

St. Stephen's College

Drawing on Inherent Congregational Strength: An Appreciative Inquiry into Living Out
the Five Marks of Mission

By

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Abstract

Appreciative Inquiry is beginning to take centre stage as a change leadership alternative to traditional problem-focussed change models. As an approach to organizational leadership, Appreciative Inquiry rests on the assumption that in every organization, there is something that works. This project brings Appreciative Inquiry to bear on church ministry.

A lot has been said and written on the phenomena of aging congregations and the diminishing influence of mainline churches in North America. Believing that what this raises is mainly a missional question, my thesis examines the attempt by the Anglican Communion to provide answers to these questions by formulating the “Five Marks of Mission” as a framework for the mission of the church. From the orientation of social constructionism, this parish church-ministry practitioner/researcher begins with the premise that organizations such as the church have the capacity to co-construct their future, and that what we need in the North American church is to change the conversation by turning attention away from our dying parts, what is lost, and what is no longer working in the corporate life of the church. Instead, we should bring energy to the celebration of those things that are working well in order to build on them for the future.

This thesis documents attempts to bring mission back to the centre of church life in a study with two parishes in the Anglican Diocese of Huron in Southwestern Ontario. The study uses Appreciative Inquiries to construct a process for the implementation of the marks of mission within the two parishes. Though the sampling is relatively small, the resulting provocative proposals are encouraging. The propositions support both the social

constructionist principle of co-creating the future, and the Appreciative Inquiry assumption that “organizations move towards what they study” (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2003) to create a future that the participating churches in the study can live into.

This effort is only a modest addition to the ongoing debate about missional ecclesiology. The outcomes provide a process model for the implementation of the Five Marks of Mission. They should also open channel for further inquiry into the subject matter.

Dedication

This effort is dedicated to ongoing works of mission in the parishes of the
Anglican Diocese of Huron.

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Glossary of Anglican/Ecclesiastical Terms Used

Anglican - A term which comes from the word angle, “Anglican” actually means “English” and refers to the church’s place of origin. (Anglican Glossary).

Anglican Communion - one of the world’s largest global Christian denominations. The churches of the Anglican Communion consider themselves to be part of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church, and to be both catholic and reformed (Wikipedia)

Anglican Consultative Council - One of the instruments of communion of the Anglican Communion. The council, which includes Anglican bishops, other clergy, and laity, meets every two or three years in different parts of the world (Anglican Communion Website).

Episcopal Church - based in the United States with additional dioceses elsewhere, is a member church of the worldwide Anglican Communion (Wikipedia).

Biretta - a stiff square cap with three or four upright projecting pieces extending from the centre of the top to the edge, worn by clergy (dictionary.com).

Bishop - The chief pastor of a local diocese of churches. The bishop stands as the guardian of the faith, fosters unity, executes discipline when needed, and proclaims the Word of God (Anglican Glossary).

Book of Common Prayer - A collection of historic prayers, devotions, and services that was originally compiled by Thomas Cranmer. Commonly called the “Prayer Book” and often abbreviated as the BCP — (Anglican Compass).

Church of Canada - The province of the Anglican Communion in Canada (Church of Canada Website).

Clericus - A meeting of clergy. It is often a meeting of clergy in a locality or deanery (Episcopal dictionary of the church).

Diocese - A diocese is a cluster of churches in a distinct geographic region under the leadership of a bishop. The adjectival form of the term is diocesan (Anglican Glossary).

Five Marks of Mission - Statement on mission. They express the Anglican Communion’s common commitment to, and understanding of, God’s holistic and integral mission (Wikipedia).

Lambeth Conference - a decennial assembly of bishops of the Anglican Communion convened by the Archbishop of Canterbury (Wikipedia).

Missio Dei - The mission of God or the sending of God. It refers to God's great mission to restore humanity to Himself (medium.com).

Primate - A title for archbishops of the Anglican Communion that distinguishes them from other bishops in the same province (Anglican Glossary).

Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF) - the Anglican Church of Canada's agency for sustainable development and relief (Anglican Church of Canada website).

Rector - a member of the clergy who has the charge of a parish with full possession of all its rights, tithes, etc (dictionary.com).

Synod - an assembly of ecclesiastics or other church delegates, convoked pursuant to the law of the church, for the discussion and decision of ecclesiastical affairs; ecclesiastical council (dictionary.com).

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 General overview of the state of the mainline churches in North America

Much is already said and written about what has become a new-normal for the church in North America: a new social order and cultural shift which has seen the church displaced from its long-held place of importance and being considered the centre of life in communities (Burdick, 2018; Folkins, 2020). It is no longer news that church membership is falling, or that anti church sentiments are increasingly leading to the rise in popularity of such groups as the “Spiritual but not Religious” (Saucier and Skrzypińska, 2006) expressions. Rightly or not, this social era is dubbed “Post-Christian” (Houtman and Aupers, 2007). This is an era where religious organizations—like other institutions—are looked at with suspicion and much scrutiny. In response, the church appears in shock and seemingly in search of answers to questions posed for its existence by this new reality: Who are we? What is God calling us to become? What is our mission in the communities where we are fortunate to have a form of continued presence? What relevance can we assert to justify our continued existence and journey into the future? That is the reality that the church is grappling with in North America.

Another way to describe the current state of the church may be to say that twenty-first century mainline churches are engaged in a desperate search for identity and new ways of doing ministry. Conversations at various workshops, clergy conferences, Diocesan synods, and all manner of church gatherings reveal deep concern for the state and future of the church. While the core message remains the good news of God who visits humanity in the person of His Son Jesus Christ in order to reconcile the world to Himself, the church seems to be struggling to adapt to changing times. This struggle is reflected on

the pews: mainline churches in North America are all currently mainly aging congregations. What hope is there for the future when the average age of church membership is steadily on an upward swing, in some cases to the upper seventies and eighties? How can the church continuously articulate and present the gospel message in clear language and form to a society and culture that is constantly changing? These are as much missional questions as they are about the relevance of the church in the 21st Century social order.

1.2 The Anglican Church

This project draws from the Anglican experience. The Anglican Communion is a global body and one of the mainline churches in North America. In an attempt to provide a framework for its mission and, in so doing, also answer the identity question as stated, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC)—one of the organizational instruments of the Anglican Communion—in 1984, produced a concise statement applicable across its 38 global provinces. “The Five Marks of Mission” (Anglican Communion Office 2021) were affirmed internationally at the 1988 Lambeth Conference. Effectively, the marks of mission became a descriptive framework for the mission of the church (a more elaborate explanation of the scope and importance of the marks is found later in this chapter and in chapter 2). Though the “Five Marks of Mission have never been adopted per se as resolutions of the Anglican Church of Canada,” the framework has generally been adopted around the country. (Anglican Church of Canada, 2021), and is generally also affirmed. In 1999, the Anglican Church of Canada actively joined the process to modify the framework (Anglican Church of Canada, 2021). The assumption can be made that these efforts are aimed at transforming local parish ministries into missional models and providing a future that is focussed and grounded in mission wherever the churches are located. Or, we

can say of the five marks of mission that they are an attempt to put mission at the centre of church life. Unfortunately, however, there is no systemic coordination of efforts to make that happen. There is, to this day, no clear guideline to help local parish congregations through any process of implementation of the marks of mission.

1.3 Research Question

Being an exploratory, qualitative study, this project does not contain a formal hypothesis. It is meant to facilitate and describe a process of transforming Canadian Anglican Church ministry into missional models in accordance with the framework of the “Five Marks of Mission.” The project was initiated with the hope that the findings may serve to both strengthen the congregational identity and deepen the sense of calling of local church parishes in communities where they are located. The project proposes to demonstrate that an “Appreciative Inquiry” (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008) methodology may provide the operational framework for the transformation of traditional parish ministry into missional models (Roxburgh, and Romanuk, 2011, foreword).

The overarching research questions that guided this inquiry are:

1. What is it like to transition traditional parish ministries into missional models in accordance with the Five Marks of Mission?
2. How do leaders of congregations see or understand the Five Marks of Mission?
3. What is the Anglican view of a missional church?

As stated above, the “Five Marks of Mission” was accepted as a framework for mission by the Anglican Consultative Council in 1984, and also in some form or the other

by various provincial and Diocesan synods since then. However, there is yet no existing guideline to help local church parishes through the necessary application of the framework towards the goal of transitioning to missional models of ministry. In my years of ministry, the closest thing I have seen to a guideline was a recent directive from the ordinary of the Anglican Diocese of Huron in Southwestern Ontario, in which local parishes were required to complete a Parish Self-Assessment document, using compliance to the marks of mission as the standard for assessing the healthiness of existing and future ministries. This inquiry was initiated in an attempt to bridge the gap between the framework and its implementation guided by the above overarching questions.

1.4 Ministry Context

This thesis is a culmination of my years of experience in parish ministry as an Anglican priest of the Anglican Church of Canada and a member of the global Anglican Communion during what is understood by many as a period of struggle in the history of the church in North America. The thesis integrates my ministry experiences with studies on the implications of the theory of emergence and the current trends and state of the church. I am exploring the attempt by the Anglican church to create a framework for mission in “The Five Marks of Mission” (Anglican Communion Office, 2021), believing that the framework was created in order to maintain a missional focus in the face of changing times, and by so doing, also answer the identity and relevance questions.

I serve as Rector at St. John’s Anglican Church, in Tillsonburg, a small town in Southwestern Ontario and a parish of the Anglican Diocese of Huron. A rector is simply the ordained leader of a local parish in the Anglican context. St. John’s is a small parish

church (averaging a weekly Sunday morning attendance of about a hundred worshippers between two services before the era of COVID 19) in a small, rural community. At the time I was starting work on the final proposal for this project in the summer of 2021, I stated that our parish was in good standing. By that, I meant that we were not faced with an imminent danger of closure, which these days is a predictable consequence of a number of factors, such as aging congregations and not having the critical mass of membership to sustain a parish status in the foreseeable future. Even in a pandemic-ravaged year, our annual statistics show a healthy number of members who participate in the ministry of the parish and faithfully contribute financially to the parish. As the project is concluded mid spring of 2022, the fundamentals of parish life at St. John's remain strong. However, like most mainline North American churches, we know that our congregation is aging.

This reality for us is particularly demonstrated in a recent development in the parish. Just before the pandemic lockdown at the beginning of the spring of 2020, the leadership of our Anglican Women and Youth (AWAY) group, which runs our Sunday School program, made the painful decision to shut the program down. In a letter to the church leadership, their leader wrote:

I have felt my Sunday School teaching days have run its course and it is time for me to move on. The inconsistency of attendees and no new families (it has been mostly grandchildren of existing parish families) has been wearing on me and my heart is not in it. All other members at the meeting expressed collective frustration and stress of preparing lessons and no children showing up (Tobias T. personal communication, July 15, 2020).

Even in the face of this situation, we are resolved that our doors not be finally shut to Sunday school programs and activities. We still have a small number of children requiring Christian formation programs. But because attendance at organized Sunday morning programs has become so sporadic and unpredictable, the decision by the AWAY group to shut down the program was not ill advised. The leadership of St. John's is left to discern what will be the nature and form of future programs for children's formation. However, the fact that our parish Sunday school is currently closed puts us in the company of the majority of Anglican churches in our geographic part of the Diocese. Currently, only two or three churches in the Oxford Deanery have a standing Sunday school or youth formation program. So yes, we are an aging congregation among aging congregations. This is the situation of attrition that I am talking about. Whatever social or cultural reasons are adduced, the low number of children, youths and young adults is a source of major concern for the church. Where lies our hope for the future?

Aging congregations is only one of the worrying signs in the current state of the church, but it is one with domino effects. The argument can be made that it is causing churches to lock their doors and fold up. We can say a lot about the current state of main-line churches in North America, but the reality of seeing churches outrightly deconsecrated and literally dying is generating a lot of anxiety across the ranks of member churches. There are a lot of church closures going on. The Bishop of Huron, The Right Reverend Todd Townshend (May 17, 2021), paints this grim picture in a recent episcopal charge to the synod of the diocese:

Twenty-five years ago, we had 250 congregations. Now we have about 170.

That is down about a third. Several groups that study this stuff anticipate that

one-third of existing churches in Canada will close over the next ten years. Let's say it's not quite that bad, and we are left with 125 church buildings in 2031, when I'm about to retire – about half of what we had when I was first ordained. It is to say the least, not a good feeling. (p. 4)

We could go on and on about social and cultural shifts and all other factors contributing to the current state of the church. I will say, however, that it is the combination of aging congregations and church closings that most easily leads to quick conclusions about the church's future. Church members are worried. We see this often at gatherings where Anglicans are given the opportunity to vent their thoughts on the state and future of the church. I remember an instance a couple of years ago when Archbishop Linda Nicholls (then Bishop of Huron) made her last episcopal visit to St. John's. She, in her characteristic way, turned the well-attended after-service coffee hour into an open forum where parishioners could ask any and every question. Our parishioners engaged her in conversation for nearly an hour. The first question came from the worried face of a man who asked her; "Bishop, where do you see the church in the next ten years?"

It is the same story everywhere. Church members feel insecure about the future of the church. This melancholic foreboding is a feature described by Bowcott (2020) as the "Contemporary Anglican Lament" (p. 22). It is a stance that emergent church leadership is having to deal with. Listening to ourselves as church members, it sounds as if the message we have for the world in our cry and fear for the future is, "Come and join us because we are dying." It is here that I see the core church ministry leadership challenge of our time. We need to turn the page from this place of melancholic foreboding. We need to find *hope* again as the centre of the church's life and message. After all, Christianity

itself is a living movement arising from a situation of death. Death and resurrection will always be at the centre of church life.

The Christian faith is built on the foundation of stories of dead bones coming to life (Ezekiel 37) and of Job's falling from grace and affluence to the "grass" of loss of everything, including the deaths of all his loved ones, and then bouncing back to his glory days. The church is built on the foundation of stories like that of the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5), the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7), and Lazarus, whose body was already in the grave and beginning to decompose (John 11). Death and resurrection are integral to the Christian story.

Writing in the classic 23rd Psalm, David intones, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4, English Standard Version). *You* in this case means the Lord. That is what makes David's experience—and the experience of every generation of followers of the Lord—missional. I am interested in this missional understanding of the church in our journey with God, and I will suggest that it is in being missional that we confront the demons of the attrition or even the death of church organizations.

1.5 Theoretical Frameworks

1.5 (i). Missional Ecclesiology

The idea of a missional church—the whole church participation as an expression of God's activity in the world—has gained much traction over the past two decades.

There are missional church websites, books, and speakers, as well as consultants with a

range of ideas about what it means for a church to be missional. As noted by Billings (2008):

Some use *missional* to describe a church that rejects treating the gospel like a commodity for spiritual consumers; others frame it as a strategy for marketing the church and stimulating church growth. Some see the missional church as a re-focusing on God's action in the world rather than obsessing over individuals' needs; others see it as an opportunity to "meet people where they are" and reinvent the church for postmodern culture (p. 1).

MacIlvaine (2010) defines the *missional church* as "a unified body of believers, intent on being God's missionary presence to the indigenous community that surrounds them, recognizing that God is already at work" (p. 91). Other definitions agree with various elements contained in MacIlvaine's, including the awareness or intention of the community of faith, the commitment to work together towards a common mission, and the need for recognition by the community that God is already at work among them. According to Roxburgh and Romanuk (2011):

A missional church is a community of God's people who live into the imagination that they are, by their very nature, God's missionary people living as a demonstration of what God plans to do in and for all creation in Jesus Christ (introduction).

The *missional church movement* began with the introduction of the term in 1998 by Darrell L. Guder. However, missional church writers trace the idea back to the beginning of the missionary church movement in 1792 and to the publication of William Carey's book, *An Inquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen* (MacIlvaine, 2010, p. 92). It is an idea that led to a string of missionary

endeavours across the globe in the 18th and early 19th centuries, and became a big influence in the formation of the global church. Mention must be made of the difference between the term *missionary*, which dates back to the Apostles and denotes the evangelical activities of those sent out to preach the gospel, and the term *missional*, which denotes an ideology or framework for ministry leadership. John Stott and Leslie Newbegin were among major influencers of the missionary movement in the twentieth century. Newbegin was an English missionary to India and later on, bishop. His work marked a turning point and a refocussing of mission back to the hitherto sending churches. Changing attitudes toward the Church and Christian living in the home church in England forced him to apply the missionary practices he had used abroad to advance the kingdom at home. When he died, his protege, Michael Green, continued his work (Goheen, 2010; Nicolajsen, 2013).

We are currently living in what I will call the next phase of the Newbegin/Stott era of the missional church movement. Beginning with the publication of Guder's book, *Missional Church*, in 1998, this era has seen an explosion of literature. I would say that the works of Leslie Newbegin, with Michael Green following, form the link between the missionary setting they envisioned and the missional mind-set of today. Quite vividly, I remember when Michael Green came to my home diocese in Africa and visited us at school—a mission boarding high school for boys founded by the Diocese of Owerri in South Eastern Nigeria. It was during what has been called “the global Anglican Decade of Evangelism.” The purpose of his visit was to teach this idea of the mission of God in every land and clime.

I may have been too young to clearly articulate any meaningful concept of ecclesiology. In hindsight, however, it makes sense that Canon Michael Green came to Africa to strengthen the ongoing work of God. When he came to visit our school, our choir of young boys sang praises to God for bringing Michael Green to us; there was drama presentation, dancing, and speeches by religious and community leaders. The next day, there was an open-air gospel gathering at the city stadium. Michael Green preached, the stadium was jam-packed, but we were mostly all Anglicans from different parishes of the Diocese. So Michael Green came, not to bring the gospel to unbelievers, but to strengthen the work of God that was already going on.

I met Michael Green again in person again in May 2006. This time, I was ordained, and was new in North America. We were attending a mission and ministry conference hosted by Common Cause Mid-South (an American Anglican Council partner) at Memphis, Tennessee. I introduced myself and told him how I had met him as a young man when he visited our school in Nigeria. He was excited to meet me, and said something like: the church was booming in your Country in those days; now we can use your services in this part of the world. Though retired from employed services of the church at this time, he was still working hard to fan the embers of mission in North America. So, from the era of Newbegin and Green, the missional church movement seems to have shifted its focus to identifying the mission of God (*Missio Dei*) in every local community, and then determining how the church fits into God's plan.

The Missional church movement, therefore, emphasizes the need to ensure that the church is not playing God, by seeking to set the agenda for local mission. It represents the view that believers and churches should keep in mind: their role is "not to do the

heavy lifting; God is doing that already. The role of the church is to discern prayerfully where and how God is working, and to come alongside Him in the work He is already doing" (MacIlvaine, 2010, p. 103). As Hooker (2009) puts it:

Mission does not happen at the initiative of the Church; mission happens at the initiative of God. Mission is not an item on the "to do" list of the Church; the mission of God is the reason for the Church. Congregations in particular and the Church as a whole do not exist to serve their own aims or even to guarantee their own survival. We exist solely to participate with Christ in expressing the love of God to the world, a love that "empties itself" for the sake of the world, even to the point of death. (p. 3)

Thus, concludes my brief working summary of the meaning and development of the contemporary missional church movement. It is the understanding that God never stops being with us (never stops being Immanuel). God is always with us no matter what, even "through the valley of the shadow of death" (Psalm 23). Our role as a church, then, is to be part of that which God is doing in our time. What this means is that the current state of the church in North America raises one crucial and fundamental missional question for us: What is God doing in our time, and how can we be part of that? It is our response to this question that marks the difference between churches that are thriving and those that are not.

1.5 (ii). *The Global Anglican Church Response - The Five Marks of Mission.*

It is one thing to come to a new understanding of the meaning of mission and quite another to translate that understanding into a new way of being by local congrega-

tions. That presents the missional challenge of our time: how do we move from our current operational mindset to a more missional model? As Townshend (2021) puts same question, how do we shift the centre of gravity in our practices from an emphasis on *operations* to an emphasis on *renewal* and *new creation*...? (p.5) The Five Marks of Mission is a global Anglican response to this question. To provide a framework for its mission, the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), in 1984, produced a concise statement known as “The Five Marks of Mission” (Anglican Communion Office, 2021). These marks of mission were affirmed internationally at the 1988 Lambeth Conference. In subsequent years, as noted by Walker (2011):

they were endorsed in 1996 by the General Synod of the Church of England and have since been taken up by a number of national churches and dioceses as criteria against which to evaluate both existing work and new ventures. (p.101)

The marks of mission have since become applicable across the 38 global provinces that constitute the Anglican Communion, and they are currently found (with minor local alterations of wording) in the original form, as developed between 1984 and 1990. The generic form of the marks of mission, as found at the Anglican Communion website are:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation

- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

Though “The Five Marks of Mission” have never been adopted per se as resolutions of the Anglican Church of Canada, the framework is generally affirmed. In 1999, the Anglican Church of Canada (2021) actively joined the process to modify the framework. The assumption can be made that these efforts are aimed at helping local parish ministries make the transition into missional models and providing them with a future focussed and grounded in mission, wherever they are located. To this day, however, there are no clear guidelines to help local parish congregations through any process of implementation of the marks of mission.

I, personally, have had my struggles with trying to implement “The Five Marks of Mission.” It is frustrating that more than three decades since its formulation, the framework remains generally unknown. Until recently in the Diocese of Huron, if you mentioned “The Five Marks of Mission,” most people would ask; “What program is that?” I have been in parish ministry across three continents (Africa, South America and North America) and can say that I have not found an emphasis on “The Five Marks of Mission” in any of these places as the framework for the mission and ministry of the church. As I began writing this paper, I wanted to be sure that this was not just me harbouring an unfounded suspicion. So, I called a few of my friends across the world to inquire about their experience of the place that the marks of mission hold in the life and ministry of the church. The first person I called is an academic and an Archdeacon. I actually got him while he was in class, conducting an end-of-year examination in a Nigerian University. Therefore, our conversation was brief:

Me: “What can you tell me about “The Five Marks of Mission?” Have you heard about them before?”

My friend: “No.”

Me: “So, it is not something that has come up in the course of your theological training and ministry?”

My friend: “Not at all.”

Me: “Actually our late bishop (Nwankiti) was at the vanguard of its formulation in the 80s as a framework for the mission of the church.” (I just want to jar your memory to see if it comes up somehow).

My friend: “No. Not at all. I’m sorry.”

Me: “No need to be sorry. I just wanted to confirm what I am thinking. Thanks bro!”

Following that conversation, I called another friend who is the priest in charge of a parish in the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago—a Nigeria/America trained priest. I asked him a similar question: “Do you know about The Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Church?” He paused for a long time and wracked his brain. He did not. He said he could make a “good guess” at what he thinks the answer might be, but that he honestly did not know. Of course, he could make a good guess. My friend is smart and boasts of 27 years’ experience in ministry.

The third friend I called is also an Archdeacon in Nigeria and a practical theology PhD candidate. His response to me was that he “partially” knows about “The Five Marks of Mission.” He obtained a master’s degree from Cambridge, England, where he encountered one of the few scholars of Anglican studies with research interest in the

marks of mission. When I asked whether he considers the marks of mission to be a descriptive framework of his ministry in the parish, his answer was an emphatic “no.” He explained to me that his reason for answering “no” and ascribing only partial knowledge to himself was that the one mark of mission that talks about protecting the environment is not something that any Nigerian minister or church would consider as a matter related to church ministry. He was, of course, referring to the fifth mark of mission: “To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth” (Anglican Communion Office, 2021).

I was a priest assistant at an Episcopal church in Wisconsin, USA, for a period before coming to Canada. My principal priest then remains somebody with whom I always discuss ministry matters. He has served at his current parish for nearly two decades, and so is in the position to know whether or not the marks of mission had influenced the direction of his parish ministry. When I put forward the question, my friend’s response was, “We made them something that we look at from a vestry standpoint: How are we participating in these marks? They’ve not been more for us like a compass, but they do form a grid for us—how are we integrating these marks into what we are doing?” (Manning, personal communication, 2021). A grid may be an accurate interpretation of the purpose and relevance of the marks of mission. In any case, this conversation with my friend in Wisconsin is demonstrative of the fact that the marks of mission are not completely unknown and unused at parish ministry levels.

I think “The Five Marks of Mission” (Anglican Communion Office, 2021) is a very positive and bold attempt by the Anglican Church to present a concise framework for the entire life and ministry of the church. It is brief, missional, biblical, and it presents

a good focus for living the Anglican baptismal vows (Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada, p. 154). However, it is unfortunate that in my years of ordained ministry—across continents and spanning over one quarter of a century—I have not come across a single comprehensive implementation plan for the marks of mission. Of course, there may be pockets of attempts here and there to bring the framework to the fore: on diocesan and national church websites, on bulletin boards, and so forth. My conversation with ordained practitioners who have the responsibility to teach the doctrines of the faith is demonstrative of the church’s failure to make “The Five Marks of Mission” universally known.

The closest I have come to a good attempt to focus parish ministry on “The Five Marks of Mission” occurred a few years ago in the Diocese of Huron. The current Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, who was then Bishop of Huron, asked that every parish/regional ministry in the diocese create a Mission and Ministry Plan based on “The Five Marks of Mission” for the 5-year period, 2018-2022. The plan was to be submitted to the Annual Vestry for 2018 and also to the Diocese (one copy to the Territorial Archdeacon and one copy to the Executive Archdeacon) by March, 2018. The intention was to identify a way forward for every parish in the diocese with a clearly identified mission purpose and concrete goals to support that purpose. (See Appendix 7 for a sample of the template).

This was a very bold attempt to bring focus on the “Five Marks of Mission.” I can say from my participation in the exercise at St. John’s, that it certainly challenged local church parishes. At the same time, it revealed the many life-giving ministry practices already taking place. Though some parishes had difficulty using the template to describe

what they were doing and produce a ministry plan, most were successful. What the exercise did not indicate is that these churches were dying. Instead, the reports revealed activities demonstrating active participation in ministry everywhere. I am of the opinion that the church needs to tell more of these stories about what is working well in our communal life instead of what is dying. Even when we look at the challenges of these times—closing churches, aging congregations, grim financial outlooks, and so on—our faith requires us also to see and celebrate the ways in which God is journeying with us through these difficulties. This is the missional focus that “The Five Marks of Mission” is aiming for. It is in accord with biblical parallels of the children of God in troubled times: the Israelites in exile, or the disciples aboard the boat in the troubled waters, who also heard messages of: “Fear not for I am with you” (Isaiah 41:10), and “Peace be still” (Mark 4:39).

1.5 (iii). *Emergent Leadership*

The church should not be confused or distracted by the emergent order of life and the challenges it presents to doing ministry. We should tell more of the “do not be afraid” and “Jesus-walking-on-our-troubled-water” stories. Church leaders are beginning to do this more and more, seeing possibilities and fresh opportunities for ministry in the challenges they face. The current Bishop of Huron, The Right Reverend Todd Townsend (being my immediate leader), is a ready example. I like the ways in which he is following the legacy of his predecessor around a vision and ministry plan deriving from “The Five Marks of Mission.” Continuing in the recent address to the diocesan synod cited above, he expressed his thoughts thus:

I continue to believe that our Strategic Goal is to shift the centre of gravity in our practices from an emphasis on *operations* to an emphasis on *renewal* and *new creation*, better revealing “The Five Marks of Mission” by becoming: a learning church, a just church, a diverse church, a new church.

Some people call a season like this a *liminal* time. It comes from the Latin *limen*, meaning “threshold”. Something is ending and something else is beginning and the two exist overlapping and at the same time. Already, but not yet. It’s still the same faith, we still carry out the same practices in community, but we slowly begin to practice them in new ways and in new places. This is potentially transformative—for good or for ill.

Twenty-five years ago, we had 250 congregations. Now we have about 170. That is down about a third. Several groups that study this stuff anticipate that one-third of existing churches in Canada will close over the next ten years. Let’s say it’s not quite that bad, and we are left with 125 church buildings in 2031, when I’m about to retire – about half of what we had when I was first ordained. Even then, if you took a person who was gripped by the Holy Spirit and trained in discipleship and ministry, and you said, “here you go, we want you to be the Anglican Christian presence in Southwestern Ontario, and you can have these 125 buildings, and these 25,000 or so Christians, and this bit of money in trusts and all that—to start a diocese—she or he would say, “Alleluia! The LORD provides!” (p. 5)

Here we have:

1. A bishop’s commitment to “better reveal the marks of mission.”

2. His commitment to becoming a *learning church*, which marks a fundamental shift toward the rediscovery of the teaching ministry, for many years the lost ministry of the church, in my opinion.
3. His brilliant analysis and presentation of the reality of our dying parts as a diocesan body, laced with his humorous prediction of a glorious life for surviving congregations, putting a welcome and positive spin on the melancholic dominant narrative of dying congregations.

Such articulation of a positive message is very much needed in the church today, instead of the cries that sound like they are coming from a sinking ship. Nobody wants to join a sinking ship.

Rather than losing heart, demurring, and complaining; instead of crying in ways that make the church appear to be begging the rest of the world to come and join us in order to avoid our impending demise, I think the novelty of the emergent order is reason for us to focus less on our worst fears and open up to how and where God is leading us in this moment. It is by so doing that we will discover the spirituality of the emergent new reality. As Cook (2013) puts it, "Looking at emergence theory with the eyes of faith, emergence can help us deepen our sense of the world. With the Holy Spirit working in our hearts, our faith seeks understanding" (p. 239). In other words, we can be *missional* in the way we see and live in the emergent world order. It is an approach to ministry that invites us into the reality that God is at work among us, no matter what. Our part, then, is to seek to key into that which God is already doing. We are not in charge.

1.5 (iv). Appreciative Inquiry: *The gap between this dream and reality*

The church does not need to be reminded that attrition is staring us in the face—we understand our situation. We know that our congregations are aging and a good number of churches are closing down. We also hear all the good talks about God being at work in our time. What is missing here is the *how*. How can we know that which God is doing in our time? How can we be partners with God? That is what nobody is telling us. Individual church parishes are left on their own to figure it out. “The Five Marks of Mission” (Anglican Communion Office, 2021) is inarguably a good missional framework, but it is a universally descriptive framework. Congregations are left to figure out what it means and make their own connection between their local ministries and “The Five Marks of Mission.”

One is reminded of the primordial church when the disciple Philip encountered the eunuch from Ethiopia. The religious enthusiast from Africa was engrossed in his reading of the Hebrew scripture when the Spirit led Philip to join the eunuch in his chariot and ask him if he understands what he is reading. The eunuch’s response is instructive: “How can I, unless someone guides me?” (Acts: 8:31). The teaching (*didaché*) is the missing link between the well-articulated “Five Marks of Mission” and the reality on the ground at local congregations.

In my role as rector at St. John’s, Tillsonburg, we were already having conversations around creating a new mission and ministry plan when we received instructions about the diocesan plan. We inaugurated a Mission and Ministry Task Team of six (three men and three women). They held three cottage meetings/listening sessions of parishioners in three separate neighbourhoods in our small town and two other sessions at the church on Sundays.

I must introduce two important terms at this point. *Appreciative Leadership* is defined as "the relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power – to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance – to make a positive difference in the world" (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, and Radar, 2010). The idea and principles of appreciative leadership derive from the second term, *Appreciative Inquiry* (AI). I will elaborate on AI later, but now will simply describe it as a generative process and change model that seeks to bring about organizational change by focussing on what has worked or is working in the life of an organization, rather than the traditional approach of looking for problems to be solved.

From my previous experience in using *Appreciative Inquiry* in the conduct of my Master of Arts in Leadership Studies project at Royal Roads University, British Columbia, I ensured that the sessions at St. John's were focussed on generative discussions about the positive aspects of our parish life. Questions for the sessions included:

- a) What are the values we possess as a church family and strive to reach?
- b) What do you value most about our church and being a member of this congregation?

The framing of these questions generated lively sessions. Parishioners freely talked about themselves and about the ministry of our parish. Keywords from the sharing at the sessions included expressions like *empathy, warmth, friendship, family, sharing, service to community, caring and concern, inclusivity, equal treatment, no higher or lower status, not snobbish, helpful, strong faith, curiosity to learn*, and so on. Parishioners identified and joyfully discussed what they feel happy about in the life of our parish, and the positive impact our church is making both in the lives of individuals and in our community

(St. John's Mission and Ministry Review, personal communication, 2018). We followed up by targeting the specific ministry areas they had already identified and sought to build on their positive impact for the future with a follow-up question: "In the following ministry areas in which we have indicated that we are doing well or not doing so well, what would you like to see us doing more of?" (St. John's Mission and Ministry Review, personal communication, 2018). The response to these questions guided our ministry plan for the future in the various cardinals of "Five Marks of Mission." I propose that such an appreciative process will help create a system to bridge the gap between the descriptive "Five Marks of Mission" (Anglican Communion Office, 2021) and the need for a local parish to apply it in their various local contexts.

The paradigm shift engineered in an appreciative process is the cultural turnaround that we are hoping for in local parish ministry situations. Nobody will join us in response to cries that we are dying, or because they are motivated to help us to lower the average age of church membership. But they would love to participate in the joyful stories about the activities of God among us. I believe that an appreciative process will be the catalyst in the transformation of parish life and ministry leadership from the prevalent traditional model to a missional model. The traditional ministry model is usually about developing an understanding of reality through a process of reduction, simplification and analysis of those same things we've been doing, and on that basis to come up with some new visions and goals (Whitney et al., 2010). On the other hand, a missional change model involves a continuous process of dialogue, discernment, and engagement of the ongoing story of God's activity within the congregation.

The mystery of God being among people, changing lives and whole communities in the ordinariness of their lives, often beginning with things insignificant and small—that is a description of the way of life of the church (also known as *The Kingdom of God*). It is how Jesus described the foundation upon which the church is built:

He said therefore, “What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.” And again, he said, “To what should I compare the kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.” (Luke 13:18-2, New Revised Standard Version).

I am assuming the traditional interpretation of these two parables, which mostly regards them as a beautiful picture of the kingdom of God working its way through the whole world. It can also be seen as a beautiful picture of the growth and influence of the church: starting small and growing so large that it provides refuge for all the world. The glory of God’s presence with us is manifest in big city cathedrals and mega churches. It is demonstrated in great world missionary activities like medical missions to Africa, and in activities of the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF). For every one of these community/city-wide or globally influential churches and ministries traces back to a small and humble beginning. What is important, therefore, is the intention and understanding that local churches bring to their ministry activities. Churches need to make clear sense of whatever their activities in various communities are and see those as their walk and work with God.

During the above-mentioned Mission and Ministry visioning process in our parish, one of the questions our task team brought forward to the focus groups was to consider how the church might be feeling a nudge from God, in the cardinals of “The Five Marks of Mission” to go on with our journey into the future: Who is God calling us to become? One of the suggestions that came up was to consider “a special Sunday service” in the year to honour and pray for those delivering emergency services such as paramedics, firefighters, first responders, police officers, and healthcare providers” (personal communication, 2018, p. 9). This was one of the suggestions that became a recommendation from the task team.

We discovered upon analysis that such a dedicated church service would relate to two of the marks of mission:

- to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom (first mark of mission)
- to respond to human need by loving service (third mark of mission).

We decided to connect the service to the celebration of St. Luke’s Day (for the patron saint of healers) on October 18. That year, letters of invitation and introductory notices were sent to the various agencies. We prepared a special service that incorporated the blessing of hands, and our fellowship team prepared meals to share following the service. But, in spite of our best efforts, the attendance was below the numbers we anticipated. Only about 10 emergency providers showed up. We were however encouraged to have made 10 new relationships through the event.

Two thousand and nineteen was a different story. The local fire department brought their different fire trucks with colourful, glowing lights brightening our street and neighbourhood. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) came in their uniforms. During the

service, their healing hands were blessed and anointed, and following the service, we all sat together sharing a meal and stories in our parish hall. It was a great community celebration, and we plan to keep on doing it. With the horrific experiences of the pandemic and the heroics of healthcare and emergency providers during these many months, the relevance of such a service is even more pronounced. And so, we will gather as a community in the month of October to proclaim the Good News of the goodness of God among us—even in the face of a devastating pandemic (first mark of mission), bless the hands of our healers, and express our gratitude for their services in words and the sharing of a meal, if possible (third mark of mission).

This is, for us, just one example of a ministry that started small, but is growing like the proverbial mustard seed. It is *missional* in the sense that it resulted from us seeking to be more active in our community by joining the ordinary, everyday activities with the ministry of the church—joining with God in what He is already doing among us. It all began for us—not in crying that we are dying—but in joyfully celebrating the values we hold dear as a parish community and wanting to do more.

What challenged me to engage in this project is this combination of my experiences of doing ministry in a national church that is going through a period of many struggles, particularly in terms of declining membership, vis-a-vis my lived experience of joy-filled, active participation of a church community in tangible, meaningful ministry. Again, my project dissertation (P.D.) aims to describe a process that facilitates the transforming Canadian Anglican Church ministry into missional models in accordance with the framework of the “Five Marks of Mission.” It was initiated with the hope that the findings may serve to both strengthen congregational identity and deepen the sense of

calling of local church parishes in their communities. The project is demonstrating the use of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008) as a vehicle for the transformation of traditional parish ministry into missional models.

I recognize the reality of the changing times we live in. Congregations are changing with the times: they are aging, struggling to balance budgets, and in some places, having to shut down completely. But those are not the only stories. It is also true that communities are growing in population, and church planters are starting new congregations. We in the mainline churches need to take a hard look at our blind spots: What are we not seeing? My Episcopalian friend from Wisconsin shared a story with me in our conversation the other day. They had permission in the Diocese of Milwaukee to distribute consecrated Communion elements to people in parking-lot drive-through settings. And so, following seven consecutive months of doing this, he had a profound experience with a communicant. It was a cold Wisconsin-winter morning in December. He was fully dressed with a cope and biretta to help. He and his companions were about to close for the day when a lady pulled up. She introduced herself as a Roman Catholic and asked if she could receive Communion. My friend explained that our Communion is open to all baptized Christians. She extended her hands and was given the element in a small paper cup (with all COVID safety precaution requirements satisfied). The woman held the cup in her hands for a long time and began to cry, receiving the Communion in tears. She told my friend that she'd not had communion in twenty years. Then she uttered something very profound: "I did not know that I was hungry, until I got here" (personal communication, 2021).

Yes, it is true that the predominant story of mainline churches in North America is the story of aging congregations and closing churches (Bibby, 2011; Thiessen, 2018). But those may be stories from the inside looking *out*. From the outside looking *in* is a different story. There are stories of people who are hungry for spiritual things. They are stories—not of the absence of God—but of a people who do not know how to make sense of the presence of God. What such people need in their lives is something like Jacob’s experience at Bethel in the Old Testament when he said, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I do not know it” (Genesis 28:16). I think, therefore, that the reality of the majority who are outside of the church looking in raises fundamental missional questions for the church:

- how do we connect with that which God is doing in their lives?
- how do we tell the stories of our journey with God in such a way that they see themselves in those stories?

A missional question requires particular leadership skills that are different from those of our traditional approach to ministry. *Emergent change leadership* is a leadership model that seeks to intervene appropriately in response to changing times. A congregation, like any other organization, either operates as it has always done in the past, or it is adaptive to change. Congregations that are open to change manifest a different organizational behaviour and culture than do congregations that are set in their ways and show no readiness to adapt to changing times and situations. Roxburgh and Romanuk (2011) categorize congregational culture into three different zones: a). the *reactive* zone, where the congregation is experiencing confusion, conflict and anxiety, b). the *performative* zone, where the congregation depends on performing well what has been learned and proven to

work, and c). the *emergent* zone, where the congregation is trying new ways of being a church (pp. 40-46). While leadership dwelling on the first two is confounded by the level of discontinuous change confronting us in the 21st century, "a congregation in the emergent zone experiments and discovers various creative ways to indwell and engage the communities and neighbourhoods in which its people are located" (p. 41). *Emergent change* is change leadership that pays attention to what is becoming, or to what is related to here and now. It is about change that focusses on who we are becoming, how we make meaning of that, and how we are relating to our communities in the now. As I have noted elsewhere: "Emergent change is about not putting new wine into old wine skin, but making the gospel relevant to the people where they are" (Oluigbo, 2015, personal communication).

Again, the research questions guiding this inquiry are:

1. What is it like to transition traditional parish ministries in Southwestern Ontario into missional models in accordance with the five marks of mission?
2. How do leaders of congregations in the Anglican Diocese of Huron see or understand the five marks of mission?
3. What is the view of a missional church in the Diocese of Huron?

In the projects conducted, I set out to demonstrate that Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2005) may provide the operational framework for the transformation of traditional parish ministry into missional models.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

My project is principally focused on exploring the means of using Appreciative Inquiry to engineer missional ministry models reflecting “The Five Marks of Mission” at local parish ministry settings. Therefore, this chapter on literature review explores relevant literature in the three cardinal touchstones of the project, namely, Five Marks of Mission, missional ecclesiology, and Appreciative Inquiry. Due to the enormous breadth of one or two of these topic areas, the intention is not to produce a comprehensive literature analysis, but to highlight the existing conversations and debates on how the topic areas can come together to create a process for the transformation of local parish ministries. In turn, this review will establish the theoretical underpinnings of the study.

Literature was accessed and reviewed over time in the course of the study. Regular search was conducted on the EBSCO database, and Google Scholar open source. The purpose of this chapter is to:

- explore the Five Marks of Mission as the framework for the mission of the Anglican Church
- Identify the theoretical foundations of Missional Ecclesiology
- Identify the mechanism of Appreciative Inquiry as the methodological framework for the study.

2.1. Five Marks of Mission

Current literature shows that the “Five Marks of Mission” (Anglican Communion Office, 2021) is widely received across the Anglican Communion and beyond, as an important statement and framework for the mission of the church. Adopted internationally at the 1988 Lambeth Conference, it was endorsed in 1996 by the General Synod of the Church of England and has since been embraced by a number of national churches

and dioceses as a framework against which to evaluate both existing work and new ventures (Walker, 2011, p.101). “The Five Marks of Mission,” are currently found, with minor local alterations in wording, in the original form as developed between 1984 and 1990. The generic form of the marks (as stated in chapter 1) is found at the Anglican Communion website. There are very limited books and academic publications on “The Five Marks of Mission.” Most of what we have are descriptive presentations of the marks at various diocesan and national church websites in the forms in which they have been adopted.

In a book titled *Gathering at God's Table: The Five Marks of Mission in the Feast of Faith* by Katharine Jefferts Schori (2012), the former presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church of America set a goal to “explore the once and future mission of the Jesus people” (p. xiii). Her book is a comprehensive volume dedicated entirely to “The Five Marks of Mission.” She begins by rejecting the narrow definition and view which sees mission as “people packing up their belongings and going to Africa or Asia to baptize non-Christians” (p. xiv). Rather, the author adopts a “deeper and broader” definition of *mission* by tracing it to its origins:

The word comes from the Latin *mitto, to send*. It's the work that Jesus modelled himself and then sent the disciples to do—feeding, healing, and teaching. The word “mass,” and the “dismissal” at the end of the service, are derived from the old Latin command at the end of a service of Eucharist or holy communion: *Ite, missa est*. It means something like “Go, you are sent.” Or as a former bishop of New York used to say, “Get up, get out, and get lost.” You've been fed—now

get out there and lose your life in service to the world. That's what mission is all about, and you don't need a passport to do it. (p. xiv)

The author cites examples from the Scriptures to demonstrate the view that mission is deeper and broader than the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). First is the example that Jesus himself set for qualification into membership of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 28:34-40), where those invited to enjoy citizenship of the Kingdom are ultimately those who stepped up and provided care for those in need. The second example is what Jesus said His own ministry was about in Luke 4:18-21: "to proclaim the good news to the poor, proclaim release of captives and sight to the blind, to set the oppressed free and to proclaim God's favour to all." From these scripture passages, she concludes: "We might say mission is how we love God through loving our neighbours" (p. xvi). The Anglican Communion, she says, promulgated "The Five Marks of Mission" as a framework for "thinking about mission." The writer sees this framework as a "helpful outline, particularly in its breadth" (p xvi).

Schori's book is sectioned into five parts. Each part is focused on one of the marks of mission. The chapters comprise various stories of the church in action: lived experiences of church life in various localities, showing ways in which the church is living out the marks of mission. I will note that while the author validates the 'Five Marks of Mission' as a useful descriptive framework for the mission of the church, what she does not provide is any direct formula to help desiring parish congregations in the doing of it.

Another notable book on the five marks is *Mission in the 21st Century: Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (2008), edited by Andrew Walls and Cathy Ross. In the book, a team of nineteen missional thinkers and practitioners provide theological

and descriptive insights into the five marks of mission from largely non-Western contexts, as well as probing some of the missiological and ecclesiological shifts that are taking place, and exploring some of their profound implications. According to Weston (2011), the main thesis of the book is that if mission exists prior to the church and brings it into existence (along with the whole enterprise of theological reflection which it feeds), then some radical rethinking is needed in light of what God is doing in our world today.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part comprises ten articles on the marks of mission (a pair of articles on each of the five marks). Ten contributors from different geographic regions of the world share conversations on the five marks, described by the editors as:

different sorts of articles to express different approaches. The first article of each pair is a more reflective, theological article, which explores the mark in some depth. The second article is more descriptive and has more of a praxis orientation. So together, these explore how this particular mark is worked out on the ground in the writers' particular contexts. In this way we hope to draw out the missiological depth and practical engagement that each mark implies. (p. xix)

This mixture of descriptive articles and those recounting lived experiences of the marks of mission from different lands and climes, offers not only a good basis for a holistic approach to mission, but also explanations that are helpful for understanding and applying the marks of mission.

In an article titled; "Marks of Mission and Ways of Belonging: Shaping the Anglican Agenda for Occasional Churchgoers in the Countryside," Walker (2010) presented

a study that sought to determine the extent to which occasional churchgoers in rural England could be deemed to be living the faith. The study used “quantitative methods in conjunction with ‘The Five Marks of Mission’ of the Anglican Communion to identify opportunities and give direction to mission” (p.100).

The study submits that the marks “guide the church toward identifying programs of action to which all who self-identify with the Christian faith can be called as both the agents of mission and the objects of mission” (p. 101). It observes that because of the broad view of mission they offer, the marks “create opportunities to recruit and engage in mission tasks those who express Christian belonging but are occasional churchgoers” (p.101). The study draws the conclusion that because occasional churchgoers share behaviours and ways of belonging comparable with those of frequent attendees, “this group enables such people to work alongside regular churchgoers to fulfil ‘The Five Marks of Mission’ adopted by the Anglican Communion” (p.115).

I think this study is a welcome attempt in the annals of the three-decade history of “The Five Marks of Mission.” It not only underscores the breadth of the framework, but more importantly shows how it can be employed to “create opportunities to recruit and engage in mission.” Though we may expect a different choice of language in the presentation of the concept that the author depicted by the term “*recruiting*” in a ministry setting, (for instance, prayerfully discerning a calling could be a more acceptable ecclesiastical language) the submission of the paper on the possibility of employing the marks of mission to create ministry opportunities is encouraging.

“Five Marks of Mission: History, Theology, Critique” by Zink (2017) is perhaps the most elaborate academic article about the marks of mission. Published in the November 2017 edition of the *Journal of Anglican Studies*, this Anglican scholar traces the development of an Anglican definition of mission from the 1984 meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council, at which a four-fold definition was first put forth, to the present use of “The Five Marks of Mission” across many parts of the Communion (p. 140).

Though Zink’s paper presents what I think is arguably the most comprehensive history of the development of the marks of mission, I do not agree with his interpretation of the five marks as just another generational slogan of the church. Nor do I agree with his submission that “given the past history of Anglican mission slogans it seems likely that in a few years, Anglicans will have moved on to a new mission slogan” (p. 146). I think “The Five Marks of Mission” (Anglican Communion Office, 2021) is more than a mission slogan. It is—as stated by Schori (2012) and others—a good descriptive framework for the entire mission of the church.

Contrary to this view of the marks as mere slogan, Wright (2015) contends that what we have in the five marks is “a remarkably comprehensive and holistic list that can be shown to have deep roots in the whole Bible. In fact, the marks can be considered as ways in which we participate in the mission of God” (p. 10). He summarizes each of the five marks in one word: evangelism (first mark), teaching (second mark), compassion (third mark), justice (fourth mark), and care of creation (fifth mark), and links them together around the centrality of the Gospel of Jesus thus:

- In evangelism - we proclaim the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord, King and Saviour

- In teaching - we bring people into maturity of faith and discipleship, in submission to Christ as Lord
- In compassion - we follow the example of the Lord Jesus, who 'went about doing good'.
- In seeking justice - we remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is the judge of all the earth
- In using and caring for creation - we are handling what belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ by right of creation and redemption. (p.11)

I think that Wright's abridged version of the five marks and his attempt to link them directly to the Great Commission, makes the marks of mission easier to understand, easily explicable and applicable to ongoing and future ministry planning.

In addition to the sources reviewed above, the Anglican Communion Office, along with Anglican national, and diocesan church websites, offer lots of materials and information on "The Five Marks of Mission":

- Anglican Communion Office - A whole section is devoted to the marks. The landing page has the current form of the marks in five different languages: English, French, Portuguese, Spanish and Swahili. There is also a page for a brief history, and another for resources (mostly bible study guides for Lent) (Anglican Communion website, 2021).
- Anglican Church of Canada - There is a whole web section with pages dedicated to information on "The Five Marks of Mission," including: "About the Marks of Mission," "Share and explore," "Get involved," "Marks of Mission Champions," and a

segment captioned “Downloadable resources for church service.” (Anglican Church of Canada, 2021).

- The Episcopal Church of America (The American expression of Anglicanism)
- The “What We Believe” section of the 2019 version of The Episcopal Church website lists “The Five Marks of Mission” and states the following:

We recognize with gratitude that “The Five Marks of Mission” developed by the Anglican Consultative Council between 1984 and 1990, have won wide acceptance among Anglicans, and have given parishes and dioceses around the world a practical and memorable "checklist" for mission activities (The Episcopal Church, 2019).

Their most recent website (The Episcopal Church, 2021) does not discuss the five marks in the “What We Believe” section. They are, however, listed and described on various other pages that can be located by using the “Site Search” feature. A search for “The Five Marks of Mission” reveals various pages dedicated to the marks including: “Five Marks of Mission Video Contest” in the “Youth Ministry” section; and “Episcopal Church calendars,” feature “The Five Marks of Mission” in the “Public Affairs section. Another article in the Public Affairs section, “The Five Marks of Mission: A checklist for mission,” describes how to apply the five marks framework:

In a succinct way, “The Five Marks of Mission” offer a framework for mission and ministry work. For many, the work of the Five Marks is already part of a congregational or personal mission program. Whether it’s when you recycle (Mark #5), undertake social justice work (Mark #4), donate to a food bank, volunteer at a soup kitchen (Mark #3), renew your baptismal vows (Marks #1 and

#2), or countless other ways, “The Five Marks of Mission” shine through. (The Episcopal Church, 2021)

This quotation demonstrates a very direct linking of the five marks to the ministries already going on at various local parish communities. It also provides a simple way to exemplify the real meaning of the five marks, contrary to Zink’s description of them as “mere slogan,” or to the general misunderstanding of the marks as just another program of the church.

In a publication covering a six-week study guide and reflection on the Five Marks of Mission, the brothers of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist (SSJE) offer what is actually a very concise but rich analysis and application of the marks to daily Christian living. Captioned “5 Marks of Love: Living Life Marked as Christ’s Own” (SSJE 2016), the brothers understand and describe the marks of mission as descriptive of the church’s attempt to live our baptismal vows by connecting to that which which God is doing among us. They therefore encourage users of their study guide to “observe and reflect on the ways in which the Divine Life expresses itself in and through us; individually, and in our faith communities, as well as in the world around us” (SSJE 2016). So the brothers express a missional understanding of the church where God is already active, and the marks of mission as descriptive of the church’s participation in *Missio Dei*.

In a way similar to Wright’s analysis above, the brothers of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist use single, words to capture each of the marks of mission in a way that makes them easy to remember. They also provide biblical references for each mark of mission, just as Wright also links them directly to the Great Commission. The following table shows the brothers’ summary of the 5 Marks of Mission:

Table 1.

Summary of Five Marks of Mission

Mark of Mission	SSJE Code Word	Biblical Reference
To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom	TELL	Luke 4:18,19
To teach, baptize and nurture new believers	TEACH	Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 12:2
To respond to human need by loving service	TEND	Luke 10:25-37
To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation	TRANSFORM	Micah 6:8
To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth	TREASURE	Psalms 24:1

This attempt is similar to Wright's effort to also make the marks easy to remember.

Wright's code words for the marks evangelism (mark 1), teaching (mark 2) compassion (mark 3), justice (mark 4) creation care (mark 5), are closely identical to the codes used by the brothers in the table above.

Figure 1. Wright's Summary of the 5 Marks of Mission



However, Wright goes farther by suggesting collapsing the five marks to three focal points for our missional engagement including:

1. Building the church (through evangelism and teaching), bringing people to repentance, faith and obedience as disciples of Jesus Christ.
2. Serving society (through compassion and justice), in response to Jesus sending us ‘into the world’, to love and serve, to be salt and light, to do good, and to ‘seek the welfare’ of the people around us (as Jeremiah told the Israelites in Babylon, Jer. 29:7).

3. Caring for creation (through godly use of the resources of creation along with ecological concern and action), fulfilling the very first ‘great commission’ given to humanity in Genesis 1 and 2.

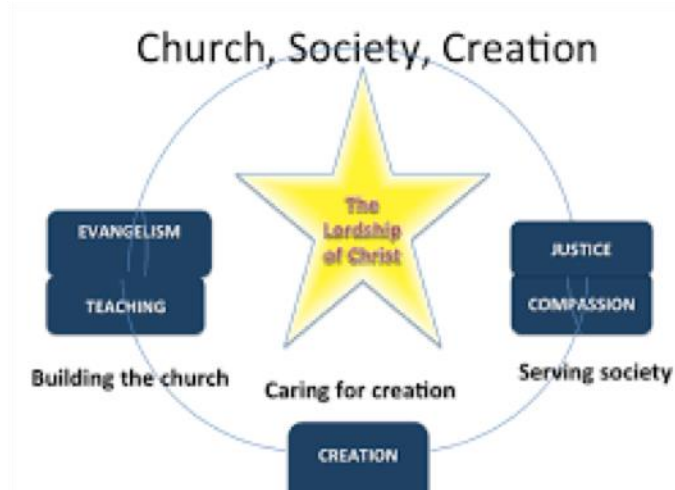


Figure 2 Wright’s 3 Missional Tasks

Wright (2015), and SSJE (2016) are both good attempts to simplify and make the marks easier to remember. However, they are also at best good descriptive presentations of the Five Marks of Mission. Like other literatures reviewed here on the marks, what they fail to do is provide a guide for their implementation at any local parish ministry level.

Though I have lamented generally on the dearth of previous work and studies focussed on the implementation of the Five Marks of Mission in this review, I need to highlight a recent work by Valerie Kenyon, which incidentally overlaps the work that I am doing in this project. It is literally a coincidence that at the heels of each other, the two of us have joined the ranks of very few researchers in the Anglican Church of Canada who

have directly dug into the issue of translating the Five Marks of Mission into practical guidelines for congregational missional change/transformation. I am grateful to The Rev. Dr. Valerie Kenyon not only for her contributions to this project as my research assistant, but more so for granting me access to her project and permission to review it. Her thesis titled “Listening to God, to One Another and to Our Neighbourhood” (Kenyon, 2021), is based on a project she conducted at two parishes, each on the outskirts of London, Ontario, where she serves as Rector in the Diocese of Huron.

The research corroborates my previous point that in 2018 parishes in the Anglican Diocese of Huron were asked to intentionally reflect upon their orientation to mission (and the ministry that flows from this orientation) by way of creating a five-year Mission and Ministry Plan (MMP). The stated intention of this plan (Diocese of Huron, 2018) was “to identify a way forward for every part of the Diocese, with clearly identified mission purpose and concrete goals to support that purpose.” In part this plan used the Five Marks of Mission to determine in each congregation their participation in God’s mission as understood in current literature addressing the missional church movement (Page 6). Dr. Kenyon’s work was therefore initially developed to support the two parishes in more fully engaging with the completion and deployment of their MMP.

She notes that underlying the request by the Diocese for parishes to complete this MMP “was the assumption that there existed across the parishes the ability to reflect theologically and the capacity to analyze and adapt to the realities of our times both within and beyond church walls’ (Page 6). Because such capacity was lacking, her “project arose in order to satisfy/fulfil the requirement for theological reflection necessary for

the adaptation of local ministries to missional models, or simply as an aid to missional understanding of existing ministries” (p.7).

The researcher began her study with the following conviction: “The practice of listening supports theological reflection, which ultimately leads to changes in understanding and behaviour” (p. 10). Therefore as parishes in the Diocese of Huron were faced with the need to create a Ministry and Mission Plan, her project aimed to study “how beginning with listening to God, to one another, and to the neighbourhood—theological reflection was supported so that understanding of and engagement with the Five Marks of Mission and missional church theology could be enhanced” (Page 10).

She observes that while this study was initially developed to support these two parishes in more fully engaging with the completion and deployment of their MMP, it did more in the end. It would simultaneously open for them an opportunity to reengage with their missional identity (p. 116).

Eleven volunteers from two parishes participated in the study, which involved listening to five Sunday sermons, based on the Five Marks of Mission and preached by the researcher, as well as attending five mid-week group discussion sessions, and five individual interview sessions with the researcher. In addition, each participant was given a journal in which they were asked to write any thoughts or reflections they may have had each week following the Sunday homily. As the writer notes:

Each week the congregation, which included the participants, would hear a homily written on a specific Mark of Mission, informed in large part by development in missional thinking and approaches. In participants' journals each week (in addition to an exercise related specifically to the particular Mark of Mission), they

were asked the same question: “When you think of the word ‘mission ’what comes to mind? In the space below, reflect for a moment on Sunday’s homily, noting any highlights, or surprises that you encountered.” The aim was to have participants return each week to the same question in light of the most recent homily. Written and audio copies of the homilies were provided to participants for their review at their convenience later in the week.

The journal also contained exercises to be completed each week (p. 54).

The study ended with individual interviews, which were recorded and later transcribed.

During this interview, which lasted between one and two hours depending upon the amount of information shared; participants had an opportunity to revisit the study’s initial questions with special attention to rating again their familiarity and comfort with each of the Five Marks of Mission (p. 59). The researcher analyzed the data collected and came to the conclusion that the findings of this study confirm that “as parishes come to terms with the new realities of a post Christendom world and make space and time to reflect on a new understanding of mission, re-engaging with the Gospel narrative in consideration of the Five Marks of Mission, both their ministries and their sense of their own identity as Christians are positively impacted” (p. 99).

While I agree with the basic premise of Dr. Kenyon’s thesis (2021), an argument can be made that her entire study makes a case for the execution of the second mark of mission, “TEACH.” I say this because the main vehicles upon which her project rides and

the focus of her thesis, namely listening and theological reflection, are the basic requirements for any successful Christian formation program, like Bible study, fellowship gatherings, and so on. I don't know that we can conveniently say about TELL, TEND, TRANSFORM and TREASURE that the way to execute them is through listening and theological reflection. Ironically, however, it was engagement with the second mark of mission (TEACH) that was the most uncomfortable for participants as the study began (Kenyon, 2021, p. 90). It may well be that the purpose of the project was not to find a process for the implementation/execution of the Five Marks of Mission, but to seek to teach an understanding of what it means.

To begin with, the basic premise of Dr. Kenyon's (2021) thesis is framed by a question raised by Van Gelder and Zscheile (2008) who observe that one of the legacies of denominations representing the cultural establishment is a certain ambiguity about the basic Gospel narrative in many churches which became organized around other narratives. Therefore, they ask, "Just how do you ask people to make theology connect with life and ministry so that the gospel truth comes alive, when in addition to inexperience in the practice of reflecting they are unclear on the details of their own faith story?" (p. 317). And so Dr. Kenyon's entire project proceeded to bridge that gap. Again, I totally agree with the principles of Dr. Kenyon's thesis. I also believe that part of our problem today is that we have lost the teaching ministry of the church. We need to rediscover this essential ministry. Dr Kenyon's project therefore is very timely, especially with the subject of marks of mission in which the thesis notes that as parishes began to develop their plan, they were introduced to the Five Marks of Mission, many for the first time (p. 7).

2.2. Missional Ecclesiology

The second major thrust of my study is its focus on the church as mission.

While we will make more than passing mention of the growing trend in what has become known as the missional church movement, the focus of this section of the literature review is mainly to establish the theoretical foundation of the phenomenon of missional church. According to Mancini, (2008):

The idea of the missional church has single-handedly captured the imagination of church leaders of all backgrounds and denominations. Take your pick: from the boomer power pastors of suburbia to the preaching punks of “emergia” and the collared intellectuals of “liturgia,” everyone wants to be missional. (p. 33)

In a paper that focusses on the emerging contours of a missional ecclesiology, Niemandt (2012) points out that the term *missional church* came into broad use through the influence of the Gospel in Our Culture Network (GOCN) and the work of Guder:

The term missional church gained prominence in the work of the GOCN, with books such as *Missional church: A vision for the sending of the church in North America*, edited by Guder (1998) and *ChurchNext* by Gibbs (2000). The works of Lesslie Newbigin, and the influential *Transforming Mission* by David Bosch (1991), played an important role in laying the groundwork for this new interest in mission (p. 1).

Working definitions of the two major terms *ecclesiology* and *missional* will be helpful here as we begin a review of the literature that give us the theoretical foundations of the term *missional ecclesiology*. Hooker (2009) defines *ecclesiology* as the “discussion of what the Church is called to be and to do – its nature, its purpose, its hopes, its structure and practices... a discussion about the nature of the Church.” Similarly, Avis in

the *Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology* (2018) defines the term as the “comparative, critical, and constructive discipline of reflection on the identity of the church” (p. 7). So, ecclesiology is simply one’s way of seeing or describing the church.

Hooker (2009, p. 2) also observes that a missional view of the Church is much more than a list of projects or priorities for congregational energy and resources. It is not the result of having done a “mission study” and defined the congregation’s priorities for its work in the coming year. Instead, it is a more profound understanding of the mission that lies at the very heart of the Church’s existence. According to Billings (2008):

the terms missional church are barely 10 years old, but already they bring up more than half a million hits on a Google search. Churches are inundated with missional hooks, missional websites, missional consultation groups, and missional speakers. Yet the meaning of the term remains unclear. Some use missional to describe a church that rejects treating the gospel like a commodity for spiritual consumers; others frame it as a strategy for marketing the church and stimulating church growth. Some see the missional church as a refocusing on God’s action in the world rather than obsessing over individual’s needs; others see it as an opportunity to “meet people where they are” and reinvent the church for postmodern culture. (p. 56)

Franklin (2007-8) notes:

The term “missional” was coined to reflect the understanding that mission is not simply a sub-category of ecclesiology, but belongs to the essence of what it means to be the Church. The Church does not “do” mission; rather, the Church “is” mission. The Church does not “have” a mission; God has created a sent

Church, a missional Church. This view is based on the missional or sending nature of God (i.e., the *missio Dei*). (p. 97)

Marshall (2013) agrees, noting that to be missional is not a program of the church, but a mindset:

The heart cry of the missional church movement is that the church is missional by its very nature. Mission is not one of the things that church does, it is why the church is. Mission is of the church's *esse* not its *bene esse*. (pp. 8-9)

Though the term *missional church* gets thrown around a lot these days and there is a vast trove of literature on the topic, the general understanding of the subject matter is not unlike the academic analysis of any term. Therefore, the literature is fraught with a wide range of viewpoints. We can however assert from the foregoing that different proponents of the idea of the missional church are agreed in the understanding of mission as the essence of the church. Wright (2014) highlights ways in which the idea of mission can be misrepresented:

- Holistic mission has been around for a while. It emphasizes that in our mission activities we must address the whole of human need – physical, material, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual -- not just the last of those. This is certainly an important corrective to narrowing mission down to a single task. But it can leave our mission very anthropocentric -- all about “me and my problems” (or you and yours). Mission can become therapeutic. “You have all these needs and we are here to help you overcome them, whatever they are.” But that immediately raises the question, “What in fact is the greatest human need?” If mission focuses on human need, then no matter how holistic you try to be, you still keep coming

back to the question, “What do we human beings really need most?” And that quickly dumps us back into the argument over the relative priority of evangelism and social action. We feel we must decide the priority on the basis of a taxonomy of needs. But the whole argument still rotates mission around human need.

- Missional church is widely used in varying ways, but in essence its point is that the church exists for mission, and everything that a church is and does should be missional – whether “at home or abroad”. The church is “on mission” everywhere and always. Great. True. But this can leave our concept of mission still very anthropocentric with the focus on ourselves as human beings -- not so much as sinners in need of salvation, but as saints in need of a mission. But then the question arises, “What is legitimately included in the church’s mission?” The familiar (and misleading) saying “if everything is mission, nothing is mission” was born out of a concern that mission had become a basket filled with anything at all that a church wanted to do. So, we are thrown back again to the old arguments about whether the church’s mission should include social, economic, compassionate, ecological issues, or simply stick to verbal proclamation of the gospel. (p.1)

MacIlvaine (2010) defines a missional church as “a unified body of believers, intent on being God’s missionary presence to the indigenous community that surrounds them, recognizing that God is already at work” (p. 91). This idea that God is already and always at work in every community and situation is central to the missional church movement. It is the common thread running through the missional church ideology. Being missional, then, is to seek to discover and be part of whatever it is that God is doing. Dreyer (2013) writes:

Central to missional ecclesiology is the theological concept of the *missio Dei*. The essence of being church is to be found in its participation in God's mission to the world. As such, the *missio Dei* is the basis and point of departure for congregational ministry. (p. 4)

And I would say that it is in accordance with this idea that the Anglican Church formulated "The Five Marks of Mission" to provide a framework for discerning ministry formation, or for measuring the extent to which the church is participating in mission with God.

Of fundamental importance to missiologists is the need to determine what it is that God is doing that our mission derives from. What is the great purpose of God?

Wright (2014) finds the answer to this question in Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus:

He has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Ephesians 1:9-10).

What this is saying is that the will of God is made manifest in Christ. The mission of the Church then is to do things that Christ commanded in preaching against sin, and in the church's relationship with the poor, the marginalized, the prisoner, the sick, and so on. As

Wright concludes:

When Paul speaks of "God's will," he does not (usually) mean God's personal guidance for our individual lives, but his great cosmic purpose throughout all time and space. And Paul says – God's plan is to bring healing and unity to the whole creation in and through Christ. The mission of God is to redeem the whole of creation, broken by sin and evil, into the new creation, populated by

the redeemed from every culture, through the cross and resurrection of Christ. I think that is what Paul meant by “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). It is the plan of God from Genesis to Revelation. It includes the whole biblical grand narrative: Creation – Fall – Redemption – New Creation, centred on and united in Christ. Mission, then, is fundamentally the activity of God, driving this whole story forward and bringing it to its glorious conclusion. (p. 2)

The Anglican Communion avowed this biblio/Christo-centric view in the formulation of “The Five Marks of Mission.” Wright, as stated above, summarizes the five dimensions of the five marks in five words that depend on the Lordship of Christ: *evangelism, teaching, compassion, justice, and care of creation*:

- In evangelism - we proclaim the good news that Jesus Christ is Lord, King and Saviour
- In teaching – we bring people into maturity of faith and discipleship, in submission to Christ as Lord
- In compassion - we follow the example of the Lord Jesus, who “went about doing good”
- In seeking justice – we remember that the Lord Jesus Christ is the judge of all the earth
- In using and caring for creation -- we are handling what belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ by right of creation and redemption (pp. 4-5).

Some missional writers move beyond the description of a missional church to the “being” of it, by attempting to provide a guide toward the transformation of congrega-

tions to missional models of ministry. In their book *The Missional Leader*, authors Roxburgh and Romanuk (2006) describe a missional church as “a community of God’s people who live into the imagination that they are, by their very nature, God’s missionary people living as a demonstration of what God plans to do in and for all of creation in Jesus Christ” (Introduction, para. 2). The book is in two parts. The first part explores the context and challenges of missional leadership, and includes deep insights to help the leader understand the terrain and navigate the challenges. This part includes a map of what they call “The Three Zone Model of Missional Leadership: Emergent Leadership, Performative leadership, and Reactive leadership” (chapter 3). Of the three zones, the idea is for congregations to seek to operate at the *emergent* zone where “a local church is adaptive; members are encouraged to cultivate experiments and interact with one another rather than wait on top-down, preplanned strategy” (chapter 3, emergent upper section: pioneering).

The second part of the book explores the concept of missional leadership in detail. It includes a description of missional readiness factors and the nature of leadership; an X-ray of the character of the missional leader; and ways to cultivate the people of God for a missional future, form a missional environment and culture, engage the new cultural context with Christian imagination, and put a team of missional leaders together in a congregation (chapters 6 to 10). This all-hands-on-deck approach, reflected in the emergent zone, is the same idea as expressed in the phrase *priesthood of all believers* (1 Peter 2:4-5) and guides the ethos and ecclesiology of the Anglican church. As Schlesinger (2015) writes:

Within this understanding, ordained ministry takes on the character of distinctive roles within the priestly people, rather than above them. This is highlighted in The Book of Common Prayer's "Concerning the Service of the Church," which identifies four orders within the Church: "lay persons, bishops, priests, and deacons," and instructs that "in all services, the entire Christian assembly participate in such a way that the members of each order ... fulfill the functions proper to their respective orders, as set forth in the rubrical directions for each service"... This represents, then, a recovery of the laity as fully Christian members of the Church with a positive ministerial contribution, rather than merely passive recipients of the clergy's ministrations. (p. 185)

I demonstrate in this study how communities of faith (Anglican parishes) comprising both laity and clergy, can come together to construct their future, believing that they are God's missionary people living as a demonstration of what God plans to do in and for all of creation in Jesus Christ (Roxburgh and Romanuk, 2011).

2.3. Appreciative Inquiry/Leadership (AI)

The next chapter has a closer focus on Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a data collection method in the methodology employed to carry out this project. What I am doing here is to highlight pieces of existing literature that identify the mechanisms of AI methodological framework as the vehicle for this study. I think it is also important to review the body of AI literature since the principles of AI are the driving philosophy behind the paradigm shift that this study suggests in the way we approach the ministry of the church today.

A lot has been written on the origin and application of AI in change leadership. As a change leadership model, AI has its roots in social construction, which simply is the view that social systems and organizations are co-created by their members (Lichtenstein and Plowman, 2009; Fitzgerald, Murrell and Newman, 2001; McNamee, and Hosking, (2012). As a philosophy of science, *social constructionism* is the view that “we have considerable influence over the nature of the realities that we perceive and experience, and that to a great extent we actually create our realities through collective symbolic and mental processes” (Fitzgerald et al., 2001, p. 5). Watkins and Mohr (2001) define *appreciative inquiry* as:

a theory and practice for approaching change from a holistic framework. Based on the belief that human systems are made and imagined by those who live and work within them, AI leads systems to move toward the generative and creative images that reside in their most positive core - their values, visions, achievements and best practices. (p. 262)

“The thesis of Appreciative Inquiry is that organizations such as the church can be recreated by its conversations,” (Branson, 2004, Introduction). A broader definition is offered by Cooperrider (credited as the founder of AI) and Whitney (2003):

Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative co-evolutionary *search for the best in people*, (emphasis added) their organization, and the world around them. *It involves the discovery of what gives “life”* (emphasis added) to a living system when it is most effective and alive and constructively capable in economic, ecological and human terms. Appreciative Inquiry involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to apprehend, anticipate and

heighten positive potential. The inquiry is mobilized through the crafting of the “unconditional positive question.” (p. 3)

“The search for the best in people,” and “the discovery of what gives life,” speak to a mindset that is fundamentally different from the melancholic foreboding prevalent in the current experience of being church in North America.

According to Kavanagh, et al. (2008), the purpose of AI is “to generate knowledge within social systems and to use this knowledge to promote democratic dialogue that leads to a congruence between values and practices” (p. 43). AI aims to work towards emancipatory transformation (Grant and Humphries, 2006; Reason and Bradbury, 2008). “This approach focuses on exploring with people what is valuable in what they do and how this can be built on, rather than focusing on problems” (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2005).

This philosophy uniquely makes AI a suitable approach to lift up congregations from focussing on everything that is wrong with the current state of the church. Grandy and Holton (2010) describe the AI approach as challenging “the traditional deficit perspective in organizational and change management” (p. 180). Conventional strategic planning models emphasize overcoming one’s weaknesses in order to achieve organizational success. By contrast, AI is a strengths-based planning model that suggests just the opposite, focusing on the positive and building on strengths (Fifolt and Stowe, 2011).

The four principles of AI as identified by the founder are that inquiry begins with appreciation, and is applicable, provocative and collaborative (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987). According to Moore (2008), the basic process of AI begins with the explo-

ration of the "best of what is" (discovery phase), then through visioning and debate collaboratively articulates "what might be" (dream phase), working together to develop "what could be"(design phase) and collectively experimenting with "what can be"(destiny phase). In the design phase, cycles of change are developed and then implemented in the destiny phase. Some appreciative inquirers have suggested that the destiny phase has moved away from a set of concrete activities or action plans to a more open process where the focus is on empowering, improving and making adjustments towards ongoing change (Egan and Lancaster, 2005). What attracted me to the AI approach is basically its positive and strength-based strategy. From the place we are in the church, the positive outlook makes AI an attractive approach to research and change leadership.

To identify the mechanism of AI as a framework for research, a wide range of academic literature is available to choose from, including books and papers in the fields of nursing, psychology, and education, as well as publications from faith-based institutions, to mention a few. My focus in the choice of literature is more on what is relevant to the application of AI for church ministry development. One such work is Branson's *Memories, Hopes and Conversations: Appreciative Inquiry and Congregational Change* (2004), a whole volume derived from the author's use of AI to lead change at his small Presbyterian congregation in Pasadena, California. Not only does the book outline his congregation's journey through the AI process in which he used the terminologies of Initiate, Inquire, Imagine, and Innovate (4I Model), it also provides biblical reflections on the theme appreciation. The book is a practical example of AI in a church setting, and was therefore the primary resource for the process I applied in the conduct in my project.

Appreciative Leadership by Whitney et al. (2010) is another book that is relevant in establishing a process for using AI to conduct research. The authors draw from the appreciative tradition to offer five major orientations for harnessing the powers of appreciation. They also outline leadership behaviours that lead to the cultivation of appreciative culture in organizations. In general, they propose that “the success of the organization does not reside in the actions of individual actors but the relationships among them” (Forward). The five core orientations include:

- Inquiry - Ask positively powerful questions
- Illumination - Bring out the best of people and situations
- Inclusion - Engage with people to coauthor the future
- Inspiration - Awaken the creative spirit
- Integrity - Make choices for the good of the whole (chapter 3).

I find this book particularly useful in the development of skills required to conduct AI-based research, and in the understanding of techniques and general principles necessary for creating the enabling environment for the process to evolve. For instance, the authors make a suggestion for developing the skill of asking the right questions:

Appreciative leaders develop a habit of asking positive questions to learn how people and things work when they are at their best. Their positive questions lead to a domino effect of positive outcomes.... The wisdom of inquiry lies with the willingness and ability to ask questions that challenge the status quo while at the same time, strengthen relatedness and guide people to value-based performance and higher levels of consciousness. (“The Wisdom of Inquiry: Leading with Positively Powerful Questions,” chapter 3).

Finally, we will conclude this literature review segment by drawing attention to a subtle tension within PAR approach. There is an attempt in the existing body of literature to distinguish problem-centric from opportunity-centric approaches within the participatory paradigm. In an article which highlights the potential for rethinking approaches to community and social change interventions that draw on participatory action research at the community and organizational level, Boyd and Bright (2007), observe that

Theory on social norms suggests that problem-centric approaches work with the momentum of norms without substantively changing them. By contrast, opportunity-centric approaches have the potential to reframe and dramatically shift organizational and community norms. (p. 1025)

The writers highlight the influence of positive organizational scholarship on the participatory approach which draws from the foundations of positive psychology (Aspinwall and Staudinger, 2003; Seligman, 2002; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Snyder and Lopez, 2002), and seeks an understanding of the characteristics, processes, and factors at play when organizations function at peak performance in both human and operational terms (p.1020).

The following table illustrate the differences the point out between problem-centric and opportunity-centric participatory interventions:

Table 2

Problem-Centric vs. Opportunity Centric Change Management

<i>Feature</i>	<i>Problem-centric methods (e.g., traditional ODC)</i>	<i>Opportunity-centric Methods (e.g., appreciative inquiry)</i>
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Basic process	<p>Problem identification and consultation</p> <p>Data gathering and preliminary diagnosis</p> <p>Feedback to a key client or group</p> <p>Joint diagnosis of the problem</p> <p>Joint action planning</p> <p>Action</p> <p>Data gathering after action</p>	<p>Affirmative topic choice—What ideas and questions will give life to this community/organizational system?</p> <p>Discover—What are the images and activities at play when this community/organization is functioning at its best?</p> <p>Dream—What might be possible with respect to our topic if we were to imagine a future, ideal community/organization?</p> <p>Design—What are the most compelling actionable ideas and how might we put them into use?</p> <p>Destiny—What will we actually do to bring about the change we envision? How will we track and encourage our progress?</p>
Underlying metaphor	Community is a problem to be solved—the community is sick and needs healing.	The community/organization is a living miracle, a center of human relatedness filled with potential for extraordinary possibilities.
Role of facilitator	Community members need a physician (the consultant facilitator) to find relief.	Community/organization members are capable of envisioning and creating change for themselves.
Role of stakeholders	Only those who are necessary should be involved.	Involvement from the whole system of community/organization members
Role of leaders	Often top-down, dictated change—plans and initiatives need to be “sold” to general community members	Bottom-up involvement—all community/organization members are assumed to be equal participants, great ideas may emerge from any member—every relevant perspective should be represented in the inquiry, preferably in a simultaneous space
Dominant motivation for change	Fear of failure or imminent crisis	Inspiration from emergent ideas about what community/organization members authentically dream of accomplishing
Possibility for change	Generally limited to established, ordinary community norms	Established, ordinary community/organization norms are transcended and redefined—the possibility for the exceptional becomes a norm and asserts momentum.
Appropriate application	Where clearly discernible negative	

	<p>deviance is apparent, and there is no interest in shifting commonly held norms</p>	<p>Where there is a desire to understand strengths, develop resilience, or redefine the Community/organization. It is also appropriate to utilize these methods to build a reserve of strength before tackling “problems” in the traditional sense; these methods establish an interpersonal atmosphere of psychological safety and trust, where problems can be addressed in ways that build, rather than diminish, community/organization strength.</p>
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Note. ODC = Organizational development and change Boyd and Bright, (2007), p. 2023.

Chapter Summary

The literature reviewed on the Marks of Mission demonstrates the universal acceptance of the marks across the Anglican world at local and national church levels. At the same time, such wide acceptance reveals the underlying requirement for a process for the implementation of the marks. Such a process is lacking in the existing body of literature on the marks of mission. It is a gap that this study is attempting to fill. Working definitions of the terms *missional* and *ecclesiology* helped to highlight the area of literature reviewed. The chapter has traced the central idea of missional ecclesiology to the theological concept of the *missio Dei*, and the understanding that the essence of being church is to be found in its participation in God's mission to the world. I have concluded that the Anglican Church formulated "The Five Marks of Mission" to provide a framework for discerning the extent to which the church is participating in mission with God. Finally, this chapter reviews the body of literature which focusses on defining the principles of Appreciative Inquiry and leadership as positive, life-giving approaches to ministry that are contrary to the problem-solving processes of traditional ministry leadership. I have also reviewed the body of literature that explains the principles of Appreciative Inquiry and why it is a suitable vehicle for research in church ministry setting. The next chapter will explain the research methodology in greater detail.

Chapter 3: Methodology - Participatory Action Research through Appreciative Inquiry

3.1 Preamble

My project is located within the broad paradigm of *action research*. In particular, the study is *participatory* action research that uses the approach of appreciative inquiry. This chapter will outline the defining characteristics of participatory action research. I will pay a bit more attention to AI in order to highlight how it is used in the participatory action research process. Finally, the chapter will attempt to strengthen my reasons for doing an Appreciative Inquiry by presenting a bit of reflection on the theology of AI.

Typically, the chapter on methodology in a doctoral dissertation includes a description/reporting on the conduct of the project. I have chosen a slightly different approach here. I want to highlight the unique character of AI as tool in a participatory action research methodology. In the next chapter, I will outline the doing of it. That way, the process involved in the AI steps will be more self-explanatory.

3.2 What is Participatory Action Research (PAR)?

Reason and Bradbury (2008) define *participatory action research* as “a participatory democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview” (p. 1). This broad definition indicates the various dimensions or principles of action research. Mcardle and Reason’s (2008) definition is narrower: “Action research typically involves creating spaces in which participants engage together in cycles of action and critical reflection” (p. 125). These are two good, functional definitions of action research. However, they fail to

speak clearly to a key element and goal of this qualitative research approach—making change. Gillis and Jackson (2002) provide a more complete definition: “Action research is a systemic collection and analysis of data for the purpose of taking action and making change by the generation of practical knowledge” (p. 264). Their definition encompasses the elements of collective action (participation), generation of knowledge (data), its analysis and action on the knowledge gained towards change.

Participatory action research (PAR) is a subset of action research. Other subsets mentioned in action research discourse include myriad terms, such as *participatory research*, *community-based participatory research*, *organizational change and work research*, *co-operative inquiry*, *action science* and *action inquiry*, *learning history*, *appreciative inquiry*, *whole systems inquiry*, and *public conversations*. (MacDonald, 2012, p.35; Reason and Bradbury, 2008, p.125). My project is located within the category PAR, which is a subset of action research. I will identify and attempt a discussion of criteria, as shown by various authors, that must be considered in doing high quality PAR and also in evaluating the quality of any PAR. I will then integrate the identified criteria in the exploration of my research question.

3.3. Essential Elements of PAR

Participatory action research has been defined as “a philosophical approach to research that recognizes the need for persons being studied to participate in the design and conduct of all phases of any research that affects them” (Vollman, Anderson, and McFarlane, 2004, p.129). Baum, MacDougall, and Smith (2006) add that at the heart of PAR is:

a collective, self-reflective inquiry that researchers and practitioners undertake, so they can understand and improve upon the practices in which they participate and the situations in which they find themselves. The reflective process is directly linked to action, influenced by understanding of history, culture, and local context, and embedded in social relationships. (p. 854)

Being a subset of action research, the PAR approach involves a cyclical, rather than a linear process. In the words of Stringer (2007), “The basic action research routine provides a simple yet powerful framework—look, think, act—that enables people to commence their inquiries in a straightforward manner and build their detail into procedures as the complexity of issues increases” (p. 8). *Look, think, act* is Stringer’s way of presenting a core feature of every action research project—it is cyclical. According to Wadsworth (1998), action research proceeds through cycles, “starting with reflection on action, and proceeding round to new action which is then further researched. The new actions differ from the old actions—they are literally in different places.” (p. 9).

Though there are varying definitions of PAR, influenced by different contexts—as we see from the examples above—common principles or dimension run through them. These common principles form our criteria for evaluating the quality of any PAR. Outlining the working principles of PAR, Stringer (2007) states that this approach:

seeks to develop and maintain social and personal interactions that are non-exploitative and enhance the social and emotional lives of all people who participate. It is organized and conducted in ways that are conducive to the formation of community—the “common unity” of all participants—and that strengthen the

democratic, equitable, liberating, and life-enhancing qualities of social life. (pp. 27-28)

He delineates the principles that can help practitioners to formulate and conduct research activities that are sensitive to the key elements of PAR, including, relationships, communication, participation, and inclusion (p. 28).

Wadsworth (1998) summarizes the major distinguishing characteristics of PAR under the three headings that make up its name: *participation, action and research*.

McTaggart (1989), on the other hand, outlines a long list of 16 tenets of PAR:

It is an approach to improving social practice by changing it, is contingent on authentic participation, is collaborative, establishes self-critical communities, is a systematic learning process, involves people in theorising about their practices, requires that people put their practices, ideas and assumptions about institutions to the test, involves keeping records, requires participants to objectify their own experiences, is a political process, involves making critical analyses, starts small, starts with small cycles, starts with small groups, allows and requires participants to build records, allows and requires participants to give a reasoned justification of their social (educational) work to others. (p. 5)

Selenger (1997), cited in MacDonald (2012), gives a summary of seven identified components in the PAR process. The first component is to acknowledge that the problem being researched originates in the community itself and is defined, analyzed, and solved by the community. The second component is that the ultimate goal of PAR research is the radical transformation of social reality and improvement in the lives of the

individuals involved; thus, community members are the primary beneficiaries of the research. Thirdly, PAR involves the full and active participation of the community at all levels of the entire research process. The fourth component of PAR encompasses a range of powerless groups of individuals: the exploited, the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized. The fifth component of PAR is the ability to create a greater awareness of an individual's own resources that can mobilize them for self-reliant development. PAR is more than a scientific method, in that community participation in the research process facilitates a more accurate and authentic analysis of social reality. Lastly, PAR allows the researcher to be a committed participant, facilitator, and learner in the research process, which fosters militancy, rather than detachment (p. 36).

3.4. Conceptual Analysis and Reflection on the Implications for Study

Let us do a brief analysis of the principles we have identified for a good PAR. This will enable us to properly locate my research approach (Appreciative Inquiry) within the action research paradigm. I will engage the analysis by attempting to answer these questions: Who does what and for whom? What is the context? What is the goal/benefit? And, how is knowledge generated? How do I as a researcher avoid allowing previous personal ministry experiences to get in the way of the inquiry process?

3.4 (i). Who does what and for whom?

As the name indicates, participatory action research is necessarily *participatory* and *democratic*. Most writers and practitioners see these as the fundamental characteristics that set this type of research apart from all others (Waterman, Tillen, Dickson, and de Koning, 2001). Being democratic, inclusive of all research participants, and working in collaboration with others is a core principle of this approach. According to Coughlin,

Smith and Fernandez (2017), to be considered as participatory action research, there must be “the need for genuine partnership approach, capacity-building of community partners; and the importance of shared decision making, co-learning, shared ownership of research products, applying findings to benefit all partners, and including community partners in all phases of the research” (p.3). This same view is stated more clearly by Coghlan and Brannick (2010):

AR is a collaborative, democratic partnership. Members of the system that is being studied participate actively.... Such participation contrasts with traditional research where members of the system are subject or objects of the study. An important qualitative element of action research is how people participate in the choice of research focus and how they engage in the process of action and inquiry. (p. 5)

Stringer (2007) also emphasizes how the philosophy of participation undergirds every action research project:

To the extent that people can participate in the process of exploring the context of the problems that concern them, they have the opportunity to develop an immediate and deeply relevant understanding of their situation and to be involved actively in the process of dealing with those problems.” (p. 32)

Of course, this co-participatory/level-playing field begs the question of what role there is for the lead researcher in this paradigm. McTaggart (1991) has the answer: “The role of the researcher is that of a facilitator who works collaboratively to involve the stakeholders in every aspect of the research process,” (The researcher in PAR is considered equal with others, and is participating collaboratively with them through the duration

of the project.) “The relationship between the researcher and other participants should be one of co-researchers, thereby allowing input not only into results, but also into the identification of the problem to be researched” (Khnn and Chovanec, 2010, p. 35). It is imperative in PAR to ensure that “research is not done ‘on’ people as passive subjects providing but ‘with’ them to provide relevant information for improving their lives” (Springett, Wright, and Roche, 2011, p. 3).

3.4 (11). *What is the context?*

Context is another intrinsic principle that guides a PAR. Baum et al. (2006) observe that “PAR contrasts with less dynamic approaches that remove data and information from their context” (p. 854). It is important that the problem in question is situated in the community/organization in which the research is conducted. PAR is considered an alternative approach to traditional social or scientific research, as it moves social inquiry from a linear cause and effect perspective, to a participatory framework that considers the contexts of people’s lives (Chandler and Torbet, 2003; Kelly, 2005; Young, 2006).

As with any research project, certain preparatory steps need to be taken prior to the beginning of a PAR project. But in PAR, one of these required steps to begin the entire process is to ensure that the issue in question applies to the context of the research. According to Coghlan and Brannick (2010), “the action research cycle unfolds in real time and begins with seeking an understanding of the context of the project. Why is the project necessary or desirable?” (p. 8). This criterion is the first, among the seven components of a PAR process identified by Selenger (1997), as cited in McDonald (2012): “that the problem originates in the community itself, and is defined, analyzed, and solved by

the community” (p. 39). According to Springett et al. (2011), it is considered an essential ingredient of PAR that “the research is grounded in the lived reality of life. The issue being researched must be located in the social system that is likely to adopt the changes that result from the research process. This is the strength of PR and results in the development of local theory” (p. 10).

3.4.(iii). *What is the Goal/Benefit?*

Participatory action research has the goal of bringing about organizational/systemic change through the course of the research. McTaggart (1991) sees PAR as “a systematic and collaborative project between the academic and marginalized/oppressed members in collecting evidence on which to base group reflection and in planning change” (p. 38). In a healthcare related PAR, Kelly (2005) states: “The overall goal of every participatory-action research project is to work together with community members to implement the action and social change necessary to resolve a health problem” (p. 71). According to Baum et al. (2006), PAR:

focuses on research whose purpose is to enable action. Action is achieved through a reflective cycle, whereby participants collect and analyse data, then determine what action should follow. The resultant action is then further researched and an iterative reflective cycle perpetuates data collection, reflection, and action as in a corkscrew action. (p. 854)

The goal and benefit of PAR is also demonstrated by Stringer (2007) while describing the cycle and framework of this kind of project:

Collaborative exploration helps practitioners, agency workers, client groups, and other stake-holding parties to develop increasingly sophisticated understandings

of the problems that confront them. As they rigorously explore and reflect on their situation together, they can repudiate social myths, misconceptions, and misrepresentations and formulate more constructive analysis of their situation. By sharing their diverse knowledge and experience—expert, professional, and lay—stakeholders can create solutions to their problems and, in the process, *improve the quality of their community life* [emphasis added]. (p. 11)

So, in character with other types of action research, every good PAR needs to satisfy the requirement of leading to change in the organization or community where the research is conducted. In other words, PAR is essentially transformational. In the words of Baum et al. (2006), “PAR researchers argue that the research process must be democratic, equitable, liberating and life enhancing” (p. 35).

3.4.(iv). *How is knowledge generated?*

As stated above, participatory action researchers work on the epistemological assumption that the purpose of academic research and discourse is not just to describe, understand, and explain the world, but to change it (Reason and Tobert, 2001). According to Coghlan and Brannick (2010): The issue is not so much the form of the knowledge produced...but who decides the research agenda in the first place and who benefits directly from it” (p. 6). The epistemological question—how is knowledge generated and by whom—is a core distinguishing criterion for PAR.

Wadsworth (1998) sees PAR as an expression of “new paradigm science” that differs significantly from old paradigm or positivist science (p.3). Baum et al. (2006) point out that:

the hallmark of positivist science is that it sees the world as having a single reality that can be independently observed and measured by objective scientists preferably under laboratory conditions where all variables can be controlled and manipulated to determine causal connections. By contrast new paradigm science and PAR posits that the observer has an impact on the phenomena being observed and brings to their inquiry a set of values that will exert influence on the study. (p. 854)

This speaks to the epistemological benefit of being part of a PAR process for research leaders and co-researchers. Knowledge is generated through dialogue in the process of the iterative cycles of data collection, analysis, action, and further reflections on the actions, and so on. Springett et al. (2011), see the knowledge creation process as a distinctive dimension that flows from the participatory principle, saying:

As soon as one moves from research “on” to research “with,” thus recognizing that actors hold many different perspectives on an issue, knowledge is created through dialogue between the different perspectives and between the people involved. This is achieved by the opening up of communicative spaces in the research process for this to take place. It also involves the recognition that knowledge is always in a process of becoming, it is never fixed. It is forever dialectic. The co-creative, collective process of knowledge generation requires facilitation so that trust can be built and maintained and attitudes and behaviours that mirror the fundamental human values of dignity, respect, mutuality, and reciprocity can be nurtured. It also means explicitly paying attention to power issues in terms of how each voice

is heard, how the dialogue is encouraged, and how joint ownership is created. (p. 10)

3.4.(v). *How does the researcher manage to get out of the way and make it truly participatory?*

You might wonder how a researcher can avoid letting his or her own beliefs, judgements and practices from getting in the way of the research. This question is answered by the concept of *reflexivity* and is considered another essential principle of PAR. According to Coghlan and Brannick (2010), reflexivity “is used in the social sciences to explore and deal with the relationship between the researcher and the object of research” (p. 41). Reflexivity generally refers to the examination of one’s own beliefs, judgements and practices during the research process and how these may have influenced the research. As Springett et al. (2011) state:

While reflexivity has become increasingly recognized as important to qualitative research in particular, an acknowledgement of the positionality of the researcher—in participatory research critical reflexivity—is at the core of all stages of the research process. The dialogical processes at the heart of PR can only be successful to the extent that issues of power are acknowledged and understood. Critical theory is an important foundation for reflexivity and can be brought into the arena for dialogue by the professional researchers alongside local theories. The continual questioning of the “taken for granted” lies at the heart of reflexivity and thus of the knowledge creation process. (p. 10)

Research has been compared to the detective story in which by solving the crime the detective comes to understand something about him or herself. This metaphor is made

in the context of action research, but is surely a broader comment on the humanist nature of reflexive judgement (Hammond and Wellington, 2014). Critical reflection is not considered separate from the research process, but is integral to it. As Friere (1970) says in his famous dictum, “Reflection without action is sheer verbalism or armchair revolution and action without reflection is pure activism, or action for action’s sake” (p. 41). In the same vein, Baum et al. (2006) add that “PAR sees that action and reflection must go together, even temporally so that praxis cannot be divided into a prior stage of reflection and a subsequent stage of action” (p. 856).

3.5 Appreciative Inquiry as a PAR Approach

In contrast to problem-centric community development and research methodologies, appreciative inquiry (AI) has a positive vibe to it. AI is said to represent “an alternative PAR process with emerging new methodologies that allow for an extension and elevation of community strengths, where the images of normative existence within that community are shifted toward the exceptional or extraordinary (Boyd and Bright, 2007, p. 1025). Credited to David Cooperrider, AI guides and nourishes the organization along the lines of their best stories. According to Branson (2004), what the AI process provides is an organization-wide (community-wide) mode for initiation and discerning narratives and practices that are generative, creative, and life giving. The key principle of AI is to focus on what is working (the positive), instead of spending energy on organizational/institutional failures. The author presents a list of ten assumptions of AI that he considers as the groundworks upon which the principles of AI are built:

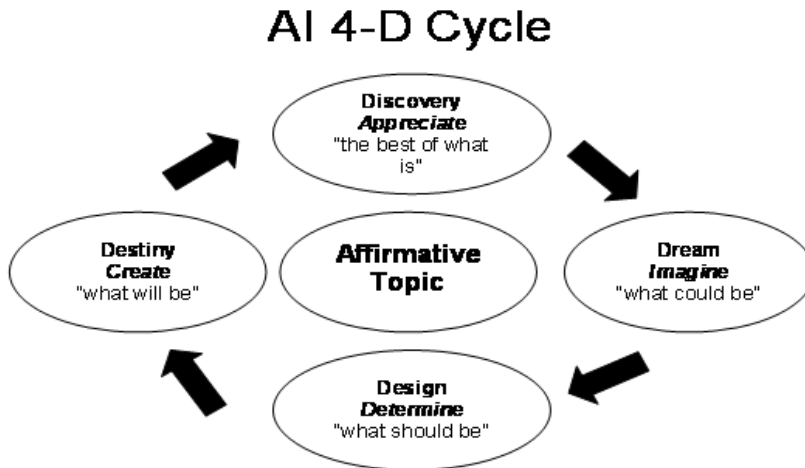
1. In every organization, some things work well
2. What we focus on becomes our reality

3. Asking questions influences the group
4. People have more confidence in the journey to the future when they carry forward parts of the past
5. If we carry parts of the past into the future, they should be what's best about the past
6. It is important to value differences
7. The language we use creates our reality
8. Organizations are heliotropic
9. Outcomes should be useful
10. All steps are collaborative (Chapter 2, loc. 577)

The AI process is simple. It has all the essential elements of participatory action research—collaborative, participatory, community-centred, and so on. However, instead of focusing on what is not working and trying to solve problems, AI begins with the premise “that there are examples of success in our past that we can learn from to create greater success in the future. Specifically, instead of dissecting problems, AI seeks to determine the state that the system aspires to” (Acosta and Douthwaite, 2005, p. 1). Therefore, AI begins with a good, positive question, believing as stated by Whitney et al. that “the wisdom of inquiry lies with the willingness and ability to ask questions that breathe mold and challenge the status quo while at the same time, strengthen relatedness and guide people to value-based performance and higher levels of consciousness” (loc. 687).

AI engages the action research cycles through four continuous phases known as the *4D Cycle* or *4D model of discovery, dream, design, and destiny*. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3. 4-D Cycle of Appreciative Inquiry



As described by Cooperrider et al. (2005), the AI process comprises:

the discovery phase (“what gives life” to the organization, that is, appreciating and valuing what is best of what is or has been), the dream phase (envisioning “what might be,” affirmative exploration), the design phase (co-constructing “what should be,” the ideal), and lastly, destiny (sustaining “what will be,” envisioned future). (p. 5)

Overall, appreciative inquiry is a powerful tool for facilitating change by crossing boundaries, engaging groups, and promoting a united approach to organizational change (Trajkovski, Schmied, and Vickers, 2013). It is the approach I chose for my

study, in a decision that I came to carefully and thoughtfully. I think that in its characteristics of shared participation, mutual generation and sharing of knowledge, PAR reflects the nature of a church community. I am also of the opinion that the language of academic research does not readily lend itself very well to the description of spiritual nature of church-related life. I remember suggesting to a former pastoral assistant to be careful with making statements like, “when I was researching for this sermon,” from the pulpit. The inference could be that a sermon is nothing more than an academic exercise. Likewise, research in a church ministry setting is more than academic exercise. This may come off a bit too fuzzy for some, but my point is to emphasize that extra care needs to be taken in making the decision for research methodology in a church ministry setting.

3.6. Theology of Appreciative Inquiry/My approach to Ministry

While churches and church leaders easily default into problem solving in the prevailing atmosphere of melancholy and fear, AI, as I am endeavouring to show, proposes a different model. AI invites churches to approach ministry by engaging in their best practices. In other words, they should count their blessings instead of dwelling on what is not working. The theology of AI can therefore be said to relate to Fox’s idea of “original blessing” instead of the commonly known concept and theology of original sin. As cited by Bauckham (1996), Fox claims that Christians urgently need to recover a sense of the world as God’s good creation and ourselves as part of that creation. He emphasizes that what a sense of creation involves, theologically and existentially, is the theme of blessing, arguing that “In Original Blessing, the goodness of creation as given by God -- the blessing of creation in God’s continuous, extravagant lavishing of goodness on it -- is more fundamental than the marring of creation by human sin and evil” (p.118).

Sandu (2011) makes the same point differently when he speaks about Beatitude Theology:

The historical model of appreciative paradigm consists in Beatitudes Theology...The equivalent to the 10 Commandments in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ is the Beatitudes (Happy is the one who...). The Christian vision chooses to replace the retributive ethics with the affirmative one. (p. 133)

Branson (2004) agrees, citing the example of Paul's attempt in his letters to encourage his readers to focus on the blessings of God instead of the threats they were facing:

The church in Thessalonica was under two kinds of external threats: religious persecution and social pressure. Paul's pastoral admonitions indicate that these environmental forces were dangerous because they tempted the church to capitulate to fear...and seduction. But Paul's letter does not begin with the problems and his pastoral solutions. Rather, he begins with thanksgiving (1 Thess. 1:2-10; 2 Thess. 1:3-4; 2:13). ...Paul wants his readers to begin with this frame of gratefulness, this opening prayer of thanksgiving, so that his pastoral initiatives can be properly understood. The life-giving resources that they need are not just external, they are available in their own practices, and through their own narratives. (chapter 3)

Original blessing (beatitudes) and gratitude (thanksgiving) provide the theological foundation of the appreciative paradigm.

In an essay titled "Ingratitude is not an option: Gratitude as *imago Dei*," published in a recent edition of Anglican Theological Review, Bohache, (2021) espoused the view that "gratitude is hard-wired into the very fiber of our being" (p. 298). This thesis

refrains from going the whole extent of the author's views which relate *imago Dei* to the sexuality of God. But, I agree with the fundamental premise of his essay, which is the view that "humans were created in the image and likeness of God, and God was thankful for what God had created. Thus, if we are the *imago Dei*, we must feel gratitude as God did." This takes us back to the very beginning of Genesis, where, before the fall of man, we meet God who was happy with and rejoiced in His creation. Therefore, the idea of original blessing (a disposition which God had towards creation) predates that of original sin.

I also see a direct correlation between the theology of grace and the theology of gratitude. Paul says in Romans 5:8 "But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us" (NRSV). That is grace. If the theology of grace teaches us that God loves us in spite of ourselves, the theology of gratitude invites us to be appreciative of the love of God for us and thankful for what God is doing in us and among us, again, in spite of ourselves.

It was a big challenge to reestablish my grounds in ministry when I arrived North America. The global Anglican Church is one Communion. From the southern bottom of the globe to the north pole, the Anglican church has the same formularies of faith, structure, Book of Common Prayer, and ordering of worship. Therefore, ordination into holy orders in one part of the world, means ordination into the ministry of the world-wide church. I came from Africa with years of ministry in Nigeria where the church is known to be vibrant and thriving. So, the shock was huge when I arrived in North America and experienced a church of aging congregations, and church closings.

Two personal experiences have helped to solidify my resolve and commitment

as a minister, and also helped to influence the direction of this project. The first was about four years ago. It is my practice to take my family to worship with neighbouring church congregations over the course of my annual holidays in the summer. We visit and worship with different congregations to have a feel of how they are doing, and maybe, learn from them. We were at a church one Sunday as they were having a guest preacher. He was a church planter on the verge of opening a new church in another small town about thirty kilometres west of where we are. The kicker for me was that the new church he was planting was located in a neighbourhood where an Anglican church was about to be shut down. Sleep eluded me that night. What are we not doing well? What is it about our denomination that brought us to the place where we are nursing our churches to death in communities where others are seeing fresh opportunities for new ministry and church planting?

The second major experience was my encounter with Appreciative Inquiry at my previous parish—St. Andrew’s Sidney, in the Diocese of British Columbia, where we used the principles of AI to reinvigorate the pastoral care ministry of the parish. I think I have grown in my spiritual life and have become more in tune with where I am in ministry by the connection I have made in this project between AI and missional ecclesiology. If God is at work in every place and at every time, then my role as a minister is to help my congregation connect with what God is doing among us. Take ministry in an aging congregation for instance. On the surface, what presents itself in this situation is the need to reduce the average age of the church. How do you do that when there is no one in the lower age groups to work with? I have discovered that the choice is mine whether to spend my time in pursuit of a demographic that is not available to me, or to make the best

of what I have.

Missional ecclesiology has taught me of the ever-abiding presence of God in all situations and in every place. That being the case, I am convinced that adopting an appreciative outlook of where we are as a church (not melancholic foreboding) will help us to connect with where God is at work among us. For instance, an effective ministry of care for one another in an aging congregation where the lonely are visited by others, the sick are loved and taken care of, people help one another by doing things as small as providing rides and doing grocery shopping, and so on, will make a big difference. We will become a church where no one is allowed to fall through the cracks. Instead, parishioners are loved and taken care of by their church family. People (maybe even the younger generations) will love to be part of what we have. I want to be part of a church like that, and I am committed to the leadership that will make it happen. This new look at where we are as a church has strengthened me in my faith and spiritual journey.

The last point may be begging the question of the overall goal of the project. What will the missional church we are talking about look like? This may be a tricky question, since this is, after all, an academic study. We want to rescind from determining the result before the research is conducted. That said, I got hints of what the end point may look like in both written work and lived experiences of communities of faith. Keller (2001), writing on the subject matter, enumerates essential elements of the missional church in contrast with the elements of the church in the era of Christendom (p.1). According to Keller, a missional church:

- Creates a Christian community which is counter-cultural and counter-intuitive.

- In Christendom, 'fellowship' is basically just a set of nurturing relationships, support and accountability. That is necessary, of course.
- In a missional church, however, Christian community must go beyond that to embody a 'counter-culture,' showing the world how radically different a Christian society is with regard to sex, money, and power.
 - In sex. We avoid both the secular society's idolization of sex and traditional society's fear of sex. We also exhibit love rather than hostility or fear toward those whose sexual life patterns are different.
 - In money. We promote a radically generous commitment of time, money, relationships, and living space to social justice and the needs of the poor, the immigrant, the economically and physically weak.
 - In power. We are committed to power-sharing and relationship-building between races and classes that are alienated outside of the Body of Christ.
 - In general, a church must be more deeply and practically committed to deeds of compassion and social justice than traditional liberal churches and more deeply and practically committed to evangelism and conversion than traditional fundamentalist churches. This kind of church is profoundly 'counter-intuitive' to American observers. It breaks their ability to categorize (and dismiss) it as liberal or conservative. Only this kind of church has any chance in the non-Christian west (p. 3).

A good example of a contemporary missional church in North America with this mix of what Keller refers to as “commitment to deeds of compassion” and “justice more

than liberal churches” on the one hand, and “commitment to evangelism and conversion” more than “fundamentalist churches” on the other, is found in House for All Sinners and Saints, a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in Denver, Colorado, founded by Nadia Bolz-Weber. Her congregation includes LGBT people, people with addictions, compulsions and depression, and even non-believers. In an interview with Fresh Air on National Public Radio (NPR), the pastor says, "Some churches might have a hard time welcoming junkie and drag queens; we're fine with that" (Fresh Air, 2015). Bolz-Weber started House of All Sinners and Saints in 2008, and by 2015, the congregation had grown to 250 worshippers every Sunday. The number has grown even more today.

Our demographics differ. That is a known fact. Therefore, we know that the outcome for this kind of project will differ from community to community. However, I began my project with the expectation that the end-products of the effort will strengthen the Anglican identity in parish communities by renewing their focus on the Five Marks of Mission. Secondly, I expect that the project will give a missional orientation to those parishes. If the study results in propositions for a future that is outside the box but attends to a need in the local community, I believe the study will have achieved its goal, as it is also my understanding that it is the process of the research that will determine the outcome. Since we are having a missional conversation in this project, it would be counterproductive to expect that the outcome will be the same old way of doing ministry.

Chapter Summary

This chapter explains how our participatory research approach is situated within the action research paradigm. It establishes the principles of PAR as the cornerstone of

this project, and presents an analysis of the identified principles of good PAR. It engages the analysis by explaining who plays what role and for whom in PAR, exploring the context, goal/ benefit, how knowledge is generated in the course of the study, and explaining the concept of reflexivity. It presents a more detailed outline of Appreciative Inquiry emphasizing that AI bears the core elements of participatory action research—collaborative, participatory, community-centred, and so on. But in contrast to the problem-solving approach of other research methodologies, this chapter has highlighted AI’s strength-based approach. Finally, the chapter presents my reflection on the theology of AI and on my personal experiences in ministry, which come together to inform the direction of this project in missional ecclesiology.

Chapter 4: Data Generation, Synthesis, and Analysis

4.1 Chapter Preamble

This chapter documents the practical application of the methodology outlined above at two parishes in the Anglican Diocese of Huron, Southwestern Ontario. It will offer a step-by-step guide to how I initiated, introduced, and conducted AI at two different parishes by bringing the communities of faith together in participatory research. The study was conducted on two of the marks of mission (marks 2 and 4). Mark 2 was the focus at St. John's Tillsonburg where the lead researcher is located as Rector as indicated above. The second parish where the study was conducted is St. Hilda's-St. Luke's, in the small city of St. Thomas. The focus of their study was the fourth mark of mission. Like St. John's, this parish has given me permission to identify them by name as participants in this study.

4.2 Outline of Appreciative Inquiry Process Phases - 4I Model

As I indicated in the previous chapter, my project is using appreciative inquiry as a research method within the broad methodological paradigm of participatory action research (PAR) to generate data. It is helpful to recall Baum et al.'s (2006) descriptive and general definition of PAR here:

PAR seeks to understand and improve the world by changing it. At its heart is collective, self-reflective inquiry that researchers and participants undertake, so they can understand and improve upon the practices in which they participate and the situations in which they find themselves. The reflective process is directly linked to action, influenced by understanding of history, culture, and local context and

embedded in social relationships. The process of PAR should be empowering and lead to people having increased control over their lives. (p. 854)

Hung (2017) describes AI as “a theory and method of research in organizational development, characterized by a positive approach” (p.1). My project is following a growing trend of interest by researchers and organizational leadership practitioners in using the positive AI approach as a method for the development of best practices.

Again, I reemphasize my opinion that a local church parish setting does not readily lend itself to some of the standard research methods. For instance, a quantitative approach and some qualitative methods might appear too academic in church settings and therefore not yield the desired results for ministry or spiritual renewal. On the other hand, the positive and conversational approach of the AI process, and the foundation of collective action in participatory research, will more readily bring a parish community together for conducting the inquiry in an atmosphere that mirrors familiar parish ministry settings, like Bible studies and committee meetings. This is the reason I chose AI as a method for my project. I believed that the positive, conversational approach of AI will provide the generative process for the conduct of my research in parish church settings.

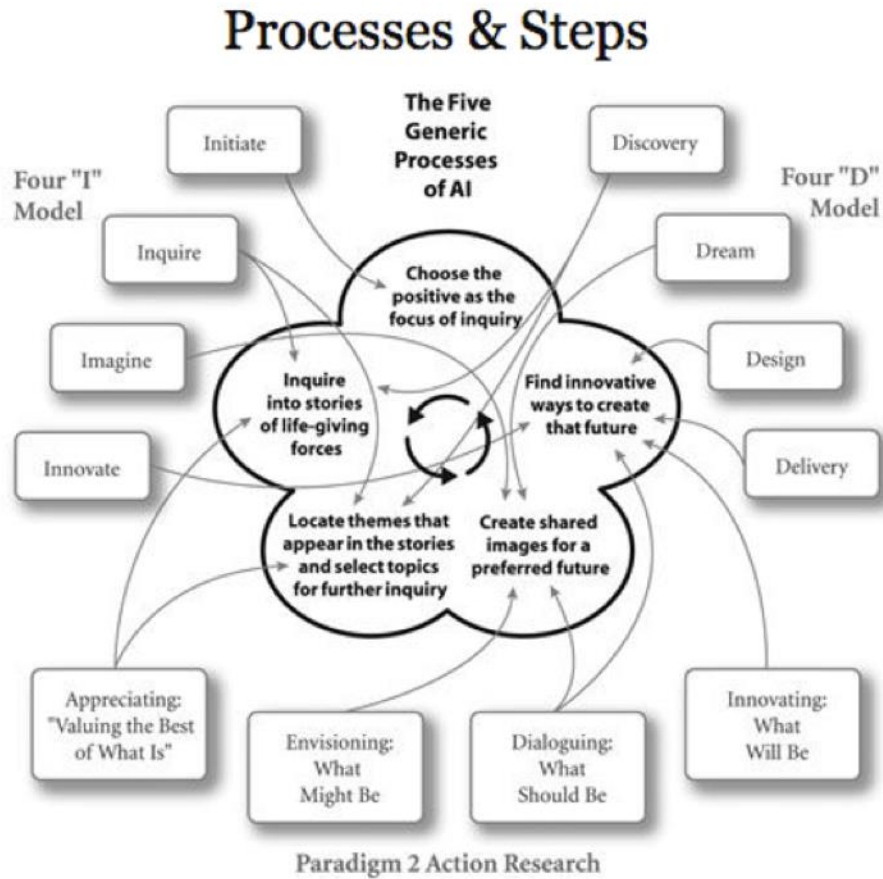
Again, the overarching questions which guided my inquiry are:

1. What is it like to transition traditional parish ministries into missional models in accordance with the five marks of mission?
2. How do leaders of congregations see or understand the five marks of mission?
3. What is the Anglican view of a missional church?

These questions guided my inquiry into how a church congregation might make the five marks the focus of their ministry. I planned to identify interested parishes in the Diocese of Huron with whom to work on this project (one mark at each church that opted in to work with me). Invitations to participate were sent to all parishes in the Diocese (see Appendix 1). Two churches opted in, the first to explore Mark number 2, and the second church chose to explore Mark number 4. The 4D model (discover, dream, design, deliver) of AI (see Figure 3) was used to generate and analyze the data. However, in place of the 4D terminology, I followed Branson's (2004) terminology of *four I's: Initiate, Inquire, Imagine, and Innovate*. The setting was planned to be at a one-day retreat-like session called "Mission Summit" at each of the parishes. I recruited participating churches by sending out a letter introducing my project and its process to all the parishes in the diocese. My plan was that if more than five parishes opted in, a process would be put in place to make the selection. But if fewer than five parishes opted in, I would conduct the study with them on the mark of mission that they choose to explore. As I have stated, two parishes opted in.

4.3 Processes and steps

Figure 4. AI Processes & Steps



NOTE: THE DIAGRAM FLOW IS COUNTER-CLOCKWISE. IT DEMONSTRATES HOW THE 4I AND 4D MODELS RELATE TO EACH OTHER AND HOW THEY PLAY OUT.

4.3(i). Step 1. Initiate (Discover)

This first step has the following objectives:

1. Lay the foundations
2. Determine the research focus
3. Form the generic questions
4. Create initial strategies (Branson, loc. 2711. Appendix 1)

I planned to set the tone for the inquiry process by guiding the community involved to choose a positive focus on the particular mark of mission under review. This step aimed to mark a new beginning by changing the conversation from focussing on what is not working to telling stories of life-giving forces relating to the mark of mission (valuing the best of what is).

As the facilitator of this conversation, I began this step by introducing the AI process and highlighting the Biblical foundations of appreciation relating to the particular mark of mission. This segment was planned to begin with a plenary session of all participants, where life-giving stories are told for the hearing of all (*Appreciative Conference*). The segment was planned to last from 60 to 90 minutes and recorded with a digital audio-recorder by the research assistant. The recording would later be transcribed for the use of the lead researcher in reflecting on the process, and analyzing the connection between the emergent themes and the findings. Following the appreciative conference, the participants would break into focus groups of six to 10, each (depending on the number of attendants) for another 30 to 60 minutes. Using flip charts or whiteboards, the focus groups would locate themes that appear in the stories they heard at the plenary and select topics. The theming constitutes part of data analysis which is inbuilt to run concurrently with data generation and done collectively by all research participants in accordance with the prin-

ciples of Participatory Action Research. One co-participant would be appointed to facilitate each of the focus groups and capture the emergent themes on a flip chart or whiteboard. Finally, all the topics selected by each of the focus groups would be combined to inform the discussion at the next step.

4.3 (ii) Step 2: Inquire (Dream).

This is the stage in the AI 4I or 4D Model at which research participants continue to inquire into those stories of life-giving forces and move further to a different level of discussion by creating shared images for the desired future (envisioning what might be). Here, I planned to bring participants back to plenary, seated in a circular formation. I also planned to use *Learning circle* as the research tool for more data generation and analysis at this stage. Wallace (2004) defines a learning circle as:

a format for dialogue that invites participation in a manner that may be different from the typical conversational format, as it is not based on debate. It is a valuable and effective mode of communication that, when utilized correctly, can be a foundation for deep dialogue. (para. 1)

The participants will inquire into the future—or dream together about what their future could look like on the mark of mission concerned—based on the themes emerging from the conversation at the previous stage. “Learning Circle” was chosen because I considered it a good vehicle to create the enabling environment for participants to be drawn deeper into the conversation as they share their individual dreams for the future, based on the emergent themes. The suggestions are captured in a flip chart and research notes. The research assistant was also planned to audio-record this segment for the same reason as stated above. This segment was planned to last around 40 - 60 minutes.

4.3 (iii) Step 3: *Imagine (Design)*.

The third step was scheduled to take about 50 to 60 minutes, beginning at plenary of all participants. The lead researcher will explain the significance of the step and will introduce the important concept of provocative propositions. After the lead researcher has explained the step, participants will return to their former focus groups to complete the actions. The goal of this phase is to find innovative ways to create the future (develop what should be), or in the words of Branson, (“ (2004) create shared images for the preferred future.” Branson’s suggested actions for this step are for the participants to collate data, share data, find life-giving themes, decide themes for initial focus, and develop provocative proposals (Appendix M). The term *provocative proposition* (proposal) is a phrase linked to generative theory and can be described simply in terms of social architecture, processes where a model of design elements is used to identify categories for participants to organize around and create change proposals, often called possibility statements, or design statements (Bushe, 2012). Therefore, participants will at this stage construct change proposals (what they can do together), based on the emergent themes of the discussions.

Each focus group in this third step was facilitated by an appointed participant, and they were focussed on designated aspects of the emergent themes, creating provocative proposals around them. The proposals were captured in flow charts by the facilitators, and recorded by the lead researcher and research assistant. The audio recordings would be for the same purpose as stated above.

4.3 (iv) Step 4: *Innovate (Deliver)*

The fourth step, (*Innovate*) deals with how the imaginative future becomes tangible and integrated into congregational life (Branson, 2004, Chapter 5). In other words, the participants formulated plans for tangible action in the area of the mark of mission that the congregation can live into, based on the positive aspirations and new language reflected in the provocative proposals. Branson suggests four specific actions to be taken in step four:

1. Informal personal initiatives
2. Informal initiatives of pairs and small groups
3. Initiatives and collaboration of formal committees
4. Formal initiatives of official boards

The participants were returned to plenary for this final step. The section was audio recorded and transcribed later for reflection, analysis, and study evaluation. The action plans formulated at this stage will hopefully become a new ministry direction for the parish on the mark of mission studied. Mission-summit reports (Appendix 3 and 4), outlining how the process evolved and the actionable plans that resulted from it was produced by the lead researcher to guide the parish council in taking next steps.

4.4 Preparation and Work-Plan

4.4 (i) Preparation

The lead researcher set a date for the project in agreement with the Parish Council of St. John's. Recruitment invitation notice was made by parish announcements. The announcements were broadcast through the parish-weekly electronic news bulletin to all parishioners that have already opted-in to the parish email list, verbally announced at the

beginning of church services and weekly study group meetings, and projected onto the overhead screen before Sunday morning services. The mission summit date was set two weeks from the date of the first recruitment notice. The arrangement was to pre-register a maximum of 20 participants for the study. Registered participants received forms for consent agreements. The lead researcher met with the Council closer to the summit day to make preparations for the session, including seating arrangements for plenary, focus groups, and learning circle sessions.

4.4 (ii) Work Plan

The entire study including data generation, collection, and collective analysis was set to happen over the course of one day. The process followed the Appreciate Inquiry steps outlined above. My colleague, the Rev'd. Dr. Val Kenyon (a recent graduate of a Doctor of Ministry program through the University of Toronto) was my research assistant. She joined us as an observer at the mission summit session. During the summit, plenary sessions were recorded with digital audio recorder by the research assistant. She was joined by another volunteer to audio record the two last focus group sessions—one recorder per group—while lead researcher alternated between the groups. Emergent themes were captured on flip charts and research notes at all sessions. The lead researcher and research assistant monitored the group energy as the day evolved and scheduled breaks as needed.

4.5 Field Work

4.5. (i) St. John's Tillsonburg (Second mark of mission)

The mission summit was preceded by an informal evening gathering of members of the parish council with the lead researcher. The meeting was aimed at formulating the study questions collectively in accordance with a fundamental principle of PAR, namely, that organizations such as a church are socially constructed, (Stringer, 2007; Coghlan and Brannick, 2010). Also as stated by MacDonald (2012), “PAR involves the full and active participation of the community at all levels of the entire research process” (p. 39). Although it was already determined that the focus of the study at St. John’s would be on the second mark of mission, the community needed to be involved in formulating the question in order to make it a truly participatory process. As the lead researcher, I facilitated the study session.

I began the session by introducing the council to the general concept of Appreciative Inquiry. Council members appeared drawn into the positive outlook of the study, and after a few attempts, formulated the question to guide the study: “What are your positive memories of Sunday school and youth formation?” The initial rendering ended with Sunday school. But, there was a strong support for the addition of *youth formation* in order to give the study a wider range that includes older children. The question is broad, open-ended, and focussed on the second mark of mission. It laid the foundation of a positive focus.

Mission Summit

18 adult participants (including the lead researcher and research assistant) took part in this study. We gathered at the hall of St. John’s on Saturday, March 2022. All participants arrived before the session began at 9:00 a.m. Each participant received a Consent Form (Appendix 2) which they all signed and returned to the lead researcher.

4.5. (i) (a) Initiate/Discover Phase

In principle, this phase began two days earlier at the session with council members. By choosing a question with a positive outlook, the stage was set for an appreciative process.

Appreciative Conference:

The conference was held in a plenary session of all study participants. The lead researcher introduced the participants to the concept of AI, laying out the 10 principles of the concept (Branson, 2004). I also made a brief biblical connection to the principle of appreciation (thanksgiving), using the text of Philippians 4: 8 - “Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (NRSV)

The study question - “what are your positive memories of Sunday school and youth formation?” - was put forward. 12 participants shared stories of their positive memories of participating or observing the positive impact on children of Sunday school and youth formation. Excerpts of their stories include -

- a. We received honours badges at Sunday school. Whatever you did you had your own badge of achievement to take home which meant a lot to us. As we grew older into the youth group, other churches came together with us and we would play games like badminton.
- b. Yes, that’s my experience too. We had different activities. I still have my 10 - year attendance badge.
- c. I was a Sunday school teacher for many years. It was a thing of joy to meet one of the students in one of my Sunday school classes 30 years later and he

had good memories of our time together. I asked him what made the time special, and the young man said, “at that time, the church was ours not theirs.” It touched me that Sunday school children felt that the church belonged to them.

- d. My grandchildren have since participated in activities in the church. They do crafts of Bible stories and things like that, but not only that, they also take active part in the church during church services. When they say a prayer for someone, they will write the person’s name on a sticky note and hold it with them, and then they will bring those notes and put them onto their offertory plates themselves, and they will surround the altar during prayers. That was very meaningful to them. They felt comfortable. I think it made the church safe for them. Recently one of them was invited to read during the service and she felt comfortable standing before everyone to read because they’ve been in the sanctuary in the presence of adults many times before, so that was no problem for them.
- e. I remember looking forward to Sunday because we had a different circle of friends that were formed at Sunday school that were different from our school friends that we met with Monday to Friday. These friends at church became special. It was always something to look forward to: to go and be with them and socialize with them at Sunday school on Sundays.
- f. Same idea. I remember having a different circle of friends growing up in (the town they grew up) that truly became close to me and we grew up together. Some of those relationships we have maintained today after so many years.

- g. The reward badges from Sunday school helped to build my self-esteem. I could not participate in sports at school due to my physical disabilities.
- h. I grew up in a very abusive and broken home. A woman, a neighbour, took my sister and I to church, and it was in that church at Sunday school that we came to know Christ. I got love by going to Sunday school.
- i. I remember the children's participation in telling stories during Christmas pageants here at St. John's. And their parents and aunts and uncles sat and listened joyfully to their stories. The children were the focus of the service as they were taking part.
- j. Growing up in a different country, it was at that Sunday school that I learned to read with the King James Bible. We were given memory boxes with scripture verses. I was able to memorize a whole lot of bible verses from my memory box. We graduated to the youth group. The youth group would have competitions among themselves. And whoever wins the competition would represent the youth group in competition among all the churches in the convention. I would say that Sunday school and youth group brought me up to stand on a mountain.
- k. I enjoy the experience of Scouts participating in worship here at St. John's and flying different colours and flags.
- l. One of our former ministers came up with the idea of an after-school program here at Saint John's. Parents would just come up and drop off their children

after school. They can stay here and do their homework, play games, or whatever. There was no teaching whatsoever, and no preaching to try to come to convert them.

The *Initiate/Discover* phase of AI process continued by breaking the participants into two focus groups. The groups were tasked with identifying themes emerging for them individually from the stories they just heard at the appreciative conference. They were asked to write such themes down on sticky-noted and post the notes on a clip board. Below is a table of themes identified by the two focus groups.

Table 3

Emergent Themes from Stories

FOCUS GROUP 1	FOCUS GROUP 2
Ownership, My Space, Friendship, Enjoyment, Fun, Stories, Respect, Support, Love, Relationship, Connection, Self Esteem, Motivation, Active Participation, Education.	Active Participation in Service/Church Events, Getting Young Stars Involved, Opportunities for Friendship, Learning the Bible, After-School Programs, Making Bible Stories Relevant to Children, Gold Starts/Building Self-Confidence, Exciting Fun, Activities with other Churches, Reason to come, Being Loved, Sanctuary (Safety),

4.5 (i) (b) *Inquire/Dream*

All participants came back together for this phase to continue inquiring into the life-giving stories of past experiences of Sunday school and youth formation. The seating arrangement was reconfigured so that we sat in a circle. The goal of this segment was to envision a future, based on the emergent themes (dream) from the stories, by creating shared mental images for the desired future. Learning Circle was the data gathering tool employed, hence the sitting arrangement. I used a cross in place of a totem, and provided hand sanitizers in accordance with COVID-19 rules. Each participant sanitized their hands before taking over the cross which meant they held the authority to speak. Themes gathered from the two focus groups were read out loud. Then participants took turns to share the future they dreamt of resulting from those themes in the parish ministry to children and youths.

The summary of the dreams shared across the circle were captured on flip charts, numbered 1 to 19 below:

1. Gather the children and show their work. Praise them in front of the congregation
2. Get the children involved actively during services on Sunday
3. Encourage children to bring a friend or someone from their street. Extend friendship
4. Make the children the focus of a special event at church
5. Get the message out via social media
6. Have programs where children bring their parents
7. Use one of our parish bequests to hire a parish youth worker
8. Programs that support your families
9. Parish music director encourage children who are interested in music
10. Programs that encourage youth
11. A welcome package program for families arriving in the growing town of Tillsonburg
12. Working collaboratively with other churches in town on children formation programs
13. Develop programs that children and youths will be invited to
14. More children learning moral values from the church since they may not get that anywhere else
15. We back up a pastor for children and work with him to make the community see how loving and caring our church is for the well-being of children

16. Use resources already provided by the town, other churches, to the Upper Deck youth services
17. Use the resources within our congregation
18. Expert to assess our potentials as parish community in relation to children and youth ministry
19. We step away from survival mentality and demonstrate more commitment to doing God's work.

4. 5 (i) (c) *Imagine/Design*

This segment began with all participants coming together after a lunch break.

The goal of this phase is to “collate data, share data, find life giving themes, decide themes for initial focus” (Branson, 2004, Appendix M). In other words, this phase aims to find innovative ways to create the future emerging from the dreams shared in the preceding segment. I introduced the concept of *provocative proposition* as a generative theory to guide this important step.

After introducing the concept, participants returned to their initial focus groups. The dreams stated above were divided into two. Numbers 1-11 went to focus group 1, and numbers 11 to 19 were given to focus group 2. The groups were charged to develop provocative propositions (possibility statements) from the dreams. Table 3 is a breakdown of the outcome of their work:

Table 4

Provocative Propositions/Proposals

	Group 1	Group 2
1	“Our congregation and Youth Pastor at St. John’s, are pleased as we see the many children who participate in our services.”	“Youth Choir at St. John’s win inter-church musical competition.”
2	“Our church is filled with joy as all generations are fully welcomed and served.”	“New Mom’s Group takes over Church kitchen for Pancake Day.”
3	“God’s word is spread by youth participation both in the church and the community, fostered by participation in music, dance, drama and service at the altar.”	“Youth Pastor played donkey in St. John’s Christmas Pageant.”
4		“Children from our Caring Hands knitting group, bring their knitting into the church to be blessed before sending to World Vision.”
5		“Youth Pastor seeking GANG* members for Gaming Night.”
		*GANG – God’s Awesome New Generation)

4.5 (i) (d) Innovate/Deliver

This is the phase in the AI process at which participants formulate tangible action plans for the future. In this case, a plan to live into the propositions developed in step three for Sunday school and youth formation, including the activation of informal initiatives for action by individuals, pairs, or in small groups, forming committees for steps leading to full implementation, and getting the parish council involved (Branson, 2004, chapter 5).

The participants returned to plenary for this final segment. After I explained the rationale and goal of the segment, participants decided to form a committee of six to work with the parish council on the next steps and implementation. Individuals volunteered to work in the committee. A committee comprising men and women, a warden, council members, and non- council members was struck. A study report, outlining the study process, outcome, and suggestions for implementation was written by the lead researcher (Appendix 3) and submitted to the committee.

4.5 (ii) St. Hilda's-St. Luke's (Fourth Mark of Mission)

St. Hilda's - St. Luke's is a small Anglican parish in the community of St. Thomas, a suburb city of London, Ontario. It is a parish of about 100 families with a pre-COVID 19, average Sunday attendance of about 70. Their current minister retired recently as Bishop of one of the dioceses of the Anglican Church of Canada, and is therefore very active and knowledgeable in the administration of parish life and ministry. With his leadership, the parish responded to the invitation to join in this study and chose to explore the process for implementing the fourth mark of mission in their parish. The fourth mark of mission is: "To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge

violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation” (Anglican Church of Canada, 2021).

The process began with an hour Zoom call with six members of the parish ministry and mission team (three women and three men) with the bishop and I making it eight people in all. At this session, I introduced the team members to the process of the inquiry and addressed their questions for clarification. We picked a date on a Saturday for the mission summit. I was invited to a pre-summit session with the parish council at their monthly meeting, which was held on the Wednesday afternoon in the week of the summit. This meeting built on my meeting with the parish mission and ministry team, and continued to solidify the participatory research requirement to involve the community at every stage of the study (Stringer, 2007, Coghlan and Brannick, 2010; MacDonald, 2012).

At this session, I introduced the members of the council to the concept and process of AI and how it will evolve on Saturday. We discussed the fourth mark of mission, and collectively decided on the study question. Council members were fully engaged in the discussion. After a considerably thorough evaluation of the breadth of the fourth mark, the parish council decided to focus attention on the first leg of the tripod of the framework, namely, “to seek to transform unjust structures of the society,” leaving the other two legs—“to challenge violence of every kind” and “to pursue peace and reconciliation”—for consideration in the future. We then discussed what could be the study question to guide the mission summit focussed on transforming unjust structures of the society. After various suggestions, the council agreed collectively that the study question

would be: “What are your positive experiences of transforming unjust structures in any community?”

4.5 (ii) (a) Event Day: data collection, analysis, and findings

Twelve adult participants took part in the parish mission summit. They were composed of a mixture of some parish council members, some members of the mission and ministry team, two ordinary members of the congregation, and myself as the lead researcher. The study group was made up of five men and seven women.

We gathered at the parish fellowship hall on Saturday, April 23. Each participant received a Consent Form (Appendix 1) which they all signed and returned to the lead researcher. In accordance with the principles of participatory research, data was generated and analyzed collectively with the group by means of the ‘4I/4D’ cycle of AI as follows.

4.5 (ii) (b) Initiate/Discover Phase

This is the phase in the process at which we lay the foundations for the study, and determine what the focus will be (Branson, 2004 loc. 2711. Appendix 1). In essence, the phase began earlier at the meetings with the parish mission and ministry team and council where we introduced them to the concept of Appreciative Inquiry, and with them formulated the study question.

Appreciative Conference.

On the day of the mission summit (April 23, 2022), the process continued with an appreciative conference. The conference was held in a plenary session of all study participants. The lead researcher introduced the participants to the concept of AI, laying out the principles of the concept. Brief Biblical foundation was also established, first for AI, which we linked to the theology of appreciation (thanksgiving) in the entire Bible, but

particularly the text of Philippians 4: 8. Then, in order to further clarify the meaning of the concepts under discussion, we looked at Bible passages which form the root for addressing unjust structures including - Matthew 23:23, Micah 6:8, Zachariah 7:9, then Isaiah Chapter 58.

Next, the study question formulated earlier in the week was posed: “What are your positive experiences of transforming unjust structures in any community?”

As they considered positive experiences of transforming unjust structures in different communities, excerpts from the participant stories showed the following:

Participant A: In this community, I’ve been following the work of the Grace Cafè. It is a service that is already developed by a group of volunteers that are organized to provide free meals to the homeless and the poor in our community. Anyone is invited to go to the café. Some people are able to pay and some may not be able to pay, but they receive a meal and share in social interaction. Grace Café was started by an individual, a lady actually, but she now has a board that runs it.

Participant B: I like the positive change of recycling the garbage. That has been good for everybody.

Participant C: I want to highlight the good things that are happening at the food-banks

Participant D: Destination church working with the Kiwanis Club deliver food to seven schools in the community. These are a group of volunteers working with the Kiwanis club to deliver lunch to schools because of the scarcity of food. It is a feeding program that is available to many kids. The other story is a church in town which has some volunteers that about 12 years ago opened a shelter in their basement. Today, they now

have 24/7, 365 days per year in which anyone who is homeless and in needs somehow has accommodation. Currently they have 125 beds. They have identified 100 people in the city who are homeless. Every week they have social services who come in and distribute medical care, social welfare help, job help, etc. They have created this amazing system with the city, with the government and with volunteers. It is a plan for people in need, with the idea that for many of them, they will be able to move them into jobs or into their own homes. They have a grant from the government but this year they are going to need to raise \$500,000 to cover the rest of what they need. It is an amazing program for a city which only a few years ago hardly knew that we had any homeless people.

Me to participant "D": What's the name of the church?

Participant D: The church where it started is United. They just created the structure. But now it has grown to an organization that has no affiliation to the church. Just people helping people.

Participant E: I just read that \$3 million was given to our community to create a number of housing units on Queen Street, which is supposed to be developed by 2023. It will be developed, I think, for the people with low income; to move this group of people who need help into such homes.

Participant F: One of the good things about Indwell (the social housing program that started in a church) is that they provide social assistance to the occupants, which is something that is missing from other housing programs. Another story is that our church has a relationship with the forensic unit of the local psychiatric hospital. We are one of

the churches that go to provide a small service to the clients there. To me, it sends a message to those folks that there are some people in this community who cares for them. We want them to know that God is always with them and give them a little more sense of community and value in their life.

Me: So how do they connect with the church, do they tell you the needs there are and all that?

Participant G: The spiritual care giver of South West mental health unit is an Anglican priest. In the Clericus where the clergy gathered, he said we need some clergy to provide worship services, and people to stay with these guys sometimes. I contacted with the chaplain and said this is something that we can do. The past two years we have not been going in because of COVID, but we have been doing that before, sometimes five or six of us will go in; a musician and some choir members. We have a worship time and we minister. We are told there should be minimal interaction but our community renders worship service. As I said we have not been able to go in for two years, so we are dying to go back and be with the people.

Participant D: We are also involved with Muslims, and this builds bridges in our community. Our local Muslim community has no place to worship on Fridays. We provided them with a place for worship until recently when they now have their own local Muslim resource centre. It builds wonderful relationship. We have dinner together, and so on.

Participant H: St. Thomas police department welcomed a social worker to work with individuals who are recovering from addiction and substance abuse. They have a social worker attached to them who is now a part of the people who are going out to help.

They now have someone who is trained to listen, and is there to help with some solutions, and perhaps in ways that other people's trainings have not permitted them to do up until now. It's another way of outreach as well to people who are in vulnerable situations.

Participant G: I just went through the groups we have in St. Thomas, and I am amazed at the number of groups that are fund raising for people that are in need in order to provide whatever is needed. For a community with the size like ours of 40,000 people, it is well over 40 groups the groups that raise money for the poor, for the sick, whatever that is needed. I am amazed how many there are

Me: In which case our day together might lead to creating partnerships with the groups identified.

Participant F to participant H: "Are the social workers a part of the police force?"

Participant D: When we work with the participating groups, the direction we have is to call the station. And it is the police that activates the system for the help.

Me: before COVID-19, when we were following a mission and ministry plan, part of the discussion was a decision to find ways to partner with the police or to talk to the police and the city to find out what needs they can identify that they feel the church can help them with. Where do they see the possibility of partnering with our church to solve the problems there are?

Me: So, did we all grow up in St. Thomas? Is there something that is different from what you have heard now from elsewhere that you might want to share with us, just briefly?

Participant I: yeah! In Ingersoll, which is where I grew up, some of the churches came together and they created what was called the Lunch Bunch. It started off with one church and spread to four others. They will have a couple of buses go around the schools, during lunch hours, pick up the students, take them to one of the churches where everything was set up for lunch. But also, they had different kinds of social activity that the students can be involved in because a number of the students involved in the lunch bunch were also given an opportunity to go to summer camps which were organized by the churches in Ingersoll. It all started with giving lunch to students and spread to families that were supported in spending time together in the summer.

The *Initiate/Discover* continued in a different setting as participants were split into two focus groups of six and five. Each group went into a separate room, with the task to identify themes emerging for each individual from the stories shared at plenary. Themes were written on sticky-notes and posted on a clip board. Table 4 shows. The themes identified by the focus groups.

Table 5

Identified Themes from Stories

Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2
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<p>Resettling refugees, Service, Helping with food security, Building bridges, Partnership, Acceptance, Learning to receive, Compassion, Humility, Recognizing our vulnerabilities, Be the best you can be.</p>	<p>Feeding the hungry, Caring for environment, Faith, Funding, Providing shelter, Partnering, Outreach, Church involvement, Sense of belonging, Communication, Forgiveness, Cooperation, Commitment, Identifying need, Care, Sense of value, Determination, Positive influence, Government support, Level of training, Community organizations and agencies, Community awareness, Community connections, Inclusion, Family, Support grassroots movements.</p>
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4.5 (ii) (c) *Inquire/Dream*

Participants came back together for this phase to continue inquiring into their positive experiences of transforming unjust structures. The sitting arrangement was re-configured so that we sat in a circle. *The Inquire/Dream* segment is designed to help participants envision a future based on the emergent themes from the stories by creating shared mental images for the desired future. Learning Circle was the data gathering tool employed, hence the sitting arrangement. I used a cross in place of a totem, and provided hand sanitizers in accordance with COVID-19 rules. Each participant sanitized their hands before taking over the cross, which meant they held the authority to speak. Themes gathered from the two focus groups were read out loud. Then participants took turns to share the future they dreamt of resulting from those themes as the parish plans to be more active in transforming unjust structures.

The summary of the dreams shared across the circle were captured in flip charts, numbered 1 to 12 below:

1. Families coming from the larger community to St. Hilda's - St. Luke's to feel supported.
2. Brown bag lunch meets needs and brings people together.
3. We are more intentional in outreach - develop focus
4. Be a service church
5. Connect with agencies, build bridges, hands-on
6. Build an identity
7. Youth involvement in all areas (folk mass, choir)
8. Youths actively participate
9. "Barry" woven throughout dreams
10. Engage in God's mission - reaching into community
11. Celebrate dreams with a mission, with joy, with focus, with humility, with intention, with priorities
12. We are light to others - be a living church where God is at work among us

4.5 (ii) (d) Imagine/Design

This phase took place after lunch, beginning with all participants together. The goal of this phase is to "collate data, share data, find life giving themes, decide themes for initial focus" (Branson 2004, Appendix M). In other words, this phase aims to find innovative ways to create the future emerging from the dreams shared in the preceding segment. I introduced the concept of *provocative proposition* as a generative theory to guide this important step.

After introducing the concept, participants returned to their initial focus groups. The dreams stated above were divided into two: Numbers one to five went to focus group 1, and numbers, 6 to 12 were given to focus group 2. The groups were charged to develop provocative propositions (possibility statements) from the dreams. Table 5 shows the outcome of their work:

Table 6

Provocative Proposals/Propositions

	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2
1	Love is the light of our life together; we ignite the fire of life within	We are feeding the hungry
2	Our youth choir leads the congregation in song and worship with their voices, guitars and drums	We had such fun at messy church with the other families
3	We joyfully celebrate as we lift our voices in worship	I really enjoyed the meal we prepared together at church and shared it with my family
4	We intentionally share our love of/for God while connecting with our neighbours, our new partners	A group of us went to the Inn and shared coffee and fellowship

4.5 (ii) (e) Innovate/Deliver

Participants and lead researcher came back to plenary for this final segment of the AI process. At this stage, the study participants are meant to jointly formulate tangible action plans for the future. In this case, a plan to live into the propositions developed in

step three for transforming unjust structures, including the activation of informal initiatives for action by individuals, pairs, or small groups, forming committees for steps leading to full implementation, and getting the parish council involved (Branson 2004, chapter 5).

After I explained the rationale and goal of the segment, members of the parish mission and ministry implementation team stepped up to take over. Apparently, the parishes' participation was at their behest as they wanted a way to begin the conversation and planning that will lead to the development of a ministry around the fourth mark of mission. A study report, outlining the study process, outcome, and suggestions for implementation was written by the lead researcher (appendix 4) and submitted to the team.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the actions and the process of participatory research conducted at two parishes of the Anglican Diocese of Huron, in Southwestern Ontario - St. John's Church, Tillsonburg and St. Hilda's-St. Luke's in St. Thomas. We have shown the flow of the 4I model of AI resulting in the formulation of new plans (provocative/actionable proposals) for the future that the parishes will live into as they begin to implement those proposals.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Evaluation

As I stated in the Introduction to this exploratory, qualitative study, this project was not initiated in order to prove a definite hypothesis. Rather, it sought to describe and facilitate what the process of transforming a local Anglican parish ministry into missional models, in accordance with the framework of the Five Marks of Mission, might look like. I also expressed my hope that Appreciative Inquiry could engineer such a process and would lead to findings that might serve to both strengthen the congregational identity and deepen the sense of calling of parishes in communities where they are located. In this chapter, I will analyze a number of factors, including how the process of the study played out, the group dynamics that led to the emergence of themes and provocative propositions/findings, and what worked well, or posed a problem to the process. I will also discuss the congruency, or a lack thereof, of emergent themes from the mission summits vis-a-vis the provocative propositions adopted.

It is important to state here that the results of this project are the provocative propositions that the research participants arrived at collectively. I am making this point in order to highlight that they are the result of a process that moved through the '4D' AI steps of Discover, Dream, Design, and Deliver (Cooperrider et al. 2005) or in the terminology of Branson (2004), the '4I' model of Initiate, Inquire, Imagine, and Innovate. The study results also includes whatever next steps the parish committees and council might take to implement the propositions. To enable that, I have written study reports (see Appendices 3 and 4) to get local parish committees started.

This chapter will also evaluate the extent to which the process of the study satisfied the social constructionist framework which is fundamental to the participatory research paradigm. To do that effectively, I will use the principles of participatory research identified in chapter 3. I will also examine the extent to which the findings reach the goal of reorienting the conversations in the participating parishes from a place of melancholy to a positive parish ministry focus and identity. Finally, the chapter concludes with the presentation of my learning from doing this project, its benefit to local parishes in Southwestern Ontario and the wider church, and my suggestions for what could be done differently for further research in the future.

5. 1 Evaluation of the participatory framework and application of AI

This study began as an attempt to challenge the negative stereotypes that tend to present the church in North America, particularly the Anglican Church, as dying. Acknowledging that the phenomena of aging congregations and, in some cases, the outright closure of congregations, have resulted in anxiety and concern for their very existence in most mainline churches, this study aimed at changing the conversation. It began with the understanding that faith requires Christians not to focus on our dying parts, but to see and celebrate the ways in which God is journeying with us through these difficulties. I identified the Five Marks of Mission as the global Anglican Communion's response to present a framework for the mission of the church, and also to provide a channel towards a missional future. Therefore, the study embarked on using the Appreciative Inquiry process to explore how local parish congregations may develop marks-of-mission-based ministries by focussing on and building the areas of ministry in which they are doing well, instead of engaging in melancholic foreboding about their state and future.

The study's objective was to explore the possibility of establishing a process for the implementation of the five marks of mission. We began with a goal of bringing members of congregations together in a positive, generative process of conversations on their best practices, and building on those practices to the development of their own ways of implementing the marks of mission. The following is an evaluation of how the study used the social constructionist paradigm of participatory research to realize this goal at the two parishes, using AI.

5.1 (i) Who did what and for whom?

To what extent did my study, conducted at two parishes in the Anglican Diocese of Huron, comply with the democratic and participatory principles of PAR? As stated in my literature review, Coughlin, Smith and Fernandez (2017) indicated that to be considered as participatory action research, there must be “the need for genuine partnership approach, capacity-building of community partners; and the importance of shared decision making, co-learning, shared ownership of research products, applying findings to benefit all partners, and including community partners in all phases of the research” (p.3). I also highlighted the views of different writers and practitioners who lay the same emphasis on the collaborative, inclusive, and democratic nature of PAR, including Coghlan and Brannick (2010), who state that “action research is a collaborative, democratic partnership. Members of the system that is being studied participate actively” (p. 5).

These principles guided the conduct of this study with the leadership and members of the two participating parishes. At St. John's a pre-summit meeting was held two days before the set date for the summit with members of the parish council. It was at this meeting that the council jointly formulated the study question. The second parish (St.

Hilda's- St. Luke's) had two pre-summit meetings, the first with the parish mission and ministry team, and the second with the parish council on the week of the mission summit. It was also at that meeting with the council that they jointly formulated the focus question. I would say that the congregations took ownership of the process from the moment they formulated the study question. It became their enquiry into their own parish ministry with a positive focus to bring change to the ministry area.

This was not a project that required the acquisition of any technical skills thereby raising the issue of gaps between people learning new skills and being able to competently perform those skills in the project, or competency gaps between the lead researcher and the co-participants (Conder, Milner, and Mirfin-Vietch, 2011). The entire project took on a conversational tone, focussed on issues of ministry that were of mutual interest to the lead researcher and the co-participants within their various experiences of life. My role as stated by McTaggart (1991), became that of “a facilitator who works collaboratively to involve the stakeholders in every aspect of the research process.” Khnn and Chovanec, (2010, p. 35) also state that “the relationship between the researcher and other participants should be one of co-researchers, thereby allowing input not only into results, but also into the identification of the problem to be researched”. Though I designed this PAR project using the AI as a vehicle, I became only a co-researcher from the moment the leadership of the two parishes took ownership by choosing the study questions. Therefore, the process that evolved was totally participatory.

5.1 (ii) Context

Context is another distinguishing principle of participatory research. Springett et al. (2011), note that in PAR, it is important that “the research is grounded in the lived reality of life. The issue being researched must be located in the social system that is likely to adopt the changes that result from the research process. This is the strength of PAR and results in the development of local theory” (p. 10). Baum et al. (2006) add that “PAR contrasts with less dynamic approaches that remove data and information from their context” (p. 854). In which case, the issue is not imported into the community or organization. The issue researched must arise from lived experiences of the community involved.

Such was the case in the situations studied for this project. First, the issue on the second mark of mission arose at St. John’s, Tillsonburg, when the parish started experiencing irregular numbers to Sunday morning children’s programs. The situation worsened when the Sunday school was shut down all together by the parish Anglican Women and Youth (AWAY) group. The council and congregation needed to find a way forward for the children and youth ministry in the parish. The study at St. John’s was a discussion of this local problem, and in the course of it, participants began to think about local solutions including: “Get the children involved actively during services on Sundays;” “have programs where children bring their parents;” and for the parish to develop “a welcome package program for families arriving in the growing town of Tillsonburg.”

The study on the fourth mark of mission is also an attempt by the congregation of St. Hilda’s-St. Luke’s, in the community of St. Thomas, to focus in that area of ministry. It was initiated by the parish mission and ministry task team who saw the need for the parish to become more relevant in their community by serving the needs that exist. As observed by my research assistant, who conducted a recent doctoral project on the marks

of mission and had ministered in the city in the past, “St Thomas is a place with high social needs; an active expression of Mark 4 would be awesome” (Kenyon, personal communication May, 2022). Therefore, the studies we conducted in both marks satisfy the PAR requirement for relevant context which according to Selenger (1997), as cited in McDonald (2012), ensures “that the problem originates in the community itself, and is defined, analyzed, and solved by the community” (p. 39).

5.1 (iii) Goal/Benefit

The next principle of PAR against which we need to evaluate the quality of this project is the requirement for research in this paradigm to have capacity to lead to organizational/systemic change. According to Kelly (2005), who wrote on PAR in healthcare, “the overall goal of every participatory-action research project is to work together with community members to implement the action and social change necessary to resolve a health problem” (p. 71). Baum et al. (2006) identify this as the first distinguishing principle of PAR from conventional research noting that PAR “focuses on research whose purpose is to enable action” (p. 854).

Both parishes that participated in this study started by identifying ministry areas in which they needed change to happen. St. John’s, Tillsonburg engaged in the project with the view to transform the operation of their children Sunday school ministry, having just seen the ongoing program come to a close. While the argument can be made that this is change motivated by fear of loss, as opposed to God’s bringing about something new, the difference here is that the process leading to the anticipated future emerged from the dynamics of appreciative dialogue. It is not a knee-jerk reaction from fear and lamentation for what is dying, but from joyful celebration of what has worked in the past leading

us into what is possible in the light of where we are today. Some of the changes the participants hoped to see happen are reflected in the dreams they expressed for their future in the “inquire/dream” phase of the AI process with explicit statements made by research participants. When asked what they would like to see happen in the future, based on the themes emerging from the stories of their positive experiences of Sunday school, the dreams included the desire to: “Develop programs that children and youths will be invited to;” “Use one of our parish bequests to hire a parish youth worker;” “We support a pastor for children and work with him to make the community see how loving and caring our church is for the well-being of children.” St. Hilda’s-St. Luke’s also set out to develop parish ministries in the area of transforming unjust structures of the society (fourth mark of mission). Some statements they made in the mission summit to convey their dreams for the future included statements about the future in which: “Brown bag lunch meets needs and brings people together;” “Be a service church;” “Connect with agencies, build bridges, hands-on,” and so on.

At both congregations, the dreams were then carried forward to plans for change in actionable statements (provocative propositions). For St. John’s, one proposition simply said, we will work to implement a future in which “Children from our Caring Hands knitting group, bring their knitting into the church to be blessed before sending to World Vision.” “Caring hands is a knitting group of elderly members of the congregation. This goal envisages a future in which a children’s Sunday school program is developed in which the children work together with the ladies to knit materials which will be blessed in the church during Sunday worship sessions, and are distributed to people in need through World Vision. St. Hilda’s - St. Luke’s also developed similar proposition

for a future they can live into saying, “A group of us went to the Inn and shared coffee and fellowship.” These are clear plans for change jointly constructed by the participants through this AI process in accordance with the principle of PAR to bring about change.

5.1 (iv) How was knowledge generated?

The literature we reviewed indicates that the epistemological question is an important distinguishing characteristic of PAR. According to Coghlan and Brannick (2010), “sharing the power of knowledge production with the researched subverts the normal practice of knowledge and policy development as being the primary domain of researchers and policy makers” (p.6). Springett et al. (2011) also make the same point, stating that “as soon as one moves from research ‘on’ to research ‘with,’ thus recognizing that actors hold many different perspectives on an issue, knowledge is created through dialogue between the different perspectives and between the people involved” (p.10). PAR practitioners therefore identify co-creation/generation of knowledge as another distinguishing principle of this research paradigm.

The epistemological question—how is knowledge generated and by whom—is a core distinguishing criterion for PAR. That knowledge is generated through dialogue in the process of the iterative cycles of data collection, analysis, action, and further reflections on the actions, and so on. This played out beginning at pre-summit sessions and then at the mission summit days at both parishes where this study was conducted.

I designed the format for the project as the lead researcher and introduced the parish and their leadership to the concept and principles of AI. Then my role became that of a facilitator. I held pre-summit sessions with the leadership of both parishes before the

summit, and can say that the leadership assumed ownership of the process the moment they formulated their respective study questions. Then, the design and flow of the process with appreciative conference, two focus groups and a learning circle in between, enabled a generative process to evolve freely. Volunteer participants moderated the focus group session where participants suggested themes freely, and co-creatively. Learning circle was also an opportunity for every participant to get the chance to a make contribution. So, we can say that the study design enabled the full participation of co-researchers and that knowledge was generated collectively. As Stated by Springett et al. (2011), a good PAR must ensure this type of communal knowledge generation:

It involves the recognition that knowledge is always in a process of becoming, it is never fixed. It is forever dialectic. The co-creative, collective process of knowledge generation requires facilitation so that trust can be built and maintained and attitudes and behaviours that mirror the fundamental human values of dignity, respect, mutuality, and reciprocity, can be nurtured. It also means explicitly paying attention to power issues in terms of how each voice is heard, how the dialogue is encouraged, and how joint ownership is created. (p. 10)

5.1 (v) Reflexivity

Reflexivity is identified as one of the core principles of PAR, but the concept can be tricky and confusing. The way it is used and applied makes one wonder if there is a difference between the term and the simple act of reflection. Reflexivity generally refers to the examination of one's own beliefs, judgements and practices during the research process and how these may influence the research. As we noted in Chapter 2 of this thesis, Coghlan and Brannick (2010) explain that reflexivity "is used in the social sciences to

explore and deal with the relationship between the researcher and the object of research” (p.41). Also elaborating further on the use of reflexivity in participatory research,

Springett, et al. explains that:

The dialogical processes at the heart of PR can only be successful to the extent that issues of power are acknowledged and understood. Critical theory is an important foundation for reflexivity and can be brought into the arena for dialogue by the professional researchers alongside local theories. The continual questioning of the “taken for granted” lies at the heart of reflexivity and thus of the knowledge creation process. (p. 10)

A couple of practical examples from the data presented above depict the role of reflexivity in the conduct of this project. First was in the course of the appreciative conference at St Hilda’s - St. Luke’s when the following dialogue ensued:

Participant G: I just went through the groups we have in St. Thomas, and I am amazed the number of groups that are fund raising for people that are in need in order to provide whatever is needed. For a community with a size like ours of 40,000 people, it is well over 40 groups, the groups that raise money for the poor, for the sick, whatever is needed. I am amazed how many there are.

Me: In which case our day together might lead to creating partnerships with the groups identified.

This happened in the course of appreciative conference when participants were sharing life giving stories and positive experiences of transforming unjust structures. Stories were flowing. My first reaction at such statistics would have been to hit the panic button in fear that they could lead participants to the conclusion that enough was being

done already in the community and ask, “Why we are wasting our time?” This was one of the few times that I offered an opinion in the course of gathering the stories. While my first impulse was to remind everyone that we were only looking for stories of positive experiences, I realized how doing that could be counter-productive. It could have the effect that someone in position of influence was dictating the direction of the process. My instinctive response acknowledged what was good about the contribution and how our current effort could leverage that to create collaboration between the parish and the wider community to transform unjust structures.

Another example is the statement, “Barry, woven throughout dreams” which was added to the summary of dreams for the future expressed in the learning circle. The statement had no explicit correlation to the themes written down on sticky notes. However, “Barry” is the ordained leader of the parish. I think that it is interesting that while Barry did not say much, his influence was looming over this particular participant. “Barry” and I knew this and said as little as possible in order not to exert too much influence on the process. Historically, one of the identified and well documented weaknesses of Anglicanism is the ways in which it has been clergy-centric (Kemp, 2019; Gragan , 2019; Kahura, 2020, and Bowcott, 2020). I recognize that involving a clergy person in such a study may influence the contribution of participants and therefore the outcome of the entire study, especially with such observation as “Barry woven throughout dreams.” Maybe I should have been more deliberate about excluding the clergy from participating. However, the clergy involved in this instance seemed to have been quite conscious of the influence they carried, and they played more the role of an observer. More important to me was the fact that, in line with social constructionist principles, church members came

together in changed conversations to create a process for a positive future for themselves. This was the role that reflexivity played throughout the conduct of the project. It allowed me to facilitate the appreciative steps, without necessarily influencing the direction.

5. 2 (vi) Congruency

While not all the themes identified by the focus groups made it to the formulation of the provocative propositions, we can clearly see the flow of the AI process from one phase to another. Table 6 is my tabulation of the flow of the study. I have called it: *Congruency Table* to demonstrate the flow of the AI process, from the themes to the propositions, to how the propositions were derived from the themes. The four rows are on provocative propositions from the study at St. John's, Tillsonburg on the second mark of mission, while the last three columns are drawn from the focus on the fourth at St. Hilda's-St. Luke's, in St. Thomas.

Table 7

Congruency Table

Themes	Dream	Proposition
<p>Fun, Active Participation in Service/Church Events, Education, Getting young kids involved, Reason to come.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use one of our parish bequests to hire a parish youth worker 2. Programs that encourage youth. 3. Develop programs that children and youths will be invited to 	<p>“Youth Pastor played donkey in St. John’s Christmas Pageant.”</p>
<p>Ownership, support, Being loved, Connection, Opportunities for friendship, Sanctuary/safety</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have programs where children bring their parents 2. Programs that support your families 3. A welcome package program for families arriving in the growing town of Tillsonburg 	<p>“Our church is filled with joy as all generations are fully welcomed and served.”</p>

Themes	Dream	Proposition
<p>Ownership, Fun, Connection, Learning the bible, Active participation in service/church events</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Get the children involved actively during services on Sunday 2. Get the message out via social media 3. Parish music director to encourage children who are interested in music. 4. Working collaboratively with other churches in town on children formation programs 	<p>“God’s word is spread by youth participation both in the church and the community, fostered by participation in music, dance, drama and service at the altar.”</p>
<p>Relationship, Connection, Active participation in Sunday service/church events, Reason to come, After school programs</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop programs that children and youths will be invited to 2. Use the resources within our congregation 3. Gather the children and show their work. Praise them in front of the congregation 	<p>“Children from our Caring Hands knitting group, bring their knitting into the church to be blessed before sending to World Vision.”</p>
<p>Service, Helping with food security, Compassion, Outreach, Identifying need, Care, Positive influence</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Families coming from the larger community to St. Hilda’s - St. Luke’s to feel supported. 2. We are more intentional in outreach - develop focus 3. Be a service church 4. Build an identity 	<p>We intentionally share our love of/for God while connecting with our neighbours, our new partners</p>

Themes	Dream	Proposition
Service, Helping with food security, Building bridges, Partnership, Feeding the hungry, Church involvement, Community awareness, Community connections,	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We are more intentional in outreach - develop focus 2. Connect with agencies, build bridges, hands-on 3. Engage in God's mission - reaching into community 4. Build an identity 	A group of us went to the Inn and shared coffee and fellowship
Compassion, Humility, Be the best you can be, Faith, Forgiveness, Positive influence, Inclusion.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brown bag lunch meets needs and bring people together. 2. Build an identity 3. Engage in God's mission - reaching into community 4. We are light to others - be a living church where God is a work among us 	Love is the light of our life together; we ignite the fire of life within

5.2 Reflections on Findings

The research findings (which in accordance with the unique nature of Appreciative Inquiry we have indicated are the provocative proposition or actionable statements the parish can begin to live into), together with the entire appreciative process, demonstrate to a large extent that the study achieved its goals. Again, the project was initiated to establish what the process of transforming a local Anglican parish ministry into a missional model, in accordance with the framework of the Five Marks of Mission, might look like. The keyword here is *process*. Such a big change in ministry model takes time to happen. In fact, it takes much longer than the time period it took to conduct this study.

This thesis was initiated to create what the process of that transformation might entail. I think we have done that with the appreciative way employed. The study committed to demonstrate that Appreciative Inquiry can engineer such a process and lead to the goals I was hoping for. Judging from the resultant positions stated above in Tables 3 and 5, and considering how the congruency table demonstrated the flow of the process from the appreciative conference to the provocative propositions, I can make the following assertions based on the project

- Focus on the marks of mission fosters parish missional identity
- Parishes have the ability to create a positive future
- Congregations are Heliotropic

5.2. (i) Focus on the marks of mission fosters parish missional identity

Describing the missional church, Roxborough (2004) says:

The Church is, therefore, an ecclesia, a called-out assembly whose public life is a sign, witness, foretaste and instrument to which God is inviting all creation in Jesus Christ. The Church, in its life together and witness in the world, proclaims the destiny and future of all creation. In this sense, local congregations are embodiments of where God is calling all creation. (p. 5)

This simply says that the church does not exist for itself but is alive to the extent that it is part of God's mission (*Missio Dei*). By focusing on two of the Five Marks of Mission, we have shown in this study how two parishes in the Anglican Diocese of Huron joyfully engaged in a generative dialogue resulting in the proposal of ministry areas that will see them participating actively in God's mission in their respective communities. St. Hilda's-St. Luke's on the fourth mark, developed missional propositions that they can

live into - “we are feeding the hungry,” and “a group of us went to the Inn and shared coffee and fellowship.” On their part, St. John’s, Tillsonburg is designed a future in which “God’s word is spread by youth participation both in the church and the community, fostered by participation in music, dance, drama and service at the altar” (second mark of mission).

Unfortunately, some dreams for a missional future expressed earlier in the *Initiate/Discover* phase of the AI process did not make it to the provocative proposition created by the participants. One example is the positive experience by one participant in the discussion of the second mark of mission at St. John’s, which was captured by the theme “after school program.” That could have resulted in a missional program in which, as shared in the stories at the appreciative conference: “Parents will just come up and drop off their children after school. They can stay here and do their homework, play games, or whatever. There was no teaching whatsoever, and no preaching to try to come to convert them.” Even without capturing those, the provocative propositions as presented are demonstrative enough that if the parishes develop ministries in the areas identified, they will be living into new missional parish identities made possible by focus of the marks of mission.

5.2 (ii) Parishes have the ability to create a positive future

All the provocative propositions developed by the two parishes that participated in this study are positive, doable, and forward looking as they are. In achieving this, they demonstrate that as communities of faith, they have the ability to come together to co-create their future. That is the fundamental premise of social constructionism and one of the foundational philosophies of the participatory paradigm. As stated by Branson,

(2004), “The thesis of Appreciative Inquiry is that organizations such as the church, can be created by their conversations” (p. xvii). The results of this project at two different parishes show church people coming together to change their focus from dying to living. As God called on the church in Deuteronomy 30:19, “I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.” These two congregation have chosen to focus on a path that leads to life. The study has energized people in the two congregations to go forward excitedly, which is necessary for creating a positive future. They have created proposals for a positive future that parishes can live into. This, of course, marks a departure from the melancholic foreboding of a dying church that is prevalent in most North American mainline churches.

5.2. (iii) **Congregations are Heliotropic/New Life is Possible**

From the last point above, we can also draw the conclusion from our AI project and its resultant provocative propositions that organizations are indeed *heliotropic*. This botanical term is descriptive of the natural inclination of plants to be oriented toward the source of light. In the same way as noted by Branson (2004), “organizations lean towards the source of energy—whether the energy is healthy or not” (chapter 2, loc. 623). The two congregations involved in this project followed the appreciative principles of AI to dream of possible new realities for themselves and co-created a possible future they could joyfully live into. This is contrary to the prevailing negative energy of dying churches across North America. They need to change the conversation from melancholy and thoughts of dying, to positive thoughts and disposition, which will then position them to celebrate the opportunities of grace available, whatever their current situations might be.

In addition to this botanical coloration are some important theological themes indicated by this outcome. For instance, it is foundational to the principles of Kingdom theology that God is able to do a new thing among people. God said to the Israelites as they were dwelling in fear in exile, “I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert” (Isaiah 43:19 NRSV). Staying stuck in the past can keep us from the new thing God wants to do. If Israel had stayed stuck in the discouragement and seduction of Babylon, they would never look for the new thing of release from exile. We can also infer the theme of resurrection from this outcome. As mentioned earlier in Chapter 1, Christianity arose from a situation of death and resurrection. The Bible has encouraging stories of dry bones coming to life (Ezekiel 37), resurrection stories from the old and new testaments including Elijah and the widow’s son in 1Kings 17, Lazarus (John 11); the widow of Nain (Luke 7); Tabitha Dorcas (Acts 9), and so on. The promise of new life in the face of death is foundational to the Christian faith. Therefore, our focus should not be on our dying parts, but on the possibility of newness.

St Hilda’s-St. Luke’s in St. Thomas and St. John’s in Tillsonburg are two churches that came to this study from different points in their parish lives. Sunday school teachers had recently drawn the curtains on their roles as leaders in that area of ministry at St. John’s, while the mission and ministry task team at St. Hilda’s-St. Luke’s were in search of a way forward as communities emerged from two years of pandemic induced shutdowns. This project was opportunity for both parishes to choose the path of positive energy and aspirations provided by the AI process. The result is a communally constructed positive vision for the future in their respective parishes.

5.3 Catalysts and hindrances to the process.

Overall, we can say that this study achieved its goal of creating a process for the implementation of the marks of mission at local parish levels. It has created an entry point for Anglican parishes to engage the marks of mission, which is what the project set out to do. I will now present a brief reflection on some of the factors that made this possible. First, I think that the research design enabled a free-flow of the appreciative process. *The 4D model* (4I in this instance) is a clear and straightforward structure for the AI research process. However, the research tools used in the execution made it easy to carry out the project. The appreciative conference inaugurated a conducive and positive environment by introducing participants to the concept and process of AI. It was an avenue to harvest stories of positive experiences. Then the two focus group sessions at both participating parishes were used for group analysis of data; the first one was used to generate emergent themes from the positive narratives, while the second was used for group creation of provocative proposals. Sandwiched between the two focus groups was a learning circle which provided opportunities for every participant to share their dreams for the future. Every participant had the chance to share in what looked like a sacred space of opportunity created by the use of a cross for a totem. So the research design was a huge contributor to the easy flow of the study.

However, the one-day mission summit proved to be insufficient for the AI process. Leading the events of the days, I felt that the time may not have been enough for the participants to grasp the full breadth of some the core steps. For instance, it appears that time was not enough for the facilitators to be grounded and clear about what was meant by *provocative proposals*. It may have been a lot to ask participants to both grasp

all the concepts and process of AI and participate in them all in one day. Then, to be asked in addition to facilitate the process of collection provocative proposals may have been a little too much. For future studies, I will suggest specific days of training for participants on the concept, particularly for volunteers to lead the session for collection provocative proposals.

The second factor that I found helpful to the flow of the project is the pre-summit sessions that I had with the leadership of the parishes. At St. John's the session was held with members of the parish council which is the canonical governing body of every local parish. In the case of St. Hilda's-St. Luke's, we had two pre-summit meetings, one with the mission and ministry task team of the parish, and the second with the parish council also. It was at those meetings that I introduced the parish leadership to the AI process, took their questions and clarified any issues.

The issues we clarified ranged from simple concerns like, "Why do we need a study question?" to more complex issues like the need to find common definitions for the phraseology of the marks of mission. For instance, a council member at St. Hilda's-St. Luke's asked for us to find a clear definition of what we mean by "unjust structures" (4th mark of mission). That question made me dig more into the area and not only provide the definition but also the Biblical foundations of unjust structures for all participants at the beginning of the appreciative conference on mission summit day. I will say again that it was at the pre-summit sessions that we formulated the study questions for each participating parish, thereby granting ownership of the process to the local churches, and at the same time, satisfying the group-involvement requirement of the participatory paradigm.

Perhaps more important is the fact that by participating in this study and developing pathways for their future in these respective ministry areas, the two parishes fulfilled a requirement in the Diocese of Huron for the development of a parish mission and ministry plan. (see Appendix 7). For St. Hilda's-St. Luke's, participation was actually initiated by the parish mission and ministry implementation committee who were searching for guidance for the development of ministry around the second mark of mission. For St. John's, Tillsonburg, it was the desire to develop their ministry to children and young adults as articulated in their mission and ministry plan, and accelerated by the the resignation of the parish AWAY group from the supervision of that ministry area. So, their already existing parish mission and ministry plan was a great impetus. The missional goals and plans set in the provocative proposals offer a road map/actionable steps towards the overall parish ministry plans.

The final contributing factor to the overall success of the project is the general philosophy of Appreciative Inquiry itself. It is AI that provides the philosophy behind the paradigm shift that this project proposed *ab initio* in our approach to ministry, and the project reached this goal overwhelmingly. There were no squabbles or disagreements at any time through the duration of the study at both parishes. The reason is that AI is a positively generative process. It is an approach that "focuses on exploring with people what is valuable in what they do and how this can be built on, rather than focusing on problems" (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2005, p. 3).

I noticed that there was no divergence of opinions in the course of the study. I know that from the point of view of traditional research this may sound odd. However, this study stayed true to its design. As an approach, AI challenges "the traditional deficit

perspective in organizational and change management” (Grandy and Holton, 2010, p. 180). Conventional strategic planning models emphasize overcoming one’s weaknesses in order to achieve organizational success. By contrast, AI is a strength-based planning model that suggests just the opposite: focussing on the positive and building on strengths (Fifolt and Stowe, 2011). AI inherently celebrates what is life-giving, and the best of lived experiences of communities. Judging from the success we experienced in this study that helped two parishes develop a process for implementing the marks of mission in an atmosphere devoid of rancour, the appreciative way may be what is need in the North American Church.

Having said that, I also need to acknowledge that not everything worked as planned in executing the initial research proposal. The original plan was to conduct the study at five different parishes in the diocese—one mark of mission per parish. However, not many parishes opted in, and a number of parishes that signed up when the process was introduced, backed out before the study was initiated. Reflecting on how the whole process evolved, I think some parishes that would have participated in the study may have found the four to five-hour mission summit session in one day a bit challenging particularly in a time when communities are emerging from pandemic-imposed lock-downs, and have not had prolonged indoor meeting sessions for over two years, sitting in at such session may have been considered a bit too much. It may have been helpful to have provided opportunities for staggered sessions, whereby the different phases of the 41/4D model would be held on different days.

5.4 Conclusions

This study has achieved a positive outcome in terms of developing a process for the implementation of the Five Marks of Mission, and creating not only a new focus in local parish ministry that can lead to the implementation of positive change, but also one that at the same time has the potential to enhance the identity of such parishes in their settings. The study has also generated obvious implications for further research and prospects of ministry across the parishes of the Anglican Diocese of Huron in Southwestern, Ontario and the wider church.

5.4. (i) Implications for Research

1. The use of Appreciative Inquiry as a research tool in the broader participatory research paradigm seems to have worked well in the execution of this project. However, this methodology will benefit from further exploration, particularly in order to ensure a built-in mechanism to clarify concepts as the AI process evolves. For instance, if a participant has a question informed by a different ideological orientation from the theoretical leaning of the study, when and how do you accommodate such questions in a way that honours the appreciative process?
2. The *provocative propositions* seem like a good ending to one cycle of the AI process, but seem to beg the question of what follows next. The study report was used in this instance to bridge that gap. In a situation where the facilitator of the project is not a part of the participating entity, something like the study report needs to arise from the process to guide the implementation of the propositions.
3. The work done by this study is foundational. There needs to be a greater exploration of the implementation process for the marks of mission. If the Marks form a comprehensive

descriptive framework for the mission of the church, then research that draws attention to the process of their implementation in different contexts will be of great benefit.

4. Further research needs to be conducted into how the marks of mission can be used to help Anglican parishes across the world to develop a missional identity.

5.4. (ii) Implications for the Diocese and Wider Church

The success recorded by this project portends encouraging potentials for the church in Southwestern Ontario and beyond. The gathering of church members in generative conversational settings that are focussed on lived experiences of what is working, provides the church with a sort of hands-on approach to ministry development akin to their gatherings like Bible study meetings and other church group settings. The only difference is that AI focuses only on what is life giving. Cooperrider and Srivastva (2013) say about AI, that as long as it is “constructed upon, practiced or inspired by the sense of the mystery and miracle of life on this planet, it will never become inert or lifeless. Why? Because life is alive; it’s always bursting out all over and AI is about the search for ‘what gives life?’ to living systems” (p. 84). We need this focus on what gives life in our experiences of church. The mandate we have from Christ is to “let our lights shine among others” (Matthew 5:16). It is not to discourage them with our cries about what is not working.

Secondly, the process developed in this project could become a feature of the learning church component of the Bishop of Huron’s cardinal vision for the church.

Bishop Todd has set the diocese on a strategic goal whose emphasis is to:

shift the centre of gravity in our practices from an emphasis on *operations* to an emphasis on *renewal* and *new creation*, better revealing the marks of mission by becoming: a learning church, a just church, a diverse church, a new church” (Diocese of Huron, 2018, Retrieved June 2022).

I think the Bishop’s plan is laudable particularly because I strongly believe that we need to rediscover the teaching ministry of the church. This project can be helpful in that regard. Its step-by-step structure is easily transferrable to any local ministry context to develop an AI process for the implementation of the marks of mission.

Finally, what happened during the time I was planning for this project could help the diocese to evaluate, or at least have some understanding of the level of readiness/willingness of the churches to engage in the important task of renewal and rebuilding. We sent invitations to all the parishes in the dioceses (see Appendix 1) to participate in the study. We planned to hold the study in five parishes (one mark of mission each). While that could have generated too much data to manage in the time I had available to me, the response was far from encouraging. Several churches opted in, but one after the other, some backed out. After several weeks of announcements at church and planning to make it happen, one warden emailed me the week the project session was to happen:

I announced on Sunday that we needed people to register for this by yesterday. I mentioned that we would be able to switch to a Zoom meeting and be able to explore other Marks of Mission. Unfortunately, no one signed up. I’m afraid that we must cancel this Saturday’s workshop (personal communication).

Similarly, all the churches that initially opted in gave good reasons why they could no longer participate in the study. What was going on? It may be that churches are

overwhelmed and could not bear the rigours of research exercise at a time when they are emerging from two years of pandemic imposed lock-downs. Or, it may simply be that churches are tired. That is my concern. I hope it is not the case that our churches are simply too tired to engage the work that is necessary for renewal. If that is the case, the church has a big problem on its hands. We need both clergy and lay leaders out in the field to lead the sheep with enthusiasm and vision to green pasture. Appreciative Inquiry offers a good vehicle to do that.

My project has achieved its goal of creating a process for the implementation of the marks of mission at local parishes of the Anglican Diocese of Huron and across the wider Anglican Communion. The plan developed is easily adaptable to the context of local parishes in the development of new ministries on any of the Five Marks of Mission. Such work if done well will have the effect of changing the conversation and temperament of local parishes, from concerns about the future to joyful celebration of where we have been in our journeys with God, where we are, and the new things that God will do in us and among us in a glorious future with Him.

This project, however, also marks a new beginning for me. This project has refocused my approach to ministry. In future applications of the learning from this project to my ministry, I will continue to seek alternatives to the negative/positive binary used in the project that might shift away from this dyad. I will strive to change the conversation from focussing on the dying parts of the communal life of the church, to the fresh opportunities of grace and newness around us. This shift is important, particularly as the church emerges from the doldrums of the pandemic. I will seek to use positive language and generative questions to unlock faith that is inherent in our church even in challenging times.

COVID-19 pandemic challenges made it almost impossible to conduct a research that required the gathering of any number of people. As a result, some churches that initially opted in to participate in this project actually withdrew. Now that most restrictions are relaxed, we have the opportunity to do quite a bit more across the Diocese of Huron to help parishes on the implementation of the Five Marks of Mission. Among other responsibilities, my position as a Territorial Archdeacon has in it the opportunity to assist parishes in strategic planning. This project has equipped me with the tools to engage this responsibility in a way that is life-giving; celebrating our experiences of the goodness of our life in Christ to various communities, and building on those to live in the fullness of the Five Marks of Mission.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Invitation to participate in a parish-wide Appreciative Inquiry on the implementation of the five marks of mission

Dear friends in Christ,

My name is Osita Oluigbo. I am the rector at St. John's Tillsonburg and a doctor of ministry candidate. I would like to invite interested churches in the Diocese of Huron to partner with me in an Appreciative Inquiry on the implementation of the marks of mission. The project is being conducted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for my Doctor of Ministry program at St. Steven's College, University of Alberta.

What is Appreciative Inquiry?

It is a process that provides a parish-wide mode for initiating and discerning narratives and practices that are generative (creative and life giving). It focuses on what's working well and seeks to build on this, instead of a more traditional focus on problems and weaknesses. This approach doesn't pretend there are no real or challenging problems, but it asks you to look at them and redefine them in a way that generates a number of positive possibilities.

What will it involve?

- A one-day of approximately 5 hours of participation preferably on a Saturday between the first Saturday in April and the first Saturday in May 2022), parish mission summit involving all interested parishioners
- A focus on any one of the marks of mission that your parish chooses to work on
- Taking part in discussions in small or large group sessions (as permitted by COVID regulations)
- BYOB (bring your own bag lunch)

We are all suffering greatly in the hands of COVID-19. but, as things gradually open up again (thank God), an Appreciative inquiry process will be a good way to change tones by engaging life-giving ministry conversations. Please consider your context and let me

know which of these five marks of mission your parish would like to focus on at this time:

1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. To teach, baptize and nurture new believers
3. To respond to human need by loving service
4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation
5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth

I look forward to working with parish leaders (rectors, wardens, and councils) to discuss details of the process. I can be reached via phone (--- --- ----) or email ositaoluihno@---.---

=

Grace to you all and peace.

Osita

APPENDIX 2

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

ST. STEPHEN'S COLLEGE.

INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH ETHICS STUDY # PRO00117692

Study Title: Five Marks of Mission

Research Investigator:

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Background

You are invited to participate in this research study exploring a process for the implementation of the Five Marks of Mission in the ministry of a local parish. We wish to learn more about how applying the Appreciative Inquiry principle can help in the transition of traditional parish ministries to missional models in accordance with the marks of mission.

The results of this study will be used in support of my thesis requirements to complete a Doctor of Ministry (D.Min) program, at St. Stephen's College in Edmonton, Alberta. The thesis falls into one of my program requirements which is a formal study summarizing the findings of an inquiry which I have chosen for personal interest, educational intrigue, professional, and ministry development.

Before you make a decision, the researcher will go over this form with you. You are encouraged to ask questions if you feel anything needs to be made clearer. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Purpose

Mainline churches in North America are faced with the reality of aging congregations and closing down of parishes. This of course has left congregations concerned about their future. Also, church conversations reveal an increasing struggle to articulate the gospel message to a culture and society that is constantly changing. In an attempt to find her voice, the Anglican Communion formulated a concise framework for its mission known as the five marks of mission. Though a good missional framework, the five marks of mission is a very generic and universally descriptive framework. Congregations are left to figure out what it means for them, and make their own connection to the marks of mission from their local ministries.

This researcher is interested in missional ecclesiology and holds the understanding that even when we look at the challenges of these times: closing churches, aging congregations, grim financial outlooks, and so on, faith requires Christians also to see and celebrate the ways in which God is journeying with us through these difficulties. This is the missional focus that the marks of mission is aiming for. Using the Appreciative Inquiry

process, the study explores how local parish congregations may develop marks-of-mission-based ministries by focusing on and building the areas of ministry in which they are doing well, instead engaging in melancholic foreboding about their state and future.

Study Procedures

In order to be eligible to participate in this project you must be above 18 years of age, and a member of the participating church congregation. Data will be generated in a one-day session of ministry summit lasting between 4-6 hours with times of break built in. The session will follow the four step Model of Appreciative Inquiry. Appreciative conference, focus groups, and learning circle will be the methods employed for data generation. The lead researcher will facilitate the discussions at the appreciative conference, and learning circle sessions, while two participants (one for each group) will moderate the focus group sessions. The Rev. Dr. Valerie Kenyon, (a recent graduate of a doctor of ministry program) has agreed to be my research assistant. She will observe the process and conduct the audio recording of the appreciative conference and learning circle sessions.

Step 1. Initiate (Discover)

This step will aim to make a new beginning by changing the conversation from focusing on what is not working to telling stories of life-giving forces relating to this mark of mission (valuing the best of what is). In accordance with the principles of participatory research, the researcher will meet with the leadership team (Council) of each participating parish the week of the summit day to formulate a positive question on the mark of mission under consideration.

On the summit day, the session will begin with an introducing of the AI process and highlighting of the Biblical foundations of appreciation relating to this particular mark of mission. This session will begin in a plenary session of all participants, where life-giving stories are told for the hearing of all (*Appreciative Conference*). This session will last from 60 to 90 minutes. Then the participants will break into focus groups of six to 12 each (depending on the number of attendants) for another 30 to 60 minutes. Using flip charts or whiteboards, the focus groups will locate themes that appear in the stories they

have heard at the plenary and will select topics. Finally, all the topics selected by each of the focus groups will be combined to inform the discussion at the next step.

Step 2: Inquire (Dream).

This is the stage in the AI 4I Model at which we continue to inquire into those stories of life-giving forces and move them further by creating shared images for the desired future (envisioning what might be). The researcher plans to use *learning circles* as the research tool for this stage and will explain the process to participants before the beginning of the segment. In a nut shell, a learning circle is defined as a format for dialogue that invites participation in a manner that may be different from the typical conversational format, as it is not based on debate. It is a valuable and effective mode of communication that, when utilized correctly, can be a foundation for deep dialogue.

The participants will at this stage inquire into the future or dream about the future together based on the themes emerging from the conversation at the previous stage. The learning circle will create the enabling environment for participants to be drawn deeper into the conversation as they share their individual dreams for the future, based on the emergent themes. The suggestions are captured in a flip chart and research notes. The learning circle session will also be recorded on a digital file and transcribed later by a professional transcriptionist.

Step 3: Imagine (Design).

The third step will return participants to focus groups lasting from 60 to 90 minutes. Here, the groups will find innovative ways to create the future (develop what should be). Put in another way, they will create shared images for the preferred future. Suggested actions for this step are for the participants to collate data, share data, find life-giving themes, decide themes for initial focus, and develop provocative proposals. The term provocative proposition (proposal) is a phrase linked to generative theory and can be described simply in terms of social architecture processes where a model of design elements is used to identify categories for participants to organize around and create change proposals, often called possibility statements or design statements. Therefore participants

will at this stage construct change proposals, (what they can do together) based on the emergent themes of the discussions.

Those are the actions that this study will be targeting in its modified 4I/4D Model. Each focus group in this third step will focus on designated aspects of the emergent themes and create provocative proposals around them. Again, the proposals will be captured in flow charts and research notes.

Step 4: Innovate (Deliver)

According to the AI 4I Model, the fourth step, Innovate, deals with how the imaginative future becomes tangible and integrated into congregational life. In other words, the participants will formulate a plan for tangible actions that the congregation can live into, based on the positive aspirations and new language reflected in the provocative proposals in the area of ministry under discussion. Four specific actions are suggested to be taken here: Informal personal initiatives, informal initiatives of pairs and small groups, initiatives and collaboration of formal committees, and formal initiatives of official boards. If you meet these eligibility criteria and you are still interested in participating please contact your parish office to register. The Letter of Consent will be signed before the mission summit day begins. The lead researcher will be taking notes by hand, appreciative conference and learning circle sessions will be audio recorded (with a choice of having the recorder turned off if you wish when you are speaking), and the emergent themes at focus group sessions and learning circle will be recorded on a flip chart. Pseudonyms will be assigned to all participants (as well as any other identifying names and locations) before the audio-recordings are transcribed. The researcher will be using the services of a professional transcriptionist in transcribing the audio-recordings, and throughout the process will operate under the privacy and security measures outlined in the confidentiality agreement (which is detailed in the consent letter).

The data collected will include researcher notes from discussions at the appreciative conference, two focus group sessions, learning circle, audio-recordings of the appreciative conference and focus group sessions, and identification information (name, address, telephone number, and email address).

Once the audio recording has been transcribed, the researcher will securely email (under password protection) a copy of the transcription for you to review. Any changes can be made to the transcription that you deem necessary at this time. This process includes reviewing, revising, and finalizing the transcriptions.

Participants, and any other individuals named in the interview, will be assigned pseudonyms by the researcher at the time of transcriptions in order to eliminate any identifying information. Transcriptions will not include any identifying information, which means all transcribed data will be anonymized.

Benefits

The findings of this research may serve to enhance the experience of a process for the implementation of the Five Marks of Mission. The project is meant to facilitate and describe a process of transforming Canadian Anglican Church ministry into missional models guided by the principles set out in the Five Marks of Mission. The findings may serve to both strengthen the congregational identity and deepen the sense of calling of such parishes in communities where they are located

It is also possible that participating in the generative process of Appreciative Inquiry will change the conversation of local parish ministry from the current state of melancholic foreboding to a new outlook of hope and living into what is possible.

Risks

It is possible that participants may feel psychologically or emotionally stressed engaging the study all day. It is also possible that attempting to construct the future the participants are dreaming of in words based on the themes emerging from the conversations may be mentally tasking, frustrating, or tiring.

In an effort to minimize any risks to you, informed consent is reviewed and obtained prior to the beginning of the study session. Ensuring opportunities to opt-out at any time in the course of the day of study gathering, and taking necessary steps to

maximize confidentiality are all steps to assist in mitigating threat or harm to participants. The lead researcher will also be monitoring the group energy and will be scheduling regular breaks as required in order to minimize the risk of tiredness.

Being a participatory research, the question on the mark of mission will be formulated by the participants. That will assist participants taking ownership of the process. Also, the positive focus of Appreciative Inquiry: re-enacting stories of what is best in the history of the organization, together with the characteristics of shared participation, mutual generation and sharing of knowledge in a participatory action research, was carefully chosen as the data generation tool for this study because of its closeness to the nature of a church community. Participants will therefore be less anxious to be part of the inquiry.

Contact information for the lead researcher will be provided to the participants should any further questions or concerns emerge in the days before or after the day of the research gathering.

Voluntary Participation

You are under no obligation to participate and if you choose to participate, you may refuse to answer questions that you do not want to answer. You also retain the right to request that the recording is stopped at any time, for any reason. Should you choose to withdraw mid-way through, any data collected to date will not be included in the final analysis and will be destroyed.

The data can be withdrawn at any point, and for any reason (or without reason), until two weeks after you have approved the transcript. After this point, the data will not be able to be withdrawn from the study.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The research will be used for the purposes of completing a thesis. The information that you will share will remain strictly confidential and will be used solely for the purposes of this research. The only people who will have access to the research data are the lead researcher and the research supervisor, as well as the Research Ethics Board and the University of Alberta auditors if requested. Your surname and first

name, address, telephone number, and email address will be collected by the lead researcher for communication and transcription delivery purposes. Identifying information will be included in the audio recording of the interview, the lead researcher's interview notes, and an Excel document noting research participants' and contact information.

Participants, and any other individuals named in the interview, will be assigned pseudonyms by the researcher at the time of transcriptions in order to eliminate any identifying information. Transcriptions will not include any identifying information, which means all transcribed data will be anonymized. Your answers to open-ended questions may be used verbatim in presentations and publications but neither you (nor your organization) will be identified. However, the lead researcher cannot guarantee that others from the session will maintain the confidentiality of what was discussed.

Two weeks after the researcher has received the approved transcript from the participants, all identifying information collected for communication purposes and noted on an excel spreadsheet will be destroyed.

All data, in both paper and electronic files, including raw data from session notes, reflective journal notes, analysis and interpretation notes and drafts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet located in the office of the researcher's home office for five years.

Electronic copies of the transcripts and data analysis will be encrypted and stored on a password protected USB Key in the St. Stephen's College vault for five years. After five years, all data will be destroyed. If you are interested in reviewing the findings of the project after publication, follow up information will be provided.

Contact Information

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact Osita Oluigbo (lead researcher), or Geoffrey W. Pritchard (thesis supervisor).

The plan for this study has been reviewed by the ethics board of the University of Alberta. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please direct such questions to the Research Ethics Office

Consent Statement

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above and hereby give my consent to participate in the Appreciative Inquiry on the Implementation of the Five Marks of Mission.

I (state your name) consent to the terms of this research study and state that I have been adequately informed about the nature of this study.

Signed: _____
—

Date: _____

MARCH 30, 23

**A FUTURE FOR PARISH SUNDAY SCHOOL
AND YOUTH FORMATION TO LIVE INTO**

ST. JOHN'S TILLSONBURG

FACILITATOR THE REV'D. OSITA OLUIGBO

STUDY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This paper is the report of a ministry development project: an Appreciative Inquiry into children's Sunday school and youth formation at St. John's Anglican Church, Tillsonburg, in the diocese of Huron. Study was conducted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry program at St. Stephen's College, University of Alberta. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) stems from the background of social constructionism, which simply holds that social systems and organizations are co-created by their members. "The thesis of Appreciative Inquiry is that organizations such as the church can be recreated by its conversations," (Branson, 2004). A more detailed definition is offered by the originator of the concept, David Cooperrider who writes with Whitney and Stavros (2005):

Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organization, and the world around them. It involves the discovery of what gives 'life' to a living system when it is most effective and alive and constructively capable in economic, ecological and human terms. Appreciative Inquiry involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate and heighten positive potential. The inquiry is mobilized through the crafting of the 'unconditional positive question' (p. 3).

Preparation

The lead researcher set a date for the pilot project in agreement with the Parish Council of St. John's. Recruitment invitation/notice was broadcast through weekly electronic news bulletin to all parishioners, verbal announcements at the beginning of church services, and at weekly study group meetings. It was also projected on the overhead screen before Sunday morning services. The study session (mission summit) was set to be held on a Saturday not less than two weeks from the date of the first recruitment notice. Registered participants received forms for consent agreements. The lead researcher met with the parish council two days before the summit to make final arrangements for the session, including seating arrangements for plenary, focus groups, and learning circle sessions.

Mission Summit

The mission summit event on Saturday, March 13, 2022, was preceded by an informal evening gathering of members of the parish council with the lead researcher. The meeting was convened for two reasons:

1. To introduce members of the parish council to the concept and process of Appreciative Inquiry.
2. For the group to formulate the study question democratically, in accordance with the principles of participatory research.

The lead researcher facilitated the gathering. He introduced the council to the general concept of Appreciative Inquiry. Council members appeared drawn into the positive outlook of the study, and after a few attempts, formulated the following question for the session: “*What are your positive memories of Sunday school and youth formation?*” The initial rendering ended with “Sunday school,” but there was a strong support for the addition of “youth formation” in order to give the study a wider range of consideration. The question is broad, open-ended, and focussed on the second mark of mission. It laid the foundation of a positive focus.

Event Day: data collection, analysis, and findings

18 adult participants (including lead researcher and research assistant who joined remotely) took part in this study. They gathered at the hall of St. John’s on Saturday, March 13. Most participants arrived before the session began at 9:00 a.m. Each participant received a Consent Form which they all signed and returned to the lead researcher. The consent agreement is necessary to protect both the privacy of the participants and the integrity of the study. In compliance with the terms of the agreement, this report does not contain any direct identifiers for the individual participants. The study evolved through the 4 phases of the 4!/4D models of AI, namely; initiate/discover, inquire/dream, imagine/design, and innovate/deliver phases

Initiate/Discover Phase

In principle, this phase began two days earlier at the session with council members. By choosing a question with a positive outlook, the stage was set for an appreciative process.

Appreciative Conference:

The conference was held in a plenary session of all study participants. As lead researcher, I introduced the participants to the concept of AI. I also made a brief Biblical connection to the principle of appreciation (thanksgiving), using the text of Philippians 4: 8 - “whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (NRSV)

The study question - "what are your positive memories of Sunday school and youth formation?" - was put forward. 12 participants shared stories of positive memories of participating or observing the positive impact children Sunday school and youth formation. Excerpts include:

- m. We received honour badges at Sunday school. Whatever you did you had your own badge of achievement to take home which meant a lot to us. As we grew older into the youth group other churches will come together with us and we would play games like badminton.
- n. Yes that's my experience too. We had different activities. I still have my 10 year attendance badge.
- o. I was a Sunday school teacher for many years. It was a thing of joy to meet one of the students in one of my Sunday school classes 30 years later and he had good memories of our time together. I asked him what made the time special, and the young man said, "at that time, the church was ours not theirs." It touched me that Sunday school children felt that the church belonged to them.
- p. My grandchildren have since participated in activities in the church for some time now. They do crafts of Bible stories and things like that, but not only that, they also take active part in the church during church services. When they say a prayer for someone, they will write the person's name on a sticky note and hold it with them, and then they will bring those notes and put it themselves into their offertory plates, and they will surround the altar during prayers. That was very meaningful to them. They felt comfortable. I think it made the church safe for them. Recently one of them was invited to read during the service and she felt comfortable standing before everyone to read because they've been in the sanctuary in the presence of adults many times before, so that was no problem for them.
- q. I remember looking forward to Sunday because we had a different circle of friends that were formed at Sunday school that were different from our school friends that we met with Monday to Friday. These friends at church became

special. It was always something to look forward to; to go and be with them and socialize with them at Sunday school on Sundays.

- r. Same idea. I remember having a different circle of friends growing up in (the town they grew up) that truly became close to me and we grew up together. Some of those relationships we have maintained today after so many years.
- s. The reward badges from Sunday school helped to build my self-esteem. I could not participate in sports at school due to my physical disabilities.
- t. I grew up in a very abusive and broken home. A woman, a neighbour, took my sister and I to church, and it was in that church at Sunday school that we came to know Christ. I got love by going to Sunday school.
- u. I remember the children participation in telling stories during Christmas pageants here at St. John's. And their parents and aunts and uncles sat and listened joyfully to their stories. The children were the focus of the service as they were taking part.
- v. Growing up in a different country, it was at that Sunday school that I learned to read with King James Bible. We were given memory boxes with scripture verses. I was able to memorize a whole lot of bible verses from my memory box. We graduated to the youth group. The youth group will have competitions among themselves. And whoever wins the competition will represent the youth group in competition among all the churches in the convention. I would say that Sunday school and youth group brought me up to stand on a mountain.
- w. I enjoy the experience of Scouts participating in worship here at St. John's and flying different colours and flags.
- x. One of our former ministers came up with the idea of an after-school program here at Saint John's. Parents will just come up and drop off their children after school. They can stay here and do their homework, play games, or whatever. There was no teaching whatsoever, and no preaching to try to come to convert them.

The *Initiate/Discover* phase of AI process continued by breaking the participants into two focus groups. The groups were tasked with identifying themes emerging for them individually from the stories they just heard at the appreciative conference. They were asked to write such themes down on sticky-notes and post the notes on clip board. Below is a table of themes identified by the two focus groups.

Table 1

Emergent Themes from Stories

FOCUS GROUP 1	FOCUS GROUP 2
Ownership, My Space, Friendship, Enjoyment, Fun, Stories, Respect, Support, Love, Relationship, Connection, Self Esteem, Motivation, Active Participation, Education.	Active Participation in Service/Church Events, Getting Young Stars Involved, Opportunities for Friendship, Learning the Bible, After-School Programs, Making Bible Stories Relevant to Children, Gold Starts/Building Self-Confidence, Exciting Fun, Activities with other Churches, Reason to come, Being Loved, Sanctuary (Safety),

Inquire/Dream

All participants came back together for this phase to continue inquiring into the life-giving stories of past experiences of Sunday school and youth formation. The sitting arrangement was reconfigured so that we sat in a circle. The goal of this segment was to envision a future based on the emergent themes (dream) from the stories by creating shared mental images for the desired future. Learning Circle was the data gathering tool employed, hence the sitting arrangement. I used a cross in place of a totem, and provided hand sanitizers in accordance with CODID-19 rules. Each participant sanitized their hands before taking over the cross which meant they held the authority to speak. Themes gathered from the two focus groups were read out loud. Then participants took turns to share the future they dream of resulting from those themes in the parish ministry to children and youths.

The summary of the dreams shared across the circle were captured in flip charts, numbered 1 to 19 below:

1. Gather the children and show their work. Praise them in front of the congregation
2. Get the children involved actively during services on Sunday
3. Encourage children to bring a friend or someone from their street. Extend friendship
4. Make the children the focus of a special event at church
5. Get the message out via social media
6. Have programs where children bring their parents
7. Use one of our parish bequests to hire a parish youth worker
8. Programs that support your families
9. Parish music director encourage children who are interested in music.
10. Programs that encourage youth.

11. A welcome package program for families arriving the growing town of Tillsonburg
12. Working collaboratively with other churches in town on children formation programs
13. Develop programs that children and youths will be invited to
14. More children learning moral values from the church since they may not get that anywhere else.
15. We back up a pastor for children and work with him to make the community see how loving and caring our church is for the wellbeing of children.
16. Use resources already provided by the town, other churches, and Upper Deck youth services.
17. Use the resources within our congregation
18. Expert to asses our potentials a parish community in relation to children and youth ministry
19. We step away from survival mentality and demonstrate more commitment to doing God's work.

Imagine/Design

This next phase began with all participants coming together after a lunch break. The goal of this phase was to “collate data, share data, find life giving themes, decide themes for initial focus” (Branson, Appendix M). In other words, this phase aims to find innovative ways to create the future emerging from the dreams shared in the preceding segment. I introduced the concept of provocative proposition as a generative theory to guide this important step.

After introducing the concept, participants returned to their initial focus groups. The dreams stated above were divided from numbers 1-11 went to focus group 1, and numbers 11 to 19 were given to focus group 2. The groups were charged to develop provocative propositions (possibility statements) from the dreams. Table 2 is a break of the outcome of their work:

Table 2

Provocative Propositions/Proposals

	Group 1	Group 2
1	“Our congregation and Youth Pastor at St. John’s, are pleased as we see the many children who participate in our services.”	“Youth Choir at St. John’s win inter-church musical competition.”
2	“Our church is filled with joy as all generations are fully welcomed and served.”	“New Mom’s Group takes over Church kitchen for Pancake Day.”
3	“God’s word is spread by youth participation both in the church and the community, fostered by participation in music, dance, drama and service at the altar.”	“Youth Pastor played donkey in St. John’s Christmas Pageant.”
4		“Children from our Caring Hands knitting group, bring their knitting into the church to be blessed before sending to World Vision.”
5		“Youth Pastor seeking GANG* members for Gaming Night.”
		*GANG – God’s Awesome New Generation)

Innovate/Deliver

This is the phase in the AI process at which participants formulate tangible action plans for the future. In this case, a plan to live into the propositions developed in step three for Sunday school and youth formation, including the activation of informal initiatives for action by individuals, pairs, or in small groups, forming committees for steps leading to full implementation, and getting the parish council involved (Branson, chapter 5).

The participants returned to plenary for this final segment. After I explained the rationale and goal of the segment, participants decided to form a committee of six to work with the parish council on the next steps and implementation of the future we envisioned together. The following individuals comprising a good mixture of council and non-council members volunteered to work in the committee:

1. Laurel Beechey,
2. Ann Chevers,
3. Karen Cook,
4. Don Grant,
5. Elizabeth Rolls,
6. Sue Symons.

Conclusion

The propositions presented in this report are a reflection of the collective aspirations of the study participants. They are expressions of a future that the parish can live into. It is hoped that they are received that way, and that volunteers will work jointly with the parish council to actualize this future.

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ST. HILDA'S-ST. LUKE'S, ANGLI- CAN CHURCH, ST. THOMAS

**FACILITATOR: THE REV. OSITA OLU-
IGBO**

STUDY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

This paper is the report of a ministry development project: an Appreciative Inquiry into the 4th Mark of mission: “To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation” (Anglican church of Canada 2021). Study was conducted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry program at St. Stephen’s College, University of Alberta. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) stems from the background of social constructionism, which simply holds that social systems such as the church, and organizations are co-created by their members. “The thesis of Appreciative Inquiry is that organizations such as the church can be recreated by their conversations” (Branson, 2004). A more detailed definition is offered by the originator of the concept, David Cooperrider who writes with Whitney and Stavros (2005):

Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative co-evolutionary search for the best in people, their organization, and the world around them. It involves the discovery of what gives 'life' to a living system when it is most effective and alive and constructively capable in economic, ecological and human terms. Appreciative Inquiry involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate and heighten positive potential. The inquiry is mobilized through the crafting of the 'unconditional positive question' (p. 3).

Preparation

The process began with an on-hour Zoom call with six members of the Parish Ministry and Mission team (three women and three men) with the Bishop and the lead researcher making it eight people in all. At this session, the facilitator introduced the team members to the process of the inquiry and addressed their questions for clarification. We picked a date on a Saturday for the mission summit. The lead researcher was invited to a pre-summit session with the parish council at their monthly meeting held on the Wednesday afternoon in the week of the summit. This meeting built on the earlier meeting with the parish mission and ministry team, and continued to solidify the participatory research requirement to involve the community at every stage of the study. (Stringer, 2007; Coghlan & Brannick, 2010; MacDonald, 2012)

At this session, the lead researcher introduced the members of the council to the concept and process of Appreciative Inquiry and how it would evolve on Saturday. We discussed the 4th mark of mission, and collectively decided on the study question. Council members were fully engaged in the discussion. After a thorough evaluation of the breadth of the 4th mark, the council decided to focus attention on the first leg of the tripod of the framework, namely, "to seek to transform unjust structures of the society,"

leaving the other two legs —“to challenge violence of every kind” and “to pursue peace and reconciliation”—for future consideration. We then discussed what could be the study question to guide the mission summit focused on transforming unjust structures of the society. After various suggestions, the council agreed (again collectively) that the study question would be this: “What are your positive experiences of transforming unjust structures in any community?”

Event Day: data collection, analysis, and findings

Twelve adult participants took part in the parish mission summit. They were composed of a good mixture of parish leaders and lay members of the congregation, including some members of the mission and ministry team, some members of the parish council, two ordinary members of the congregation, and myself as the lead researcher. The study group had an almost even demographic split —five men and seven women.

We gathered at the parish fellowship hall on Saturday, April 23. Each participant received a Consent Form which they all signed and returned to the lead researcher. In accordance with the principles of participatory research, data was generated and analyzed collectively with the group by means of the '41/4D' cycle of Appreciative Inquiry as follows:

Initiate/Discover Phase

The objective of this first step in Appreciative Inquiry is always to lay the foundations for the study, and determine what the focus will be. That being the case, this phase began in essence at the meetings with the parish mission and ministry team and council where we introduced Appreciative Inquiry and set the study question.

Appreciative Conference.

On the day of the mission summit (April 23, 2022), the process continued with an appreciative conference. The conference was held in a plenary session of all study participants. The lead researcher introduced the participants to the concept of AI, laying out the principles of the concept. Brief Biblical foundation was also established, first for AI, which we linked to the theology of appreciation (thanksgiving) found across the Hebrew and New Testaments, but particularly the text of Philippians 4: 8. Then we looked at Bible passages which form the root for addressing unjust structures including Matthew 23: 23, Micah 6:8, Zachariah 7:9, then Isaiah chapter 58. Next, we introduced the study question which the parish leadership and lead researcher formulated mid-week: “What are your positive experiences of transforming unjust structures in any community?”

Nine participants shared positive experiences of communal attempts to address unjust structures. The following is a summary of the stories they shared:

Participant A: In this community, I’ve been following the work of the Grace Cafè. It is a service that is already developed by a group of volunteers that are organized to provide free meals to the homeless and the poor in our community. Anyone is invited to go to the café. Some people are able to pay and some may not be able to pay, but they will receive a meal and share in social interaction. Grace Café was started by an individual, a lady actually, but she now has a board that runs it.

Participant B: I like the positive change of recycling the garbage. That has been good for everybody.

Participant C: I want to highlight the good things that are happening at the food-banks

Participant D: There is a church working with the Kiwanis Club to deliver food to seven schools in the community. These are a group of volunteers working with the Kiwanis club to deliver lunch to schools because of the scarcity of food. It is a feeding program that is available to many kids. The other story is a church in town which has some volunteers and about 12 years ago opened a shelter in their basement. Today, they now have 2/47, 365 days per year in which anyone who is homeless and needs shelter somehow has accommodation. Currently they have 125 beds. They have identified 100 people in the city who are homeless. Every week they have social services come in and distribute medical care, social welfare help, job help, etc. They have created this amazing system with the city, the government, and volunteers. It is a plan for people in need, with the idea that for many of them, they will be able to move them into jobs or into their own homes. They have a grant from the government, but this year they will need \$500,000 to cover the rest of their cost. It is an amazing program for a city which only a few years ago hardly knew that we had any homeless people.

Me: What's the name of the church Participant D?

Participant D: The church where it started is United. They just created the structure. But now it has grown to an organization that has no affiliation to the church. Just people helping people.

Participant E: I just read that \$3 million was given to our community to create a number of housing units on Queen Street which is supposed to be developed by 2023. It will be developed, I think, for the people with low income; to move this group of people who need help into such homes.

Participant F: One of the good things about Indwell (the social housing program that started in a church) is that they provide social assistance to the occupants, which is something that is missing from other housing programs. Another story is that our church has a relationship with the forensic unit of the local psychiatric hospital. We are one of the churches that go to provide small service to the clients there. To me it sends a message to those folks that there are some people in this community who care for them. We want them to know that God is always with them and give them a little more sense of community and value in their life

Me: So how do they connect with the church? Do they tell you the needs there are and all what?

Participant G: The spiritual care giver of South West mental health unit is an Anglican priest. In the Clericus where the clergy gathered, he said we need some clergy to provide worship services, and people to stay with these guys sometimes. I contacted the chaplain and said this is something that we can do. The past two years we have not been going in because of COVID. But we have been doing that before, sometimes five or six of us will go in; musician, some choir members, we have a worship time and we minister. We are told there should be minimal interaction but our community renders worship service. As I said we have not been able to go in for two years so we are dying to go back and be with the people.

Participant D: We are also involved with Muslims, and this builds bridges in our community. Our local Muslim community has no place to worship on Fridays. We provide them with a place for worship until recently when they now have their own local

Muslim resource centre. It builds wonderful relationship, we have dinner together, and so on.

Participant H: St. Thomas police department welcomed a social worker to work with individuals who are recovering from addiction and substance abuse. They have a social worker attached to them who is now a part of the people who are going out to help. They now have someone who is trained to listen, and is there to help with some solutions, and perhaps in ways that other people's trainings have not permitted them to do up until now. It's another way of outreach as well to people who are in vulnerable situation.

Participant G: I just went through the groups we have in St. Thomas, and I am amazed the number of groups that are fund raising for people that are in need in order to provide and whatever is needed. For a community with a size like ours of 40,000 people, there are well over 40 groups that raise money for the poor, for the sick, whatever is needed. I am amazed how many there are.

Me: In which case our day together might lead to creating partnerships with the groups identified.

Participant F: "Participant H, are the social workers a part of the police force?"

Participant D: When we work with social services group the direction, we have is to call the station. And it is the police who activate the system for the help.

Me: before Covid, when we were following a new mission and ministry plan, part of the discussion was a decision to find ways to partner with the police or to talk to the police and the city to find out what needs they identify that they feel that the church can help them with? Where do they see the possibility of partnering with our church to solve the problems there are?

Me: So did we all grow up in St. Thomas? Is there something that is different from what you have heard now from elsewhere that you might want to share with us, just briefly?

Participant I: yeah! In Ingersoll, which is where I grew up, some of the churches came together and they created what was called the Lunch Bunch. It started off with one church and spread to four others. They will have a couple of buses go around the schools, during lunch hours, pick up the students, take them to one of the churches where everything was set up for lunch. But also, they had different kinds of social activity that the students can be involved in because a number of the students involved in the lunch bunch were also given opportunity to go to summer camps which were organized by the churches in Ingersoll. It all started with giving lunch to students and spread to families that were supported in spending time together in the summer.

The *Initiate/Discover* continued in a different setting as participants were split into two focus groups of six and five. Each group went into a separate room, with the task to identify themes emerging for each individual from the stories shared at plenary. Themes were written on sticky-notes and posted on a clip board. Table 1 below shows the themes identified by the focus groups.

Table 1

Identified Themes from Stories

Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2
---------------	---------------

Resettling refugees, Service, Helping with food security, Building bridges, Partnership, Acceptance, Learning to receive, Compassion, Humility, Recognizing our vulnerabilities, Be the best you can be.	Feeding the hungry, Caring for environment, Faith, Funding, Providing shelterPartnering, Outreach, Church involvement, Sense of belonging, Communication, Forgiveness, Cooperation, Commitment, Identifying need, Care, Sense of value, Determination, Positive influence, Government support, Level of training, Community organizations and agencies, Community awareness, Community connections, Inclusion, Family, Support grassroots movements
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Inquire/Dream Phase

Participants came back together for this phase to continue inquiring into their positive experiences of transforming unjust structures. The sitting arrangement was re-configured so that we sat in a circle. The ‘Inquire/Dream’ segment is designed to help participants envision a future based on the emergent themes from the stories by creating shared mental images for the desired future. Learning Circle was the data gathering tool employed, hence the sitting arrangement. I used a cross in place of a totem, and provided hand sanitizers in accordance with COVID-19 rules. Each participant sanitized their hands before taking over the cross which meant they held the authority to speak. Themes gathered from the two focus groups were read out loud. Then participants took turns to share the future they were dreaming of based on those themes as the parish plans to be more active in transforming unjust structures.

The summary of the dreams shared across the circle were captured in flip charts, numbered 1 to 12 below:

1. Families coming from the larger community to St. Hilda's - St. Luke's to feel supported.
2. Brown bag lunch meets needs and bring people together.
3. We are more intentional in outreach - develop focus
4. Be a service church
5. Connect with agencies, build bridges, hands-on
6. Build an identity
7. Youth involvement in all areas (folk mass, choir)
8. Youths actively participate
9. "Barry" woven throughout dreams
10. Engage in God's mission - reaching into community
11. Celebrate dreams with a mission, with joy, with focus, with humility, with intention, with priorities
12. We are light to others - be a living church where God is a work among us

Imagine/Design Phase

This phase took place after lunch, beginning with all participants together at the same place. The goal of this phase is to "collate data, share data, find life giving themes, decide themes for initial focus" (Branson, Appendix M). In other words, this phase aims

to find innovative ways to create the future emerging from the dreams shared in the preceding segment. I introduced the concept of provocative proposition as a generative theory to guide this important step.

After introducing the concept, participants returned to their initial focus groups. The dreams stated above were divided into two: Numbers one to five went to focus group 1, and numbers, 6 to 12 were given to focus group 2. The groups were charged to develop provocative propositions (possibility statements) from the dreams. Table 4 shows the outcome of their work:

Table 4

Provocative Proposals/Propositions

	Focus Group 1	Focus Group 2
1	Love is the light of our life together; we ignite the fire of life within	We are feeding the hungry
2	Our youth choir leads the congregation in song and worship with their voices, guitars and drums	We had such fun at messy church with the other families
3	We joyfully celebrate as we lift our voices in worship	I really enjoyed the meal we prepared together at church and shared it with my family
4	We intentionally share our love of/for God while connecting with our neighbours, our new partners	A group of us went to the Inn and shared coffee and fellowship

Innovate/Deliver

Participants and lead researcher came back to plenary for this final segment of the AI process. At this stage, the study participants were meant to jointly formulate tangible action plans for the future. In this case, a plan to live into the propositions developed in step three for transforming unjust structures, including the activation of informal initiatives for action by individuals, pairs, or in small groups, forming committees for steps leading to full implementation, and getting the parish council involved (Branson, chapter 5).

After I explained the rationale and goal of the segment, members of the parish mission and ministry implementation team stepped up to take over. Apparently, the parishes' participation in this study was at their behest as they wanted a way to begin the conversation and planning that will lead to the development of a ministry around the 4th mark of mission. This study report, outlining the study process, outcome (possibility or actionable propositions), is written by the lead researcher to help the team members as they enter the phase of implementation: engaging the parish of St. Hilda's-St. Luke's and the community of St. Thomas in the good work of transforming unjust structures of the society..

Conclusion

The propositions presented in this report are a reflection of the collective aspirations of the study participants. They are expressions of a future that the parish can live into. It is hoped that they are received that way, and that volunteers will work jointly with the parish council to actualize this future.

References

- Branson, M. L. (2004). *Memories, hopes, and conversations: Appreciative inquiry for congregational change*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute.
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- MacDonald, C. (2012). Understanding participatory action research: A qualitative research methodology option. *Canadian Journal of Action Research*, 13(2), 34-50.
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Appendix 5

Mission Summit Agenda

St. John's, Tillsonburg

1. Appreciative Conference (Plenary) 60 - 90 minutes
2. Focus groups (2 groups) 20 -30 minutes
3. Bathroom-break - 10 minutes
4. Learning Circle (plenary) for the Inquire/Dream phase 40 - 60 minutes
5. Lunch break 20 - 30 minutes
6. Focus Groups for the Imagine/Design phase 30 - 60 minutes
7. Plenary for the Innovate/Design phase 30 - 40 minutes

Appendix 6
St. Hilda's - St. Luke's

Mission Summit Agenda

1. Appreciative Conference (Plenary) 60 - 90 minutes
2. Focus Group (2 Groups) 20 - 30 minutes
3. Bathroom Break 10 minutes
4. Learning Circle 40 - 60 minutes
5. Lunch Break 20 - 30 minutes
6. Focus Group 30 - 60 minutes
7. Plenary for Final Phase 30 - 40 minutes
8. Closing

Appendix 7

Mission and Ministry Plan Part 1 (Required)

Creating a Mission and Ministry Plan

The Bishop of Huron has asked that every parish/regional ministry in the Diocese create a Mission and Ministry Plan for the 5-year period 2018-2022, to be submitted to Annual Vestry 2018 and to the Diocese (1 copy to the Territorial Archdeacon and 1 copy to the Executive Archdeacon) by March, 2018. The intention is to identify a way forward for every part of the Diocese, with clearly identified mission purpose and concrete goals to support that purpose.

We have provided a template (attached) that all parishes/regional ministries are expected use, along with some advice on process (attached). This booklet contains basic goals that must be met by all parishes. If your parish cannot meet them by the specified date, please indicate in the appropriate column the date by which you expect to reach the goal. There is a column for “Proposed Action.” Here is where you enter your plan for fulfilling the goal.

The template is divided into sections: five based on the Five Marks of Mission, and others on Ministry and Leadership, Congregational Health, Long-term Future, Buildings, and Finances. Each section includes an explanation and room for goal-setting.

If your parish has goals beyond those named in this booklet, please use the “Mission and Ministry Plan, Part 2 (Optional)” to enter your other priorities. That booklet also contains numerous suggestions for parish goals which are worth considering.

Suggested Process

In order to simplify the task of creating a plan, we’ve identified a process that we think will be helpful. Your parish/regional ministry may have its own way of moving forward and that’s fine. Steps 6 and 7 are not optional, however. The Mission and Ministry Plan must be passed by Vestry, the latest acceptable date being Annual Vestry 2018, and submitted to Church House and the Territorial Archdeacon.

1. Create a task force to response to the challenges of the five marks of mission as identified within the mission plan. It is suggested that this visioning not be made another task of the council or wardens, but that a separate task force be created that will involve fresh and experienced eyes. The task force must include the Rector/Priest-in-Charge.
2. Terms of reference should be prepared by council to ensure that the committee has a clear focus of what their tasks and deadlines are. This will include the requirement that monthly reports be provided to the Parish/Regional Council as well as special reports in June and November. The task force should consider the results of the Self-Assessment, the phased goal benchmarks in the diocesan mission plan and other available resources.
3. Concurrently the council should complete the Parish Self-Assessment. Knowing where you are can help you to know where you can go. The questions asked in

the Self-Assessment are intentionally arranged to prepare you for answers that you can enter into your Mission Plan. It will be an essential resource for the work of the Task Force. However, completing it should not become one of its tasks.

4. Separately the Clergy/Council/Wardens/Finance/Building Committee should respond to the goals set in sections 6 – 10 of the mission plans.
5. Distribute the draft to the congregation(s) and invite amendments and other responses; a Town Hall meeting or some similar form of engagement is a good idea within the month of June. The findings of the task force should be shared with wardens and council before any vestry submission or presentation.
6. The final plan must be accepted by motion of Vestry. A Special Vestry for the purpose, by the end of November 2017, is advisable, so that planning can be undertaken for Annual Vestry 2018. Otherwise, the Mission Plan may be accepted at Annual Vestry 2018.
7. Submit final copies to: 1) the Executive Archdeacon of the Diocese of Huron, the Ven. Tanya Phibbs, and 2) the Territorial Archdeacon. Together the archdeacons will review and respond to each submission.
8. Timeline:
 - a. May 2017 Creating a task force within the parish
 - b. June 2017 Evaluating the current mission statement and discussing the needs to be addressed
 - c. September 2017 Formulation of the Mission plan in two months

- d. November 2017 Parish consultation and draft approval via presentation to council or a special vestry meeting
- e. January 2018 Vestry approval

Mission and Ministry Plan

Sections

1. Evangelism: The First Mark of Mission
2. Discipling: The Second Mark of Mission
3. Service: The Third Mark of Mission
4. Transforming Society: The Fourth Mark of Mission
5. Safeguarding and Renewing the Earth: The Fifth Mark of Mission
6. Ministry and Leadership
7. Congregational Health
8. Long-term Future
9. Buildings
10. Finances

1. Evangelism: The First Mark of Mission

“To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom” is to share the news that in Christ God is

reconciling to world to himself (2 Cor. 5:19), in words. How can you speak the Good

News to the world around you?

Evangelism: Minimum Goals	Will meet goal by due date (Yes/No)	If not meeting goal by due date, indicate date by which you will meet (Show plan to move toward goal in the "Proposed Action" column.)	Proposed Action
<p>Participate in one evangelism training event Due date: by Dec. 2018</p> <p><i>-may be a shared event</i> <i>-may be a workshop, book study, series of educational events</i> <i>-the Director for Mission and Ministry leads these</i> <i>-you can use the "Thy Kingdom Come" video series:</i> https://www.thykingdomcome.global/fait h <i>-Wycliffe College's Institute of Evangelism can provide people and resources</i></p>			

<p>Identify the group of people whom your parish/regional ministry hopes to reach Due date: by Annual Vestry 2019 <i>-may be defined by age, socio/economic class, or geographic location - must be specific enough that you can reach them with particular activities</i> <i>-should be feasible for you to reach</i></p>			
<p>Undertake two evangelism activities designed to reach the identified group Due date: by Annual Vestry 2022 <i>-these activities must include explicit proclamation of the Good News, in words</i> <i>-social events, such as dinners and concerts, may count but only if a significant component of the event is explicit proclamation</i></p>			
<p>Other:</p>			

2. Discipling: The Second Mark of Mission

“To teach, baptize and nurture new believers” and, indeed, all believers, is the work of discipling. How can your congregation(s) foster the Christian development of new participants, long-time members, and everyone in between?

Discipling: Minimum Goals	Will meet goal in 2018 (Yes/No)	If not meeting goal in 2018, indicate date by which you will meet (Show plan to move toward goal in the “Proposed Action” column.)	Proposed Actions
Host, or participate in, a Lenten formation series, such as “The Five Marks of Love” <i>-“The Five Marks of Love” engages the Five Marks of Mission and is available from Church House</i>			
Regular small groups for prayer, Bible study, and other Christian formation			
Require substantial baptismal preparation, including church attendance and explanation of baptismal meanings and promises			

3. Service: The Third Mark of Mission

“To respond to human need by loving service” is a central aspect of Christ’s call. The challenge for us is to remember that loving service engages us personally with those in need, so that we are changed by the encounter. Simply providing a building or sending a

cheque misses the heart of what Christ asks of us, indeed, offers us. How can your congregation(s) find real needs and offer service that is truly loving?

Service: Minimum Goals	Will meet goal in 2018 (Yes/No)	If not meeting goal in 2018, indicate date by which you will meet (Show plan to move toward goal in the "Proposed Action" column.)	Proposed Actions
Participate in at least one ongoing community-oriented charitable service activity Due date: Annual Vestry 2018 <i>-this requires the active involvement of parishioners (not just clergy) in outreach for others</i> <i>-may be in cooperation with non-parishioners</i> <i>-simply providing space in the church building does not qualify</i>			

4. Transforming Society: The Fourth Mark of Mission

“To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind, and to pursue peace and reconciliation” is a call to go beyond charitable giving and help to change the world that creates human needs. How can your congregation(s) join in God’s work of building the Kingdom by participating in the transformation of society?

Transforming Society: Minimum Goals	Will meet goal in 2018 (Yes/No)	If not meeting goal in 2018, indicate date by which you will meet (Show plan to move toward goal in the “Proposed Action” column.)	Proposed Actions
Host/participate in an educational event on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and participate in the Blanket Exercise Due date: by Annual Vestry 2018			
Appoint a contact person for the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund. Due date: by Annual Vestry 2018			

5. Safeguarding and Renewing the Earth: The Fifth Mark of Mission

As Christians, we are called to “safeguard the integrity of creation.” Our world is a gift from God. We bear responsibility for it. How can your congregation contribute to the work of caring for the Earth?

The Earth: Minimum Goals	Will meet goal in 2018 (Yes/No)	If not meeting goal in 2018, indicate date by which you will meet (Show plan to move toward goal in the “Proposed Ac- tion” column.)	Proposed Actions

Do a green assessment of your parish buildings.			
Decrease use of electricity and water.			

6. Ministry and Leadership

Ministry and Leadership: Minimum Goals	Will meet goal in 2018 (Yes/No)	If not meeting goal in 2018, indicate date by which you will meet (Show plan to move toward goal in the "Proposed Action" column.)	Proposed Actions
Parish Council meetings <i>-Parish Council meetings must occur at least four times a year -at least three days' notice should be given of all meetings of Parish Council</i>			
Teaching element in every Parish Council meeting <i>-Parish Council should be about more than business; include some element of learning about God and our Diocese of Huron</i>			

Nominating Committee for officers <i>-nominations should be recommended by parishioners, so that the community owns its life</i>			
Effective communications <i>-ensure that the congregation knows about the possibilities and challenges that are being faced, and about events to attend</i>			
Participation in life of the Deanery and Diocese <i>-active and regular involvement</i>			
Warden and Treasurer training <i>-the Diocese offers training for wardens and treasurers</i>			

7. Congregational Health

Congregational Health: Minimum Goals	Will meet goal in 2018 (Yes/No)	If not meeting goal in 2018, indicate date by which you will meet (Show plan to move toward goal in the "Proposed Action"	Proposed Actions

		column.)	
Safe Church Compliance			
Safe Church policies and procedures on bullying and harassment are normal aspects of parish life.			
Ensure broadly-based decision-making <i>-avoid concentrating decision-making authority among few parishioners</i>			
Regular opportunities for fellowship and community building <i>-fellowship after worship is a common example</i>			
Conversations are done in person, on the phone, and/or video chat. No conversations via email. <i>-email should be used only for general sharing of information; talking about issues and decision-making</i>			

<p><i>should not occur over email because email does not aid in resolution</i></p>			
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8. Long-term Future

<p>Long-term Future: Minimum Goals</p>	<p>Will meet goal in 2018 (Yes/No)</p>	<p>If not meeting goal in 2018, indicate date by which you will meet (Show plan to move toward goal in the "Proposed Ac- tion" column.)</p>	<p>Proposed Actions</p>
<p>Complete Mission and Ministry Plan Due date: Annual Vestry 2018</p>			

9. Buildings

Buildings: Minimum Goals	Will meet goal in 2018 (Yes/No)	If not meeting goal in 2018, indicate date by which you will meet (Show plan to move toward goal in the "Proposed Action" column.)	Proposed Actions
<p>Fill out the attached Property Condition Matrix for all buildings in the parish's care</p> <p><i>-this is the Property Condition Matrix from the Parish Self-Assessment Booklet (available on the diocesan website under Resources/Parish Toolbox/Congregational Development)</i></p>			
<p>Identify lists of building condition issues that will need: 1) to be addressed within the next five years, and 2) in the next five to ten years.</p> <p><i>-the Property Condition Matrix will help</i></p>			
<p>Identify significant building elements that because of condition or age will likely need to be addressed.</p> <p><i>-the Property Condition Matrix will help</i></p>			

<p>Establish budget costs and timelines.</p> <p><i>-with trade or professional help, establish budget costs that include a 20% contingency allowance. Provide this to the finance committee</i></p>			
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10. Finances

Finances: Minimum Goals	Will meet goal by due date (Yes/No)	If not meeting goal by due date, indicate date by which you will meet (Show plan to move toward goal in the "Proposed Action" column.)	Proposed Actions

<p>Balanced budget Due date: Annual Vestry 2018 and continuing thereafter</p> <p><i>-a balanced budget may include the use of interest from endowed funds, but must not include the use of capital</i></p> <p><i>-a balanced budget must list all expenses including apportionment & clergy costs</i></p>			
<p>Full apportionment and clergy costs paid monthly (or as indicated – explain in “Proposed Action” box) Due date: ongoing</p> <p><i>-diocesan and national expenses are ongoing, so apportionment is best paid on a monthly basis or earlier</i></p>			

<p>Parish conversation about finances Due date: by Sept. 30, 2017</p> <p><i>-may follow a town hall format or may be by written document distributed to the whole parish/regional ministry</i></p> <p><i>-a full presentation to the parish/regional ministry of the financial situation and prospects of the parish/regional ministry</i></p> <p><i>-includes data about projected givings and expenses over the next five years</i></p>			
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PROPERTY CONDITION MATRIX

SITE

NAME OF PARISH: _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____

Do you have a survey of the property?	() yes	() no			
	If yes please include a copy	If no would you provide a sketch with approximate dimensions			

Do you have a septic bed or are you connected to municipal services?	<input type="checkbox"/> septic bed	<input type="checkbox"/> municipal services			
If you have a tile bed when was the last time it was looked at?	<input type="checkbox"/> within the last 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 – 20 years	<input type="checkbox"/> longer	<input type="checkbox"/> do not know	
If you have a well when was the last time it was reviewed or updated?	<input type="checkbox"/> within the last 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 – 20 years	<input type="checkbox"/> longer	<input type="checkbox"/> do not know	
Is there a cemetery on the property?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no			
Does the parish have a separate cemetery elsewhere?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no			
Do you have a propane or oil tank on site?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no			
If you have an oil tank where is it located?	<input type="checkbox"/> underground	<input type="checkbox"/> inside the building	<input type="checkbox"/> do not know		
How many parking spaces do you have on the property?	<input type="checkbox"/> spaces on pavement	<input type="checkbox"/> spaces on gravel			

BUILDINGS

Which of the following buildings does the parish have?	() church	() separate parish hall	() rectory	() the # of other buildings	PLEASE complete a separate check list for each building
Approximate age of oldest part of the building?	()				
Approximate size of the main floor?	() sq feet	OR () square metres			
Number of storeys (including basement level) for each building?	() sq feet	OR () square metres			
Size of the entire building including useable basement, upper floors and balconies?	() sq feet	OR () square metres			
Do you have drawings for any of the buildings, floor plans etc.?	() yes	() no			

Type of Construction: check one of the following for each building or insert a description	() yes Wood structure with sloped roof and siding on the walls	() yes Wood roof structure and floors with masonry	() yes Steel and masonry construction	() yes Other Please describe	

ROOFS

Type of roof (check one for each) If a building has more than one type insert approx. % or area of each		LIFE CYCLE			
	Slate	100 years	() %		
	Cedar shakes or shingles	50 – 75 years	() %		
	Asphalt Singles	20 – 30 years	() %		
	Metal roof	30 years	() %		
	Flat roof membrane	25 years	() %		

When was the last time major work or replacement of these roofs was done?	<input type="checkbox"/> Within the last 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/> 5 – 20 years	<input type="checkbox"/> longer	<input type="checkbox"/> do not know	
Indicate which section of the roof was addressed?					
Do you know the approximate cost of the work completed?	\$ ()				
Have you had roof leaks since the last major work?	<input type="checkbox"/> yes	<input type="checkbox"/> no			

EXTERIOR WALLS

Type of walls (check one for each). If a building has more than one type insert approx. % or area of each		LIFE CYCLE			
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	Masonry	100 years	() %		
	Metal or plastic siding	50 years	() %		
	Wood siding	40 – 80 years	() %		
	Other (please describe)		() %		
When was the last time major work was done to the walls?	() Within the last 5 years	() 5 – 20 years	() longer	() do not know	
Do you know the approx. cost of this work?	\$ ()				
Do you have a bell tower and/or a spire?		70 years	() yes	() no	
If yes what is approx. height from ground level to top?			() feet OR () metres		
How many stained glass windows do you have?		60 years	() windows		
Do they have storm windows?	() yes	() no			

When was the last time major work was done to the windows?	() Within the last 5 years	() 5 – 20 years	() longer	() do not know	

INTERIOR

Type of heating system (indicate approx. age)		LIFE CYCLE			
	Steam or hot water boiler with radiators	25 – 35 years	() years old		
	Forced air system	25 years	() years old		
Does your system cool as well?	() yes	() no			
Has there been a major upgrade to any of the systems since it has been installed (indicate the year)?	() within the last 5 years	() 5 – 20 years	() longer	() do not know	

When was the last time the following other interior items were upgraded?					
	Lighting	50 years	() within the last 5 years	() 5 – 10 years	() longer () do not know
	Electrical work other than lighting	50 years	() within the last 5 years	() 5 – 10 years	() longer () do not know
	Floor finishes	25 years	() within the last 5 years	() 5 – 10 years	() longer () do not know
	Wall and ceiling finishes	50 years	() within the last 5 years	() 5 – 10 years	() longer () do not know

ACCESSIBILITY – Do you have the following?

Accessible building entrance	() yes	() no			
Accessibility to all public areas in the building	() yes	() no			

A life or elevator	() yes	() no			
Accessible washrooms	() yes	() no			
Accessible pews or designated wheelchair areas (provide the # of spaces provided)	() yes	() no			

CURRENT PLANS - DO YOU HAVE ANY EXPANSIONS OR RENOVATIONS PLANNED FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR?

Appendix 8

Confidentiality Agreement

This form may be used for individuals hired to conduct specific research tasks, e.g., recording or editing image or sound data, transcribing, interpreting, translating, entering data, destroying data.

Project title - Five Marks of Mission
(Pro00117692)

I, _____, the _____ (specific job description, e.g., interpreter/translator) have been hired to _____

I agree to -

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher(s)*.
2. keep all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) secure while it is in my possession.
3. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., disks, tapes, transcripts) to the *Researcher(s)* when I have completed the research tasks.
4. after consulting with the *Researcher(s)*, erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Researcher(s)* (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).
5. other (specify). Researcher cannot guarantee that other participants from the session will maintain the confidentiality of what was discussed.

(Print Name)	(Signature)
(Date)	
<i>Researcher(s)</i>	
OSITA OLUIGBO.	OSITA C. OLUIGBO
01/O3/2022	

(Print Name)	(Signature)
(Date)	

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by Research Ethics Board (*REB3*) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office

Appendix 9

Letter of Episcopal Endorsement



The
Diocese of Huron

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA

The Right Reverend Todd Townshend, Th.D.
Bishop of Huron

May 19, 2022

To Potential Parish Participants

Dear friends in Christ,

At a time when the church is facing many challenges, we need to more deeply understand the dynamics of congregational life and faith. The Venerable Osita Oluigbo is working on his doctoral studies to examine these dynamics in congregations by exploring the process for the implementation of the Marks of Mission. Your parish has been identified as one of the venues for his study. Your insights into your parish life will be valuable information that will assist both Archdeacon Osita and the diocese as we seek to be faithful in ministry.

I support Archdeacon Osita's research project and hope that your parish will enter into the study with him.

May God continue to bless your parish as we seek to live God's mission today.

Yours in Christ.

A handwritten signature in dark purple ink that reads "Todd". Below the signature is a horizontal line.

The Rt. Rev. Todd Townshend
Bishop of Huron