

**Distinctives of Church Case Studies
&
Study Questions for**

***Learning From The Past
To Guide Us Into The Future***

***A “First Person” Case Study by Bill Egner, Executive Pastor
Christ Chapel Bible Church of Fort Worth, Texas***

Distinctive—Expect to get “inside the heads” of the principals

The case study will allow you to “think the thoughts” of the principals, the main players in each case. You may or may not agree with their theology or decisions, but you will see the situation from their perspective and life-history. Seek to discover their “sitz im leben,” the sociological understanding of their “place in life.” This requires understanding the context of a ministry, so expect plenty of background data. Endeavor to “think their thoughts” and by analogy apply lessons to your ministry situation.

Distinctive—Expect plenty of data

Case studies are often twenty pages, single-spaced. You will be given as much background information as is practical to understand the case. It is essential to grasp as much as possible of the history and polity of the local church. *There is a key to reading case studies: the folks at Harvard suggest a “first skim” of the case, looking for pertinent information. Then, go back for a detailed reading of the material.* Sift the data of the case and sort out what you perceive to be relevant data points. Expect plenty of block quotes. These quotes allow the principals in each case study to share their “own story.” Data will come from websites, information published by the church, books and magazine articles by the principals and others, newspaper stories, and personal interviews.

Distinctive—Expect to discover principles

“Principals” are the main players in the case and you should draw the “principles,” the “main ideas” of the case that transcend church polity, geography and culture. Generally, the case will present a problem or turning point in ministry, but not the “correct answer” or the “solution.” Read the case to formulate your conclusions and be able to defend your conclusions with the case data. Why did the “main players” make the decisions that they did? What is the larger picture of what is going on, the “meta-narrative?” What “main ideas” can you analogously apply to your ministry or life?

**Study Questions:
Learning From The Past To Guide Us Into The Future**

**A “First Person” Case Study by Bill Egner, Executive Pastor
Christ Chapel Bible Church of Fort Worth, Texas**

1. Identify the central issues and the “main players.” As you read, consider making a list of the markers for the spiritual DNA of Christ Chapel.
2. Why could this issue be pivotal for Christ Chapel? What are the leadership considerations in this issue? If you were an Elder, you would ...
3. What are the affects of history on the current issues at Christ Chapel? How do current issues in your church have “long ties” into your churches history?
4. What unique “language” does Christ Chapel have and what is the unique “language” of your church or denomination?

Learning From The Past To Guide Us Into The Future

A “First Person” Case Study by Bill Egner, Executive Pastor Christ Chapel Bible Church of Fort Worth, Texas

Introduction

Christ Chapel Bible Church finds itself in the late summer of 2006 at a blessed crossroads. That crossroads is the opportunity to invest in one of three ministry options, each of which will offer material care as well as show the love of Christ to orphans and/or impoverished children.

All three options have been brought forward by lay people, are overseas and are seriously being considered by the Elder Board. Two of the three options require a relatively small financial commitment from the church, short-term volunteer commitments to go and serve and no governing Board or staff oversight. The third option, on the other hand, requires a significant amount of financial commitment, potentially hiring overseas staff as well as requiring large-scale governance and longer-term commitment.

It's a wonderful place to be and in a sense Christ Chapel has been building toward a time such as this ... and for ministry discussions such as this. Yet realities being what they are mean ministries still vie for the same fixed resources of the church. How should the leadership decide which, if any, should be funded or supported? What might Christ Chapel's history disclose about its ability to finance or even oversee an overseas “church-sized” ministry idea? Though the risks of the third option loom large, is this actually the direction God is calling the church?

To help guide its decision, the Elder Board would like to use a grid of three criteria through which to understand and assess the potential pluses and minuses of each ministry option: 1) “Being the Banker;” 2) “Volunteer Commitment with Return Impact;” and 3) “Providing Governance.”¹ A Ministry Understanding Grid is shown in Figure 1.

¹ These are terms familiar to those in leadership at Christ Chapel. “Being the Banker,” as its name suggests has solely to do with providing the funding for a ministry venture, much as an individual or corporation would approach a bank with an idea and be given funds pursuant to its proposal. No debt or repayment by any individual or ministry is implied by this terminology. “Volunteer Commitment” has to do with being able to send untrained volunteers into the community or on a short-term overseas ministry experience in which they are able to make some level of contribution or impact within the target environment. “Return Impact” is the return spiritual benefit that accrues to Christ Chapel Bible Church through the volunteer whose heart, ideally, was changed by their community or cross-cultural experience. And “Providing Governance” describes whether or not the Elder Board will provide on-going governance to the endeavor.

Figure 1 – Ministry Understanding Grid

Issue	Requested of Christ Chapel
Being the Banker	
Volunteer Commitment with Return Impact	
Providing Governance	

This is a current situation at Christ Chapel Bible Church. Certainly prayer for discernment and “ears to hear” have been and remain highest priority. But perhaps there are lessons to be learned from the spiritual DNA and history of taking on church-sized projects that could help guide the church. In that vein, we will begin with the recent history that has brought Christ Chapel to such a “sudden” influx of spiritual entrepreneurship.²

A Brief And Recent History Of Christ Chapel

Founded in 1980 by a group of only 60 men and women, Christ Chapel has grown today to be a church of over 3,000 adults, students and children on campus any given weekend and has become the steward of resources including a \$6.1 million dollar annual operating budget and 194 full and part-time staff. Perhaps a brief history of the past four years suggests why the climate has become so “suddenly” conducive that the leadership would consider such large-scale projects, even ones based overseas.

In the summer of 2002, Christ Chapel received a fax from Saddleback Community Church in Lake Forest, CA describing the opportunity to become one of the “first wave” of churches to host a “40 Days of Purpose” all-church, spiritual growth campaign. Even though *The Purpose Driven Life* had not yet been released, after prayer and discussion the Senior Pastor and the Executive Pastor both felt led of God to pursue this invitation. The ensuing spiritual result that fall was fairly profound, probably best summarized by a renewed sense of commitment to God’s calling not only at the individual level, but on the corporate spiritual life. In fact, the spiritual impact was substantial enough that every fall since Christ Chapel has held a “40 Days of Purpose” type all-church, spiritual growth campaign.

In 2003 an in-house study entitled “Building Lost Habits, Restoring Lost Values” formed the basis for the largest building campaign attempted to date. In 2004 another in-house study called “Walking with the Galilean” brought the congregation up close with the Savior, discovering how to more closely walk in His footsteps. The fall of 2005 saw the church mobilize its resources toward the community in an unprecedented fashion through Saddleback’s “40 Days of Community” striving to build bridges of “good works” in a Christ-honoring way into nearby regions of Fort Worth. And finally in September 2006

² Webster’s *New Dictionary of the English Language* defines an entrepreneur as “one who organizes and assumes the risk of a business or enterprise.” Christ Chapel has for many years applied this concept to describe those who exercise that same type of creative, initiative-taking spirit with respect to Kingdom matters.

the church plans to strengthen and widen last year's bridges while praying for opportunities to share "good news" as those bridges are traversed with another in-house campaign called "Just Walk Across the Room." These back-to-back fall campaigns seemingly have propelled the church spiritually to a new place of sensitivity to God's leading and sense of calling toward taking the gospel ("good works" plus "good news") to the world.

But the truth is these "sudden" ministry opportunities are in reality not so sudden, though they are certainly larger in scope than in the past. Christ Chapel is not at this crossroads just for these reasons, but perhaps for a reason that runs much deeper in the heart and soul of the church—the concept of permission-giving or spiritual entrepreneurship. It may even be that a manifestation of this DNA was seen even in the initial decision of the executive-level leadership to pursue such all-church, spiritual growth campaigns in the first place. It is toward this idea of a church DNA that we now turn our attention.

Christ Chapel's Spiritual DNA

The Church

On September 28, 1980 approximately 60 people, representing six different churches, met at the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. Lyndell Kirkley and sensing the need for another Bible Church in Fort Worth prayerfully decided to form Christ Chapel Bible Church.³ The purpose of this new fellowship by their definition was to glorify God:

1. In developing a family of believers which is first and foremost coming to know, enjoy and love God through the Lord Jesus Christ;
2. In laboring and striving according to His power to present every believer complete in Christ;
3. And regularly meeting together for the worship of God and the equipping of the believers for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ through the faithful teaching of the Scriptures, through prayer, through the singing of praises to God and through fellowship;
4. In committing to work together and to be accountable to one another to permit God to develop the spiritual gifts of this body of believers for serving one another and others as God leads both financially and otherwise;
5. In evangelizing through the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, locally and worldwide;
6. In supporting and working with other Christian ministries in harmony with God's Word; and
7. In the ordination of qualified men to the ministry, until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁴

³ Personal conversation with Mr. Richard Miles, a charter member of Christ Chapel Bible Church, 2000.

⁴ From "Constitution of Christ Chapel Bible Church," p. 1.

By way of summarizing their prayerful, overarching purpose for and scriptural foundation of this new fellowship, these 60 men and women chose Colossians 1:28-29 where the Apostle Paul writes to the church in Colossae:

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me. (NIV)

This biblically-inspired charge – to labor with all of Christ’s energy for its members’ spiritual maturity – was further imbedded in its attenders’ minds when it was embodied within the fellowship’s vision statement, originated circa 1995, then slightly revised to the following in 2002:

To stretch every involved person from the threshold of their spiritual pilgrimage toward becoming a fully-developing follower of Christ.⁵

Spiritual maturity in the context of biblical community – to see Christ formed and released in every involved person – has been the aim and motivational purpose of Christ Chapel Bible Church for the past 25 years. As a congregation the people have come to desire and expect being given permission to pursue their heart’s desire in ministry. And in many instances they have risen to the challenges presented to them by the Senior Pastor through whom, in large part, the congregation has received its day-to-day DNA.

The Senior Pastor

In 1981 this start-up church seemed the perfect fit for the then and now Senior Pastor’s spiritual DNA, Dr. Ted Kitchens. He was saved, rooted and grounded in the Southern Baptist tradition, cut his ministry teeth in Fort Worth Young Life and was trained for the ministry through both Sagamore Hill Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas under the mentorship of Fred Swank and Dallas Theological Seminary. In terms of natural abilities he has a strongly entrepreneurial bent, creating and running a successful ski trip business during his time at DTS, and has a temperament that inspires others to step out into uncharted ministry water.

With respect to the permission-giving concept he connects at a deep level with the story of Young Life’s founder Jim Rayburn, receiving permission to go and start the fledgling ministry of Young Life in the basement of Dallas Theological Seminary. While most of his passion for spiritual entrepreneurship undoubtedly comes from his own DNA, some of it may also be a kind of reaction against a tradition in churches that he may have perceived, along the lines of the only “legitimate” ministries in which to serve are those found within the church walls. In other words, “You may serve anywhere you like as long as it’s in one of our internal church ministries.” But to a spiritual entrepreneur like Ted that ministry field is much too constricting. Regarding this idea of permission-giving, Ted says:

⁵ From http://www.cbcfamily.org/our_mission.html.

If every member of CCBC is a minister, then we should turn them loose to follow the Spirit's leading. We should be their cheerleader so they can feel the good pleasure of serving God every day of their lives.⁶

To further flesh out "how" the day-to-day ministry vision would be implemented, Ted in partnership with the Elder Board introduced 10 core values, things they felt very deeply about, circa 1995:

1. A celebrative mix of traditional and contemporary worship
2. Efficacy of the Word of God in teaching and preaching
3. Life change takes place in small groups
4. Giving ministry away to lay leadership
5. Preaching and teaching must be "Monday-morning" relevant
6. Reaching the community and city through friendship evangelism
7. Supporting missions around the world
8. Raising up "home-grown" people to enter the ministry
9. Placing high priority on children and youth
10. Allowing God to speak through the daily provision of our financial needs⁷

While not expressly stated under number four above, the idea of permission-giving had by then become a long-standing, integral spiritual muscle in the church body and so was better articulated in a 2002 revision of the church core values under number six below:

1. We're committed to "Monday morning" relevant biblical teaching.
2. We're committed to grace manifested in loving relationships where we expect neither more nor less of each other than the Bible does.
3. We're committed to unity in our decisions, our planning and our daily interactions.
4. We're committed to being purpose-driven toward the spiritual development of every involved person.
5. We're committed to honoring God through the pursuit of excellence in all aspects of our ministry.
6. We're committed to the priesthood of the believer and to a permission-giving mentality as it relates to every believer's ministry involvement.
7. We're committed to allowing God to speak through the daily provision of our financial needs, including a debt-free facility.
8. We're committed to encouraging personal shepherding and life change through small groups.⁸

A permission-giving mentality, especially as seen through the ongoing modeling of the Senior Pastor's entrepreneurial spirit, pervades Christ Chapel. This is a church whose DNA runs deep with taking on entrepreneurial spiritual challenges.

⁶ From a discussion with Dr. Ted Kitchens, September 2006.

⁷ Personal notes from the author.

⁸ From http://www.cbcfamily.org/core_values.html.

Governance

The final decision-making authority as to which ministry to support is clear from the church's constitution. That authority resides in the Elder Board.

Article IV

Government

The government of this church, under the leadership of Jesus Christ, is vested in the Boards of Elders and Deacons duly elected by the membership.

Article V

Officers, Pastors, Non-Pastoral Staff and Teachers

Section 5 The Elders, (3) The Duties

It shall be the duty of the Elders to care for the church and its spiritual condition, to guard the purity of doctrine and life of the church, and to discipline the church in accordance with the Word of God. The Elders shall assist the Pastors in the administration of the Lord's Supper, act for the church in the reception and dismissal of members, and examine all seeking membership in the church. It shall be the duty of the Elders to assist the pastors in counseling the needy, comforting the afflicted, visiting the sick, and supplying the pulpit of the church when necessary. It shall be the duty of the Elders to supervise the operation of the church with its various organizations. The Elders shall supervise the Church School, the missionary work of the church, the distribution of benevolent funds, the young people's work, and any other organization or activity of the church. The Elders and the Deacons shall jointly approve the church budget to be prepared by the Church Treasurer.⁹

While this has been and remains true, the Senior Pastor especially has an extremely high level of influence in almost every area in which he cares to set foot. This is the result of having trusting, on-going, two-way relationships with the Elders, a long tenure and a remarkable track record of wise decision-making. Board decisions are always made with unanimity among the voting Elders (the Senior Pastor and the Executive Pastor are Elders with voice but no vote). It should be noted as well that the Elders have always been gracious to solicit input and many times recommendations from the executive-level staff before making their final decision.

The purpose of this section has been to illustrate that there is a permission-giving DNA river that flows through Christ Chapel. This river is wide in that it permeates most every area of ministry. It is deep in that it includes those who govern as well as the governed. And it is long—25 years strong and still going. It is also noteworthy that the Senior Pastor has a large amount of well-earned steering influence and his DNA will usually lead him in the direction of something entrepreneurial, something that will make a long-term, eternal impact.

⁹ From "Constitution of Christ Chapel Bible Church," p. 9.

But it is also worth stating that sometimes the permission-giving DNA can make it very difficult to say “no.” Clyde Crawford, Elder Board Chairman, wondered out loud if faced with two or three good choices of ministry would the church be able to discern God’s strategic direction (like a rifle shot) or would it instead give permission to all in order to offend none (like a shotgun blast).¹⁰ One might wonder how a strategic direction would even “feel” to a church with such a permission-giving DNA.

It is clear that Christ Chapel has the resources to take on any of the three ministry options, even the third option that requires the largest financial, personnel and governance commitments. Christ Chapel also has permission-giving spiritual DNA that is highly entrepreneurial and from time-to-time takes calculated risks. Does Christ Chapel’s DNA direct it toward one option over another, or might it instead try to spread its resources evenly over all three? The next section will briefly review how this DNA has played itself out in two slightly smaller and one similar-sized ministry opportunity to see if some wisdom for the current situation might be gleaned.

Three Examples of Permission-Giving History

Illustration One: The Original Community Ministry

Ted Kitchens birthed what is now called Community Ministries and its leadership committee in 1996 as a response to closing an internal food and clothing pantry due to safety concerns and dwindling volunteer staffing. A committee, then called the Judean Committee, was formed to link the needy in the community with existing resources within the city of Fort Worth. The committee was comprised of any person from the congregation who had assumed a seat of leadership, perhaps on the advisory board, of a local Christian-based agency and who would act as the liaison between that agency and the church.

Committee members could additionally, and usually did, request funding from the church’s budget to help support the operating costs of that agency and received various low levels of support as long as that committee member remained in an active leadership role within that particular agency. In 1996 those first five community ministries combined for a total budget of \$12,000. Unfortunately, the committee met irregularly for the next seven years in spite of being chaired by willing and motivated lay people. In 2004 an associate-level staff member was put in charge of the committee, but it had suffered from a lack of significant leadership for too long. The committee grew increasingly fragmented and ineffective. In 2005, the current committee was revamped and subsumed under a new ministry area within the church known as “Serve.” In the current fiscal year’s budget (2006/2007) there are 13 ministries supported to a level of approximately \$60,000 for the year.

1. Beautiful Feet
2. Bread Basket Ministry

¹⁰ From a personal conversation with Clyde Crawford.

3. Cancer Care
4. Center of Hope
5. Cook Children’s Medical Center
6. Cornerstone Ministries
7. Fort Worth Crisis Pregnancy Center
8. Habitat for Humanity
9. H.O.P.E. Farm
10. Pregnancy Lifeline
11. Presbyterian Night Shelter
12. Ronald McDonald House
13. Union Gospel Mission¹¹

In this example, the Senior Pastor as entrepreneur gave permission to himself under the authority of the Elder Board as well as to those who were at the time interested in having a bona fide ministry outside the church walls.

Their major function was to see that the ministry that *should* be done *would* be done and with at least the indirect assistance of Christ Chapel. But “permission-giving” here seems to mean that an individual is encouraged to pursue something outside the church’s walls, usually becoming involved in an established community ministry. With regard to financial support the church assumes the role of “spiritual banker” who after a brief interview can be counted on to provide money toward that outside organization which assumes all liabilities, staffing and day-to-day operations.

With regard to being supported by Christ Chapel volunteers, each liaison and agency continued to recruit their own manpower, either by networking within the church or without. And with regard to governance, there was no governance required. The other benefit of this approach, as opposed to Christ Chapel becoming a specialist in meeting the needs of the poor and needy, allows the church to do what it does best, and outside agencies—specialists—to do what they do best while providing a link from the church to the city. In hindsight, the key concept that was launched and still operates well today is one of ministry outsourcing. Accordingly, the Elder’s Ministry Understanding Grid would be filled out as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Ministry Understanding Grid for the Original Community Ministry

Issue	Requested of Christ Chapel
Being the Banker	Yes
Volunteer Commitment & Return Impact	Yes
Providing Governance	No

¹¹ From the annual budget for 2006/2007 of Christ Chapel Bible Church.

Illustration Two: The New Community Ministry

In 2002, Christ Chapel participated in Saddleback Community Church's national spiritual alignment campaign called "40 Days of Purpose." Based on the overwhelming spiritual impact of this campaign on the church, the leadership wrote curriculum and led the congregation through two more campaigns for the fall of 2003 and 2004, raising over \$14 million dollars in cash and pledges toward a new sanctuary complex between December 2002 and December 2003.

Yet a bend in the road was just over the next hill. A very public disagreement with the neighborhood over the proposed new facility led the church leadership to confront how it could become a better neighbor within its immediate community. Saddleback's "40 Days of Community," passed over the previous year as not the right fit for that time, was selected for the fall 2005 spiritual alignment campaign.

Susanne Avondet and Shay Cotter, two gifted and talented women from the congregation, spearheaded this unprecedented effort for the church to build strong bridges into the surrounding public schools and community and make a tangible difference in its quality of life. For those six weeks Christ Chapel provided focused, dedicated, and concentrated manpower doing ministry meaningful to the community at-large. Some results of that campaign are:

1. 880 volunteered for school projects -3,520 man-hours
2. 300 volunteered for HopeFest, working that day or passing out flyers-1,920 man-hours
3. 150-200 Thanksgiving baskets prepared and passed out to needy school parents
4. Refurbished four teacher lounge or conference rooms (two small groups joined together to spend \$10,000 on a teacher lounge)
5. Painted classrooms, murals, parking lot gates, playground equipment, exterior iron railings around parking lots, exterior doors, encouraging quotes on hallway walls.
6. Landscaped- maintenance on all schools; removed dead or undesirable plant material; trimming trees, shrubs and bushes; planting a tree; refurbishing flower pots; planting flowers around all school signs; prepared, planted along two school fronts to enhance entrance (total cost of plant material used \$5,000 which was all donated)
7. Soccer clinics were given two Saturdays for elementary students, average 40 per clinic.
8. Held a hot dog cook-out for soccer clinic participants and parents one Saturday (80 people)
9. Window washed in all schools
10. Power washed sidewalks and courtyards
11. Constructed shelving in 10 classroom closets, built shelving in storage room and teacher work areas
12. Created "GO CENTER" for HS students to research jobs, colleges, scholarships
13. Dusted library shelves

14. Teacher Appreciation-over 350 custodians, staff and teachers at schools were appreciated through breakfast, lunch, snacks, notes, gift cards
15. Office furniture was donated and delivered to schools.¹²

This campaign had two large impacts on Christ Chapel. The first was to expand the size of its vision and role for reaching into the city and the world for Jesus Christ. The church learned that it was not only wanted but welcomed when it applied its resources of money and manpower to assist in areas of interest to the entire community. The second was one of leadership.

Until that time the church had seen itself as the community's spiritual banker through the old Community Ministry committee. With this campaign, while it was certainly a federation of churches that accomplished the overall campaign, Christ Chapel had taken the lead role. The church was no longer just handing out money on the sidelines, but was an active participant, even a leader, in building bridges to the community even if only for a six-week effort.

Out of that campaign emerged the right leadership for the Community Ministry committee which in that time frame was subsumed under the ministry banner of Serve in accordance with the church's spiritual plan. Susanne and Shay have continued to forge an increasingly and incredibly strong connection between Christ Chapel and the surrounding community as well as creating bridges for the volunteers of the church to walk across and serve.

In this example the campaign served as the initial entrepreneurial force. However, the entrepreneurial spirit within Susanne and Shay caused them to request permission to continue, improve and build additional bridges into the community, which they have done to a remarkable level over the past nine months. With regard to finances, the church still functioned as the primary spiritual banker, funding not all but the majority of the ministry effort.

With regard to people this example has perhaps shown that Christ Chapel volunteers want to accompany their money to a ministry project, at least on a short-term basis. And with regard to governance, there was no governance required. It should be noted that, in truth, this example is strongly tied to the previous one in that the idea of outsourcing is being further refined and staffed through an increased level of publicity within the congregation. Providing money and mobilizing short-term volunteers truly connects with Christ Chapel's permission-giving spirit. The Ministry Understanding Grid would be filled out as illustrated in Figure 3.

¹² From an email provided to the author by Susanne Avondet.

Figure 3 – Ministry Understanding Grid for the New Community Ministry

Issue	Requested of Christ Chapel
Being the Banker	Yes
Volunteer Commitment & Return Impact	Yes
Providing Governance	No

Illustration Three: A Church Plant

Dr. Ted Wueste, who began on Christ Chapel’s staff as an intern finishing seminary, rose through the ranks to become an assistant pastor over a portion of the church. Over time he felt more and more passionate about planting a church in southwest Fort Worth and sensed God’s call in that direction. Toward that end, he wrote his Doctor of Ministry dissertation on church planting which detailed the specifics of such an undertaking.

At that particular time Christ Chapel had no plans to pursue church planting as either a strategic direction or core part of the ministry operation but was feeling the “pinch” of a growing congregation in an undersized facility. Primarily because of its “permission-giving” DNA and secondarily to relieve some of the facility congestion, the Elder Board, the Senior Pastor and the Executive Pastor unanimously gave him permission to proceed and Trinity Chapel Bible Church held its first service on August 2, 2004.

For the first year of its operation, Christ Chapel served again as a spiritual banker, guaranteeing that Trinity Chapel’s bills would be paid in full whether through their own offerings or through Christ Chapel’s budget. But this time an additional privilege and responsibility was added to the Elder Board—the issue of on-going governance. Ted Wueste’s dissertation outlined a detailed action plan including specific measurements for moving from “daughter” status to “sister” status.

It would be during this in-between time that Christ Chapel’s Elders would oversee Trinity Chapel’s operation, providing spiritual, administrative and operational guidance, acting in every way as Trinity Chapel’s Elder Board while Trinity Chapel nurtured and developed its own Shepherding Team that would eventually replace Christ Chapel’s Elder Board. During year two, Christ Chapel again guaranteed Trinity Chapel’s fiscal needs while Trinity continued to collect and keep its own regular and special offerings, demonstrated spiritual and financial stability and basically functioned as an independent entity while still walking toward “formal” independent status or “sisterhood.”

But after these two years, the Chairman of Christ Chapel’s Elder Board, Clyde Crawford, observes that Christ Chapel may not have offered as much “hands on” guidance as it might have. As Christ Chapel’s first church plant this is probably understandable. CCBC certainly made itself a resource, but left the pursuing of guidance to Trinity Chapel rather than the other way around. In a more reflective moment, Clyde commented that perhaps Christ Chapel let Trinity Chapel become a little too “out of sight and out of mind.” More recently after having opportunity to put a summary of the church plant experience together Clyde writes:

The elders have given very little oversight to the new church [TCBC] but it has not been required because of the relationships discussed above [in Clyde’s thought paper]. The elders are primarily interested in the needs and activities of the local body [of Christ Chapel]. The original and current plan is to transfer the governance role to a board of elders of the new church. The board of elders of CCBC is not organized to serve as a governing board for an offsite organization.¹³

While never saying he was disappointed in the level of governance Christ Chapel offered, Ted Wueste commented that maybe expectations could have been managed better at the beginning on both sides. He writes:

I expected that there might be more involvement from the elders [of Christ Chapel] on a regular basis rather than [us] giving updates once or twice a year (although Clyde has showed tremendous interest all along). The differing expectations were partly because I had called for more involvement in my presentations [to the Christ Chapel Elder Board] and thought that the things I had put in writing were “accepted.” Again, there hasn’t been a lack of support or anything discouraging but I thought there would be more oversight or involvement. It is really ok and it is not as though I’ve felt any needs haven’t been met but just different than what I expected initially.¹⁴

The reader should understand that all parties agree Trinity Chapel is a wonderful and successful church plant in every respect. This example has merely tried to surface that while Christ Chapel has a long history of being a spiritual banker to fund new ministries as well as outsourcing ministry that can better be done by specialists outside its walls, its current desire and discipline (not its competence) to provide on-going governance might be questioned.

Even with a unanimous heart to see this new church plant launched and succeed, it seemed there was far less thought or intentionality given toward providing an ongoing, nurturing governance relationship. It seems that Christ Chapel’s history of outsourcing and “out of sight, out of mind” spiritual entrepreneurship just naturally took over. In other words, neither Christ Chapel nor Trinity Chapel did anything wrong. Christ Chapel just acted in accordance with its DNA. The Ministry Understanding Grid for Trinity Chapel would best be filled out according to Figure 4.

Figure 4 – Ministry Understanding Grid for Trinity Chapel Bible Church

Issue	Requested of Christ Chapel
Being the Banker	Yes
Volunteer Commitment & Return Impact	No
Providing Governance	Yes

¹³ From a personal conversation with Clyde Crawford.

¹⁴ From a personal conversation with Dr. Ted Wueste.

Though beginning and expanding a Community Ministry and launching a church plant are vastly different ministry categories, these examples seem to reinforce the “spiritual banker” or outsourcing philosophy underpinning the permission-giving concept that presently exists at Christ Chapel. Christ Chapel excels when it can fund and outsource ministry to self-contained and self-governing entities. It also excels when it can send or provide short-term volunteers who have a genuine desire to do ministry but can only afford to do so for a fixed period of time.

On the other hand, Christ Chapel might struggle if it finds itself in a situation that requires ongoing oversight or governance of a “church-sized” ministry involving more than simply providing money or short-term volunteer manpower. It is certainly not beyond its DNA or its history, but would undoubtedly require a shift of intentionality and/or desire and discipline on the part of the Elder Board and executive-level staff to provide such ongoing governance, governance that would be required for the third option of launching of a full-fledged overseas orphan ministry. Or perhaps its permission-giving DNA simply will not allow it, in the final analysis, to say “no” to any of the three options and the available resources will be spread out as evenly as possible across the entire ministry landscape.

Right now, God alone knows the answer. Yet Christ Chapel will continue to strive to navigate its own uncharted waters, confident of God’s grace and a preferable future somewhere just over the horizon.