

Transformation Design A

Seungin_&_Jamie Synthesis Report
Friend's Church

We stay for the sense of belonging

Interview Results

Interview #1 Pastor Chris

1. Are you currently serving as a full-time pastor? What kind of work did you do before becoming a pastor?

After completing his graduate studies in theology, he went straight into pastoral ministry. However, before taking on a full-time role, he also worked part-time in various other fields. Throughout his life, he has lived and worked in many different places, including Colorado, New York, Denver, and Boston. These experiences gave him a broad perspective and shaped his understanding of people and communities. Eventually, he was given the opportunity to serve as a full-time pastor at this English-speaking congregation. Although Korean is still his first language, he is able to preach effectively in English, and he is deeply grateful for this opportunity to serve in a multicultural setting.

2. What was your journey to becoming a pastor like? Was there a specific experience that led you to this path?

“The journey has been both difficult and gracious like any other journey. I had a horrific car accident in which I was supposed to die yet lived.”

His journey has been both challenging and filled with grace, much like any meaningful journey in life. One defining moment was a horrific car accident that he experienced. By all accounts, he should not have survived, yet by God's grace, he did. That experience forced him to reflect deeply on the purpose of his life. It became clear to him that he had been spared for a reason—that God had a calling for him beyond what he had previously imagined. This realization set him on the path to pastoral ministry, a path that has been both humbling and profoundly rewarding.

3. What is your favorite Bible passage, and why?

“This is difficult because I have many favorite passages. But if I have to choose only one, it should be Galatians 2:20. I loved the verse because it explains so eloquently who I am and why I live.”

(Galatians 2:20 states, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”)

It is difficult for him to choose just one passage, as many have deeply shaped his faith and understanding of God. However, if he had to select just one, it would be Galatians 2:20:

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

This verse resonates with him deeply because it so beautifully encapsulates his identity in Christ and the reason he lives the way he does. It serves as a powerful reminder that his life is no longer his own but belongs to Christ, who loved him enough to sacrifice Himself. For him, this passage is the foundation of both his faith and ministry.

4. How do you usually prepare your sermons each week?

“I preach twice a week and I prepare my sermons at least 2 weeks ahead of each sermon.”

He preaches twice a week and makes it a priority to prepare his sermons well in advance—at least two weeks ahead of time. This allows him to immerse himself in prayer, study, and reflection, ensuring that he is not simply delivering a message but truly conveying what he believes God has placed on his heart. For him, sermon preparation is not just about crafting words; it is about seeking God’s guidance so that His truth can be communicated clearly and effectively to the congregation.

5. Have you ever had a particularly moving or deeply impactful experience during your pastoral ministry?

“Of course, one was very painful while the other was very graceful. One time, I was falsely accused of something I did not do. I ended up leaving the church. Later, I met a wonderful and gracious senior pastor and congregation who loved me in a way that healed my previous wounds.”

His ministry has been marked by moments of both deep pain and extraordinary grace. One of the most painful experiences he encountered was being falsely accused of something he did not do, which ultimately led him to leave the church he was serving at the time. It was a devastating and disheartening season in his life.

However, he later met a senior pastor and a congregation who embraced him with a love and kindness that helped heal those wounds. Their genuine care and acceptance reminded him of the redemptive power of Christian community. Through this experience, he gained a deeper understanding of what it truly means for the church to be a place of restoration and grace.

6. As a pastor, what do you find most challenging? What keeps you going despite the challenges?

“I am a Reformer and have a desire to reform the church based on the Word of God. But I’ve found it quite challenging to do at times for various reasons. What keeps me going despite the challenges is the calling I believe by which God has called me.”

One of the greatest challenges he faces is his desire for reformation within the church—to see the church continuously shaped and refined according to the Word of God. However, bringing about meaningful change is not always easy. He has encountered obstacles, resistance, and moments when progress seemed slow or even impossible.

Despite these challenges, what keeps him going is his deep conviction that he has been called to this work by God. For him, pastoral ministry is not just a profession—it is a divine calling. And when God calls, He also sustains. He believes it is God’s strength, not his own, that enables him to persevere. His faith in God’s plan and timing gives him the endurance to continue, even when the road is difficult.

7. How do you ensure that first-time visitors feel engaged beyond their first service? (5 Whys)

A key factor is making them feel truly welcomed. It’s not just about greeting them at the door—it’s about showing them the warmth of the community, making them feel seen, valued, and embraced. A church is more than just a place of worship; it should feel like a spiritual home where people experience genuine love and belonging.

1. Why is it important to show the warmth of the community?

Because God is a loving and compassionate God, and the church is meant to be a reflection of His nature. The Bible teaches us to love one another, and by embodying this love, we demonstrate that we are His disciples. In the world, love often comes with conditions or hidden costs, but God’s love is freely given. The church exists to manifest that unconditional love, just as Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross for humanity. When outsiders witness this love in action, they see the true nature of God’s presence among His people.

2. Why does the church represent Jesus’ love for people?

The church is the hope of the world. Throughout history, it has played a profound role in shaping societies—establishing hospitals, founding schools, and driving countless social reforms. Christianity has been a cornerstone of humanitarian efforts, and without it, the world as we know

it would be vastly different. Even though churches today are not perfect, their impact remains significant. They continue to serve as a beacon of hope and compassion, striving to reflect the love of Christ.

3. If the church is meant to represent Jesus, why is it imperfect?

Christians are called to rely on God and the teachings of the Bible—these are the foundations that shape individuals and, by extension, society. However, the Bible also makes it clear that humanity is inherently sinful. From the time of Adam and Eve to the present day, history is a testament to human imperfection. The Word of God serves as a guide to redeem and transform people from their sinful nature. The church, being made up of people, is imperfect—but God's Word remains flawless. Ultimately, it is God who will bring about perfection in His own time.

4. Why should Christianity be considered the only truth?

Because the Bible offers the only truly coherent worldview—one that provides a comprehensive understanding of human existence, morality, and purpose. Unlike other belief systems, which may contain partial truths or conflicting perspectives, the Christian worldview is internally consistent and all-encompassing. It does not merely coexist with other ideologies; rather, it integrates and explains reality in a way that no other system does.

5. Why is the Bible the only source of a coherent worldview?

Truth, by its very nature, is singular. Just as every creature in existence is uniquely created, so too is truth. Different religions and philosophies make competing claims about reality, but they cannot all be correct simultaneously—truth cannot contradict itself. If there is one God, and He is truly righteous and good, He would not reveal Himself in ways that contradict His own nature.

People are naturally drawn to coherence and consistency. When an idea lacks logical connection, we instinctively recognize the flaws in its reasoning. This is not a coincidence—it is because God, as the Creator of humanity, designed us to seek truth that aligns with His own perfect coherence. The Bible, composed of both the Old and New Testaments, is a testament to this divine consistency. A logical God would write a coherent story, and that is precisely what Scripture reveals.

8. What steps does the church take to retain members and help them grow in their faith?

“First, the church must be the place in which people get to know the True and Living God better and better through the faithful studying of the Word of God. Secondly, the church also must be the place where people can practice the love they receive from God to one another, which may be tangibly experienced by serving and caring and forgiving each other.”

The church plays a crucial role in nurturing the faith of its members and ensuring they remain engaged in their spiritual journey. First and foremost, it must be a place where individuals can come to know the True and Living God more deeply. This is achieved through the faithful study

and teaching of the Word of God, allowing members to build a strong foundation in biblical truth. Through consistent scriptural study, sermons, and discipleship programs, the church helps believers grow in their understanding of God's character, His promises, and His purpose for their lives.

Beyond spiritual knowledge, the church must also be a place where God's love is actively practiced and experienced within the community. Faith is not only about learning but also about living out God's love in everyday relationships. This is made tangible through acts of service, mutual care, and forgiveness among members. When individuals have opportunities to serve one another, extend grace, and receive support in times of need, they experience the transformative power of Christian fellowship. In this way, the church becomes not just a place of worship but a family where faith is strengthened through both teaching and action.

Interview #2 Ray (Elder Congregant at English Worship)

1. You first went to church in 1967. How do you think churches back then compare to churches today?

She believes that, overall, there isn't a drastic difference between churches then and now. However, when she first started attending church, she lived next to missionaries, who would regularly go out and actively engage with people, sharing the gospel with a sense of openness and enthusiasm that seems less common today. Back then, life was more closely knit, at least in Costa Rica, and church communities were deeply intertwined with everyday living. While modern churches still foster close relationships, she feels that people now tend to maintain more defined personal boundaries. Unlike the past, when church life and personal life were often indistinguishable, today, church members remain connected but generally do not integrate into each other's daily lives as deeply as before.

2. What do you consider to be the core of your faith? Has any specific Bible passage or story had a profound impact on your life?

For her, the core of faith is to always extend an invitation—both to God and to others. One Bible passage that has profoundly shaped her faith and even influenced her entire community is Matthew 7:7-11:

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he

asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!"

She grew up in a predominantly Catholic community, while her family remained Christian. Surrounded by Catholic neighbors, she often felt the contrast between different religious traditions. However, this passage always reassured her that God's love is accessible to all who seek Him. It has served as a guiding principle throughout her faith journey, reinforcing the idea that those who sincerely reach out to God will never be turned away.

3. Why did you choose to attend a Korean church? What attracted you to it?

A year ago, she encountered a difficult situation in which an important personal possession was stolen by someone she trusted. At the time, she lived near a church and often noticed its banners displaying messages such as "ENGLISH WORSHIP SERVICE" and "SUNDAY 11 AM". One day, while walking by, she saw someone carrying a Bible and instinctively followed them into the church.

From the moment she stepped inside, she felt welcomed. A group of Korean church members greeted her with enthusiasm and guided her to the English service. She describes this experience as an invitation from God—one that arrived at just the right time. Her life had been consumed by work and study, leaving her with little free time, typically occupied from 5 AM to 11 PM each day. Yet, at that moment, she felt called to dedicate the little time she did have to God, leading her to become a part of this church community.



4. What similarities and differences do you see between churches in Costa Rica and the Korean church in the U.S.?

She sees very few differences. Churches in Costa Rica also offer both Spanish and English services, just as many churches in the U.S. do. One noticeable distinction, however, is the frequency of Holy Communion. In Costa Rica, the English-speaking congregation would hold Communion weekly, while in my Chinese churches, it typically occurs once a month. And there's no Holy Communion at this English Service. Other than this, she finds that churches across cultures share a universal sense of faith and worship.

5. What advice would you give to young believers or those who are just beginning their faith journey?

She would encourage them to hold on to the truth of Jeremiah 31:3, which expresses God's eternal love:

"The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.'"

Her advice to new believers is simple yet essential: study the Bible every day. No matter how much time one can dedicate, even reading a single verse repeatedly can reveal new insights each time. The Bible is not just a book; it is the only true reference point for Christians, a direct connection to God that continually nourishes and strengthens one's faith.

6. How do you see the church helping newcomers feel at home, both inside and outside of services?

For her, the church fosters a unique sense of connection and shared destiny among believers. There is a deep familiarity within Christian churches worldwide—regardless of racial or cultural backgrounds, the feeling of being "home" remains the same. The shared faith and common purpose create a spiritual bond that transcends differences, making every church feel like an extension of God's family.

7. What role does music, language, and community play in your engagement with church life?

While languages may differ, the essence of worship and community remains unchanged. She finds that the role of church music is largely universal, whether in Costa Rica in the 1960s or in her current congregation. However, she holds a strong belief that only traditional forms of worship music are appropriate for honoring God. In her view, sacred worship should be approached with reverence, and modern musical styles—such as rap or contemporary adaptations—do not align with the solemn and holy nature of worship. She believes that worship should be conducted with deep respect and careful consideration.

Beyond this, she sees no major differences in the ways music, language, and community contribute to church life. Whether in Costa Rica or the U.S., the church remains a place of shared faith, worship, and belonging.

8. How would you summarize your faith journey in one sentence?

For her, everything begins and ends with “Jesus Christ”. He has shaped her life in every way, guiding her steps and giving purpose to all that she experiences. Every event, whether joyful or challenging, has been part of His plan. It is Christ who allows her to wake up each morning and find rest at the end of each day. Her faith is not just something she holds—it is the very foundation of her existence, woven into every moment of her life.

Interview #3 Jay (Choir Director)

1. Do you have a favorite hymn? What special meaning does it hold for you?

My favorite hymn is “Follow the Right Path, the Path of Righteousness.” This hymn is not just a song to me; it carries the message I wish to convey as a church choir conductor.

Q. Is there a particular reason why you love this hymn?

This hymn proclaims the unchanging truth of Christianity. The lyrics emphasize, “Spread the amazing news, the unchanging truth of Jesus, to the whole world,” which deeply moves me. Especially in the chorus, the line “Just as the sun rises again after the dark night, God’s kingdom will soon come upon this earth” gives me a strong sense of hope.

Q. Does this hymn hold a personal significance for you?

Yes, I would like this hymn to be played at my funeral. I want to be remembered as someone who carried this message until the very end. Through this hymn, I hope people will continue to follow the path of faith and never lose hope.

2. What advice would you give to someone who wants to join the choir or become a choir director?

The message I want to share is: “You are brave.”

A choir member or conductor is not just someone who sings; they play the role of conveying messages that are often difficult to express to the world.

Of course, being a good singer is important, but even more essential is having a genuine heart that longs for worship. If you aspire to become a conductor, you need the ability to explain

complex concepts in a simple and accessible way. Many choir members are not music majors, so it is crucial to break down complicated musical theories or conducting techniques so that everyone can understand.

Additionally, rather than speaking a lot, it is important to listen.

Q. Why is listening important?

Not all choirs are the same, but in immigrant churches, some choir members may face language barriers in their daily lives. For many of them, Sunday worship is the only time they feel comfortable expressing themselves in their native language. Because of this, they often have a lot they want to say, and the opportunity to share their thoughts is precious.

This is why it is vital for a conductor to listen attentively and show empathy. By doing so, the choir becomes more than just a practice space—it transforms into a community where members understand and support one another, growing together as one.

3. When did you first start engaging with music? What led you to become a church choir director?

I first became interested in music when I was in my third year of middle school. One day, I heard a piano piece and thought, "I want to play this myself." That moment sparked my curiosity about music. My father found the sheet music for me, and as I practiced, I naturally developed a passion for music.

Becoming a church choir conductor was largely influenced by my mother. I had been a choir soloist since high school, and my mother was a choir conductor. Naturally, I followed in her footsteps and took on the role of conductor, a position I have continued to hold to this day.

Q. How long have you been conducting at Friend's Church?

This year marks my seventh year. I can say that I have spent my entire twenties as a choir conductor.

4. In your opinion, what role does music play in worship? How does it help people connect more deeply with God?

In the church, music is essentially worship. And this worship is not just a melody—it is a crucial tool that carries God's message. The lyrics of hymns convey the core of faith, and through these messages, people receive grace.

The role of the choir is also very significant. When choir members, who generally have stronger musical abilities than the congregation, sing, their worship can touch others more profoundly. It helps open the hearts of those listening and allows them to have a deeper spiritual experience.

Q. Does having strong musical ability mean professional training?

Not necessarily. It doesn't mean that someone has received formal music education, but rather

that they sing better than others and have a deep love for worship. Church music plays the role of helping people organize their thoughts, calm their hearts, and prepare themselves spiritually for worship.

Q. Have you witnessed a case where music brought about a spiritual transformation?

Yes, one of our choir members had such an experience. During a service, they were deeply moved by the choir's hymn, and that moment led them to join the choir. They later shared that at the time, "The voices of 20 choir members sounded like 200," emphasizing how powerfully they felt God's presence through the music. Now, as a choir member, they continue to share that same grace with others through worship.

5. As a conductor, what do you find most challenging?

"The most challenging part is harmonizing different voices into one unified sound."

A choir is composed of individuals with distinct vocal tones and strengths. As a conductor, my role is to bring these diverse voices together to create a seamless harmony. If this balance is not achieved, the emotional impact and delivery of the music can suffer.

1. Why is it difficult to harmonize different vocal tones and volumes into one cohesive sound?

Each person has a unique voice, with different vocal power and techniques. Some choir members have musical training, but many are not professionally trained. If the voices are not balanced correctly, the resulting sound may feel uneven, making it difficult to move and inspire the listeners.

2. Why is a well-balanced choir essential in worship?

Worship music is not just background sound; it plays a crucial role in helping the congregation become spiritually engaged. If the choir lacks harmony, the emotional power of the hymn diminishes, making it harder for worshippers to find comfort and grace through the service. Poorly executed music can make it challenging for people to fully immerse themselves in worship and may even give the impression that the church has not adequately prepared for the service.

3. Why is it important for worshippers to focus and open their hearts spiritually through music?

Music is a powerful vehicle for conveying messages of faith. When worshippers have a moving musical experience, their faith deepens, and their engagement in worship and community activities increases. Hymns are more than just songs—they serve as expressions of faith and prayers, shaping the attitudes and spiritual receptiveness of the congregation.

4. Why does an emotionally moving musical experience strengthen faith and encourage greater participation in worship and church activities?

Music provides an essential emotional and spiritual connection. Through inspiring hymns, worshippers can experience personal moments of divine grace while also building a sense of community. The emotions felt during worship do not remain within the service alone—they often translate into increased participation in church events, volunteer work, and community engagement.

5. Why does delivering a powerful faith-based message through music encourage deeper engagement in both worship and church life?

Music has the power to stir emotions and inspire people. When faith-based messages are conveyed effectively through music, worshippers see the service as more than just a ritual—it becomes a central spiritual experience. Over time, this deep connection to worship fosters a stronger sense of belonging within the church, leading to greater dedication, voluntary participation, and continued faith development within the community.

6. How do you hope to see yourself or the choir grow and develop in the future?

As a conductor, I strive to enhance my musical abilities. However, beyond technical improvement, I believe that the choir growing together in harmony is even more important.

Rather than focusing on individual voices, I hope choir members will embrace the idea of singing as one unified sound, approaching worship with humility. Singing in the choir is not just about performing a song—it is about sharing faith and glorifying God together.

Most importantly, I wish for the choir to grow as a stronger community. Beyond improving individual skills, I hope we can support one another and sing with one heart. If we achieve this, I believe our worship will become richer, both musically and spiritually, allowing us to offer a more profound and meaningful service.

Interview #4 Julie

1. Why do you bring Noah to church every week? How do you think this impacts his social and spiritual growth?

I bring Noah to church every week because I want him to grow as a child of faith. Faith is not just something to be taught—it is something to be experienced and embodied. I believe it is

important for him to naturally embrace his faith by learning praise songs, listening to sermons, and reading the Bible at church.

Additionally, as a mother, I also seek wisdom. Raising a child in faith is not easy, and the church serves as a valuable space that supports that role. I believe that within the church community, Noah can grow not only spiritually but also socially—learning how to interact with his peers and develop kindness and consideration for others. That is why the time we spend at church holds deep significance for both of us.

2. What challenges have you faced in bringing a young child to church? How has the church supported you in this process?

The biggest challenge is simply getting Noah ready in the morning. Even the basic routine—washing him, feeding him breakfast, and dressing him—is not easy. On top of that, preparing his lunch, packing his milk, and getting him into the car often feels like a small battle. Bringing a young child to church is physically and mentally demanding, but I find strength in the care and support that the church provides.

The church shows great consideration for parents in many ways. Small gestures—like opening the door for us, helping carry heavy bags, or reserving a seat for Noah—add up and provide a sense of relief. But what truly gives me strength are the warm words of encouragement from church members. Simple phrases like, *"It must have been tough getting here, you did great,"* help ease the burden I feel as a mother and remind me that I am not alone.

3. How does the church help new parents like you feel welcomed and engaged beyond just attending Sunday services?

The church provides various activities to help new parents go beyond simply attending worship and instead find support and growth in both faith and daily life.

For example, every Wednesday, there is a prayer gathering dedicated to families and children. Through this gathering, parents can share their concerns, gain spiritual strength, and connect with others who are experiencing similar challenges. It serves as a valuable space for mutual encouragement and support.

Additionally, the church offers special programs tailored for parents. One particularly impactful activity involves an art therapist, where parents engage in drawing exercises that help analyze their emotions. This process allows them to reflect on feelings and concerns they may not have even realized they had.

Through these initiatives, the church fosters a deeper sense of community, enabling parents to build meaningful connections, find comfort in shared experiences, and grow both personally and spiritually.

4. Have you formed any meaningful relationships within the church community since joining? If so, how has that affected your experience?

For me, the church is more than just a place to practice faith—it is a special space where I have built some of the most meaningful relationships in my life.

The biggest change was meeting my husband at church. Sharing the same faith naturally brought us closer, allowing us to understand and respect each other with faith at the center of our relationship. Our bond grew stronger as we navigated life together, guided by our shared beliefs.

This experience made me realize the profound role that the church community plays. It is not just a place for worship but a space for growth, support, and shared life experiences. My time at church has not only deepened my faith but has also significantly shaped my life, providing me with relationships that continue to inspire and support me.

5. Outside of being a mother, what is your occupation or personal passion? How does that influence the way you introduce Noah to faith and community life?

I work as a homeroom teacher for second-grade students. As an educator, I believe that teaching is not just about imparting knowledge but, more importantly, about helping children develop strong character and values.

This perspective greatly influences how I introduce Noah to faith. For me, it is not just about academic success—it is about raising him to reflect the character of Jesus and grow into a kind and principled individual.

Just as I teach math and English at school, I also want to teach Noah how to be a good person in society and how to engage in a community with care and respect for others. Church is more than just a place to learn about faith—it is a space where people support and grow together. I hope that through church, Noah will experience the warmth of a community and develop both his faith and character in a meaningful way.

6. What kind of school or daycare does Noah attend? Do you notice any differences in how he interacts with other children at church compared to school?

Noah is not yet enrolled in a formal school or daycare, but we attend the baby school program at church together every Tuesday.

I don't feel there is a significant difference between his interactions at school and at church. Since he is still very young, I see this stage as a learning process for socialization. While he mostly engages in individual activities, he is gradually learning how to interact and play with other children.

For example, today he naturally played and interacted with older children, which was a meaningful moment. Watching Noah slowly learn how to build relationships and grow within a community is something I find truly valuable.

7. Has Noah ever had any particularly fun or meaningful moments at church? What behaviors indicate that he feels comfortable or engaged?

When Noah comes to church, he expresses his happiness with his whole body. The moment he steps into the sanctuary, he excitedly runs around, talks much more than usual, and smiles brightly. Seeing these behaviors makes it clear that he perceives church as a safe and comfortable space.

He becomes especially focused during worship time. Sometimes, he tries to sing along to the hymns or carefully observes the conductor's hand movements, fully immersed in the moment. These actions show that Noah is not just attending church but naturally experiencing faith and finding meaning within the community.

8. What aspects of the church community make you feel like this is a place where you and Noah can continue to grow?

The church is a vital space for both Noah and me to grow spiritually. With a trustworthy pastor and a congregation that shares our faith, we gain meaningful lessons and insights every week.

One of the most impactful aspects of the church community is the conversations we share. These are not just casual chats but deep discussions centered on God's word, which bring grace and wisdom into our lives. Through these exchanges, I find myself growing spiritually, and Noah, too, naturally learns about faith and communal living within this environment. The opportunity to share and grow in faith with such wonderful people is the main reason why Noah and I feel a strong connection to this church and want to continue being part of this community.

Key Analysis of the Interview

Interview #1 Pastor Chris

- **Calling and Purpose – A Life Saved for a Reason**

Observation: Pastor Chris's calling became clearer after surviving a near-death experience. His strong sense of purpose is moving, but I can't help but think about newcomers who also come to church in times of crisis and never experience the same kind of healing or connection through the community.

Quote: *“I had a horrific car accident in which I was supposed to die yet lived.”, “The journey has been both difficult and gracious like any other journey.”*

- **Sermon Preparation – Seeking God’s Word for Others**

Observation: He approaches sermon preparation with prayer and sincerity, truly seeking God’s message for his congregation. Still, I wonder whether the sermons reach everyone equally—especially newcomers facing language or cultural barriers, like Ray.

Quote: *“I preach twice a week and I prepare my sermons at least 2 weeks ahead of each sermon.”*

- **Wounds and Healing in Community**

Observation: Chris’s story of being hurt and then healed by a new community shows both the vulnerability and redemptive power of church life. It made me realize how fragile a sense of belonging can be—if even pastors can be pushed out, newcomers without support structures must feel even more at risk.

Quote: *“I was falsely accused of something I did not do. I ended up leaving the church.”, “Later, I met a wonderful and gracious senior pastor and congregation who loved me in a way that healed my previous wounds.”*

- **Reform and Resistance – Holding On to the Calling**

Observation: His desire for reform is clear and rooted in strong biblical conviction. However, I noticed that his idea of reform seems to focus more on internal structure and theology, rather than addressing real-world needs like language access or family support, which are critical for welcoming newcomers.

Quote: *“I am a Reformer and have a desire to reform the church based on the Word of God.”, “What keeps me going is the calling I believe by which God has called me.”*

- **Welcoming Newcomers – Beyond a Friendly Greeting**

Observation: Chris sees welcome as a spiritual practice, not just a social one. I resonated with that—but at the same time, I’ve seen that many newcomers still feel disconnected. This shows a real gap between the church’s intention and the actual lived experience of those trying to belong.

Quote: *“A church is more than just a place of worship; it should feel like a spiritual home where people experience genuine love and belonging.”*

- **Identity in Christ – The Center of His Ministry**

Observation: His faith is deeply rooted in Christ, and that clarity gives him direction. But I also realized that newcomers, especially those unfamiliar with Christian culture or language, may take much longer to feel that same spiritual identity. The church must walk with them patiently on that journey.

Quote: *“If I have to choose only one [verse], it should be Galatians 2:20... It explains so eloquently who I am and why I live.”, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me...”*

Interview #2 Ray (Long-time Congregant)

- **Changing Church Communities**

Observation: Today’s churches still offer warm greetings, but the depth of relationships is often limited. As Ray points out, churches used to blend seamlessly with everyday life, but now the boundaries between “church life” and “personal life” are more clearly defined, making it harder for newcomers to feel fully included.

Quote: *“Back then, life was more closely knit... church communities were deeply intertwined with everyday living.”, “Today, church members remain connected but generally do not integrate into each other’s daily lives as deeply as before.”*

- **Faith as Invitation**

Observation: Ray repeatedly emphasizes “invitation,” showing that her faith is rooted in relationships. However, in many churches today, this invitation feels like a one-time gesture rather than an ongoing, active welcome.

Quote: *“The core of faith is to always extend an invitation—both to God and to others.”, “Those who sincerely reach out to God will never be turned away.”*

- **God’s Invitation through the Korean Church**

Observation: Ray was warmly welcomed on her first visit, and she interpreted it as a divine invitation. However, as the interview suggests, this sense of welcome didn’t extend into deeper integration. There’s a gap between first impressions and long-term belonging.

Quote: *“She describes this experience as an invitation from God—one that arrived at just the right time.”, “From the moment she stepped inside, she felt welcomed.”*

- **Universality of Worship Despite Cultural Differences**

Observation: Ray emphasizes similarities across churches, but also notes the absence of shared rituals like weekly communion. These practices create rhythm and unity, and their absence may make it harder for newcomers to feel spiritually grounded.

Quote: *“Churches across cultures share a universal sense of faith and worship.”, “There’s no Holy Communion at this English Service, unlike in Costa Rica where it was weekly.”*

- **Advice to New Believers**

Observation: Ray’s advice is practical and simple. Still, habits like daily Bible reading are difficult to maintain without the support of a community. Churches need structures that encourage spiritual habits, especially for new believers.

Quote: *“Study the Bible every day... even reading a single verse repeatedly can reveal new insights each time.”, “The Bible is not just a book; it is the only true reference point for Christians.”*

- **Church as Spiritual Family**

Observation: Ray values the church as a spiritual family. But to sustain that “home” feeling, regular interaction and genuine relationships are needed. Language, cultural, and generational divides still hinder full inclusion.

Quote: *“There is a deep familiarity within Christian churches worldwide... the feeling of being ‘home’ remains the same.”, “Shared faith and common purpose create a spiritual bond that transcends differences.”*

- **The Importance of Reverent Worship**

Observation: Ray sees worship music not just as preference, but as a reflection of reverence. Churches need to find ways to embrace diversity while maintaining a sense of sacredness that resonates with members like Ray.

Quote: *“Only traditional forms of worship music are appropriate for honoring God.”, “Modern musical styles... do not align with the solemn and holy nature of worship.”*

- **Christ-Centered Faith**

Observation: Ray’s faith is absolute and central to her life. For newcomers to reach this level of commitment, churches must do more than welcome—they must provide pathways that nurture deep, lifelong faith.

Quote: *“Everything begins and ends with Jesus Christ.”, “My faith... is the very foundation of my existence, woven into every moment of my life.”*

Interview #3 Jay (Choir Director)

- **Worship Music as a Tool for Faith and Message**

Observation: Jay sees music not as background or atmosphere, but as a spiritual tool that directly conveys the message of the Gospel. This helped me realize that worship music is not just emotionally moving—it is a powerful entry point for newcomers to intuitively experience the Christian message.

Quote: *“In the church, music is essentially worship... not just melody—it is a crucial tool that carries God’s message.”, “Hymns are more than just songs—they serve as expressions of faith and prayers.”*

- **Choir as Community – Listening Matters More Than Speaking**

Observation: Jay deeply understands the context of immigrant churches. His comment about Sunday being the “only time to speak their native language” really stood out to me. It made me realize that the choir can be more than a rehearsal space—it can become a safe space for emotional expression and belonging.

Quote: *“Rather than speaking a lot, it is important to listen.”, “For many of them, Sunday worship is the only time they feel comfortable expressing themselves in their native language.”*

- **The Challenge of Harmony – Unity in Diversity**

Observation: Jay’s idea of “harmony” applies beyond music—it reflects what churches must also achieve as communities. I saw a parallel between musical harmony and the challenge of integrating diverse individuals (with different cultures, languages, and generations) into a unified spiritual experience.

Quote: *“The most challenging part is harmonizing different voices into one unified sound.”, “Each person has a unique voice... if the voices are not balanced correctly, the resulting sound may feel uneven.”*

- **Spiritual Transformation Through Music**

Observation: Jay’s story reminded me how music can be a turning point in someone’s faith journey. That moment of being emotionally moved through a hymn can lead someone from passive attendance to active participation. Worship music can literally open the door to belonging and engagement.

Quote: *“The voices of 20 choir members sounded like 200.”, “That moment led them to join the choir.”*

- **Sincerity Over Skill – Worship Comes from the Heart**

Observation: Jay prioritizes sincerity over performance. This made me reflect on the importance of keeping entry barriers low for participation in church life. When people are welcomed as they are—even without training—they are more likely to stay and grow within the community.

Quote: *“More essential than being a good singer is having a genuine heart that longs for worship.”, “Many choir members are not music majors.”*

- **Future Vision – Singing as One Voice**

Observation: Jay’s hope for the choir focuses not on individual excellence, but on communal unity and shared faith. This helped me reflect on how spiritual depth in worship comes not just from musical quality but from a collective posture of humility, harmony, and intention.

Quote: *“Singing in the choir is not just about performing a song—it is about sharing faith and glorifying God together.”, “If we achieve this, I believe our worship will become richer, both musically and spiritually.”*

Interview #4 Julie

- **Church as a Space for Spiritual and Social Growth**

Observation: Julie sees the church not just as a worship space, but as a place where her child grows holistically. I was struck by how she views faith as something to be lived, not just taught—and how the church becomes a place of daily formation for both the parent and the child.

Quote: *“Faith is not just something to be taught—it is something to be experienced and embodied.”, “Within the church community, Noah can grow not only spiritually but also socially.”*

- **Attending Church with a Child Is a Battle – Small Gestures Matter**

Observation: Julie’s words show how exhausting it is to bring a child to church. I realized that small acts of kindness—like opening doors or offering words of encouragement—can make a big emotional difference. For parents, the church must be a space of both logistical and emotional care.

Quote: *“Even just getting Noah ready in the morning feels like a small battle.”; “Simple phrases like, ‘You did great,’ help ease the burden I feel as a mother.”*

- **Church Programs That Care for the Parents, Too**

Observation: Julie’s experience with church-based therapy and prayer meetings showed me how much the church cares for the caregivers, not just their children. I realized how important it is for the church to recognize and support parents as individuals with emotional and spiritual needs.

Quote: *“Drawing exercises with the art therapist helped me reflect on feelings I didn’t even realize I had.”; “These initiatives allow parents to find comfort in shared experiences.”*

- **Church as a Life-Shaping Community**

Observation: Julie’s story shows that church can play a transformative role beyond worship, becoming a space where life-changing relationships are formed. It made me think about how long-term belonging is often rooted in these deep, shared experiences.

Quote: *“The biggest change was meeting my husband at church.”; “Our bond grew stronger as we navigated life together, guided by our shared beliefs.”*

- **Faith Education as Character Formation**

Observation: As a teacher, Julie sees education as forming both mind and heart. Her approach to Noah’s faith mirrors this. I realized that for her, church isn’t just a place for learning about the Bible, but for shaping values, empathy, and how to live with others.

Quote: *“I want to raise him to reflect the character of Jesus and grow into a kind and principled individual.”*

- **The Church as a Socialization Space for Toddlers**

Observation: Julie cherishes the interactions Noah has at church. I saw the church as a unique intergenerational space—one that can support early social development in a way that feels safe and guided by shared values.

Quote: *“He naturally played and interacted with older children... it was a meaningful moment.”*

- **Comfort Is Expressed Through the Body**

Observation: Noah's joyful behavior at church is a clear, nonverbal sign that he feels safe there. I realized the church isn't just a place parents bring their children—it can become a space that children themselves identify as their own.

Quote: *"The moment he steps into the sanctuary, he runs around, talks more, and smiles brightly."*

- **Faith Grows Through Conversation and Relationships**

Observation: Julie finds the most growth not in programs, but in meaningful conversations rooted in faith. It helped me see that a church thrives not only when it teaches—but when it creates space for shared reflection, wisdom, and spiritual exchange.

Quote: *"The most impactful aspect of church is the conversations centered on God's word.", "These discussions bring grace and wisdom into our lives."*

Journey map

PAST

Ray: "I don't really understand Korean. What are they talking about? Am I a good fit for this church?"

Julie: "Bringing Noah to church is already exhausting—I don't have the energy to socialize."

Jay: "We need new members, but many first-time visitors never come back."

PRESENT

Ray: "Everyone here already knows each other. How do I join their conversations?"

Julie: "If there were a dedicated children's area, I wouldn't have to watch Noah all the time."

Jay: "I wish more young people would join the choir, but they don't seem to stay long in the church."

FUTURE

Establish a Systematic "Newcomer Integration Plan"

Ray: "If someone could personally guide me around, I'd feel more at home."

Jay: "The monthly newcomer lunches give us a chance to really get to know them."

Improve Language and Cultural Adaptation

Ray: "If the sermon had translations, I would understand it much better."

Julie: "The cross-cultural events make me feel more welcome."

Provide Better Support for Families

Julie: "If there were a children's area, I could focus more on the service."

Jay: "Having more young families involved makes the church feel more vibrant!"

Final Outcomes

Ray: "Now, I look forward to coming to church every week!"

Julie: "Noah is happy in the children's area, and I can finally connect with other parents."

Jay: "Our choir finally has more new members!"

Answer each research question

1. Why do some members prefer Korean worship over English worship?

Several factors influence this preference:

- **Cultural and Linguistic Familiarity:** Older members, especially those in their 40s–60s, may prefer Korean worship because it allows them to engage more naturally in their first language and remain rooted in familiar cultural practices. The Korean service is also held in a larger sanctuary and reflects a more traditional worship structure familiar to longtime Korean congregants
- **Language as Emotional Comfort:** Jay, the choir director, highlighted that for some Korean-speaking members, Sunday is the only time they can express themselves freely in their native language. This makes the Korean service—and especially the choir—a place of deep emotional connection and cultural grounding
- **Generational Communities:** English worship tends to draw younger adults and multicultural attendees, while the Korean service is more often attended by older Korean congregants. These generational dynamics can shape one’s sense of belonging, influencing which service feels more like “home” based on age and cultural background.
- **A Small, Unified English Service—for Now:** The English service is currently small, allowing for a worship format that feels comfortable and cohesive across age groups. However, as the number of younger attendees grows, there may be a growing desire for more contemporary or youth-friendly expressions of worship—such as praise bands or informal music styles. This could potentially create tension with older members like Ray, who value the consistency and formality of traditional worship. The church may eventually need to navigate these generational preferences within the English-speaking congregation itself.
- **Generational Communities:** While younger cross-cultural adults tend to attend the English service, the Korean service continues to draw older, native Korean speakers. Worship choices are thus shaped not only by language but by age, identity, and personal history with the church community.

2. How does the church retain long-term members while welcoming new ones?

The church balances tradition with outreach in several key ways:

- **Intentional welcome experiences:** From the “Welcome Event” with name tags and games to shared meals and personal greetings, the church fosters a culture of friendliness and warmth. However, the synthesis also points out a gap: while first impressions are positive, long-term integration can lag if relationships don’t deepen.

- **Spiritual depth and care:** Pastor Chris emphasized that retention comes from helping people grow in the knowledge of God and practice love through mutual service and forgiveness. This theological grounding is central to sustaining long-term faith.
- **Supportive programs for families and parents:** Julie shared how programs like prayer gatherings and art therapy helped her navigate parenting and faith. These efforts support ongoing engagement, particularly for parents of young children.
- **Community milestones:** Events like the 43rd anniversary celebration and personal moments (e.g., Seungin's birthday) show that the church ties personal life events into community celebration, reinforcing long-term belonging.

3. What motivates attendees to actively participate beyond Sunday services?

The motivation stems from both internal faith and external community dynamics:

- **Music as spiritual experience:** Jay noted that worship music isn't just performance—it's an emotional and spiritual experience that draws people into deeper participation. For some, a single hymn sparked their involvement in choir and wider church life.
- **Parenting and shared growth:** Julie's participation is deeply tied to her desire to raise her son in faith. Church is a space where both she and her child can grow spiritually and socially. The presence of supportive community members and parenting programs sustains her involvement.
- **Relational faith:** Ray emphasized the importance of ongoing invitation and connection. When people feel emotionally and spiritually "at home," they are more likely to continue engaging outside regular services.
- **Personal calling and healing:** For Pastor Chris, active engagement stems from a personal calling and redemptive experiences within community. His commitment models a faith journey that goes beyond obligation—it's rooted in identity and purpose.

Synthesis

Insight Statement

The church wants to be welcoming, but hasn't fully achieved it yet.

(Insight: The church brings people together across different languages and cultures by focusing on "love" and "welcoming" as key strategies to attract and keep members-like what the name "Friend's Church" does.)

Opportunities for Change

- **Establishing a Newcomer Integration System**

I propose a Newcomer Integration Program that includes a *Church Buddy Program*, *Newcomer Lunch gatherings*, and *WhatsApp group chats*. This system goes beyond a warm initial greeting and is designed to build long-term relationships and encourage deeper engagement within the church community.

Why I'm qualified:

I have conducted interviews with a diverse group of church members (Pastor Chris, Ray, Jay, and Julie) and synthesized insights based on their experiences. I've carefully analyzed the gap between the church's intention of being welcoming and the actual experiences of newcomers. With my skills in community-based design, I am capable of prototyping and improving this system in collaboration with the church.

Evidence the community will welcome it:

Julie shared how physically and emotionally demanding it is to attend church with a child, and how small acts of kindness offer her deep comfort. Ray felt welcomed at first but later experienced isolation due to a lack of follow-up. Pastor Chris emphasized that the church should feel like a "spiritual home," and Jay mentioned that "listening" is key to building community. Together, these statements reflect a shared desire for deeper, ongoing connection.

- **Reducing Language and Cultural Barriers in Worship**

I aim to design bilingual worship materials—such as visual summaries of sermon highlights or key Bible verses in Spanish and English—to support non-Korean-speaking members during worship.

Why I'm qualified:

Through the interviews, I recognized that language barriers are a recurring challenge in immigrant churches. With my multicultural experience and sensitivity to language inclusion, I am equipped to thoughtfully design communication tools that enhance accessibility without compromising theological depth.

Evidence the community will welcome it:

Ray expressed that translated messages would help her connect more deeply. Pastor Chris places great value on the clarity and accuracy of biblical teaching, and this initiative can help him share the message more effectively with a broader audience.

- **Creating a Child-Friendly Space and Parent Support Group**

I propose the creation of a safe, designated space for children to play, allowing parents to fully participate in worship. Additionally, I suggest forming a support group where parents can share their parenting experiences and faith-related concerns.

Why I'm qualified:

Julie's story gave me a deep understanding of how isolating and difficult it can be to parent while attending church. As a designer, I know how to listen to these voices and collaborate with the community to visualize and implement supportive spaces and programs.

Evidence the community will welcome it:

Julie clearly stated, "If there were a children's area, I could focus more on the service." Jay also mentioned that having more young families involved makes the church feel more vibrant. These responses show that the community is ready and willing to embrace thoughtful accommodations like this.

Design Principles

1. Prioritize Belonging Over Attendance

Design for long-term emotional connection, not just one-time participation. True integration happens when newcomers feel seen, known, and valued beyond their first visit.

2. Center Empathy in Every Interaction

All design decisions—whether spatial, programmatic, or communicative—should begin with listening. Caregivers, immigrants, and young members bring unique challenges; your solution must respond with understanding and dignity.

3. Build Community Through Participation, Not Perfection

Encourage contribution even without expertise. Whether in worship, parenting, or conversation, create space for people to engage without needing to be “prepared” or “qualified.” This principle strengthens community through openness and grace.

How Might We Statements

- How might we design a program for immigrant church members to feel emotionally connected beyond a warm greeting?
- How might we reduce language and cultural barriers to make worship more inclusive for immigrant and non-Korean members to fully engage in worship and community life?
- How might we support participation in worship for parents with young children to feel less overwhelmed?

How I Would Strengthen the Synthesis Report

- **Conduct More Interviews Across Demographics**

I would expand the interview pool to include more diverse voices within the church—such as teenagers, elderly members, first-time visitors, and volunteer staff. These additional perspectives would help identify invisible gaps in belonging, especially across generations and cultural backgrounds.

- **Include Secondary Research on Church Integration Models**

To supplement the primary data, I would research existing newcomer integration systems in multicultural or immigrant churches (e.g., case studies, scholarly articles, or community toolkits). This would allow me to benchmark successful models and evaluate how similar strategies could be adapted for this specific church context.