

ABSTRACT

Developing a Congregation-Led Homebound Ministry in a Rural Context

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This project addressed the need for Golinda Baptist Church to establish a viable, long-term, homebound ministry. The purpose of this project was to evaluate the effect of the intervention on the people of Golinda Baptist Church taking ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry.

The biblical foundation of this project primarily comprised Genesis 12:1-3, Exodus 3:7-17, Isaiah 61, Luke 4:16-30, and Acts 2:42-47. There are also various examples of these biblical principles exhibited throughout Church history. The biblical application of God working with humanity to restore creation is vital for the Golinda Baptist Church to engage the local homebound community.

This project is an exercise in caring for the homebound through education, exposure to need, and asset-based service from a congregational perspective.

I believe this project led to the successful establishment of a viable, long-term homebound ministry at Golinda Baptist Church.

Developing a Congregation-Led Homebound Ministry in a Rural Context

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DEDICATION

To Camilla. Thank you for walking into that Starbucks and for saying “Yes!”

You are God’s treasure and the great light of my life.

To my Mama Bear. Thank you for raising me right and for being my hero.

For my “Old Man,” who went before his time. I can’t wait to see you again
and I am proud to be your son.

CHAPTER ONE

An Introduction to the Project

Statement of the Problem

The people of Golinda Baptist Church (GBC) needed to take ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry. The church is in a rural context with a significant number of aging citizens who cannot leave their homes easily or without assistance. GBC lacked an organized method for addressing the everyday problems of this neglected social group. These conditions necessitated the development of a coordinated effort to alleviate the hardships of elderly, homebound residents in the surrounding community.

Statement of the Purpose

The personal purpose for this project was my belief that it is essential for the church to care for the forgotten members of society. A viable, long-term ministry to homebound senior citizens is critical to sharing the gospel in our rural context. The practical purpose of this project was for the people of GBC to take ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry. The research purpose of this project was to discover the effect of the intervention on the people of GBC taking ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry.

Definitions

The terms used in this proposal that may be ambiguous or potentially misunderstood by the reader are defined as follows:

- a. Core Member: People currently recorded in the membership roll of GBC who attend one or more services on a weekly basis.
- b. Homebound: A person who has trouble leaving home and cannot do so without the help of another person or medical equipment such as crutches, a walker, or a wheelchair.
- c. Rural Context: A community characterized by low population density, few businesses, and limited access to public safety and utility services. Farmlands, forests, plains, deserts, or prairies often surround these areas.¹
- d. Senior Citizen: An elderly person, especially one who is retired and living on fixed income.²
- e. Viable: For the purposes of this project, this specifies a homebound ministry capable of involving church members in meeting the needs of homebound individuals in practical and caring ways.
- f. Long-term: For the purposes of this project, this specifies a homebound ministry that is sustainable, owned by the congregation, and continues beyond the conclusion of the study for a period of one year or more.
- g. Homebound Ministry: A ministry performed by the local church on a recurrent basis to address the physical, emotional, and spiritual concerns of local citizens who are either confined or find it difficult to leave their home. It addresses issues such as food insecurity, depression, and spiritual welfare within this isolated societal subgroup.

1. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, “Rural” or “Non-metro” areas are defined on the basis of counties using a combination of open countryside, rural towns (places with fewer than 2,500 people), and urban areas with populations ranging from 2,500 to 49,999 that are not part of larger labor market areas. “Rural Classifications,” USDA, last modified September 27, 2016, accessed October 21, 2016, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/rural-economy-population/rural-classifications/>.

2. The U.S. Census Bureau defines a “Senior Citizen” or “Older Adults” as someone sixty-five and older. “Older Americans Month,” last modified May 8, 2015, accessed October 21, 2016, <http://www.census.gov/newsroom/facts-for-features/2015/cb15-ff09.html/>.

Project Rationale

Context

Golinda is a rural community located approximately twenty minutes southeast of Waco, Texas

on TX highway 77 near the McLennan/Falls county line. Citizens of the town have limited access to public safety and utility services. Electrical, water, and telephone systems are often out of service during extreme weather conditions. These factors may be inconvenient for the majority but pose a significant risk to elderly, homebound individuals.

A significant number of the city's residents are sixty-five or older and have difficulty performing daily tasks. Proper nutrition, socialization, access to medical and dental care, and a reliable source of transportation are just some of the challenges confronting the homebound.

Depth of Need

According to the 2010 census, of the 218 households in Golinda, twenty-seven had someone over the age of sixty-five living alone.³ Many of these seniors are retired, require medication, and live on fixed incomes. Several are also widowed, have no nearby family, and grow to depend increasingly on others as they age. These issues can have detrimental physical, emotional, and spiritual effects on elderly homebound individuals in a rural context.

3. American Fact Finder, "Golinda city, Texas,' 2010 Census Information," accessed February 22, 2016, <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/>.

Imagine for a moment the plight of a person who has lost the ability to accomplish simple tasks such as purchasing goods, driving, or attending a worship service. Family members are frequently busy, many friends are deceased, and there is a growing sense of isolation. These factors converge into a general lack of purpose in one's life and provide a unique service opportunity for the rural church.

For Penny Adams, this is not an exercise in imagination but a fact of everyday life. Until recently, she was a member of the city council, head of the WMU, and taught Sunday school at her local church. On March 9, 2016, a stroke impaired her short-term memory and balance, causing her to fall easily and forget often. Through this single incident, she lost the ability to clean her home, cook for her family, and participate in many of the activities that shape her identity.

Penny's hardships do not stop with her new restrictions. She must also contend with medical bills, limited insurance benefits, and a tiny social security check. These are problems no retiree should face but, because of her lifelong commitment as a stay-at-home mother, Penny must play the hand she has been dealt. The sudden transition from provider to dependent has been quite difficult for her socially, emotionally, and financially.

The church feels Penny's absence. Many of the members ask about her and wonder how she is holding up, but few of them take the extra step to make a visit. Penny is isolated and is one of many who would benefit from the church's presence in this small community. More than ten percent of the households in Golinda have a person living in similar circumstances. This deficiency begs to be addressed through an organized, biblical approach.

Biblical and Theological Imperatives

Scripture tells the story of God's restorative work on behalf of his fallen creation. He achieves this goal by calling men and women into partnership with him and inviting them to accomplish his work. The biblical narrative is full of their stories and summons believers into action today.

Beginning with Genesis, there is a pattern of God calling people for a purpose. God's plan to bless the world through Abraham encompasses the history of Israel, the coming of Messiah, and the Christian epoch. Jesus Christ commissions his church to spread the good news of a God who spares no expense in restoring what is broken.

Several biblical and theological imperatives are present and relevant to ministry to the homebound. The first is God's practice of seeking out those who are lost. In the context of a sermon delivered to tax collectors and teachers of the law, Jesus tells the parables of the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:1-7), the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10), and the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32). Each of these stories speaks of a God who actively seeks out the misplaced. Does this not describe the plight of the homebound?

Second, God rarely acts independently of a human agent in the larger context of scripture. A man or woman acting as God's representative almost always accompanies divine action. Instances of this are found in the lives of Moses (Ex. 3), Samuel (1 Sam. 3), David (1 Sam. 16), Nathan (2 Sam. 12:1-14) Jeremiah (Jer. 1), and Jesus' disciples (Mt. 4:18-22; Luke 5:27-32; John 1:35-51). If homebound people need food, companionship, or any other necessity, God will enable someone to provide it. He uses people to reach out to other people.

Third, God wants to bless all the peoples of the world. The call of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), the Sinai Covenant (Ex. 19), and the Great Commission (Mt. 28:16-20) all bear out this central biblical and theological principle. The divine partnership works to restore the communion between God and creation lost in Eden. The homebound and other forgotten members of society are an indispensable part of God's community.

These truths are dealt with more comprehensively in Chapter 2 but serve here as the occasion for the project. An organized, responsible response to this deficiency is essential in the rural context of Golinda, Texas.

Literature

Several compelling reasons exist within current literature to demonstrate the need for this project. Dosia Carson indicates there will be a steady rise in the overall number of senior citizens in the coming years and the "greying of our congregations" will become more prevalent.⁴ She predicts by the year 2030 there will be approximately seventy million people over the age of sixty-five, representing twenty percent of United States population.⁵ As this becomes one of the dominant issues for the church in the twenty-first century, rural congregations need a way to effectively respond to this challenge.

Janet Ramsey confirms this "grey" trend and argues "silver" is the more accurate term "since the percentage of adults over eighty-five is growing most rapidly."⁶ She

4. Dosia Carlson, *Engaging in Ministry with Older Adults* (Washington, DC: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), 1-2.

5. *Ibid.*, 6.

6. Janet L. Ramsey, "Holy Friendship: Reimagining Ministry with Homebound Older Adults," *Word and World* 26, no. 3 (2006): 259.

rightly contends that a dramatic demographic shift is imminent and questions why the church is not making its own preparations. GBC had no organized program for older adult visitation in the congregation and was unprepared to respond to this growing need.

Ramsey points to ageism as a major contributor to the lack of concern for the elderly. She believes this form of discrimination based on pejorative stigmatizations, labeling, and/or categorizing of persons based on age “is the chief factor working against joyful, vital ministry with older adults.” Churches do not respond because they mirror society’s emphasis on youth and beauty to the exclusion of the elderly in their midst. Ramsey and Carson agree that the marginalization and neglect of this age group is something congregations must overcome.

James Ellor and Sheldon Tobin concur with Ramsey in their vision for a visitation ministry that involves the homebound as an active partner.⁷ They conducted their study in an urban community among thirty-four clergy and seventy-three individuals over the age of sixty-five. Of the thirty-four congregations represented, ninety-four percent had a ministry to the homebound and eighty-nine percent included laity in their visitation efforts. Their study found a successful homebound ministry is “not done *to* the homebound but *with* them.”

Diana Garland takes the notion of ministry with the homebound a step further in her explanation of “inside-out” congregations, in which the family is the primary vehicle for engaging the local community. Utilizing the premise that “everyone can do something,” she incorporates those confined to their homes into her service model. She

7. James W. Ellor and Sheldon S. Tobin, “Beyond visitation: Ministries with the homebound elderly,” *Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling* 39, no. 1 (1985): 12-21.

reinforces this concept by providing the example of a homebound senior participating in a call ministry to children in an after-school church program. In her view, loss of independence should not prohibit one from service in the church or the completion of its mission in the world.⁸

Ramsey offers the most comprehensive look at homebound ministry as she calls for a “Holy Friendship” where both the visitor and the person being visited mutually benefit from the relationship. Both the young and aged have opportunities to experience spiritual intimacy and pursue a relationship with God together. Once a ministry *to* the homebound is exchanged for a ministry *with* the homebound, the possibilities for growth and restoration are endless.

The greatest need for this project is because of the lack of emphasis placed on the rural context. Analyses of urban areas are copious but there is a distinct absence of study outside the cities where large populations of the elderly reside. Where is the concern for their welfare or the value they offer the community?

The bulk of rural churches are ill equipped to address this insufficiency. Their lack of organization is problematic and visitation duties are oftentimes given over exclusively to the clergy. The responsibility of caring for the homebound is too great for the pastor to shoulder alone. A method to help small churches become conscious of this deficiency and respond corporately is required.

8. Diana R. Garland, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012), 428.

Desired Project Accomplishment

It was my desire for this project to mobilize the core membership of GBC to create a congregation-led, homebound ministry. My belief was that through discussion, education, and teamwork, the people would become aware of the opportunity to care for these neglected members of our local community. The members of GBC wanted to help others but lacked the knowledge and infrastructure to do so. My intention was to raise awareness of homebound concerns and help create the necessary machinery to meet those needs.

Statement of Research Questions

The people of GBC needed to take ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry. The research purpose of this project was to discover what effect the intervention would have on the people of GBC taking ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry. To investigate the effectiveness of the intervention, I used one overarching research question with three sub-questions:

The main research question was: What effect did the intervention have on the people of GBC taking ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry? The sub-questions were:

- a. What effect did education regarding the needs of the homebound have on their willingness to own the problem?
- b. What effect did exploration of the need have on their willingness to own the problem?
- c. What effect did working on a congregational policy to address the needs of the homebound have on the people of GBC taking ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry?

Significance of the Project

There were several perceived benefits to addressing homebound needs in a rural context. On the local level, this project would help church leaders connect with homebound seniors for a mutually beneficial relationship. It also possessed the potential to provide a fresh vision of visitation ministry that would involve all members in an organized effort. This endeavor would enrich the community and foster connections between all age groups contributing to the study.

A study conducted in a rural context also had the capacity to enhance the greater body of literature and inform the church in its mission to spread the gospel in the twenty-first century. Urban contexts are always important but the deficiency of emphasis on the areas outside their borders needed to be addressed as well. The opportunity to dialogue with confined senior adults, equip the laity, and involve the homebound in congregational life holds great promise. Smaller communities can contribute to the greater body by grappling with these topics and offering up their own solutions.

My belief was that this project would significantly contribute to the knowledge base by studying how small congregations tackled these issues. Inquiry into these topics would advance the greater body of literature, inform congregations of similar background, and provide a sturdy foundation for future efforts along this track.

Christian ministry practice is always in need of new ways to relate an unchanging gospel. By studying rural congregations and their response to homebound individuals, new ways could emerge for interacting with society. The gospel message has much to say in a world where the elderly are isolated and forgotten. In my view, this was a great place to start and I was excited to see what could be learned through this study.

CHAPTER TWO

Biblical and Theological Foundation

Introduction

Scripture is the account of God's restorative work on behalf of his fallen creation. The Creator's way of achieving this goal often involves calling ordinary men and women into partnership with him. The biblical narrative provides a basis for how God uses people to engage their communities and mend his creation. His mode of operation always involves inviting men and women to accomplish his work.

God's story is ongoing and he remains active through the church in reaching the communities of the world. This chapter exhibits the project's progression out of this central biblical and theological truth. God is always at work, and the following pages showcase his action in the past with the hope to shed light on his work with humanity in the present.

The Call of Abraham: Genesis 12:1-6

The call of Abraham is foundational for understanding God's partnership with humanity. The divine strategy for reclaiming creation is obvious despite a noticeable absence of rational.¹ God instructs Abraham to leave his father's house and journey to an unknown land. The promise to bless Abraham and make him a blessing to all the peoples

1. Terence E. Fretheim, *The Pentateuch* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 85.

of the earth bears the ultimate goal of embracing the entire world.² Abraham's actions highlight the importance of human cooperation with God. He follows God's command despite the unknown variables that the journey entails. The narrative presents Abraham as a paradigm of faith and obedience for those who will follow God after him.³ It also demonstrates how the God who calls people also accompanies them on their journey.⁴

The Abrahamic covenant is unique because God is the only one responsible for keeping its requirements.⁵ God's promise of land and descendants (Gen. 15:1-21) requires an heir, although Sarah is incapable of bearing a child. The numerous attempts to produce a baby through natural means emphasize the hopelessness of the human situation.⁶ God's fulfillment of the promise (Gen. 21:1-7) serves as a testament of his enduring faithfulness and his ability to overcome any obstacle. Abraham and Sarah's story shows that impossibility is not a factor when God is at work. He uses the extraordinary faith of ordinary people to bless and restore the communities of the world.

2. William Sanford LaSor, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic Wm. Bush, *Old Testament Survey: The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 47.

3. Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, The New International Critical Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 376.

4. Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, vol. 1 (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982), 122.

5. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 437-38.

6. Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 4th ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998), 158.

The Call of Moses: Exodus 3:7-17

The scriptural pattern of God using people to reach people is further exemplified in the call of Moses.⁷ The Lord hears the cry of Israel in bondage and “comes down” to “bring them up” out of slavery. This interaction signifies the continuity of God’s promise to Abraham and his faithfulness to his covenant. Moses serves as the human component in the next phase of God’s plan for Abraham’s family.

An apparent incongruity exists between the announcement in v. 8 and the commissioning of Moses in v. 10. If the Lord has come down to deliver Israel, why is he sending a mere man to do his work? This ostensible inconsistency is easily reconciled in the larger context of scripture, as God rarely acts independently of a human agent.⁸ He is the deliverer and Moses is the means of his deliverance for the children of Abraham.⁹

Moses also shows us that those whom God calls are not without a will of their own. The human partner has an influence over how events unfold. The actions of both parties are needed to attain the goal. The greater Old Testament canon supports this idea of cooperation between God and humanity.¹⁰

7. Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 58.

8. Ibid.

9. Peter Inns, *Exodus, The NIV Application Commentary*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 99-100.

10. Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, vol. 2 (Louisville: John Knox, 1991), 58.

Moses is reluctant to accept God's invitation and attempts to disqualify himself by asking "Who am I?"¹¹ He does this because he understands the personal jeopardy of making such an absurd demand in Pharaoh's court. The Lord reassures Moses with the promise of his constant presence, "I will be with you." Yet people will inevitably question the identity of the one sending Moses on such a brash mission. What is the true name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob?

Moses' request to know God's identity carries great weight. To comprehend the intimate nature of his inquiry, one must understand that a name is tied directly to a person's essential character in ancient times.¹² God's reply of "היהה רשא היהא" is a Hebrew idiom in which a thing is understood in terms of itself.¹³ "I am who I am" is the most prevalent translation but it is by no means an exhaustive interpretation.

"I will be who I am/I am who I will be" is another accepted rendering of the term.¹⁴ It conveys the Lord's reliability, unchanging character, and his willingness to be God for the Israelite people. YHWH wants Moses to understand his nature so he can introduce Israel to their God. Before Moses can begin his task, he must first know the Lord for himself.

God's servant should exist in relationship with God and be willing to act as his instrument. The divine mission entails knowing YHWH and making him known, even when that calling presents difficulty. Moses' life as Israel's leader demonstrates what one

11. Hamilton, *Exodus*, 58.

12. Lasor, et al., *Old Testament Survey*, 66.

13. Ibid.

14. Fretheim, *Exodus*, 63.

can accomplish when faithfully serving the Lord, and it sets a precedent for all those who follow. It also shows what God can do with a person's availability, despite their inability, when working in partnership with him.

Freedom from Slavery: Isaiah 61

God's effort to mend creation sets people free from bondage. This theme is present throughout the Pentateuch, historical, and poetic portions of the Old Testament. Nowhere is the longing for freedom stronger or more fully expressed than in the prophetic writings. The children of Abraham are familiar with oppression and ache to find release from their troubles. The author of Third Isaiah (56-66) provides one of the fullest expressions of this national anticipation.

Isaiah 61:1-3 speaks of a new age for the people of Israel. The writer does not identify himself but keeps the emphasis on his calling.¹⁵ He is anointed by the Spirit of God to advocate for the poor, provide comfort for the brokenhearted, emancipate the enslaved, and he serves as an agent of God's wrath against the oppressor. The Messiah will relieve Zion's heartaches and transform them into "oaks of righteousness" before the Lord.

These verses personify the bold spirit of expectancy following the exile and into the Hellenistic period. In the bowels of slavery, the vision of an ideal future under God paves the way for Messiah's arrival.¹⁶ The people long for a Christ to reestablish the

15. John N. Oswalt, *Isaiah*, The NIV Application Commentary, vol. 15 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003.), 650.

16. Lasor, et al., *Old Testament Survey*, 300.

Davidic monarchy, overthrow the oppressors, and bring about a golden era of prosperity.¹⁷

Ancient Israel's history is built on the hope of a God who hears them when they cry out. God does not ignore suffering and a restored creation necessitates an end to bondage. When YHWH's anointed one comes, he will herald an end to slavery and mend what is broken. Anticipation builds throughout the Hellenistic period as the Old Testament ends and the New Testament begins to unfold.

The Coming of Messiah: Luke 4:16-30

God's answer to Israel's cry is Jesus of Nazareth. He is the Messiah whom Israel needs but not the one they expect. From his humble birth in Bethlehem to his unique way of engaging the multitudes, Jesus of Nazareth is not what anyone anticipates in the Christ. He clearly demonstrates his divine sanction on several occasions. In harmony with Isaiah's prophecy, these events occur throughout the gospels and serve as testimony to his divine identity.

Luke 4:16-30 showcases a pivotal moment in Jesus' early ministry as he addresses his hometown synagogue.¹⁸ He opens by reading the words of Isaiah 61 and surprises everyone saying, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Their initial response is warm and they speak of Jesus in favorable tones. They clearly expect him to

17. L.W. Hurtado, "Christ" in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, eds. (Downers Grove: IVP, 1992), 106-107.

perform miracles for them like those reported from neighboring Capernaum, which housed a large non-Jewish population.¹⁹

Jesus' next statement extinguishes their presumptions in short order. He begins by quoting an ancient maxim assuming special privilege for one's own relations.²⁰ He retorts by reminding them of Israel's past unfaithfulness and how God sent his prophets to help their enemies in times of great need.²¹ They become infuriated as Jesus reminds them "‘good news to the poor’ embraces ‘the widow, the unclean, the Gentile, those of the lowest status.’"²² His audience has the opportunity to accept his message, but they can expect no special treatment due to their proximity. Nazareth's rejection of Jesus foreshadows Israel's denial of Messiah and the gospel's spread to the Gentiles after his resurrection.²³

John Bright writes, "The true Israel of God is not racially determined, but includes those of any race who obey him."²⁴ The Lord made Abraham a means of blessing for all the peoples of the earth (Gen. 12:1-3). Moses named Israel God's "treasured possession," "kingdom of priests," and "holy nation" (Ex. 19:1-6). These titles

19. Fred B. Craddock, *Luke*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, vol. 29 (Louisville: John Knox, 2009), 63.

20. Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 216.

21. Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, vol. 3. (Downers Grove: IVP, 1994), 91-92.

22. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 218.

23. Craddock, *Luke*, 64.

24. John Bright, *The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and Its Meaning for the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 146.

inextricably connect the children of Abraham with all peoples of the world. Freedom from bondage was never intended for Israel alone but as something they should share with others.

God sent his Son to free people from oppression in all its various forms rooted in sin. Sin is the decision to disobey God and this act of freewill paradoxically results in enslavement for the sinner. It is the germ that Messiah came to eradicate. Jesus Christ delivers humanity from sin, ushers in true freedom, and will bind all the people of the earth into a grace-filled community of obedience to the Lord.

As the period of Jesus' earthly ministry comes to an end, once again the partnership between God and humanity is seen. Christ sends ordinary men and women to engage their communities through the Gospel Message. As his church, they will work with God to mend creation and restore what was lost in the fall. So begins the apostolic era and the time of the early church.

The Church as True Community: Acts 2:42-47

Matthew's gospel records Jesus commissioning his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations." Jesus continues to engage the world "as a living presence in the community of his disciples who must faithfully continue the mission (25:31-46)."²⁵ The Holy Spirit's arrival at Pentecost and Peter's subsequent exposition of the Old Testament

25. David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), 273.

present Jesus as Lord-Messiah.²⁶ His sermon marks the birth of the church and provides a way of life free from bondage to sin.

Acts 2:42-47 tells of an evangelistic community empowered by the witness of the apostles and confirmed by the Holy Spirit.²⁷ They live in constant fellowship, share all things in common, and their lives are characterized by thankfulness before their Creator. The disciples are strengthened by their differences, blessed of God, and exist to share his blessing with the rest of the world. It is a picture of the church as it should be in any age and provides a measurement for its activity today.²⁸

A Moment of Reflection

It is important to pause at this point for reflection on the history of Israel and the purpose of the church. How is the church living out the mission of God today? In what ways are we working in partnership with the Lord? In what manner do we allow him to use us as his means of deliverance? How are we proclaiming the emancipation from sin as exemplified in the life of Jesus Christ and the works of the early church? The answers to these questions inform our purpose and identity in this world.

These thoughts occurred to me as I contemplated the ways GBC could partner with God to serve our local community. Several residents of Golinda were considered homebound and lived within walking distance of our church. Many of them were once

26. Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 108-139.

27. Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, rev. ed. (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 33-34.

28. William H. Willimon, *Acts*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox, 1988.), 42.

active in the area but at the time of writing lived in isolation because of disability. GBC had no organized method to meet their needs or free them from the restrictions that age had placed on them. The choice was either to reach out to them or continue in apathy but ignorance could no longer be claimed as an excuse.

History testifies to the fact the church has not always lived up to its purpose. Christ's people have failed many times to partner with him. Yet, despite resistance or circumstance, exceptional individuals and groups have arisen to carry out God's purposes. They span diverse cultures throughout history and exemplify the fullness of a life in Christ. They are God's partners and the means he uses to set the captives free. The remainder of this paper focuses on their stories and concludes with what can be learned from them.

The Early Church

Early Christianity experiences steady expansion. Goodman attributes this development to the new movement's novelty, exoticism, and the stories of the martyrs.²⁹ Stark denies the miraculous nature of the church's expansion altogether by equating its growth with that of the Mormons of present day and their utter lack of mass conversion.³⁰ Whatever the explanation or process, it is clear by the early fourth century that Christianity is in the Roman Empire to stay.

29. Martin Goodman, "The Emergence of Christianity," in *A World History of Christianity*, Adrian Hastings, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 19.

30. Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 13-14.

The Romans initially see the church as an association or social club like any other across the Empire.³¹ Their perception of the church gradually degrades with changes in national leadership. Empire-wide persecutions of Christians eventually take place for their refusal to worship the ancestral gods, participate in the armed forces, and insistence on remaining separate from society.³² The church spreads despite these challenges.

The best explanation for the massive influx of people into the church comes from its opposition. People of all social strata find a place of belonging within its ranks. In sharp contrast to the pagan cults, the Christian community provides social care for individuals and uses its resources to help those in need.³³ God's blessing flows through early Christianity to people across the Roman Empire regardless of their occupation, income, race, or place in society.

The apologists are an exceptional group of Christian thinkers who appear around the turn of the second century. These educated converts engage a wide audience of cultured non-Christians through their use of rhetoric. The ministry of apologetics takes shape around the writings of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Aristides, Melito of Sardis, Tatian, Athenagoras of Athens, and Theophilus of Antioch.³⁴ These men argue rigorously in

31. Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (Yale: New Haven, 1984), 33-34.

32. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (New York: Viking, 2009), 155-156.

33. Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 196-208.

34. Roger Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1999), 57-67.

favor of the gospel and combat various forms of anti-Christian propaganda. The apologists give Christianity a public face by dialoguing with their surrounding culture.

The early church partners with God by caring for those within its ranks and remaining in continual conversation with society. Christians begin to articulate their values in a culturally significant manner and model their beliefs in their actions. Although a darker period of church history looms on the horizon, these ideals represent the best of Christianity as the believers strive to carry out Christ's mission in the world.

The Imperial Church

A major shift occurs as Constantine assumes the throne of the Western Roman Empire in 312 C.E. Civil war rages in Rome and culminates in a decisive battle at the Milvian Bridge. Constantine receives a vision in which he recounts as “a cross of light in the heavens, above the sun, and an inscription, CONQUOR BY THIS.” He instructs his soldiers to paint a Chi Rho monogram on their shields and wins a decisive victory over the armies of the Eastern Empire through use of this tactic. The Chi Ro becomes the official symbol of Imperial Christianity.³⁵

Constantine takes a decidedly tolerant attitude toward Christians following his victory on Milvian Bridge. He and his counterpart in the East pass the Edict of Milan allowing people of all faiths to worship as they see fit. He lavishes wealth on the church as its chief patron and it is during his life that the church codifies its fundamental beliefs. These essential Christian doctrines solidify into dogma and clear boundaries are laid as Christianity transitions from a persecuted religious sect into the dominant religion of the

35. MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*, 189.

Empire.³⁶ Emperor Constantine I inaugurates the period of Imperial Christianity as he receives baptism on the eve of his death in 337 C.E.

The advancements in Christian doctrine are double-edged as they intersect public policy. As the church gains power during Constantine's reign and the years following his death, its conduct toward outsiders undergoes significant change. Conversion after Constantine is more a matter of political expediency than a decision of faith.³⁷ Those outside the borders of the now "imperial church" do not fare well after the First Council of Constantinople. Paganism withers as ancient landmarks burn, the Olympic Games conclude in 393 C.E., and non-Christians are excluded from serving in positions of authority in the government.³⁸ The church in power becomes extremely intolerant as the formerly persecuted become the persecutors.

The period of the imperial church is characterized by a turning away from those in need, the abuse of power, and a departure from the practices of early Christianity. The church exchanges its partnership with God for a merger with the state, taking on all the negative qualities of Rome. During this period, although a few remain faithful, the church corporately fails to participate in the redemptive work of God, turning away from those in need and becoming almost entirely inwardly-focused.

36. Adrian Hastings, "150-550," in *A World History of Christianity*, Adrian Hastings, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 36.

37. *Ibid.*, 41.

38. MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*, 220.

The Medieval Church

The collapse of the Western Roman Empire in the sixth century ushers in the medieval period of church history. Biblical imagery of Christ as “head” and the church as “body” serve to reinforce the social hierarchy of the medieval culture.³⁹ Church doctrine teaches that it is God’s will and the obligation of each person to stay in whatever social class they exist. This basic assumption about the natural order stymies social change and intellectual advancement throughout the medieval period.

The Sacraments

During this period, the church is more concerned with the eternal state of the soul than the everyday quality of life for the individual. The seven sacraments develop as the principle way in which the church cares for ordinary people throughout the Middle Ages. The foremost among these is the Eucharist, which provides every person the opportunity to take in the body and blood of Christ.⁴⁰ The common and uneducated encounter the gospel through its application. These rites of the church exhibit evidence of membership, provide forgiveness for sin, and guarantee a place in heaven after death.⁴¹

An unfortunate exploitation of the sacramental system begins in the eleventh century. The concept of purgatory as a waypoint between heaven and hell allows the living an opportunity to purchase insurance for eternity through the practice of

39. Benedicta Ward and G. R. Evans, “The Medieval West” in *A World History of Christianity*, Adrian Hastings, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 110.

40. Miri Ruben, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (New York: Cambridge, 1991), 14-35.

41. Ward and Evans, “The Medieval West,” 126-127.

indulgences. The church racketeers vast amounts of income for the construction of cathedrals and finances many nefarious political endeavors through this scheme. One of the earliest and best examples of this abuse is Pope Urban II's funding of the first Crusade by promising plenary indulgence to all who participated in the Jerusalem campaign. Financing for subsequent Crusades accumulates through similar means.⁴²

Monasticism

Despite the church's abuse and neglect of those in need during this era, a remnant persists in faithful partnership with God. Christian monastics initially retreat from society in the hopes of attaining union with God.⁴³ They withdraw to the deserts and other remote places to strengthen the spirit by denying the desires of the flesh. Ironically, they gain both fame and notoriety by pursuing isolation and obscurity.

People everywhere seek the desert fathers and mothers for wisdom, healing, and shelter. The monastics do not desire this reverence but frequently accommodate visitors by seeing to their needs and opening their membership.⁴⁴ They also intersect with society by housing travelers, exchanging commerce with local villages, and providing medical care for the sick in their midst. By their example, they provide an alternative to a faith enforced by the state.

42. Ward and Evans, "The Medieval West," 128.

43. Anthony C. Meisel and M. L. del Mastro, trans., *The Rule of St. Benedict*. (Garden City: Image, 1975), 10.

44. Marilyn Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: From the Desert Fathers to the Middle Ages* (Malden: Blackwell, 2000) 19-21.

The medieval period showcases an exponential growth in new monastic orders. The Benedictine Rule is the primary school of monastic thought, leading from the imperial church into the Middle Ages. The Order of St. Benedict comprises the traditional hermit class of monastic. The basis of their order requires a rigorous daily schedule, manual labor, times of silence, and total obedience to the abbot.⁴⁵ All other monastic orders owe their genesis to the Benedictines.

Eventually a much more itinerant division of monastic emerges with the friars, who manage to wed the traditional vows of monastic life with a more evangelical approach to outsiders. Two major orders within their ranks are Franciscans and Dominicans, who go out among people as traveling preachers, espousing different methods but attaining equally impressive results. The friars minister amid the growing social problems of medieval cities through their presence.⁴⁶

The Franciscans form around the example of St. Francis of Assisi. His model of poverty and evangelism through lifestyle is foundational to their order. Some of his followers espouse a vow of partial poverty while others maintain an existence totally dependent on the kindness of strangers. They preach the gospel among the common people, are among the first to espouse a rudimentary ecology, and promote a Christian outlook resembling the early disciples.⁴⁷

45. C. H. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism: Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*, 3rd ed. (London: Longman, 2001), 21-37.

46. Lawrence, *Medieval Monasticism*, 250.

47. Ward and Evans, "The Medieval West," 122.

The Dominicans follow the teaching of St. Dominic of France. Their efforts to preach in the common vernacular and missionary endeavors to foreign lands result in the salvation of many souls. They are instrumental in the founding of various schools and universities, which significantly advance the fields of scholarship, medicine, and many other disciplines.

In a period characterized by the church's abuse of power and apathy towards the individual's everyday quality of life, the monastic orders remain faithful by partnering with God. They provide food, clothing, and shelter for those within the faith while simultaneously reaching out to those beyond its borders through their missionary efforts. They also offer educational opportunities by contributing to many modern scientific and scholarly disciplines that improve the lives of citizens throughout the world. A dark time is made a great deal brighter because of their presence.

Troublemakers

The monastics are not alone as several groups and individuals appear to challenge the ideals of the status quo during the second half of the medieval period. The first are the Waldensians of the late 1170s. These men and women dispute many bedrock dogmas of the establishment, most notably the ideas of purgatory and transubstantiation. The authorities retaliate by denouncing their practice of preaching in the common tongue, their lifestyle of voluntary poverty, and their views of soteriology.⁴⁸

Other lovable outlaws of the late Middle Ages are John Wycliffe and the Lollards. They advocate for translating the scriptures into the vulgar tongue of the uneducated.

48. MacCulloch, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*, 397.

Wycliffe and his followers succeed in their endeavors but pay the price of excommunication from the church. After Wycliffe dies in 1384, the Council of Constance declares him a heretic in 1415, and Pope Martin V orders his remains exhumed and burned forty years after his death. Many consider the Lollards and Waldensians forerunners to the Reformation.

As the medieval period closes and the Reformation dawns on the horizon, God's inspires courageous men and women to oppose the oppressive clerical system. They partner with God to reach out to the disenfranchised by preaching and translating the scriptures into the common tongue. These individuals are evidence of an emergent pattern of faithfulness. When the church stagnates, God will send his messengers to stir the waters.

The Reformation

The Protestant Reformation marks a turn back toward the foundational mission of the church with the introduction of Martin Luther's ninety-five theses in 1517. Luther espouses the Pauline idea of salvation by grace through faith alone.⁴⁹ Although it is his intention to reform the Catholic Church, he inadvertently serves as a springboard for the Protestant movement.

Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli champion early reform by challenging many abused dogmas of the medieval church. Balthazar Hubmaier, Meno Simons, and the Anabaptists redefine the relationship of church and state by calling for repentance and

49. Roger E. Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 278.

personal faith as a prerequisite for baptism.⁵⁰ John Calvin champions the cause of Christian monergism and his ideas on election are occasion for debate among young theologians to this day.⁵¹ Their fresh ideas make full use of the Gutenberg printing press, which is instrumental in the rapid spread of Protestantism during this period.

The Catholics responds with their own list of reforms. The Council of Trent convenes in 1545 with the goal of suppressing Protestantism. The essential beliefs and institutes determined there henceforth define the boundaries of Catholic orthodoxy. This process has the secondary effect of reform for the Catholic Church.⁵²

New orders within Christian monasticism arise in the time of the Reformation, most notably the Society of Jesus. The Jesuits develop around the personality of Ignatius of Loyola with the goal of promoting Catholicism around the world. Their reputation as missionaries, educators, and Papal loyalists is second to none. They initially serve as a foil for the spread of Protestantism but eventually open ecumenical dialogue with their opponents.⁵³

The Reformation is a turbulent time when many Christians strive to correct the wayward course of the church. While it is an occasion for the birth for fresh ideas and educational opportunities, it also marks the emancipation of worship for the common person as the marriage between church and state dissolves. People can now encounter the scriptures in their own language and rediscover the ability to approach God directly

50. Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief*, 416-417.

51. *Ibid.*, 410-413.

52. Andrew Pettegree, "Reformation and Counter-Reformation," in *A World History of Christianity*, Adrian Hastings, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 270-273.

53. *Ibid.*, 273.

through prayer. The church reluctantly turns back toward those it has neglected as social boundaries become more permeable. These uncomfortable yet necessary changes announce the church's journey from worldly power back to partnership with God as the Age of Reason dawns.

The Enlightenment

The Enlightenment is a period of reproof for the church. The gap between society and the faith widens as Enlightenment thinkers question Christianity's claims about the natural order. Immanuel Kant coins the Enlightenment's motto as the "release of man from his own self-imposed immaturity." It is a time of political, scientific, and social change through the discovery of the natural laws. It is also a bittersweet period of admonition and rediscovery for the church.

One dynamic event of the Enlightenment is coined the First Great Awakening. It takes place primarily among European Protestants and the British colonies of North America. The preaching of Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield provide an intensely personal experience for their hearers. Revival burns through Protestantism and sets up for subsequent Awakenings.

John Wesley rides hot on the heels of the First Great Awakening through his preaching, evangelism, and prolific writing. Travelling on horseback throughout England, Scotland, and Ireland, he preaches wherever he can gather a crowd. He is the founder of the Wesleyan movement as one of the early Methodist circuit riders.⁵⁴ His influence continues throughout Europe and North America today.

54. Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief*, 510-511.

William Carey, a British shoe cobbler and Particular Baptist, observes the need to spread the gospel to the unreached people groups of the world. He forms the first Baptist Missionary Society in 1792 to reach India with the good news and serves as its first missionary to India at great personal cost. The presence of Christianity there today owes its beginning to Carey and those who passionately followed in his footsteps.⁵⁵

The Enlightenment is an encouraging time as the church corporately rediscovers its partnership with God. People on the fringes of society and the unevangelized are welcomed into its ranks. Revival takes place as the church engages society by inviting outsiders into relationship with God through worship. The Great Awakenings, the circuit riders, and the birth of the modern missions movement are all expressions of this new genesis.

Modern Christianity

Change escalates as twilight falls on the Enlightenment and the modern age dawns. Industrialization, rapid scientific advancement, and the emergence of a global society dominate this era. The church struggles to keep up as the world transforms rapidly around it. Many hold science in awe as Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* espouses an alternate view of humanity's beginning in 1859 and the Manhattan Project splits the atom in 1945.

During World War II, the church experiences many of its most recent failures. Many church leaders stand in timid silence as the Nazi blitzkrieg engulfs Europe in the 1930s. German Protestant and Catholic churches alike suffer persecution under the heavy

55. Leon H. McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), 184-187.

hand of Hitler's Gestapo.⁵⁶ It is only when France falls and Great Britain experiences the blitzkrieg that congregations worldwide finally begin to rally around the Allies against fascism.

The life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer stands in sharp contrast to the church's hesitancy surrounding the second world war. His teachings on community and his contribution to Christian ethics exemplify the best aspects of modern Christianity. Bonhoeffer witnesses first-hand the destruction of Germany at the close of World War I, the rise of the National Socialist Party, and understands the threat that Hitler poses to the world. While his actions as a spy and seditionist go against his ideals as a Christian pacifist, Bonhoeffer reluctantly becomes a member of the German resistance.⁵⁷ The Nazis eventually apprehend Bonhoeffer and execute him in Flossenbürg, just before their surrender to the Allied forces.

Bonhoeffer's ideas on discipleship, grace, and suffering in the context of community are reminiscent of the early church. In *The Cost of Discipleship*, he writes, "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die."⁵⁸ Bonhoeffer clearly understands this principle as he gives his life on April 9, 1945. He stands as one of the ten martyrs of the twentieth century memorialized over the Great West Door of Westminster Abby in London. His witness is foundational for the modern church and serves as a model for what the church should look like in any age.

56. William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1960), 234-245.

57. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 374.

58. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, rev. ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960), 79.

A Church on Both Sides

Church leaders are present on both sides of many critical social issues in the decades following the end of World War II. Race is a particularly divisive topic for congregations as exhibited in the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. To promote racial equality, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and a group of activists form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to conduct non-violent protest for civil rights.⁵⁹ They are frequently met with scorn and resistance by many American Protestants throughout their struggle.

Women's rights are another issue of hot debate within the church. Fundamentalist ministers and theologians utilize a literal interpretation of scripture to exclude women from service in the church. Christian egalitarians oppose this idea by asserting that while everyone is equal in personhood before God, gender-based limitations in the home, church, and society are invalid. This argument remains a subject of hot debate in many churches today.

Social Welfare

Modern Christianity has also occasioned a rapid growth in social concern. Local congregations often serve their local communities by opening food pantries, dealing in second-hand clothing, and providing childcare through Mother's Day Out programs. Christian faith-based organizations such as Meals on Wheels, Alcoholics Anonymous, Habitat for Humanity, and Goodwill work outside and across denominational lines to engage in social welfare and evangelism. These ministries are typically independent of

59. McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage*, 788.

church oversight but frequently work together with the local church in their efforts to care for outsiders. Despite the myriad differences within the church, many individual believers and congregations make the choice to partner with God. Together they reach out to the communities of the world by providing for daily needs and announcing freedom from sin through the gospel message.

Implications for the Project

As the twenty-first century unfolds, the church holds untold potential to speak to issues of age, race, gender, and many other issues encapsulated within post-modernity. How can Christians partner with God, be a part of his restorative work, and spread the gospel of freedom from sin in their context?

The scriptures bear witness to the need for God's intervention on humanity's behalf. He responds to this need by redeeming his creation from the fall through the life, death, and resurrection of his Son. Jesus Christ commissions his church in the past and in the present to spread this good news. History records the actions of a church empowered by the state as a force of unmatched potential for evil. Conversely, it also teaches that a community of believers empowered by the Spirit have no limitations for good.

Golinda Baptist Church

I believe that GBC exists to partner with God to redeem his creation. We live in an aging community with many homebound individuals in our midst. These people are oppressed and forgotten by the world around them. They need our attention and intervention on their behalf.

The church's inward focus requires a shift to an outward one. As they grapple with the illusive issues of our time, believers can live out their values in ways that show they care for those in our community. God has called his church from the known to the unknown and sent it in his name to set the captives free. Elderly, homebound citizens provide an ideal occasion for GBC to participate in *missio Dei*.

A viable, long-term ministry to homebound senior citizens is a practical way in which GBC can work as God partners in his redemptive work. He chooses to work beside and through his people to mend his creation and restore everything lost in the fall. The Lord's story is ongoing and he remains active through the church in reaching the communities of the world. He always has and always will use people to reach other people. GBC has opportunity to contribute to the greater narrative of God through loving the homebound. As God's story continues to unfold, only he knows the rest of GBC's story.

CHAPTER THREE

Method

Introduction

Rural communities need a ministry designed to care for their elderly, homebound residents. Unlike urban areas where resources and assistance for the aging are prevalent, districts outside city limits lack the means to adequately care for senior citizens. A strong sense of interconnectedness characterizes small town life and provides a unique ministerial opportunity for local churches. Unfortunately, rural fellowships are frequently discouraged by poor funding, disorganization, and a general lack of knowledge concerning geriatric life. Education and the development of methods to engage the needs of homebound individuals will play an instrumental role in helping the small church effect positive change in contemporary society.

The people of GBC needed to take ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry. The purpose of this study was to discover the effect of this intervention on the people of GBC taking ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry.

The Intervention

Individual interviews were conducted prior to Session 1 to gauge each participant's experience, attitude, and willingness to help the homebound. These inquiries took place the week following the sample draw at locations indicated most convenient by each informant. These conversations provided a baseline to understand the impact of the intervention on each volunteer. In the days following the individual interviews, the

sample group met in six intervention sessions. These meetings began on Thursday, October 27, 2016 and concluded on Tuesday, November 29, 2016. The meetings consisted of the following sessions.

Session 1

The sample group met in the church sanctuary to watch the film *Tuesdays with Morrie*, which chronicles the reunion of a former student with his elderly, homebound professor. Many in the focus group were especially touched by the ironic way that Morrie taught Mitch how to live, even as he himself was dying of Lou Gehrig's Disease. The story did a marvelous job of showing its audience that mutually beneficial relationships can exist between the homebound and those who interact with them.

During the discussion that followed, the group came to consensus on several points:

- People continue to have inherent worth and something to offer others until the time of death, regardless of homebound status.
- Those who form a relationship with the homebound stand to gain just as much from it as the individual they are visiting.
- Food is a natural component of the bonding process. Sharing a meal with someone is vital to forming a deeper relationship with them.

These major points of the film served as a backdrop for the following sessions.

Session 2

Dr. Jerry Smith of First Baptist Church, Clifton, Texas joined the group to discuss the work going on in his community. His congregation had an established homebound ministry and he went over an extensive list of the ways in which they served the homebound of their area. He provided practical examples of shut-in ministry to serve as a

pattern for the focus group during the application process. I facilitated a brief question-and-answer session following his lecture to discuss how it informed the group's view of homebound needs. Many of the concepts he shared were new and somewhat overwhelming for the group, but several of his ideas resurfaced during the application process in later meetings.

Session 3

In the third session, members were divided into pairs to survey homebound residents of the Golinda community. The local city council recommended these individuals as fitting this study's definition of homebound and they served as a purposive sample of those whom it could benefit. I contacted each household in advance of this session, obtained their verbal consent, and advised them when to expect our visit.

Following Sunday morning worship, our focus group gathered in the church sanctuary. I explained the exercise and sent them out to three households within the city to visit using a brief questionnaire (Appendix E) as a discussion guide. These encounters averaged one hour in duration and were one of the most influential exercises in the intervention.

As the teams returned to the church for debriefing, the resulting discussion yielded two important insights. The first of these was the fear of being forgotten, which was shared by an individual named "Granny."¹ Although she remained an active member of the community, she worried that her gradual loss of mobility would eventually impede her ability to attend civic and religious gatherings. Granny was concerned that the congregation of GBC would lose all interest in her once she was no longer able to attend

1. All names used in the report are pseudonyms.

our services. Hearing someone they loved to confess her fears of being discarded once she outlived her usefulness deeply impacted the informants who visited her. Our discussion of this topic occupied a great deal of the debriefing exercise. I believe this is the point when the idea of worshipping with the homebound in their homes began to take root in the minds of our group.

The second major topic of our discourse came from a woman named “Naomi.” Naomi was in her late eighties and wanted to serve God through her local church but did not know of any way she could contribute. Her feelings of uselessness pervaded her thoughts and gave her a feeling of helplessness. The concept of a homebound person wanting to minister to others came as a surprise to some in the group because they viewed them previously as dependents. The voice of someone they knew personally—explaining their feelings through honest discussion—brought about this change of mind in the group. This gave rise to the idea that the homebound could be assets in ministry rather than dependents.

In each of these cases, personal encounters with homebound individuals with whom the informants had prior contact was the impetus for discovery. Putting a face on the issue took away the abstraction for many of the group members and made it a much more personal experience. I observed genuine changes of heart in this session and it was more fully expressed in the application phase of this intervention.

Session 4

In session 4, we took part in an asset mapping exercise led by Dr. Gaynor Yancey from the Baylor University School of Social Work. She led us through a process of Appreciative Inquiry, in which the informants identified strengths and assets within

McLennan and Falls counties that service the homebound of the Golinda community. This approach was superior to the typical deficit approach because it encouraged the group to look for ways in which GBC could utilize existing resources instead of focusing on the lack of efforts toward the homebound. Once these assets were mapped, she encouraged volunteers to locate any gap in services that GBC could specifically address through its ministry.

The exercise yielded three major benefits. First, by involving the group in constructing their own asset map, it helped them to visualize the local community and gave them ownership over the exercise. Second, it jumpstarted their imaginations in developing ways that GBC could respond to unmet needs by utilizing congregational strengths. Third, it decreased the risk of GBC inadvertently creating a service already provided by another local church or civic group in the area.

The biggest takeaway from this exercise was a general feeling of empowerment for all those involved. Yancey did a wonderful job and advised us she would be available to help us with any question that might arise during the application process. Everyone left the meeting encouraged and eager for the final phase of the training.

Session 5

This session included a group debriefing to measure how the intervention had impacted the sample group. Several smaller topics permeated the discussion, but as the discussion progressed, the following themes rose to the surface:

- a. High presence of leadership potential: There was an unusually high percentage of participants willing to assume leadership roles or partial responsibility under specified conditions.

- b. Two-on-one relationships: The group wanted to form visiting teams to go out in teams of two to form relationships with the homebound households. This model would provide regular, predictable contact for these isolated individuals and would serve to protect the integrity of volunteers making the visits.
- c. Worship with the homebound: The informants discussed the possibility of taking worship to the homebound in their residence through song, listening to the recorded sermon, having a Sunday school lesson, prayer, and administration of the Lord's Supper.
- d. Serving with the homebound: The group discussed ideas for involving the homebound in practical ministries they could do from home such as letter writing, making phone calls, and praying for people on the prayer list.

Although the reluctance to take on leadership roles did not change from the opening interviews, the concepts of visiting teams, worship teams, and serving with the homebound were ideas directly attributable to the intervention process.

Session 6

In the final session, a policy proposal was drafted for presentation to the congregation for how the church could institute a viable, long-term, homebound ministry in the local community. Through the course of discussion, the group decided to propose the following measures to the assembled congregation:

- a. Address homebound loneliness through the building of intentional relationships.
- b. Address homebound spiritual needs through worship with other believers in the home.
- c. Assist the homebound by providing information and opportunities for enrollment in services provided by GBC, para-church ministries, and government agencies.
- d. Provide opportunities to involve the homebound in the essential ministries of GBC (e.g., greeting card ministry, letters to visitors).

The group decided to begin this process by sending out a bulk mailing to assess number and needs of local homebound residents in the local community. GBC's efforts were to

correspond with the responses received from this effort and the needs exhibited within the congregation.

Statement of Research Questions

To guide the inquiry during the process of intervention, I used one overarching research question with three sub-questions. The main question was: What effect did the intervention have on the people of GBC taking ownership of a viable, long-term homebound ministry? The sub-questions were:

- a. What effect did education regarding the needs of the homebound have on their willingness to own the problem?
- b. What effect did exploration of the need have on their willingness to own the problem?
- c. What effect did working on a congregational policy to address the needs of the homebound have on the people of GBC taking ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry?

Description of Method

The qualitative method was employed using a multiple case study. This methodology is superior to others because it allows the researcher to observe the effect of the intervention on the attitudes and actions of individual participants. Another strength of this strategy is its ability to measure the impact of the intervention on the willingness of each subject to take ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry.

Role of the Researcher

Since I have been the pastor of GBC for seven years, this project is a “backyard” study due to its analysis of my ministry context. Golinda is a small town and I am actively involved in local activities. I regularly participate in civic matters and consider

myself a shepherd of the community. The volunteers for this study are my friends, neighbors, and congregants. I wanted my church to integrate faith with action in its mission field because of this project.

The most active members of my congregation comprised the subject pool of this study. These farmers, ranchers, and retirees are lifetime residents of Central Texas. We are a regular part of one another's everyday lives. They transcend the role of parishioners in my eyes because they are my friends.

I also have a deep love for senior citizens and equate service to God with care for the aged. GBC lacked an organized approach to serve the elderly in our community and this deficiency necessitated attention. I believed that education and exposure to homebound need would result in a concentrated effort to care for them.

I acknowledge as pastor that I held the power to compromise the way I analyzed and reported the results of this study. Due to the inevitable close connections in such an intimate setting, multiple strategies for validity were employed to curtail researcher bias. These included triangulation, member checks, peer review, rich/thick descriptions, and an audit trail. These measures ensured the findings I reported were accurate, unbiased, and in keeping with the highest standards of qualitative research.

The Sample

I drew a sample group from the core membership of GBC using the most actively involved members of this congregation. A convenient sampling strategy was employed because the most active church members regularly attend the Sunday evening service. Informed consent was given everyone in attendance during the morning service on Sunday, October 23, 2016. Those interested in participating in the study were encouraged

to be present at the evening service later that night and those who remained afterwards comprised the sample pool. Time for consideration was given to allow the subjects time for thorough consideration and to avoid any instance of coercion on my part as pastor and researcher. Of the fifteen people who remained after the evening service, the chairman of deacons picked ten volunteers whom he felt were best suited to the project.

Entering the Field

I gained access to this field through my role as pastor of the congregation. A letter of support from GBC's chairman of deacons confirms the church's willingness to participate in this study. Although GBC had the desire to help homebound senior citizens, it lacked the process and vision to begin its efforts. The intervention process provided direction for their work.

Data Collection

Individual interviews were conducted in the days following the sample draw using an interview guide (Appendix C). The questions contained within this guide were designed to gauge each participant's willingness to take ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry. The answers gleaned from the opening interviews served as a measure for the effectiveness of the intervention. Each ninety-minute interview was conducted at a place agreed upon between the informant and the researcher, digitally recorded, and stored on an encrypted hard drive for a period of three years and then destroyed.

Prior to the interview, the participants received a letter detailing the purpose of the research (Appendix A), a consent form (Appendix B), a list of interview questions

(Appendix C), and a demographic survey (Appendix D). The respondents were asked to sign consent forms allowing use of the data obtained in the study preceding the completion of the demographic survey, interview, and guided journals.

The demographic survey (Appendix D) consisted of questions pertaining to age, marital status, ethnicity, education, work status, income, church membership and involvement, community involvement, and any previous interaction with the homebound. It also asked if the informant would be willing to participate in a member check during the analysis portion of the study.

Session 1 was a review and discussion of the film *Tuesdays with Morrie*. A guided examination of the film and its relation to GBC's ministry context was conducted using a discussion guide (Appendix H) following a viewing in the church sanctuary.

During Session 3, informants were divided into groups of two to survey homebound residents of the Golinda community using a brief questionnaire (Appendix E). This list of residents was recommended by the city council as fitting this study's definition of homebound and served as a purposive sample of those in Golinda whom this study might benefit. Everyone came back together afterwards to dialogue and share their observations.

Throughout the study, the subjects were asked to work through guided journals (Appendix F) as a method for gauging the effectiveness of the intervention. These utilized selected passages from scripture, stories, and facts about the homebound. Participants read the curriculum and wrote their thoughts out as a component of the intervention process. These journals provided further quantifiable data for the project.

A group interview occurred as part of Session 5 using a debriefing guide (Appendix G). This outline was similar though not identical to the individual interview guide (Appendix C) and was intended to measure the effect of the intervention upon the focus group.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed using analytic induction. All the data collected was audio recorded, transcribed, and then coded. Initially, open coding was done by indexing the transcriptions and data according to topic and subject/participant using an Excel sheet. Second, axial coding was performed by working through the data, allowing themes to surface, and sorting the data according to their correlations. Finally, selective coding was achieved by identifying primary and secondary themes for reporting.²

Reporting the Results

There are various ways to articulate the findings of qualitative research in contemporary scholarship, but it is the researcher's task to find the best way. Narrative format was utilized to ensure that the reader fully grasped the purposes and outcomes of this project, the way I interpreted the data, and the significance I attached to the results. Rich descriptions further aided in the transference and application of these methods in similar contexts. These measures were employed in the hopes of providing a fresh perspective for readers to understand the plight of the homebound in a rural context and a plausible approach for the local church to meet their needs.

2. John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Research Inquiry and Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2013), 86-87.

Validity and Reliability

Due to the potential for researcher bias, several methods were employed to verify the findings of this study. Creswell recommends the following measures, which were employed in this study, to ensure the accuracy of the results:³

Triangulation

Multiple data collection methods were utilized, including individual interviews, guided journals, and a focus group. Through one-on-one interviews, I assessed the understanding and values of each participant regarding homebound needs. I also employed guided journals to sample the progression of each informant as they advanced through the study. Finally, I used a focus group to note the changes in perception, opinion, belief, and attitude of members in an interactive setting during the intervention process.

Member Checks

I shared all data, analyses, and interpretations with informants to judge the study's accuracy and credibility. I accomplished this after the final session of the study by presenting my findings to the assembled group. Participants were invited to critically analyze the findings to ensure credibility.

Peer Review/Examination

I enlisted the help of Dr. Joyce Nuner to discuss the study's progression, the congruency of emerging findings with raw data, and tentative interpretations. Dr. Nuner received her Ph.D. from Texas Woman's University, is an Associate Professor of Family

3. Creswell, *Research Design*, 190-193.

and Consumer Sciences at Baylor University, and has extensive experience in the field of qualitative research. She reviewed and examined the process of the study to ensure the accuracy of the findings.

Rich, Thick Descriptions

I described the rural ministry context, the church demographic, and all pertinent subject matter in vivid detail throughout the report to help others decide if this study is relevant to their setting.

Researcher's Position

I kept a journal throughout the research process to serve as a record of my methodological decisions and rationale for them, the logistics of the study, and a reflection of what happened in relation to my values and beliefs.

Audit Trail

The spreadsheet used for data analysis serves as an audit trail.

Researcher Bias

I have been the pastor of GBC since early 2009 and my connection to this community made it difficult to avoid bias in data interpretation. I possess a strong love for geriatrics and have a special place in my heart for the homebound. It was my belief that GBC's current level of effort to meet homebound need was insufficient, which as my motivation for proposing this study. I was aware of several biases and I developed countermeasures to control their effects throughout the research process.

The first bias was my belief that the people of GBC should want to help the homebound of the Golinda community. This idea was rooted in my love for geriatrics and my belief that scripture compels Christians to care for the forgotten members of society. I controlled this bias through peer review and member checks to ensure my tentative interpretations were accurate and unclouded by my connection to this ministerial context.

A second bias was my belief that education, awareness, and interaction would lead to an organized congregational effort to address homebound need. This idea originated in my love for learning and a strong conviction that one learns best through application of knowledge. I curtailed this bias through peer review, member checks, and journaling to ensure my interpretations were accurate. I also tracked the intuitive leaps that I made during the research process.

A third bias was my belief that GBC was not doing enough to help the homebound of the community. This idea was validated by the homebound of Golinda during Session 4. I regulated this bias by allowing each group to survey the homebound of the community without any interference from me. The reports were also subject to peer review and member checks for verification.

Researcher Effects

Since my role as researcher coincided with my role as pastor of GBC, I had prior relationships with everyone who took part in this study. The congregation was aware of my personal views concerning homebound care through my preaching, teaching, and individual conversations. These interactions made researcher effects an unavoidable factor in this qualitative study.

I conducted this study on a voluntary basis. Participants had the choice to participate or decline and could withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. I assured the participants that there were no right or wrong answers and exhorted them to view me as a researcher in this setting instead of their pastor. While I had prior knowledge of how congregation members felt about homebound individuals, the only information used in this study was gleaned from the interviews, focus group, guided journals, and demographic surveys.

Ethical Issues

Several measures were employed to protect the participants of this study. All the rights, needs, values and desires of the participants were given first consideration regarding data use and reporting. The following safeguards were exercised to protect the informants' rights: 1) all research objectives, procedures, and uses of data were articulated verbally and in writing so they were understood by the informants, 2) written authorization to proceed with the study as communicated was obtained from the informants, 3) informants were briefed orally and in writing on all methods of collection, storage, protection, and use of data, 4) all transcripts, interpretations, and reports of this data were available for participants' review, 5) the informants' rights, interests, and wishes were given top priority when decisions were made in data reporting, and 7) all final decisions regarding this project and oversight rested with the leadership of GBC and the Institutional Review Board of Baylor University.⁴

While there were no foreseeable harmful outcomes to this study, every effort was made to protect informants. Though names were changed to pseudonyms, there was still

4. Creswell, *Research Design*, 197-198.

a risk of that a breach of confidentiality and/or anonymity might occur. All records related to this research have been and will continue to be kept in a locked file cabinet in my office. The audio tape recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my office for three years and then destroyed. Electronic data will be stored on an encrypted password-protected computer and destroyed in three years. All data is accessible only to me.

At all times, I endeavored to ensure integrity in reporting this study. Through triangulation, peer review, and journaling, I took active steps to safeguard the integrity of the information. The results were reported using narrative format to ensure the reader understands the purposes and outcomes of this project, the way I interpreted the data, and the implications of the results. These measures were to facilitate a clear line of communication between researcher and reader.

At no point during this study was deception used. The I made every effort toward accountability through informed consent, member checking, and regular communication with informants and supervisors. These measures ensured quality and reliability throughout the verification process. They also served to discourage unwarranted intuitive leaps or temptations to bias the results.

Many positive possibilities exist resulting from this study for GBC and the Golinda community. First, it has the potential to benefit local homebound senior citizens by providing for their needs. Second, it may help GBC develop an effective ministry to address an important issue in its rural context. Third, it has the capacity to involve GBC core members on the policy level of ministry to the local mission field. Finally, this project may become a portable model for other congregations in similar circumstances.

Conclusion

Especially in rural communities, homebound senior citizens are important but neglected members of society. The local church can help but often lacks the organization and education necessary to effectively address this challenge. Congregations must become students of culture, especially as the life of Christ intersects with human need. His gospel is unchanging but the methods used to spread it must be tailored to each individual mission field. It is my earnest hope that this project can provide a starting point for positive change at GBC and other churches in similar circumstances.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

Introduction

The intervention yielded several primary and secondary findings worthy of note. These results hold potential interest for those serving in similar ministry contexts who are seeking methods to engage their congregations in homebound ministry. To guide the inquiry during the process of intervention, I used one overarching research question with three sub-questions. The main question was: What effect did the intervention have on the people of GBC taking ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry? The sub-questions were:

- a. What effect did education regarding the needs of the homebound have on their willingness to own the problem?
- b. What effect did exploration of the need have on their willingness to own the problem?
- c. What effect did working on a congregational policy to address the needs of the homebound have on the people of GBC taking ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry?

I gathered copious amounts of data throughout the intervention process.

Information collected through interviews, focus group sessions, and various data gathering tools was analyzed using analytic induction. Emergent themes were then shared through member checking and peer review to determine the validity of my interpretation of the data. Finally, the information was categorized into primary and secondary findings for reporting.

Intervention Summary and Adjustments

Summary

The project began following the evening service on Sunday, October 23, 2016 when ten participants signed the informed consent document and took part in the group project orientation. The group consisted of nine females and one male representing a sample of the core membership of GBC. During the meeting, we scheduled individual interviews, agreed on a date for the first session, and each participant received a participation packet. Their bag included guided journals, a notebook, a tentative schedule, and my business card.

All individual interviews were conducted the same week, between Monday, October 24 and Wednesday, October 26 at places convenient to participants. Session 1 took place on Thursday, October 27 at GBC. Although I originally planned to give each participant a copy of *Tuesdays with Morrie*, the group decided that a corporate viewing in the sanctuary was a more practical. There was a group debriefing afterwards to discuss the film and its impact on the audience.

Session 2 met on Tuesday, November 1 at GBC. We were joined in this meeting by Dr. Jerry Smith, pastor of FBC Clifton, Texas. Dr. Smith's church has a successful homebound ministry, and he came to share their story, vision, and a few practical tips with us. We had a brief Q & A period afterwards and dismissed for the evening.

Session 3 gathered on Sunday afternoon, November 13 at GBC. We had a brief meeting in the sanctuary, divided into teams of two to three, and visited three homebound households in Golinda using the discussion guide. Each of these visits lasted

approximately an hour, and we had held a group debriefing afterwards to discuss our encounters.

Session 4 was an Asset Mapping exercise led by Dr. Gaynor Yancey of the Baylor School of Social Work, meeting on Saturday, November 19 at GBC. All participants took part in a cooperative effort to map the strengths of our community and evaluate how these assets could improve the lives of local homebound residents. After charting the network, the group looked for gaps in the field that our church could address. Finally, we recorded ideas for how our congregation could help shut-ins connect with resources pertinent to their individual needs.

Session 5 was a group interview held at GBC on Tuesday, November 22. We conducted a corporate interview and discussed the guided journals to evaluate their respective impact on each participant's concept of homebound life. We also briefly discussed concepts the group wished to incorporate into the policy proposal during the final meeting.

Session 6 took place at the church parsonage on Tuesday, November 29. All participants were present and unanimously agreed that they wanted to continue serving the congregation as a board on homebound concerns. With minimal assistance from me, they drafted a policy proposal to present to the church at a business meeting in early 2017. This meeting concluded the intervention process.

Adjustments

The holiday season and participant schedules played a significant role in how the intervention timeline played out. After consulting with the faculty supervisor, it was decided that the six hours between Sunday services would provide ample time for

potential volunteers to consider their participation in the study and would negate any instance of coercion on my part as pastor and researcher. I provided informed consent after the morning service on Sunday, October 23 and invited those interested in volunteering for the study to attend the evening service. Those who returned later that night were given opportunity to recess before the sampling process began. I reviewed all pertinent documentation with the fifteen remaining individuals, exited the room, and the chairman of deacons selected ten volunteers for the study.

Another small change occurred in Session 1. Although it was originally planned to give each participant a copy of *Tuesdays with Morrie*, everyone decided a corporate viewing in the sanctuary was more practical. All other adjustments to the proposed intervention involved minor alterations to the schedule to provide flexibility for maximum participant involvement. The total length of the intervention was four weeks.

Primary Findings

What follows are primary findings that represent the most prevalent and significant responses of applicants to the stated research questions.

The Power of a Living Case Study

The film *Tuesdays with Morrie* allowed participants to experience the reunion of a homebound professor with his former student and the mutual relationship grown from their shared intentionality. Mitch and Morrie's friendship paved the way for fuller engagement with the homebound community. It accomplished this by giving volunteers the opportunity to witness a symbiotic exchange in the context of a living case study. It

provided a stark contrast to the corporate perception of the homebound as helpless prior to the intervention.

During opening interviews, I asked volunteers, “What feelings come up for you when you think about the homebound?” I noted eight of ten participants responded with negative descriptors, including sadness, anger, loneliness, need, and loss of independence. Concerning loss and loneliness, Bonnie commented, “Well it’s sadness because you know they’re such doers in their day, and now they can’t do a lot of things, and for some unknown reason nobody else seems to take an interest in them.”

Session 1 consisted of a corporate viewing of *Tuesdays with Morrie* followed by a debriefing. I first noticed the group perception of the homebound as helpless begin to shift during this exercise. Although Morrie becomes a shut-in early in the film, he was not portrayed as a sad, helpless wretch but rather as a capable professor with one last lesson to teach his student. During the debriefing, six of eight people in attendance used positive descriptors to describe Morrie, including happy, courageous, and full of life despite his homebound status.

Along with the positive portrayal of the homebound came a movement toward symbiosis with them. During opening interviews, eight of ten participants described a relationship with the homebound in terms of service and responsibility. On this subject, Baba said, “I’m always very touched that there’s somebody that really needs, they need you. Just like anything that needs care . . . you feel responsible for it. These people, I feel responsible for every one of them.”

Mitch is the second major character of this film and is one of Morrie’s former students. These two were once close but are now estranged, but when Mitch sees

Morrie's story on TV, he decides to reconnect with him. The group noted Mitch's obsession with work and his inability to make meaningful connections before his first visit with Morrie. The group initially attributed this to misplaced priorities but, after digging deeper, discerned the root of Mitch's disconnect stemmed from an emotional trauma in his past. Amy reflected,

Although [Mitch] had a relationship with [his] girlfriend, I don't think he truly realized in his heart that he didn't want to touch, feel, [or] have any of those emotions. And then, as he began to visit Morrie more often, I saw that he began to open up those emotions and give deep from inside himself. . . . I'll tell you from experience, sometimes you hide yourself in your job so you don't have to touch or feel. It's an escape so you don't have to deal with those emotions.

The friendship portrayed in this film created a possibility in the minds of participants for a mutually beneficial relationship with shut-ins. Participants noted how Morrie helped Mitch address his past, face his fears, and learn how to make meaningful connections with others through their bond. As Jessica put it, "By dying, Morrie taught Mitch how to live."

Another way members identified with the homebound was the way Mitch and Morrie bonded over food, which is a major background element of the story. Participants unanimously agreed that sharing meals is a vital part of any meaningful relationship between individuals. Baba noticed that Mitch brought Morrie food he enjoyed, even after they started blending it for him. The way these men wrestled with the difficult issues of life over pita bread served as a narrative example of mutual intentionality. As Jenna put it, "It's one thing to go into someone's home and visit; it's quite another thing to go in someone's home and have a meal. You get to know each other . . . it's a way to draw closer." The group observed this as a vital facet of the friendship that Mitch and Morrie shared and which should characterize a relationship with the homebound.

The intensely personal nature of this film, the relatability of the characters, and the placement of this exercise at the beginning of the intervention had a galvanizing effect on the focus group. The power of this living case study helped participants discover the possibility for a mutually beneficial relationship between themselves and local homebound residents. It also helped them envision what a viable, long-term, homebound ministry might look like in their context. It paved the way for the sessions that followed.

High Commitment to Leadership and Post-Intervention Involvement

Another result of the intervention was the full, ongoing participation of every member of the focus group following the study. The team developed a policy for ongoing homebound ministry at GBC and a plan for presenting it to the congregation. Every participant attended the church business meeting on March 8, 2017, presented the policy for approval by the church body, and committed to serve as a congregational advisory board on homebound issues. What about the intervention allowed for this positive outcome?

An early discovery was the group's high presence of leadership capacity and strong interest in serving shut-ins prior to the beginning of the intervention. During opening interviews, participants were asked, "Describe your willingness to lead GBC to be involved in a ministry to homebound senior citizens." Two participants immediately agreed to serve as leaders.

Terri said, "If I say I'm going to do it I'm going to do it. I think a lot of the ladies here, especially, trust me and know I'm not going to try to lead them off a cliff. I'm willing to do as much, if not more, than any of them." On the same subject, Jenna

asserted, “If you’re going to be a good leader, you’re going to have to be what you’re saying first. I guess by example. Be willing to get out there and do it.”

An additional two committed to lead under specified conditions. Amy explained, “I think there are certain aspects that I’d be willing to take a lead on, but there are also other aspects that I’d need to be a follower on.” Jessica indicated her willingness to serve as a leader provided the pastor maintain an active presence.

Other participants identified as followers but were extremely devoted to the idea of an ongoing effort. Shelly answered:

I don’t see myself as a leader in most cases. If I get into a leadership role it’s because I got pushed into it, but I’m a very good follower. A very hard worker. And so if someone else will say, “every middle Wednesday we’re going to go take soup to the homebound, or we’re going to go clean houses or whatever,” I will be right in there with my gloves on. But I’m not a really good leader, if people say no, I just say “ok.” I guess I don’t see myself as a leader or as a instigator, starter. But I’m a hard worker.

Her words exemplified the spirit of the remaining six during opening interviews. Their active participation and earnest concern for the homebound provided fertile ground for an ongoing ministry to grow.

Another contributing element occurred in Session 3 as participants interacted with three local shut-ins named Granny, Ruth, and Naomi. Volunteers discovered that the physical concerns of these homebound seniors were being met but their emotional and spiritual needs were an issue of concern. All three women separately and unanimously indicated a desire to have more regular social contact with others outside of their household.

Jenna, Baba, and Amy’s meeting with Granny made a significant impact on the assembled group during our discussion. Granny’s physical needs were addressed though

local family, but she spoke at length of her “loneliness” and “fear of being forgotten.” Faith and Shelly said their conversation with Ruth was similar. Ruth, who recently experienced a loss of mobility, expressed a longing for continued involvement with her Sunday school class and said she would like to go out with them for lunch occasionally.

Ruth’s and Granny’s earnestness helped everyone recognize that homebound believers require continued contact with their church family, especially after they have lost the ability to attend. Concerning those in a rural setting, Jessica commented in her journal:

The needs of the homebound become even more complex in a rural community like Golinda, trips to the doctor, pharmacy, and grocery store take so much more time. My Grandparents used to enjoy sitting on their front porch in Waco and watching the cars go by, I think it helped them feel connected. They were a block from their church and felt a part of it. When they moved to Golinda they never embraced the FBC Golinda and were even more isolated. So living out from town isolates the homebound even more.

Granny expressed a desire to worship with other believers in her home, saying she would enjoy someone coming with the recorded sermon and listening to it with her rather than just dropping it off. She further indicated she would benefit from the Lord’s Supper, at least once every quarter to help her feel connected her congregation. All three women visited indicated an interest in increased contact with their church family.

Every participant agreed this was a good idea, especially Jessica, who stated during Session 5, “I would like myself to see teams of 2-3 go out and visit the homebound in their homes to sing and pray and do things like that.” She went on to champion this cause in Session 6 during the drafting process. Additionally, June noted in her journal, “My visit with Naomi helped me see how much visitation is needed. Just to drop by, listen, and talk.”

These changes indicate a connection between high leadership potential and interaction with need on a commitment to post-intervention involvement. Personal dialogue with their homebound neighbors—especially those with whom members had a prior relationship—helped them connect a personal face with a formerly abstract issue. In the final session, all members voted unanimously to make this a part of the final proposal. In my notes on Session 3, I wrote, “Today we’ve turned a corner. I believe the group finally understands just how deep the need for relationship goes.” These encounters helped the participants connect biblical truth with everyday life, resulting in a genuine desire to serve Christ by caring for the emotional and spiritual needs of homebound residents.

Networking with the Homebound as Partners in Ministry

The intervention introduced the focus group to a new concept of partnership with the homebound. In her book, *Family Ministry*, Dr. Diana R. Garland espouses the idea that, “Everyone can do something.”¹ Her vision encapsulates all ages represented in the church, from infancy to the elderly and homebound. Scripture is filled with the stories of individuals serving God despite their age or status in society; the homebound are a modern cultural manifestation of this idea. Many of them maintain a strong relationship with Christ and want to serve others but lack the opportunity. They remain a largely untapped resource for the local church in its efforts to preach the gospel.

During opening interviews, participants did not express an awareness of homebound aptitude for ministry, and the majority used negative language to describe

1. Diana R. Garland, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012), 428.

their condition. Sessions 1 and 2 set the stage for a mutual relationship, but during Session 3, the idea of partnership began to take root. Early in the discussion, Amy mentioned Granny's ministry of providing welcome baskets to new residents in Golinda. Those who visited Ruth and Naomi reported that they practiced ministries of prayer and encouragement for church members and visitors. The group became aware through this exercise that the homebound are still capable of service in the kingdom of God despite their isolated status.

Much of this idea is reflected in participant journals from the section entitled, "Holy Partnership." The exercise questioned volunteers about their concept of joining the homebound in cooperative ministry. Of the nine who completed this assignment, seven expressed an openness to working in cooperation with shut-ins in. Shelly reflected:

The idea of partnering with the homebound is new to me, probably because the ones I visit are either very frail, or ill, or losing their mental abilities. Some could surely be prayer partners. Others could take part in sending cards. . . . They aren't assets because they do something; they are assets because they are God's children and because many of them have done something—something good in the past.

Baba remarked:

Each person is an individual that you would need to draw out the things that not only interest them but one they could accomplish. We do not want to put strain or pressure on anyone. Some could sew, if they have no arthritis; cook if the desire and ability was there, write notes, make phone calls, organize projects. The children's department always needs decorations for different lessons and seasons. Some could color, draw, stencil, all of the above, and more. This could make a shut-in feel like they were a part of our own church or community.

Amy responded:

There are some homebound who are still very capable of functioning in their own environment, just not in the community due to medical issues, and [are] able to make calls or even make small gifts/cards, etc. . . . to provide to others who need more than them. Working as a "team" would be a blessing to both persons.

Jessica asserted, “Those homebound who have stayed in the word and continued to pray can be the best prayer warriors a church can have.”

These responses indicate a new awareness and openness to networking with the homebound that did not exist before the intervention. Bonnie said it best when she remarked, “Homebound does not mean helpless.”

The participants’ high level of engagement with the homebound led to this becoming a synergistic exercise as both groups engaged fully in personal partnership for ministry. Their experience heavily influenced and comprised the final component of the policy proposal, in which GBC’s new approach would involve the homebound in vital roles in the congregation. They attained a place and a purpose in the church as they became not only recipients of service but also contributors.

Secondary Findings

What follows are secondary findings because of their ancillary but noteworthy status within the intervention.

Overcoming Hindrances to Full Engagement

Two major challenges raised by seven of ten volunteers during opening interviews were locating the homebound in Golinda and gaining entry to their residence. These challenges represented a major roadblock in the minds of participants in the beginning. Their concerns included statements such as, “We have to find out where these people live.” and “Breaking the ice . . . is going to be a task. And getting them to open up to you or feel comfortable with you.” Despite the group’s initial level of reluctance, I

observed that they quickly traversed these barriers and moved fully into the intervention.

Why was this the case?

First, the dialogue with Dr. Jerry Smith was quite helpful. He offered the group practical tips for locating the homebound of the local community, gaining entry to the home, and building trust through consistency. He exuded confidence, gave informed advice, and addressed diagnostic questions from personal experience. It was critical to have this conversation early in the intervention because it gave the group confidence to answer these questions in their own context.

Second, the Appreciative Inquiry with Dr. Yancey was instrumental because it helped the group visualize their community. By constructing a map of the local area, participants gained a new tool for engaging their mission field and ownership of the information they discovered. Each member demonstrated a different type of knowledge, skill, and expertise as they constructed a new resource together. I observed that this exercise solidified group identity around the assurance that they could make a difference for their homebound neighbors. These measures worked in concert to help the group overcome their reservations quickly and efficiently, resulting in full investment in the project.

Prevalence and Asset of Female Involvement

The sample pool for this study consisted of fifteen volunteers—twelve women and three men. Of these, nine women and one male were selected by the chairman of deacons for the study. What accounts for this high percentage of female involvement?

Women comprise a large portion the workers in small, rural churches and most ministries at GBC are staffed by female volunteers. Many of them remember a time when

a woman's place was in the home. In those days, women tended to the matters of raising children and managed the household while their husbands provided an income. They considered service to the community through the local church an extension of their traditional role. Despite new career options, opportunities for education, and a rise in the cost of living during recent years, many women have held to such values. These factors are especially strong in the small, country church, where the idea of the nuclear family is alive and well among its greying members.

High female participation was an asset to this study for several reasons. First, since women typically have a longer life span than men, most of the homebound they visit are also female and this facilitates a smooth entry into the home. Second, I noticed women contributed to the galvanizing effect of the intervention by immediately addressing the feelings of abandonment and loneliness with a practical plan for forming intentional relationships. Third, I hypothesize the prevalence of female involvement will likely lead to increased male participation through their spouses and close family members.

A New Ministry Immediately Founded

In the final session, the focus group met at the parsonage to draft a policy for presentation to the congregation. I served exclusively as a guide during this exercise to help them assemble their thoughts into a cohesive proposal. Through the course of the discussion, they drafted the following ministry plan:

“We want to see a ministry developed out of our church to address the needs of the homebound of our community. These needs we perceive include:

- a. The need to address loneliness through the building of relationships
- b. The spiritual need for worship with other believers
- c. Enrolling them in services provided by our church, parachurch ministries, and government agencies
- d. Involving the homebound in a ministry (card ministry/letters to visitors/prayer chain)

“We would like to begin this process by sending out a bulk mailing to the homes of our area and basing our efforts on the response we receive.”

Study participants voted unanimously in the final session to continue serving as a congregational advisory board on homebound issues. They would plan, organize, and facilitate all homebound ministry for the church in the local area. They presented their proposal in the monthly church business meeting on March 8, 2017. Nine of ten members of the focus group attended and it was received by the congregation’s unanimous vote. I was overwhelmed and amazed at their commitment to this wonderful ministry opportunity.

Summary

The intervention resulted in the formation of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry at GBC. Through individual interviews, film, discussions with experts, interaction with local homebound residents, Appreciative Inquiry, and candid discussion, a wonderful new opportunity came into existence to enrich the Golinda community. We gleaned several new insights about ourselves and our homebound neighbors during this process: 1) a living case study is an excellent means of giving fresh insight and helping participants fully engage, 2) high leadership capacity and exposure to need is a great method to help people invest in others, 3) Appreciative Inquiry is a valuable tool to help

congregations quickly overcome roadblocks, understand their ministry context, and efficiently serve their communities, 4) the possibility exists for networking with the homebound in shared ministry, 5) traditional, elderly churches with high female involvement have an asset for relationship-based ministry, 6) this approach has an above average propensity for beginning a congregation-led, homebound ministry in a rural context.

In conclusion, I consider this intervention to have been a resounding success. I hope others in similar contexts benefit from this wonderful, enriching process that I have experienced.

CHAPTER FIVE

Evaluation of the Project

Prior to the implementation of the project, GBC had no organized plan to care for local homebound residents, and the need existed for them to take ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry. I proposed a project to help GBC create a viable, long-term, homebound ministry to address this issue. To guide the inquiry during the process of intervention, I used one overarching research question with three sub-questions. The main question was: What effect did the intervention have on the people of GBC taking ownership of a viable, long-term homebound ministry? The sub-questions were:

- a. What effect did education regarding the needs of the homebound have on their willingness to own the problem?
- b. What effect did exploration of the need have on their willingness to own the problem?
- c. What effect did working on a congregational policy to address the needs of the homebound have on the people of GBC taking ownership of a viable, long-term, homebound ministry?

The data revealed that participants were open to the idea of a more organized effort to address homebound individuals but had concerns for locating them and gaining entry to their residence. The intervention helped volunteers quickly overcome their initial hesitancy through observing a living case study, conversations with local shut-ins, and the Appreciative Inquiry process. The final proposal drafted by the focus group and their unanimous commitment to long-term, homebound ministry attested to the success of this project in achieving its initial purposes. Although questions concerning the transportability and longevity of this project remain, this project affirmed that a viable,

long-term, homebound ministry is a realistic and achievable goal for rural churches in similar contexts.

Theological Significance of the Project

The focus of Chapter Two centered on the partnership between God and humanity throughout the ages. God works with regular men and women to engage their local communities as he redeems creation from the fall. An expression of this relationship involves congregations stepping out to encounter those individuals who cannot leave their homes. The following reflections represent the foremost biblical and theological implications of this project as it intersects with the homebound.

God Uses People to Reach Other People

God works through everyday circumstances and rarely acts independently of human agents. He chose Abraham and his offspring to bless the nations, Moses to make himself known to Israel, and he commissioned his church to reach the world with the good news of his Son. He continues to use ordinary people and their relationships to accomplish his mission. Unfortunately, the homebound are an isolated group and oftentimes suffer from a lack of meaningful contact.

Connection is a vital part of the human experience because our Creator is a relational being. He is Trinity in unity—the Father, Son, and Spirit live in perfect relationship within the Godhead. Is it so strange to think that he desires the same for his children in relation to one another and himself? When asked about the greatest commandment in the Law, Jesus linked the love of God with the love of one's neighbor

(Matt. 22:36-40). This correlation is immutable and is especially relevant for the local church as it encounters its homebound neighbors.

Worship is a particularly significant way the church can help the homebound because it venerates a personal being in the context of community. Although many shut-ins were once active members of their congregations, they are now isolated from other believers. Limited contact reduces their worship experience to the artificial mediums of radio and television. It is a challenge the homebound are unable to surmount on their own. God wants to use the local church to help these detached individuals reconnect in meaningful ways.

Initial interviews indicated a passive awareness of this issue on the part of participants at the beginning of the intervention. As the study progressed, the focus group unpacked the concept of worshiping with the homebound. They eventually came to the decision of forming teams to worship with these individuals in their homes. These encounters will include prayer, singing, sharing a meal, listening to the pastor's recorded sermon, and the administration of the Lord's Supper.

Worship is just one of the ways GBC will cooperate with God to help our homebound friends. It serves as an example of what can happen when motivated individuals unite with God to love their neighbors. In small ways such as these, we partner with him in our relationships to mend what was broken in the fall.

Networking with the Homebound as Partners in Ministry

One of the most significant discoveries during this intervention was the opportunity for partnership with the homebound in ministry. The shared assumption of participants viewed shut-ins as recipients of service rather than contributors. Sessions 1-3

shattered these notions as volunteers encountered the initiative and ingenuity of their homebound neighbors. The innovative ministries of these clever individuals helped the focus group begin to view them as capable collaborators.

The scriptures showcase a collection of people serving God despite their age, status, or inability. Among these are Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 12:1-3), Moses (Ex. 3), Caleb (Josh. 14:7-12), Simeon and Anna (Luke 3:22-40), and many others. These people would be considered well past their prime by modern standards but that made little difference in how God used them. They did mighty deeds and are remembered for their faithfulness to this day.

Shut-ins are an asset, not a liability, when it comes to service in the kingdom of God. It is foolish to forget the homebound but it is wise to involve them in congregational ministry. The focus group kept this in mind as the project entered the application phase. The homebound were happy to perform vital tasks within the church body based on their interest and availability. As one volunteer wisely put it, “Homebound does not mean helpless.”

Broad Implications for Ministry

The practical significance of this project is that it mobilized the people of GBC to create a viable, long-term, homebound ministry in their rural context. It is important to note this project was intended to create a self-sustaining ministry from the start. Ministries dependent on outside motivation for their function will stall once the stimulus is removed. On the other hand, dynamic ministries begin when people experience need personally and take ownership of it.

Several helpful exercises contributed to the overall success of this intervention:

Tuesdays with Morrie

A key experience that led to the attainment of the project goal was *Tuesdays with Morrie*, a film based on the best-selling book by Mitch Albom. The movie starts with Morrie, an elderly college professor with a zest for life, learning that he has Lou Gehrig's disease. His story receives publicity and eventually comes to the attention of his former student, Mitch. Mitch is an overworked sports columnist with skewed priorities and a detached personal life. He remembers his promise to stay in contact with Morrie at graduation many years earlier and feels enormous guilt. He resolves to reconnect with him.

Morrie is overjoyed at his reunion with Mitch and is eager to resume his role as a teacher. Over the next few months, the two bond over conversation and food every Tuesday. Mitch learns a great deal through his friend's dying process about what it means to be alive. The mutual relationship forged between the two helps Mitch get his life back on track and allows Morrie purpose during his final days.

It is difficult to overestimate the impact of this exercise on the focus group. This film galvanized them in their purpose by helping them see the profound struggle that the homebound endure. It also allowed them to observe the benefit of a mutual relationship with the homebound through a living case study. This exercise was extremely powerful for these reasons, and it was a great way to set the tone for the intervention.

Conversations with the Homebound

Encounters with the homebound of the local area was a crucial component of this study. Conversations with them transformed an abstract issue into a person with a name

and face in the mind of the participants. It instilled a personal component into the intervention by forging connections between volunteers and local shut-ins. This has been discussed at length in earlier chapters, but it is important to reiterate its vital contribution to the overall intervention.

Asset Mapping

Asset Mapping is a powerful tool to help congregations assess the needs of their community. It provides data about the strengths and resources of a neighborhood, town, or city and helps reveal solutions. As community strengths and resources are inventoried and depicted on a map, one can more easily think about how to build on these assets to address community needs and improve health. It was a highly beneficial exercise because it bred confidence and ownership among participants as they became stewards of a new ministry to the homebound. It was an invaluable instrument for creating motivation among volunteers to view challenges through the lens of strength.

These exercises resulted in the formation of an ongoing ministry at GBC. On both a local and a wider scale, the pragmatic potential of this process as it intersects with other ministries is promising. What would it look like if more churches began ministries in this way? By selecting motivated volunteers, helping them become experts of the field, and giving them ownership in a necessary task, the possibilities for service are incalculable. The methods and materials may require modification or restructuring, but these core principles remain the same. The unanimous commitment of all participants to an ongoing homebound ministry at GBC attests to the success of this effort.

Personal Implications for Ministry

The Qualitative Method

The qualitative research method has fundamentally changed the way I look at beginning ministries. I had biases and expectations stated in Chapter Three for how I believed this study would play out. I viewed this as a method for informing GBC membership that we needed to develop a viable, long-term, homebound ministry. I honestly believed they would resist the idea and that it would be a hard sell on this proposal.

I quickly discovered that I had underestimated my congregation. Many of them have experienced homebound need from multiple perspectives. I learned that three of my volunteers were homebound at one time in their lives and several more had served as caregivers for their family members and close friends. As their pastor of almost eight years, I had no idea just how willing and sympathetic they would be to this critical need and ministry opportunity. I underestimated them and I could not be happier to have been so wrong. In this way, I was a learner and not a teacher during the intervention.

Predictably, occasions will arise in the future to create new ministries to address emergent issues in our community. There will also be new opportunities to study congregations in the rural context and the ways they serve. Wherever I go, I would like to make the qualitative approach and its strengths a part of my method for ministry. In this way, I will understand my congregation and surroundings better while helping others in similar contexts gain new perspective.

Appreciative Inquiry

I have also come to understand the value of Appreciative Inquiry through my association with Dr. Gaynor Yancey of the Baylor School of Social Work during this study. I originally designed the intervention to follow the common approach of meeting an acknowledged need by addressing a perceived weakness. I learned that the discovery and cataloguing of available assets is a superior method for doing community ministry because it addresses need based on strength instead of weakness. This approach gave confidence, ownership, and accountability to my participants for the ministry resulting from their findings.

This exercise gave me such a sense of personal pride and accomplishment as I rediscovered Golinda with my focus group. It changed the way we understand our city and our ability to engage it. It made me wonder about other applications for this method. I believe this approach has changed my view of need on a fundamental level because I have always sought to address it through deficit. In the future, I will inventory the assets of my church, my community, and myself when I approach any task.

Possibilities for Future Research

One adjacent opportunity for future study is a ministry geared toward caregivers. As a person's health and mobility decline, there is often another close relative or friend there to assist them. This person oftentimes shares in the seclusion of their charge and is subject to many of the same hazards. There are many instances of the caregivers dying before their dependents in cases of prolonged illness. Contributing factors include isolation, poor dietary habits, and the neglect of their own personal health. A study

exploring the needs and opportunities to assist long-term caregivers is an excellent prospect.

A second occasion for additional research is the cross-cultural element of homebound ministry. American rural communities are no longer homogenous, so a degree of discernment is required for engaging the elderly. Religion, customs, language, and culinary needs can differ widely from household to household. Rural churches would benefit from a study juxtaposing homebound need with emergent cultural trends in their communities.

A third prospect for further examination is the effect of sharing meals upon the overall health of homebound individuals. Many of them rely on food delivery services such as Meals on Wheels to provide sustenance. These services are wonderful but cannot provide the kind of meaningful contact that many shut-ins desire. Proper nutrition is an issue when eating alone and, in cases of mental frailty, can be forgotten altogether. Observing the effect of regular contact and meal sharing on the health of rural homebound individuals would be an interesting expansion to this intervention.

Conclusion

American rural churches possess tremendous potential for service in the kingdom of God at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Though populations shift and life becomes more urbanized, the need for those individuals occupying the heartlands remains the same. In other words, as long as there are farmers in their fields, they will need a church to shepherd them. Rural fellowships must continue to contextualize the gospel in ways their local communities can understand.

My congregation and I uncovered new methods to contextualize the gospel in Golinda, Texas. We discovered the opportunities for mutual relationship and learned how to address need through strength. As he has done from the beginning, God will continue to redeem his creation, and he will accomplish this mission through ordinary individuals in everyday circumstances. May this study help others in similar contexts serve God and their neighbors to the fullest.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Letter to the Pool of Candidates

Greetings!

My name is Morgan Woodard and I am pursuing my Doctor of Ministry degree at Truett Seminary. You have been nominated as a potential participant, if you are willing, in my D.Min project which will focus on helping Golinda Baptist Church (GBC) set up a viable, long-term homebound ministry.

I am looking for GBC members who are willing to learn about the needs of homebound individuals beginning the week _____ and ending on _____. In addition to learning about homebound need, participants will:

- Share their thoughts on the homebound with me in a one (1), 90-minute interview
- Watch *Tuesdays with Morrie* (89 minutes) and take part in a 1-hour film discussion
- Attend a 1-hour Q & A session on a successful homebound ministry in a similar church setting
- Participate in an in-home survey of local homebound individuals
- Attend an asset mapping exercise
- Complete three (3) weekly guided journals
- Cooperate in drafting a church policy on homebound ministry to be presented as a motion in the GBC congregational business meeting on _____
- Participate in a 1-hour group debriefing

The entire process will take four (4) weeks to complete and will require approximately fifteen (15) hours of your time broken up over seven (7) study visits. All of these sessions will be held at times convenient for volunteers.

For the purposes of this project, a homebound individual is defined as “a person who experiences difficulty in leaving home and cannot do so without the help of another person or medical equipment such as crutches, a walker, or a wheelchair.” The purpose of this study is to discover the effect of this intervention on the people of GBC taking ownership of a viable, long-term homebound ministry.

I have served as the pastor of GBC since February 2009 and have worked in various capacities with geriatrics for the past 17 years. Throughout my years in the ministry I have watched many of these sweet people lose their independence and sense of purpose. I have a strong belief that these individuals retain a place in God’s kingdom and are a largely untapped resource for the local church. I furthermore believe the local church can and should have an organized, biblical ministry involving this age group. If you have a similar conviction, I am inviting you to participate in this project.

A research consent form is attached that explains a bit about the purpose of the study and what is being asked of participants. If you have questions about this project or about serving as a participant, please email (Morgan_Woodard@baylor.edu) or call me (254-652-2251) any time.

If you are interested in serving as a participant, please remain after the Sunday evening service next _____ at 7:30 PM. The chairman of deacons will select the pool of 10 volunteers from those who remain.

Thank you for considering this opportunity!

Morgan Woodard

Pastor
Golinda Baptist Church
Cell: (254) 652-2251
Office: (254) 307-2803
Email: Morgan_Woodard@baylor.edu

APPENDIX B

Consent Form

Baylor University
George W. Truett Doctor of Ministry Program

Consent Form for Research

PROTOCOL TITLE: Developing a Congregation-Led Homebound
Ministry in a Rural Context

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Morgan Woodard

SUPPORTED BY: Golinda Baptist Church

Introduction

Please read this form carefully. The purpose of this form is to provide you with important information about taking part in a research study. If any of the statements or words in this form are unclear, please let us know. We would be happy to answer any questions. You have the right to discuss this study with another person who is not part of the research team before making your decision whether or not to be in the study.

Taking part in this research study is up to you. If you decide to take part in this research study we will ask you to sign this form. We will give you a copy of the signed form.

The person in charge of this study are Morgan Woodard. We will refer to this person as the “researcher” throughout this form. Ron Cook, Ph.D is the faculty advisor.

Why is this study being done?

The purpose of this study is to explore the effect of education and interaction with homebound need upon the development of a viable, long-term homebound ministry at Golinda Baptist Church.

We are asking you to take part in this study because you are considered a core member of Golinda Baptist Church.

About 6 subjects will take part in this research study at Baylor University.

How long will I take part in this research study?

We expect that you will be in this research study for 4 weeks. During this time, we will ask you to make 7 study visits to Golinda Baptist Church.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you agree to take part in this study, we will ask you to sign the consent form before we do any study procedures.

Study Visit 1

Visit 1 will take about 90 minutes to complete. At this visit, we will ask you to do the following procedures:

- Complete a questionnaire detailing your age, marital status, ethnicity, education, work status, income, church membership and involvement, community involvement, and any previous interaction with the homebound.
- Interview you about your experiences with the homebound.

Study Visit 2

Visit 2 will take about 90 minutes to complete. Prior to this visit you will have been asked to watch the film *Tuesdays with Morrie*. At this visit, we will ask you to do the following procedures:

- Take part in a focus group. A focus group is a small group of people who take part in a discussion about a selected topic. The focus group will be led by a member of the research staff. The focus group leader will ask the group members discuss the film and how it informs their views on homebound needs.

Study Visit 3

Visit 3 will take about 60 minutes to complete. At this visit, we will ask you to do the following procedures:

- Listen to a guest speaker from a congregation with an established homebound ministry discuss the work being done in their community.
- Listen to a guest speaker share their story of caring for a homebound spouse for an extended period of time.
- Participate in a Q & A session following each of the speakers.

Study Visit 4

Visit 4 will take about 3 hours to complete. At this visit, we will ask you to do the following procedures:

- We will send you out in teams of 2 for the purposes of surveying homebound residents of the Golinda community.
- Complete a survey guide with assigned homebound individuals.
- Take part in a focus group. The focus group will be led by a member of the research staff to dialogue and share observations following homebound visits.

Study Visit 5

Visit 5 will take about 3 hours to complete. At this visit, we will ask you to do the following procedures:

- Participate in an Asset Mapping exercise. This exercise will be led by a member of the research staff for the purposes of providing information about the strengths and resources of the local community and uncovering solutions by depicting them on a map.

Study Visit 6

Visit 6 will take about 2 hours to complete. Prior to this visit you will have been asked to complete a series of guided journals. At this visit, we will ask you to do the following procedures:

- Take part in a focus group. The focus group will be led by a member of the research staff for the purposes conducting a group debriefing.

Study Visit 7

Visit 7 will take about 2 hours to complete. At this visit, we will ask you to do the following procedures:

- Take part in a focus group. The focus group will be led by a member of the research staff for the purpose of drafting a policy proposal for presentation in the next business meeting for how GBC can institute a viable, long-term homebound ministry in the local community.
- We will ask the group who would be willing to help form a homebound ministry team and lead it at GBC.

Audio Recording

We would like make an audio recording of you during this study. If you are recorded it will be possible to identify you on the recording. We will store these recordings in a locked cabinet and only approved study staff will be able to access them. We will label these recordings with a code instead of your name. The key to the code connects your

name to the recording. The researcher will keep the key to the code in a password-protected computer. The recording will be stored for a period of three (3) years and then destroyed.

Audio recording is required for this study. If you do not want to be recorded, you should not be in this study.

What are the risks of taking part in this research study?

Interviews

You may feel emotional or upset when answering some of the questions. Tell the interviewer at any time if you want to take a break or stop the interview.

Questionnaire/Survey Risks

You may be uncomfortable with some of the questions and topics we will ask about. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

Focus Groups

The researchers will ask you and the other people in the group to use only first names during the group session. They will also ask you not to tell anyone outside the group what any particular person said in the group. However, the researchers cannot guarantee that everyone will keep the discussions private.

Loss of Confidentiality

A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality. Loss of confidentiality includes having your personal information shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. The researcher plans to protect your confidentiality. Their plans for keeping your information private are described later in this consent form.

Are there any benefits from being in this research study?

There are no benefits to you from taking part in this research.

Others including Golinda Baptist Church and homebound individuals in the local community may benefit in the future from the information that is learned in this study.

Storing Study Information for Future Use

We would like to store your study information for future research related to the effect of education and interaction with homebound need upon the development of a viable, long-term homebound ministry. We will label all your study information with a code instead of your name. The key to the code connects your name to your study information. The researcher will keep the code in a password-protected computer/locked file. Electronic

data will be stored on an encrypted password protected computer and destroyed in three (3) years. All data will be accessible only to the researcher.

Future use of study information is required for this study. If you do not want your information to be used for future research, you should not be in this study.

How Will You Keep My Study Records Confidential?

We will keep the records of this study confidential by labeling recordings with a code instead of your name, using only your first name during interviews and focus groups, and storing all data on a password-protected computer. All data will be accessible only to the researcher and will be destroyed after 3 years. We will make every effort to keep your records confidential. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of your records.

If, during your participation in this study, we have reasonable cause to believe that child/feder abuse is occurring, this will be reported to authorities as required by law. The researcher will make every reasonable effort to protect the confidentiality of your research information. However, it might be possible that a civil or criminal court will demand the release of identifiable research information.

If, during your participation in this study, we have reason to believe that you are at risk for harming yourself or others, we are required to take the necessary actions. This may include notifying your doctor, your therapist, or other individuals. If this were to occur, we would not be able to assure confidentiality.

The following people or groups may review your study records for purposes such as quality control or safety:

- The Researcher and any member of **his** research team
- Authorized members of Baylor University who may need to see your information, such as administrative staff members from the Office of the Vice Provost for Research and members of the Institutional Review Board (a committee which is responsible for the ethical oversight of the study)
- The sponsor or funding agency for this study
- Federal and state agencies that oversee or review research (such as the HHS Office of Human Research Protection or the Food and Drug Administration)

All records related to this research will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. The audio tape recordings will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office for three (3) years and then destroyed. Electronic data will be stored on an encrypted password protected computer and destroyed in three (3) years. All data will be accessible only to the researcher.

The study data will be stored on a password-protected computer.

The results of this study may also be used for teaching, publications, or presentations at professional meetings. If your individual results are discussed, your identity will be protected by using a code number or pseudonym rather than your name or other identifying information.

We have a Certificate of Confidentiality from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) for this study. This certificate adds special protection for research information that identifies you. This Certificate does not mean that the government approves or disapproves of this study.

With this Certificate, we cannot be forced (for example by court order or subpoena) to release any identifying research information about you. You should understand that the Certificate does not prevent you or a member of your family from voluntarily releasing information about yourself or your participation in this research study. If an insurer, employer, or other person obtains your written consent to receive research information, then the researchers may not use the Certificate to withhold that information.

The Certificate does not prevent the researchers from voluntarily disclosing, without your consent, information that would identify you as a subject in this research study if we: 1) are concerned that you may be suicidal (thinking about killing yourself) or at immediate risk of seriously harming yourself or others, or 2) learn about serious harm to you or someone else (such as child abuse or elder abuse). Under these circumstances we will notify the appropriate people (such as your personal doctor, counselor, local or state agency, or other authorities).

Study Participation and Early Withdrawal

Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to take part or to withdraw at any time for any reason. No matter what you decide, there will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the information that you have already provided will be kept confidential. You cannot withdraw information collected prior to your withdrawal.

The researcher may take you out of this study without your permission. This may happen because:

- The researcher thinks it is in your best interest
- You can't make the required study visits
- Other administrative reasons

Will I get paid for taking part in this research study?

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

What will it cost me to take part in this research study?

There are no costs to you for taking part in this research study.

What if I have any questions or concerns about this research study?

You can call us with any concerns or questions about the research. Our telephone numbers are listed below:

Researcher: Morgan Woodard.....(254)
652-2251

Faculty Advisor: Ron Cook, Ph.D.....(254)
710-3755

Morgan Woodard can be reached Mondays-Fridays from 8AM-5PM and at any time in case of emergency.

Ron Cook can be contacted Mondays-Fridays from 8AM-5PM.

If you want to speak with someone **not** directly involved in this research study, you may contact the Baylor University IRB through the Office of the Vice Provost for Research at 254-710-1438. You can talk to them about:

- Your rights as a research subject
- Your concerns about the research
- A complaint about the research

Indicate your decision for the below optional research discussed earlier in this form:

Optional Consent for Audio/Video recording:

Do you agree to let us make an audio recording of you during this study?

_____ YES

_____ NO

_____ INITIALS

Optional Consent for future research with study information:

Do you agree to let us store your study information for future research related to the effect of education and interaction with homebound need upon the development of a viable, long-term homebound ministry?

_____ YES

_____ NO

_____ INITIALS

Future Contact

We may like to contact you in the future either to follow-up to this study or to see if you are interested in other studies taking place at Baylor University.

Do you agree to let us contact you in the future?

_____ YES

_____ NO

_____ INITIALS

Statement of Consent**SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT:**

I have read the information in this consent form including risks and possible benefits. I have been given the chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in the study.

Signature of Subject

Date

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent:

I have explained the research to the subject and answered all his/her questions. I will give a copy of the signed consent form to the subject.

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

APPENDIX C

Interview Questionnaire

Introduction: I am very interested in learning about your experience with homebound senior citizens. The following questions are designed to help you share your thoughts, feelings and perceptions. There are no right or wrong answers. I will be recording throughout the interview. Do you have any questions before we start?

| Overarching Research Question | |
|--|---|
| What effect did the intervention have on the people of GBC taking ownership of a viable, long-term homebound ministry? | |
| Research Questions | Interview Questions |
| 1. What effect did education regarding the needs of the homebound have on their willingness to own the problem? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When you think of the homebound, what particular person comes to mind? 2. What feelings come up for you when you think about the homebound? 3. Describe your willingness to serve the needs of homebound senior citizens in the Golinda community. |
| 2. What effect did exploration of the need have on their willingness to own the problem? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Describe your current level of involvement in caring for homebound senior citizens in the Golinda community. 5. Describe the role your faith plays in caring for the homebound. 6. How do you see yourself expressing your faith to the homebound? |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>3. What effect did working on a congregational policy to address the needs of the homebound have on the people of GBC taking ownership of a viable, long-term homebound ministry?</p> | <p>7. Describe your willingness to lead GBC to be involved in a ministry to homebound senior citizens.</p> <p>8. In what ways do you believe your voice is vital in leading GBC to be involved in a ministry to homebound senior citizens?</p> <p>9. When you think of GBC beginning a homebound ministry, what particular challenges come to mind?</p> <p>10. In what ways do you think you can help GBC overcome these challenges?</p> |
| | <p>11. Describe your idea of a successful ministry on the part of GBC to the homebound senior citizens of this community.</p> <p>12. How do you see yourself playing a part in helping GBC create a successful ministry to the homebound?</p> |

If participants are hesitant or do not provide enough data, the researcher will use appropriate prompts to gain additional information.

Prompts may include:

1. Could you give me some examples?
2. Please tell me more.
3. Is there anything you would like to add?
4. Is there anything else you can tell me?

Conclusion and Summary:

I would like to thank you for sharing your time with me today. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. I hope you have a great day.

APPENDIX D

Demographic Form

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>To be completed by researcher</i> | <i>Participant</i> |
| Code: _____ | |

| | |
|--|--|
| Date of Completion: | |
| Age: | |
| Marital Status: | <input type="radio"/> Married <input type="radio"/> Partnered <input type="radio"/> Single <input type="radio"/> Divorced <input type="radio"/> Widowed <input type="radio"/> Separated |
| Race/Ethnicity <i>(please choose the ONE that best describes what you consider yourself to be):</i> | <input type="radio"/> Native American or Alaskan Native <input type="radio"/> African American <input type="radio"/> African National/Caribbean islander <input type="radio"/> Asian <input type="radio"/> Hispanic or Latino <input type="radio"/> Middle Eastern <input type="radio"/> Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander <input type="radio"/> Multi-Racial <input type="radio"/> White (Non-Hispanic) <input type="radio"/> Other |

| | |
|--|---|
| Educational Status: | <input type="radio"/> Less than high school <input type="radio"/> High school diploma or GED <input type="radio"/> Some college (please specify) <hr/> <input type="radio"/> Technical program <input type="radio"/> Associates degree <input type="radio"/> Bachelor's degree <input type="radio"/> Master's degree <input type="radio"/> Doctoral degree <input type="radio"/> Other |
| Work Status: | <input type="radio"/> Full Time <input type="radio"/> Part Time Not employed outside the home <input type="radio"/> Unemployed <input type="radio"/> Unemployed/seeking employment <input type="radio"/> Disabled <input type="radio"/> Retired |
| Family Income: | <input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/> \$0-\$10,000 per year <input type="radio"/> \$10,001-\$20,000 <input type="radio"/> \$20,001-\$30,000 <input type="radio"/> \$30,001-\$40,000 <input type="radio"/> \$40,001-\$50,000 <input type="radio"/> \$50,001-\$60,000 <input type="radio"/> \$60,001-\$70,000 <input type="radio"/> \$70,001-\$80,000 <input type="radio"/> \$80,001-\$90,000 <input type="radio"/> \$90,001-\$100,000 <input type="radio"/> More than \$100,000 |
| Years as a member of Golinda Baptist Church: | <input type="radio"/> 0-3 years <input type="radio"/> 3-10 years <input type="radio"/> 10-15 years <input type="radio"/> 15-25 years <input type="radio"/> More than 25 years |
| Average number of services attended per month: | <input type="radio"/> Less than 3 services <input type="radio"/> 3-6 services <input type="radio"/> 6-12 services |

| | |
|--|--|
| | <input type="radio"/> 12 or more services |
| | |
| Please specify all roles served in the church: | |
| | |
| Please specify your involvement in the Golinda community: | |
| | |
| * Experience caring for the homebound: | <input type="radio"/> I have cared for a homebound person <input type="radio"/> I am currently caring for a homebound person <input type="radio"/> I have never cared for a homebound person |
| * Are you or have you ever been homebound? | <input type="radio"/> Yes (please explain below) <input type="radio"/> No <input type="radio"/> Uncertain |
| Would you be willing to meet with the researcher to discuss information gained from you throughout this study? | <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No |

If you have been homebound or have experience caring for a homebound person as indicated above, please use the blank space below to explain:

APPENDIX E

Purposive Sample Questionnaire

Questions

1. Please describe your daily needs. (These can be physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, etc.)
2. In what ways are your daily needs currently being met?
3. In what ways are your daily needs NOT currently being met?
4. How do you believe your local church can help you?
5. Please specify any ways you would like to continue serving God through your local church.

Note

If individuals are hesitant or you do not understand their answers, try using these prompts to gain additional information. Prompts may include:

1. Could you give me some examples?
2. Please tell me more.
3. Is there anything you would like to add?
4. Is there anything else you can tell me?

APPENDIX F

Guided Journals

Journal Guide- Week 1- Imagine

“As you grow, you learn more. If you stayed as ignorant as you were at twenty-two, you'd always be twenty-two. Aging is not just decay, you know. It's growth. It's more than the negative that you're going to die, it's the positive that you understand you're going to die, and that you live a better life because of it.”¹

Imagine for a moment that your independence is a thing of the past. Your car keys have been taken, you fall more often than you would like to admit, and your memory has become somewhat unreliable. Suppose your freedom is dependent on the goodwill of others for everything from social interaction, to your next meal, to bathroom breaks. How does that make you feel? Please record your thoughts in your journal now.

For many senior citizens this is not an exercise in imagination but a fact of everyday life. According to the 2010 census, of the 218 households Golinda, 27 had someone over the age of 65 living alone.² Many of these seniors are retired, require medication, and live on fixed incomes. Several are widowed, have no nearby family, and grow increasingly dependent on others as they age. These issues can have detrimental physical, emotional, and spiritual effects on elderly homebound individuals.

1. Mitch Albom, *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson* (New York: Broadway, 1997), 118.

2. “Golinda city, Texas,” 2010 Census Information,” accessed February 22, 2016, <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/>.

The Scriptures encourage us to respect the elderly of our communities in both the Old and New Testaments.

“Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord.” (Lev. 19:32, NIV)

“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” (James 1:27, ESV)

“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” (Matt. 7:12, ESV)

Everyone who lives long enough will eventually reach this season of life. How do you want others to treat you when your time comes? In what practical ways can you respond to this need now as you see it in others? How can Golinda Baptist Church respond to this need in the local community?

Reflection: Please answer the questions below in your journal now.

1. Describe the feelings that come up for you concerning a loss of your independence and becoming dependent on others for your basic needs.
2. Describe your understanding of the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of homebound individuals in your community.
3. In what specific ways do you see yourself leading your church to help those who are currently dependent on others for their basic needs?

Journal Guide- Week 2- Contact

“The first service one owes to others in a community involves listening to them. Just as our love for God begins with listening to God’s Word, the beginning of love for others is learning to listen to them. God’s love for us is shown by the fact that God not only gives God’s Word, but also lends us God’s ear.”³

You were created to live in constant relationship with God and the people around you. Humans are not designed to live in isolation but to interact with others through relationships. This network of relationships between you and other individuals is what we call “community.” When you think about the relationships in your life, to what extent do you believe you are living in community? Please take a moment to think about your relationship with God and about the other relationships in your life. How would you describe them? Please record your thoughts in your journal now.

The Scriptures encourage us to live in community with God in both the Old and New Testaments:

“You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.” (Lev. 19:18, ESV)

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as

3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), 97.

a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” (Deut. 6:4-9, ESV)

“And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:28-31, ESV)

Living in community means living in love. In God’s eyes, loving Him is synonymous with loving others, or one’s “neighbor” as the scriptures put it. But who qualifies as our neighbor? Is it simply the person sitting next to you or the one living two doors down? Yes, but it is also much more. According to Jesus, a neighbor can be anyone with whom we have contact. As Garland states, “Love is our inner commitment to God that is expressed in all our conduct and relationships. Those who do not show love to others can hardly claim to love God...”⁴ The homebound of our local community certainly fit into Jesus’ definition of “neighbor.”

In a recent study performed among cognitively impaired, institutionalized, hospitalized, and terminally ill older adults, it was found that human touch significantly

4. David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 476.

improved the disposition and functionality of those who experienced it as contrasted with those who did not.⁵ Human contact is essential to loving one's neighbor as oneself.

At the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus did something exceptional for an unnamed leper. A consequence of this man's condition was severely limited contact with others. Although other stories in the New Testament attest to Jesus' ability to heal a person regardless of proximity, Jesus goes the extra step to actually touch this man. After the leper approaches and says to Jesus, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean," Jesus replies by *touching* him and saying, "I am willing; be clean!" (Matt. 8:1-4, NIV)

Human contact is essential to the process of healing. The homebound of the local community require regular contact with the body of Christ through the physical presence of its members. How can you live in community with the homebound today?

Reflection: Please answer the questions below in your journal now.

1. In what ways do you believe the scripture above applies to your involvement with the homebound of the local community?
2. What role do you believe human contact plays in the overall physical, mental, and spiritual health of the homebound in this community?
3. Describe the role your faith plays in your care for the homebound.
4. In what specific ways do you believe you can help your church provide community and relationships for homebound individuals?

5. Elizabeth Bush, "The Use of Touch to Improve the Well-Being of Older Adults: A Holistic Nursing Intervention," *Journal of Holistic Nursing* 19, no. 3 (September 2001): 256-270, accessed July 14, 2016, <http://jhn.sagepub.com.ezproxy.baylor.edu/content/19/3/256.full.pdf+html>.

Journal Guide- Week 3- Holy Partnership

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” -Hellen Keller

We spend so much time wondering what we can do for someone that we fail to realize what we can do *with* someone. Up to this point in our discussion we have explored how we can help the homebound. But why stop there? Serving God requires two things: a pulse and a relationship with Christ. Many elderly homebound individuals meet both of these criteria. Take a moment and think about all of the ways you can minister *with* such a person. Please record your thoughts in your journal now.

Homebound individuals can serve God and their local church even if they cannot leave their residence without difficulty or the assistance of others. Building on this idea, Diana R. Garland offers the example of a homebound senior adult serving as part of a call ministry to children in an after-school church program. She espouses the idea, “Everyone can do something.”⁶

Ramsey offers the most comprehensive look at homebound ministry calling for a “Holy Friendship” where both the visitor and the person being visited mutually benefit from the relationship. The young and aged have the opportunity to experience spiritual intimacy and pursue a relationship with God together. Once a ministry *to* the homebound

6. Diana R. Garland, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012), 428.

is exchanged for a ministry *with* the homebound, the possibilities for growth and restoration are endless.⁷

The Scriptures speak of many elderly individuals who remained in active service to the Lord in both the Old and New Testaments:

“Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.” (Gen. 21:5, ESV)

“Now Moses was eighty years old, and Aaron eighty-three years old, when they spoke to Pharaoh.” (Ex. 7:7, ESV)

“I (Caleb) was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought him word again as it was in my heart. But my brothers who went up with me made the heart of the people melt; yet I wholly followed the LORD my God. And Moses swore on that day, saying, ‘Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God.’ And now, behold, the LORD has kept me alive, just as he said, these forty-five years since the time that the LORD spoke this word to Moses, while Israel walked in the wilderness. And now, behold, I am this day eighty-five years old. I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming. So now give me this hill country of which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be

7. Janet L. Ramsey, “Holy Friendship: Reimagining Ministry with Homebound Older Adults,” *Word and World* 26, no. 3 (2006): 259.

that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said.” (Josh. 14:7-12, ESV)

“There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. (Luke 2:36-38, NIV)

Regardless of their abilities, elderly people have a place in the service of God. When we place limitations on them or see them exclusively as dependents we miss out on all the wonderful things God can accomplish through them. If we begin to see the homebound as teammates in ministry we can experience all the benefits of partnership.

Reflection: Please answer the questions below in your journal now.

1. Describe your feelings on partnering with elderly, homebound individuals for ministry in the local community.
2. Please list a few practical ways you believe a homebound believer could continue serving God and their local church?
3. In what specific ways do you believe you can help your church see homebound individuals as assets rather than dependents in ministry?

APPENDIX G

Group Debriefing Guide

I am very interested in learning about your experience with homebound senior citizens.

The following questions are designed to help you share your thoughts, feelings and perceptions. There are no right or wrong answers. I will be recording throughout the interview. Do you have any questions before we start?

| Overarching Research Question | |
|--|--|
| What effect did the intervention have on the people of GBC taking ownership of a viable, long-term homebound ministry? | |
| Research Questions | Interview Questions |
| What effect did education regarding the needs of the homebound have on their willingness to own the problem? | Describe your willingness to serve the needs of homebound senior citizens in the Golinda community. |
| What effect did exploration of the need have on their willingness to own the problem? | In what ways do you believe your level of involvement in caring for homebound senior citizens in the Golinda community will change following this study? Describe the role your faith plays in caring for the homebound. How do you see yourself expressing your faith to the homebound? |

If participants are hesitant or do not provide enough data, the researcher will use appropriate prompts to gain additional information.

Prompts may include:

1. Could you give me some examples?
2. Please tell me more.
3. Is there anything you would like to add?
4. Is there anything else you can tell me?

Conclusion and Summary

I would like to thank everyone for sharing your time with me today. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. I hope you have a great day.

APPENDIX H

Tuesdays with Morrie

Discussion Guide

Learning Objectives

1. To analyze the film *Tuesdays with Morrie*.
2. To respond to its message concerning the needs of homebound individuals.

Questions

1. Please summarize the movie *Tuesdays with Morrie*.
2. What are some major issues you believe are in play through this film?
3. How does this compare to our context?
4. How have you seen this in our context?
5. Compare and contrast this to your experience with the homebound.

Supplemental Questions

6. Describe Morrie's loss of independence and how it affects his view of himself, others, and his place in society.
7. What are some factors you believe initially hinder Mitch from making contact with Morrie once he finds out he has ALS?
8. In what ways do you believe religion plays a part in Morrie's coping with the dying experience?
9. What are your thoughts on Morrie's idea of aging as growth instead of decay as most people view it?
10. Describe the change in relationship between Mitch and Morrie in this story.
11. What significance do you believe food and the sharing of meals plays in this story?

12. Describe the prolonged pain Morrie experiences at the loss of his mother 70 years after her death.
13. In what ways does this story inform your view of the needs of the homebound of our community?

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