 2. No matter what our gift is – it is not more important than someone else's 	<p> 1 Corinthians 12:1,12-21</p> <p>Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant.</p> <p>The <u>body is a unit</u>, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"</p>	<p> Biblical Examples of people demonstrating three spiritual gifts</p> <p>Matt Heyn/Jeff Uhlenbrauck</p>
<p>May 16</p>	<p>Personal Ministry Involves Hearing and Doing</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We cannot serve if we do not grow spiritually. 2. When we grow spiritually we will want to serve 	<p> Luke 11:28:</p> <p>Blessed rather are those <u>who hear the word of God and obey it.</u></p> <p> James 1:22-27:</p> <p><u>Do not merely listen to the word</u>, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does.</p>	<p> Mary and Martha</p> <p>Pastor Italiano</p>
<p>May 23</p>	<p>The Festival of Pentecost</p>		

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