The Creative Church

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The Creative Church
by
Lindsey M. Johnson

A Project
in
Creative Studies

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
For the Degree of

Master of Science

May 7, 2009

Buffalo State College
State University of New York
Department of Creative Studies
Abstract of Project

This project contains a church plan for a new church that embraces creativity. The starting point began with a passion to create a church that connects with our current culture. The steps for completing this church plan are clearly outlined in the process described. The final product is a plan for “Relevant Community Church” and a process to lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ by connecting and communicating in creative and relevant ways.

May 7th, 2009
Buffalo State College  
State University of New York  
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Dates of Approval:

________________________  
________________________

Dr. Mary Murdock  
Lindsey M. Johnson
Acknowledgements

I first thank my savior Jesus Christ for finding me and putting me back on His straight and narrow path. Without my God I would not be where I am today. I am grateful for the blessings He has given me and for the passion He has put within me. May this project be honoring to Him and may it be used to help others come to know Him also.

To my husband, Steve- thank you for following your calling and taking me along for the ride. Thank you for sharing your knowledge and wisdom. Thank you for being so supportive and patient with me.

To my parents- thank you for giving me a foundation in Jesus. I have been blessed with a heritage that cannot be measured.
# Table of Contents

**Section 1: Background to the Project**
- Purpose .............................................................................................................. 1
- Project Description .......................................................................................... 1
- Rationale for Selection ...................................................................................... 1-2

**Section 2: Pertinent Literature**
- Overview of Literature .................................................................................... 3
- Annotated Bibliography .................................................................................. 4-6
- Selected Bibliography ...................................................................................... 7

**Section 3: Process Plan**
- Introduction ..................................................................................................... 8-9
- Project Timeline ................................................................................................ 10-13

**Section 4: Outcomes**
- Introduction ................................................................................................... 14
- Products ............................................................................................................. 15
  - Introduction/Environment ........................................................................... 15
  - Worship ......................................................................................................... 15
  - Evangelism .................................................................................................... 15
  - Discipleship ................................................................................................. 16
  - Fellowship .................................................................................................... 16
  - Christian Service ......................................................................................... 16

**Section 5: Key Learnings**
- Introduction ................................................................................................... 17
- Content ............................................................................................................. 17
  - Social Acceptance ....................................................................................... 17
  - Resistance to Change ................................................................................... 18
  - Habits ............................................................................................................ 18
  - Process .......................................................................................................... 19-20

**Section 6: Conclusion**
- Introduction ................................................................................................... 21
  - Next Steps .................................................................................................... 21
- References ........................................................................................................ 22

**Section 7: Appendices**
- Appendix A: Concept Paper ........................................................................... 24-30
- Appendix B: Relevant Community Church Plan ........................................... 31-41
- Appendix C: Live Development Process ......................................................... 42-43
- Appendix D: Five Circles of Commitment ...................................................... 44-45
SECTION 1: BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a church that embraces creativity and meet the needs of those within the church and community in a relevant way. This project looked at the typical Protestant church in Western New York and adapted common way of doing things from that perspective.

Project Description

This project contains a plan for beginning a creative church in the 21st century. This plan provides a framework for developing the five purposes of the church in a way that connects with the current culture and the people in it (Johnson, 2009).

Rationale for Selection

I grew up as a child who was very involved in church because of my family. Although I believe I was given a good spiritual foundation, I strayed far from it after being in junior high school. I didn’t know why I believed the things I said I did. I also didn’t think it seemed practical to live a life as a Christian in a world with so many other ideas.

In high school and most of college I followed the crowd and was easily influenced by those around me. The Biblical truths I was taught so long ago didn’t seem to matter any more. I thought Christians were weird and typically hypocrites. When I would attend church, I went because I felt like I was fulfilling a duty to both my parents and God. The sermons didn’t seem to apply to me, and the music was very annoying.

After a few years of college, I was brought to a breaking point. I knew I needed to have God be a part of my broken life, but I didn’t know how to find Him. It was during this time that I attended a new church on my own. The sermon was practical and the music was enjoyable. I met many Christians who were actually
normal and fun to be around. It was at this church that I grew in my faith and volunteered with junior high students, high school students and eventually college students. I met many friends there, including my husband.

I share the information above because I find it important in my passion for creating a creative church. The place I discovered who God was in a church that reached out in new and exciting ways. The environment was comfortable, the messages were applicable and the people were real. The church saw the need to reach out to more than the typical church crowd and appeal to young people in a genuine way.

Almost five years later I am married to an associate/youth pastor who shares the same passions as I do. He currently leads a service each week with about 100 people after just two months. We make it our goal not to fulfill the negative stereotypes that people have given Christians. We believe Jesus avoided these negative stereotypes himself.

I know in my heart that one day a new church will exist that is even more relevant and creative than the church where I met God. The church plan presented in this project was designed to teach people the real truths of Jesus Christ and love them through the ugliness of daily life. Perhaps if this plan is developed and adapted, people will have a deeper sense of God’s love and grace within the walls of a church that embraces creativity in a new, relevant way.
SECTION 2: PERTINENT LITERATURE

Overview of Literature

This section contains pertinent research and literature related to the church and how people relate to it. It is organized into annotations that were the most helpful in constructing this project. Each resource has shaped this church plan, so I have included helpful information for the reader to locate these sources.
Annotated Bibliography

ISBN-10: 080102417X

_A matrix of meanings: Finding God in pop culture_ by Craig Detweiler and Barry Taylor discussed cultural texts and theological conversations that took place through our culture in the form of film, music and other pop culture. The matrix of meanings showed how current music artists and film addressed spiritual issues and topics. Detweiler and Taylor continued by explaining how the Christian church might engage culture through the common language of cultural texts.

Detweiler and Taylor used pop culture as a lens to view or present the bible without using criticism. The authors asked difficult questions of the church and state that the majority of the world connects with pop culture much better than they do with the church. The challenge of both Detweiler and Taylor was for the church to engage in pop culture in a respectful and vibrant way.

ISBN-10: 0814742955

_Convergence culture where old and new media collide_ by Henry Jenkins, founder and director of MIT’s Media Studies Program, explained the shift in how culture interacts with media. Jenkins explained that rather than new technology and media replacing older forms, the two have converged. Jenkins discussed how consumers of media have become participants instead of just spectators.

Jenkins also showed how in this participatory culture consumers have formed knowledge communities that engage in collective intelligence. The author explained that collective intelligence was when a community was able to collectively share information in a way that helped them solve problems greater than any single member could solve on his/her own. Lastly, Jenkins critiqued conventional convergence
theory. The author analyzed converging media and made a case that the leader of convergence was the call for new models of consumption, not production.

ISBN-10: 1842272926

*Church after christendom* by Stewart Murray looked at how the church might survive in a post Christian culture. Murray identified trends and possible reasons why more people were leaving church and why others were not finding the church. He then examined the emerging church movement, to see if it might be the next form for the Christian church. Murray suggested that the church should refocus on the mission and service, authentic community and redefining worship.

Given the increased decline of Christian churches in the United Kingdom, Murray suggested that it was possible that the church will not survive. This book was somewhat of a reality check, and it was undoubtedly depressing. Murray argued that post-Christendom must view the history of non-conforming traditions. Overall, the author asked some important questions dealing with what the church actually is and why it exists.

ISBN-10: 0979017491

*Pop goes the church* by Tim Stevens was a very practical source for breaking the mold of the typical protestant church. The forward to this book was written by Ed Young, a pastor of a highly creative church in Fort Worth Texas. Ed explained that the mission of the church was to be a vehicle to communicate and share our love for God. Each year Ed’s church holds a conference strictly dealing with creativity. The conference name “C” stands for the “creative church conference”.

The first few chapters of *Pop goes the church* contained the author’s experiences that have turned off both Christians and non-Christians alike from church. Tim Stevens pointed out where the church has gone wrong in not keeping up with the world around it. Our world is drenched in popular culture, or what Stevens
defined as the world of music, movies, television shows, books, magazines, fashion, sports, art, video games and internet that has a following and acceptance by millions around the globe.

The premise behind this book was that in order to reach people for Christ, it is essential we use pop culture. Stevens emphasized that in order to be effective, we must learn the culture of the people we are trying to reach and communicate the gospel in the language, signs, symbols, and the very soil of the culture. Toward the end of the book, Stevens provided information on twenty churches that have made it part of their mission to use pop culture to leverage the gospel. The twenty churches share their ideas on what has worked best for them and why they have chosen to use pop culture in order to communicate with the people around them for a specific purpose.


Although *The purpose driven church* was written in 1995, it still is practical in providing a framework for a growing church. Author Rick Warren presented a blueprint on how to grow a healthy organization within the five purposes of the church: worship, discipleship, fellowship, ministry and evangelism. Warren has written this book to give advice to other pastors on the successes he has found at his own church. Pastor Rick Warren currently oversees one of the largest churches in America; Saddleback Community Church in Lake Forest, California.

The book was helpful in providing Warren’s perspective on how to efficiently run a church. Warren shared models he has developed to disciple his attendees. Warren also categorized different types of churches who emphasize certain purposes of the church more than others. The authors explained the importance in finding balance within the five purposes of the church so that those in attendance do not overemphasize the purpose that express only the gifts and passion of the pastor.
Selected Bibliography


SECTION 3: PROCESS PLAN

Introduction

This section outlines the individual steps taken to create this church plan. The time necessary to complete these tasks is listed after each daily entry.

In looking back on my process plan, I was surprised at how much I veered from my original project timeline and yet still ended up where I needed to be in the end. Although planning is essential, during our creative process we learn new things about ourselves and learn to adjust them in order to make things work.

The most difficult part of this project for me was letting go of what other people thought my church plan should look like instead of creating it in my own way. The whole process began pretty slowly as I sifted through books, locating the ones I would find most important and influential. I found it frustrating that there were so many great resources and yet not enough time to read through them all. I stuck to books that dealt mainly with pop culture and its influence on the church. I also focused in on Rick Warren’s *The purpose driven church* (1995) to expand on an example of a church plan that had already been created and put in place. Some books I read cover to cover, others I chose chapters that seemed of most importance.

About the second week of March I realized something crucial. I had planned to facilitate two idea generation sessions on how people best communicate and learn so I could address these issues in my final church plan. I began to panic that I wouldn’t have enough time to get everything done and worried that some of the ideas other people suggested would somehow influence my project in ways I never intended them to. Thank God for our “ah ha” moments when we find them early on. I reevaluated the purpose of this project and once again was driven to follow my passion. Certainly church leaders, authors and ordinary people alike, have influenced this church plan, but the biggest influence of it all has been myself and my passion to see things carried out.

Mid March was the point where things began to come together. The ideas for the church plan were finally making it on paper, and I focused an entire weekend on completing sections 1, 2 and 3 of the final write-up.
Project Timeline

February

February 9, 2009
• Submitted Concept Paper draft to Dr. Murdock

February 16-20, 2009
I used my mid-winter break away from work to do the following:
• Researched articles and books on the creative church. Took notes, completed class readings.
• Received feedback from Dr. Murdock and edited concept paper draft.
• Continued to edit concept paper.

February 22, 2009
• Submitted final version of concept paper
• Continued reading and discussing important issues that would need to be covered in church plan.

February 26, 2009
• Continued researching, reading and locating the last of my pertinent literature.

March

March 1, 2009
• Highlighted key points from Rick Warren’s The Purpose Driven Church to help develop my own church plan.
• Continued reading pertinent literature

March 2, 2009
• Created the “Life Development Process” in the program pages to mimic the process described in The Purpose Driven Church.
March 5, 2009
• Created “The Five Circles of Commitment” in the program *pages* to mimic the process described in *The Purpose Driven Church.*
• Contacted Hamburg Wesleyan Church to set up a CPS session 1.5 hrs.

March 12, 2009
• Met with our Master’s Project class to discuss project set-up and completion. 3 hrs.

March 13, 2009
• Reevaluated the purpose of this project and understood facilitating a CPS session was not necessary. 1 hr.

March 18, 2009
• Began drafting sections 1,2, for submission on Thursday, March 26. 5 hrs.

March 21, 2009
• Received feedback/editing from friends on sections 1,2,3 and continued to revise and incubate on information. 4 hrs.

March 28, 2009
• Began drafting the creative church plan. 3.5 hrs

April

April 4, 2009
• Looked for images that would depict the church plan being created. 1.5 hrs.

April 5, 2009
• Organized final write-up according to APA guidelines 3 hrs.

April 6, 2009
• Continued forming the church plan
• Chose the church name: *Relevant Community Church*
• Spoke with sounding board partner about project layout 4 hrs.
April 8, 2009
• Created church logo and mission statement.  2 hrs.

April 9, 2009
• Continued to work on church plan.
• Developed introduction.  3 hrs.

April 10, 2009
• Continued to work on church plan and edited grammar errors.
• Inserted images to depict church environment.  8 hrs.

April 11, 2009
• Checked in with my husband to review plan in place so far.
• Edited final church plan and inserted into the final write-up.
• Submitted sections 1-7 in Dr. Murdock’s drop box  6 hrs.

April 16, 2009
• Made changes suggested by Dr. Murdock
• Read through entire project and further edited  1 hr.

April 26, 2009
• Further edited and read through entire project
• Added to the Christian service portion of the church plan  2.5 hrs.

April 30, 2009
• Edited references
• Proof read and made changes  3 hrs.

May 2, 2009
• Added references and changed spacing
• Captured videos to use for presentation  2 hrs.

May 3, 2009
• Worked on project presentation PowerPoint, edited video clips
• Planned out what should be communicated through video  3 hrs.
May 6, 2009

• Worked on project presentation
• Made changes to final project and formatted

3 hrs.

Total: 121.5 hrs.
SECTION 4: OUTCOMES

Introduction

This section discusses the products that have been developed through this project and provides insight on how they each were created. Creating this church plan was both exciting and difficult. The biggest challenge was finding a starting point. I found myself looking for current church plans, but I could not find any. After sorting through Rick Warren’s *The Purpose Driven Church (1995)*, I realized there was not much I could expand on in order to create my own church plan.

I looked at the five purposes of the church: worship, evangelism, discipleship, fellowship and Christian service (ministry) and began defining what they each meant. After defining each of these areas, I looked for scripture verses that supported each area of the church. The version of the *Bible* that I chose to use was *The Message Remix*. I thought that if I wanted my church plan to be current, I should use the language of the people. *The Message* version is the *Bible* in contemporary language. After I defined each section of the church plan, I found it important to develop a mission statement to help guide any development in the church.
Products

The main product of this project is the church plan as a whole. In actuality, the church plan contains six specific parts or products. Below is each product with a description of what it contains.

Introduction/Environment

Within the first page of Relevant Community Church’s plan, the reader was invited to take a tour to see what the church was like. The mission statement of the church was defined, and the reader is left with an image of what the church environment looks like. In order to introduce the five major sections of this project, background information about the church is shared. The idea of using creative talents and respecting natural resources are just a couple of the values discussed within this section.

Worship

The second section of this church plan defined the term worship and provided a Bible verse that expressed how God deserves to be praised. Relevant Community Church focused on many different types of worship, understanding that it can come in many forms. This section of the church plan discussed how nature, art and music were all human expressions that could be used as worship. The idea of worship in nature and art led to an indoor garden, containing artwork that was described in detail. The worship services explained in the church plan include modern worship music and technologies used to help the people reflect on the goodness of God.

Evangelism

This next section also defined the term evangelism and provided a Bible verse that gave instruction on showing others the love of Jesus. This area of the project explained how Relevant Community Church focuses on connecting families and hosting community events. The church plan designed special groups to help families grow together and gave opportunities for the public to use the church facility for community events.
Discipleship

Ephesians 4:12 was quoted from *The Message* version of the *Bible* in the beginning section of this product. This was a fairly large section of the church plan because it discussed the teaching series, classes, small groups, mentoring, youth and children. Each of these areas explained the philosophy of the church and why each one was valued at Relevant Community. The Evangelism part of this church plan also provided teaching topics and classes that were practical and relevant to a person’s everyday life.

Fellowship

The definition of fellowship in the beginning of this section was to encourage and incorporate those attending the church. Another verse from *The Message Bible* was used to express the importance of not doing things alone. Within this product, the church plan contained one of the church’s core values of living in community. To emphasize this through the church environment, a café called *The Gathering* was described. The idea of fellowship over good coffee was also discussed and explains why supporting particular coffee suppliers was done intentionally.

Christian Service

Christian Service is many times defined as being ministry. As Christ followers we have been called to serve others. This section of the church plan discussed the many ways in which Relevant Community Church was looking to serve people. The church plan focused on opportunities of service within the church, in the south towns of Buffalo and around the world. In the world today, one of the best ways that we can teach and communicate who we are is by what we do. Relevant Community Church was designed with the goal of loving all people and proving it with our lives.
SECTION 5: KEY LEARNINGS

Introduction

This section contains the major learnings I have taken from creating this project. I will discuss some of the creativity and domain relevant skills that were drawn upon. Some things I have planned for in this project took place as expected, while others were evolved or omitted.

Content

The domain skills I found myself drawing upon in the creation of this project were exactly what I anticipated. The interesting thing was, I discovered I wasn’t as skilled at them as I thought originally. According to the ForeSight™ (Puccio, 2002) measure, I am very scientific in my thinking, so I assumed I could plan things out far in advance and follow through with them. Because this process of creating was more challenging than I imagined, my planning was not what I expected. In the beginning of this project I spent a lot of time looking through pertinent literature, toward the end I found myself very pressured to complete the church plan.

Social Acceptance

It is no secret that not many people look to create their own churches. I was worried to choose my topic on the creative church because part of me was self-conscious as to what other people might think. Even though creating this church plan has been a passion of mine, I always feel the need to conform. In a study conducted by Manion & Haukkala (1994), results showed social needs of human beings strongly encouraged social conformity. The need to conform is one reason why developing a new approach or idea is usually more creative than group action conformers take. I am thankful I decided to go with my original plan that was something uncommon and possibly more creative.
Resistance To Change

I’ve never been a person who adapts well to change, and yet I see it is necessary in order to create something as large as Relevant Community Church. Both creativity and change entail new directions, and they are both associated with doubt and risk (Manion & Haukkala, 1994). Many people resist change because it involves hard work whether it is looking at abstract concepts for a church or locating the resources to make something like this a reality. Planning this church required alterations even in my own patterns of thoughts, habits and approaches.

Habits

My nature is to be a very habitual person. Every day I hold tight to my routines and when they’re disrupted, I am not very happy. It was not terribly difficult for me to make working on this project somewhat of a routine since I have a good habit in planning. Another habit of mine is getting very overwhelmed when I’m faced with a large task. I needed to learn how to relax and take each step of my project one day at a time. Lastly, I have a habit of always needing it quiet when I do any kind of school work or reading. I realize that this is also a learning style, but I was able to counteract my habit and stopped asking my husband to keep his noise level at absolute zero. Typically I do not work with any sort of music on, and yet I have completed a large part of this project while listening to jazz music in the attempt to drown out other background noises.
Process

I know that after completing this project I have gained a better understanding of the creative process. The beginning of this project started off very slowly because I did not know exactly what my church plan would look like. I’m a person of structure, and without it I confess I can become slightly obsessive compulsive.

The process of sorting though literature and writing was stretching for me. I knew that this project would serve a greater purpose one day so it became crucial to me that I examined all its parts. Planning something from scratch and creating a practical time line left me losing my intrinsic motivation to even create this project. Maslow (1962) talked about this sense as something that is deeper and our need to dig for it. Maslow discussed our struggles to get through all the surface layers.

After I pushed myself beyond the surface layers, I believe I finally reached a state of primary creativeness. Before this point I was stuck in secondary creativeness because I was very conscious of creating something practical. I was looking towards other churches I admired for direction, but suddenly I realized their direction was not the direction I was motivated to pursue. After that moment, I came to the realization of true novelty and new discovery.

Maslow wrote about this unconscious behavior that we are generally afraid of and keep under control (Maslow, 1962). I knew some people wouldn’t care about my ideas for a church embracing our culture and creativity, but it didn’t matter because I was given permission to be myself and fantasize about the future.

I believe this project could have at first been viewed as a problem. If I’m working as a first year kindergarten teacher, taking another course in creative studies and involved in many other activates, when would I find the time to complete this project? I needed to first look at my life and prioritize things and learn where my biggest motivations were coming from.

Tumin believed that human experiences could be classified into different categories. One category is considered those in which the locus of satisfaction is in extrinsic rewards received from performance. Another category was those whose locus of satisfaction was in the very actions which constitute the performance (Tumin, 1962). Somehow amongst all the other pressures of time and life, my project
was completed. One of the major things keeping me going was the intrinsic motivation that it was truly a passion of mine to deliver the message of Jesus in a relevant and practical way. My locus of satisfaction was in the very actions that constituted the performance.
SECTION 6: CONCLUSION

Introduction

Before I began this project I did not fully understand the rigor involved in creating something. People design and create things all the time, and it just never seemed so difficult. I’ve realized that in order to have change (change in this sense is change within the church), someone needs to lead the way. My husband and I dream about a church that embraces our vision, and yet we know that having this become a reality will be very difficult.

Next Steps

It has been a big accomplishment for me to complete something this big, and I have to say that I am proud of myself and the work I’ve done. I plan on making a hard bound copy of this project to keep for myself and share with others who share my passion of creating a church like Relevant Community. I need to remember down the road that actually implementing this church plan will require me to use the creative process and draw upon my strengths once more. I’m not for certain that this will actually take place, but I will continue to dream that it will. Perhaps one of the biggest things I’ve learned about the creative process is that in order to create we first need to dream, that I will continue.
REFERENCES


SECTION 7: APPENDICES
Appendix A: Concept Paper
The Creative Church

Name: Lindsey Johnson

Submitted: 2/22/09

Using a Skill or Talent and Improving the Quality of Life For Others

What Is This Project About?

This project will look at the church within the United States and the culture that surrounds it. The purpose of this project is to develop a creative church plan with a vision of meeting the needs of the people in the Buffalo area. This plan will alter the current church. The plan will take the philosophies and missions of the present church and adapt them in creative ways in order to be relevant in the 21st century. This project will generate ideas on how to develop a new church plan. It will contain a comprehensive picture of what the church currently does, as well as show what things would shift in order to be relevant in the current times. This plan will focus in on the five purposes of the church and how they can best be accomplished in the 21st century: 1.) Worship, 2.) Fellowship/Community, 3.) Discipleship, 4.) Service, 5.) Evangelism. The plan will also contain images of what the new church environment would look like.

Rationale For Choice:

I do not think there is anything in life I am more passionate about than the desire to show others God’s love for them in this broken world. Growing up I was turned off to the church because I felt like it was a place filled with judgmental hypocrites asking me to live a life foreign to the world and culture around me. I know now their intentions were good, but they weren’t enough.

Often times the church and Christians are viewed with many negative stereotypes. Many people in our current generation are looking for a relevant message that can be applied to their lives, one that is practical and not boring. As the ultimate creator, God is the inventor of creativity, and I believe it is a powerful thing when we use it with a clear, positive purpose.

Since my negative church experiences, I am so refreshed when I hear of a church that is relevant, current and uses creativity and innovation to leverage into our current culture. Although churches like this really do exist, I am currently not in one that is quite there yet. My husband is an associate/youth pastor with a future aspiration of
planning his own church. Together we hope to begin a church that embraces creativity. Although at the end of this semester this creative church may not exist, I know one day it will. It is my hope the outcome will bring us broken people closer to the lives God called us to live. Perhaps people will have a deeper sense of God’s love and grace through an environment that is inviting, practical and creative.

**What Will Be The Tangible Product(s) or Outcomes?**

One of the tangible products of this project will be a plan for beginning a creative church in the 21st century. This plan will provide a framework for developing the five purposes of the church in a way that connects with the current culture and the people in it. Within the written out plan will be photos or images of what the new church environment would look like.

**What Criteria Will You Use To Measure The Effectiveness Of Your Achievement?**

I will measure the effectiveness of my achievement by having a final outcome of loving the creative church even more than when I began. I will know I have created an effective project when people who review my vision plan become excited and inspired to get involved to make it become a reality.

**Who Will Be Involved or Influenced; What Will Your Role Be?**

Hopefully many people will be influenced through this project outcome. The goal is not to hope everyone will follow the same beliefs I have, but rather that they would see the Christian church in a new perspective; a positive one. Since my husband is a pastor, he will be involved in this project, giving me practical advice and suggestions from his perspective. I also plan to involve people both in and outside of the church to help provide insight.

**When Will This Project Take Place?**

Phase one of this project will take place over the spring semester; February-May 2009. During phase one, a church plan will be developed for future use. I plan on doing most of the work for this church plan on weekends and weeknights that I have available. This project also contains another phase that will not be implemented within the spring semester of 2009. Phase two of this project will begin by gathering the people
who are on board for implementation. During this phase, those committed to the church plan will look for the proper location and leadership.

**Where Will This Project Occur?**

This project will occur in Buffalo, New York and the surrounding suburbs.

**Why Is It Important To Do This?**

This is something important for me to do because of my own personal experiences with the church. Even more than that, I see people living lives more for themselves with an inner desire to live in community. The creative church is about giving meaning to relationships and giving people support in areas where they need it most. The creative church is about being practical and yet sharing a vision larger than each of us. I see a huge need to show a person who Jesus really was when he walked on this earth, someone who was in tune to people’s needs and the culture in which they were living. The creative church isn’t about convincing people that God exists, it’s about living lives that show love and purpose to the current world, which we’re living.

**Personal Learning Goals:**

- Open-mindedness
- In-depth research
- APA formatting
- Working on something that is bigger than myself
- Become a better communicator and facilitator
- Ability to synthesize

**How Do You Plan To Achieve Your Goals and Outcomes?**

I plan on achieving the outcome stated by first using the CPS process to locate the strengths and weaknesses in our current Protestant church. I plan on gathering those within our current church, other churches, and those who do not attend church to
receive feedback on what they consider to be relevant, how they best communicate and the types of environments they learn best in.
I know there are many resources on the creative church, as I have already begun to locate them; I plan on using these resources. I will use my sound-board partner, professors in the Creative Studies department, church leaders, friends and my husband to receive feedback and evaluation. Lastly, I will develop my project planning skills to prepare a practical time line.

**Evaluation:**

I plan on evaluating my results by having other pastors/church leaders view my design plan to see if it is practical and can be put into place. These leaders can also provide feedback to see if all of the needs discussed were addressed.
I also plan on evaluating my own work by reviewing the concerns and seeing if they have been met. I will review the entire process to note if I have carried out this passion of mine and carefully used the techniques I have learned through out the Creative Studies program. Lastly, I will be evaluated by my instructor, Dr. Mary Murdock with feedback on how to actually put my plan into action in the future.

**Prepare Project Timeline:**

**February**
- Submit Concept Paper draft by Monday, February 9, 2009
- February 16-20 (Mid winter-recess) research articles, books on the creative church. Take notes, complete class readings. Receive feedback from Dr. Murdock and edit concept paper draft.
- Final version of Concept Paper posted by Sunday, February 22, 2009
- February 21-26 meet with friends and leaders within the church for CPS brainstorming session to identify problems we’re seeing with the current church’s ability to connect, communicate, teach and be relevant.
- Mid-end February continue researching and locating pertinent literature.
- February 16-28 receive feedback from those outside the church on how people connect with a community, environments, technology, and how they learn best.

**March**
- Beginning of March- Idea Generation #2 to generate ideas on what a highly creative church might look like. During the brainstorming session, we will also generate ideas on how to adapt the five major areas of the church to fit our culture.
- Continue researching and locating pertinent literature.
- Begin drafting sections 1,2,3 to be ready for submission Thursday, March 26
- Continue research and receive feedback/editing from friends on sections 1,2,3
- Mid March- begin typing church plan and locating images that portray what the environment will look like.
April
- April 1-7-begin drafting section 4 on project outcomes
- Compile all images of church environment and begin inserting into church plan where appropriate
- April 8-11- finish drafting section 4 and complete sections 4 and 5 (outcomes and key learnings)
- Sunday, April 12- submit sections 4,5,6
- End of April- finalize editing, look into binding final project

May
- First week of May- Send in project to be bound
- Complete section 7- gather all references and notes taken
- Prepare presentation
- Thursday, May 7- class presentation
- Tuesday, May 14- submit and sign final, bound version of project write-up

**Identify Pertinent Literature or Resources:**

The following books and articles will be explored:


*Union Seminary Quarterly Review.* 52(1-2), 29-42.


Appendix B: Relevant Community Church Plan
Come and visit us at Relevant Community Church where we believe that following Christ means more than just coming to Church on Sunday morning. Get connected and make connections with our current world and God. We welcome you to take a tour and see what we’re all about!

From the moment you walk through the doors of Relevant Community Church, you will understand you’re not entering any ordinary place of worship. Be greeted by someone who displays just how welcoming and accepting Relevant really is. Our atmosphere was intentionally created to make you feel comfortable, but also to signify how passionate we are about leading people closer to Jesus through the use of our creative talents.

The welcome center is located right through our main entrance where you can find information on our current ministries and activities. Although our building is fairly large and updated, we respect the importance of conserving our resources. While we have created Relevant Community Church to be comfortable and current, we also believe we have used our resources wisely. One of our missions is to give to those in need whether in our community, or across the world. Wherever possible, our church building has been created using recycled materials, signifying one of our core beliefs; stewardship of resources.
Worship

Celebrating God’s presence and Exalting our Master

"God is magnificent; he can never be praised enough. There are no boundaries to his greatness" (Psalm 145:3 The Message Version).

Since worshiping God can come in many different forms, we encourage you to get involved and get creative. Visit our unique worship center that allows individuals to worship God through nature, art and music. Since human beings were created in God's image (Imago Dei), we should be a reflection of God. We value creativity at Relevant, knowing that we should be a reflection of the very nature of our God, our creator.

Nurtured Through Nature

On your way into service, take a walk through our indoor garden. Located directly off our welcome center is an indoor garden created to signify the beauty of God’s creation. Reflect on the goodness of God, come to pray, or simply breathe in the fresh herbs planted by our preschoolers. Each plant in our indoor garden has been planted as a seed and nurtured to grow with loving hands.

"God's kingdom is like a pine nut that a farmer plants. It is quite small as seeds go, but in the course of years it grows into a huge pine tree, and eagles build nests in it." (Matthew 13:31 The Message Version).

The Artist’s Way

Relevant Community Church is filled with lovers of God and art. From the murals around our hallways, to the dedicated pieces from local artists and members, you will see we take this talent seriously. This past year our children’s ministry worked to create mosaic tile patterns on floor of our indoor garden as a reminder that we’re all broken people that can be beautifully restored through Jesus. The artwork displayed through our church signifies that we recognize individual talents and use them to glorify our creator.
Worship Services

Our worship services offer modern worship music that is intentionally chosen to help deliver the specific message of the service. Our worship band is supported by technologies that deliver vibrant sounds and lighting. The use of technology at Relevant is not to create a show, but instead used to help lead people to worship and connect with God freely. Even if you’re not a follower of Christ, our worship songs express deep meaning and teaching about God and his promises.

Each service opens 15 minutes before starting time to allow for video announcements. You will notice that depending on the teaching series, the background music both before and after worship services pertains to the message. Often times we use songs that are commonly found in our culture around us. We believe that in order to be relevant, we must create an atmosphere that is not foreign to the world around us. We have chosen to embrace popular culture in order to better communicate the message of Jesus Christ.
Evangelism

Communicating the good news of God’s word

“Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in the way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I’ll be with you as you do this, day after day, right up to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20 The Message Version).

In order to fulfill the mission of Relevant Community, we stress the importance of “living out Jesus”. Members of our church recognize the gift they have in Jesus, so they are always looking for new ways of inviting others to know Him as well. It is simply a part of the culture of our church to be accepting, loving and conscious of how our lives influence those around us.

Connecting Families

While we seem to have something for everyone at Relevant Community Church, we see value in preserving the family structure. For those who attend our church as a family, we have many opportunities to strengthen relationships and communication by simply being together. Some of the small group opportunities include family groups where families can share meals, fellowship and teachings together.

Special events

We always seem to have a large variety of events going on at Relevant Community Church on a regular basis. One of the purposes of our church is to support the community around us. We don’t want to just be in the community, instead it is our constant goal to be a part of the community. Because of this, it is not uncommon to see community events being hosted at our facility. In the past we have had local schools use our youth center for art festivals, open mike nights and sporting activities. We have also opened our building up to community education courses and concerts.
Discipleship

“Educating God’s people to grow in maturity

“He handed out gifts of apostle, prophet, evangelist, and pastor-teacher to train Christians in skilled servant work, working within Christ’s body, the church, until we’re moving rhythmically and easily with each other, efficient and grateful in response to God’s son, fully mature adults, fully developed within and without, fully alive in Christ” (Ephesians 4:12 The Message Version).

Teaching Series

About every four weeks the teachings of our services take on a specific theme. Grounded in biblical truth, the messages also can be transferred to every day life. We have not designed our messages to just make a person feel good for attending service. Each week the messages follow Relevant’s mission statement: “To lead people into a growing relationship with Jesus Christ by connecting and communicating in relevant ways”.

Below are some of our previous teaching series. The messages are not about ideas or belief, but are practical in helping you live life to the fullest.

- “God is Green”: Learn how to serve God and save the planet
- “The Love Factor”: Peel away shame and rejection and learn how to love yourself after understanding God’s love for you
- “Where Else is the Cross True?”: Explore how the cross is at work today
- “Is Jesus Who He Said He Was?” Understand who Jesus really was
- “Where is God When He Can’t Be Reached?”
- “All You Need Is Love”: Uses the well known Beatle’s song “All You Need Is Love” to explain God’s greatest commandment
- “Questions?”: Dig deeper into these serious, but common questions- Is there only one true religion? Does following Christ mean giving up all the fun things in life? Why does God allow bad things to happen?

*Check out our website for these messages available in podcasts

Classes

Typical Sunday school classes are not exactly what we offer at Relevant. To avoid the standard classroom atmosphere, we have created lounge areas for common interest groups to meet. The classes we offer are based on interest and practical matters. Have a specific bible passage that you would further like to explore? Contact the welcome center or church office to view current courses being offered.

*See Appendix for our Life Development Process
On the more practical side, check out these courses

- The Money Worry: See what God has to say about our finances.
- Overcoming Fears of Parenting in a Fearful World
- The Struggle For Acceptance: Why we need people to like us.
- What Am I Good At?: Help Discover your unique gifts and talents
- The College Scene- Spring Break Edition: Connect with students who have chosen to free themselves from the social expectations of college life.

Small Groups

At Relevant Community Church, we feel that sharing life with others leads to spiritual growth and allows for deeper connections with God. Our small groups allow for discipleship outside of the church, in homes or other meeting places. Joining a small group is a great way to get to know others and take the next step in learning how the bible can be applied to daily living.

Mentoring

No matter which stage of life you find yourself in, there is always someone who has been there before. Study and explore how God is present in all circumstances with a mentor who promises to support and pray for you. We have so much to learn from each other, take the opportunity to grow!

Youth

Our youth programs are designed to minister to teenagers ages 13-18. Check out our youth center that has been designed as a safe haven for students in Jr. and Sr. high school. The youth center is connected to our main building, but allows for an
alternative entrance for students not looking for association with the church. The youth center shares a gymnasium with the church and also contains its own staging area and snack shop/game room. The mission of our youth ministry is exactly the same as the mission of Relevant Community Church as a whole. We believe our youth center helps us to do this for teens in a more practical way.

**Children**

We know raising up good children is one of the most important jobs a parent can have. At Relevant Community Church we understand that it does take a village to raise a child. Our dedicated teachers are passionate about teaching young children the way of Jesus. Our children’s area has been designed for creative expression and learning. Rest assured that your children are being well taken care of while you attend one of our services. Our children’s team has also developed activity nights that involve families to participate.
Fellowship

Encouraging and Incorporating our Members

“All the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person’s need was met” (Acts 4:44-45 The Message Version).

Living in Community

At Relevant Community Church we emphasize the importance of living in community and fellowship. We strongly believe that humans were not designed to go through life alone. God created people to live and work among each other. Our church has been specifically designed for people to interact with each other. After service come and enjoy company of friends and family in our large fellowship area.

“It’s better to have a partner than go it alone. Share the work, share the wealth. And if one falls down, the other helps.” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 The Message Version).

The Gathering

Perhaps you would like a coffee at our café, The Gathering. Our coffee shop is open before and after services and also through out the week. In fact, even people who do not normally attend Relevant Community Church come to The Gathering for our homemade breads and delicious Rwandan coffees. Our café is strictly operated by Relevant volunteers and serves Land of a Thousand Hills coffees. Land of a Thousand Hills provides living wages for coffee growers and supports sustainable economic development in Rwanda. At Relevant Community Church we value quality across every area of ministry and our coffee is no different! All profits from our café are donated to missions’ projects to help improve the quality of life for others.
Christian Service

Demonstrating God’s love

“Then those ‘sheep’ are going to say, ‘Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you? Then the King will say, ‘I’m telling you the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me- you did it to me.’” (Matthew 25:37-40 The Message Version).

As a church, we have taken on a variety of projects to help fund and support significant causes. We believe that after a person begins to know who Jesus is and begins growing closer to Him, they naturally are drawn to take on his personality traits. Jesus did not come to serve himself, He instead came to serve others. We believe this wholeheartedly so we are intentional about providing opportunities for our members to serve within our church, our community and around the world.

Service at Relevant Community

Many people are surprised at how many volunteers it takes to keep Relevant Community Church up and running on a daily basis. Although we have many staff members who are committed to serving the church full-time, we also have many willing hands who enjoy serving, even without receiving a paycheck.

Service in Our Community

At Relevant we believe serving our community is one of the most powerful demonstrations of God’s love. Each spring we host our “Day Devoted to Service” and invite other churches and organizations to join us. Together, we take on the Buffalo south towns, picking up garbage, weeding gardens, planting flowers, painting houses and helping those in need. Working alongside other people creates a larger impact and gives us an opportunity to connect with people we normally wouldn’t. Following the event, we call everyone back to our church grounds for a picnic.

The Road Crew

The Road Crew consists of men, women and teenagers who are always looking for ways to help someone in need. If they hear of a need within our church, or in the community, they find some way of helping. Each Saturday morning The Road Crew travels though out our community mowing lawns of the elderly, grocery
shopping for someone who is sick, cleaning houses for those who could use some extra help, or even spending time with someone who is going through a difficult situation. The Road Crew has grown so large that we now have volunteers available throughout the weeknights as well. The Road Crew team is always looking for new ways to be a blessing in someone else’s life.

**From Nation to Nation**

Too often we take for granted how much we have been blessed by living in the United States. Jesus asked us to care for orphans, widows and those suffering. A large percentage of our weekly budget is strictly designated to fund particular missions projects. We have also sent many teams to the following countries to serve and make a difference in the lives of others.

- Somalia
- China
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Zambia
- Rwanda
- India
Appendix C: Life Development Process
Life Development Process

Appendix D: Five Circles of Commitment
Five Circles of Commitment