MELISSIA MASON – WRITING SAMPLES

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First Methodist Grapevine Celebrates 150 Years

First United Methodist Church of Grapevine is excited to celebrate 150 years since the official charter of our church, back in 1866. The church has been on the same site since its beginning. From this historic land on Church Street, FUMC Grapevine has ministered to the Grapevine community through 15 decades of life's ups and downs. When the church began, Grapevine was mostly rough prairie and farm land. Through years of settlement, economic depression, wars, social change and tremendous area growth, FUMC Grapevine has continued to share God's love with Grapevine and surrounding communities.

We cherish our integral connection to Grapevine and its history and invite the community to join us in celebrating our shared heritage. As a part of the celebration, we will host a free organ concert featuring world-class organist Bradley Hunter Welch at 6 p.m. on Saturday, October 8. We will gather together for a celebration worship service at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, October 9. We encourage anyone in the community - whether you are a member of the Methodist Church, another church, or any church at all - to join us in this milestone celebration.

First United Methodist Church is located at 422 Church Street, one block west of Main Street in historic downtown Grapevine. For more information about First United Methodist Church Grapevine and its ministries, visit us online at www.firstmethodistgrapevine.org or call the church office at 817-481-2559.

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Voices for Hunger Benefit Concert

Join the Fort Worth Chorale and First United Methodist Church Grapevine on Saturday, October 14, for a FREE concert benefiting the Tarrant Area Food Bank and Food Ministries of FUMCG. The Fort Worth Chorale will be singing selections from their October "Our Songs" concert, in addition to joint performances with the Adult Choirs of FUMCG. The concert begins at 3:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary of FUMC Grapevine (422 Church Street in Grapevine). If you're coming to the area for the Butterfly Flutterby, Grapevine Garden Club Sale, or Fall Roundup at Nash Farm, be sure to stay around for the concert.

This event is centered around coming together through music to fight hunger. On any given day in North Texas, tens of thousands of families and individuals struggle with food insecurity and hunger. The music for this performance celebrates choral singing from across the USA and the globe, including arrangements of "Moonlight in Vermont," "Summertime" (from *Porgy and Bess*), "The Yellow Rose of Texas," and others. Although this is a FREE concert, we will be accepting monetary donations, as well as in-kind donations (listed below). All monetary donations will be split evenly between the two beneficiaries.

Most Needed Items: Canned Meat (tuna, chicken, ham, etc.), Canned Fruit, Canned Vegetables, Canned Soup & the following INDIVIDUALLY-SIZED items (for kid's backpacks): Easy Mac, Ramen noodles, Applesauce, Fruit cups, Pudding cups, Breakfast bars, Instant oatmeal.

The following CANNOT be accepted: Glass Containers, Baby Food, Bottled Water, Soda.

For more information about the sponsoring organizations, visit www.fortworthchorale.org, www.fumcg.org, or www.tafb.org. First United Methodist Church is located at 422 Church Street, one block west of Main Street in historic downtown Grapevine. For more information about this or other ministry opportunities, visit www.firstmethodistgrapevine.org or call 817-481-2559.

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Day of Service: Kids Against Hunger

Monday, January 16, Martin Luther King Day, has become known as a Day of Service. If you are looking for an opportunity to volunteer in the Grapevine area, First United Methodist Church invites you to help make a difference in the lives of hungry and malnourished children in the world. The Kids Against Hunger project involves packaging nutritious meals to be shipped to areas in the world where they are most needed. The church has set a goal this year to collect $10,000 which will provide 43,475 meals! We will package the meals on MLK Day, January 16, in the Family Life Center of First Methodist Church in Grapevine.

The packaging process is a great opportunity for families to volunteer together. We will package meals that are composed of rice, fortified soy containing 52% protein and nine vitamins, six types of dehydrated vegetables, and a chicken-flavored vitamin powder that contains another 21 vitamins and minerals. They will be sealed in plastic bags and then boxed, ready to go. The meals, once they reach their destination are prepared easily by cooking the bag contents in boiling water for 20 minutes. Individuals only need to eat one cup of the rice casserole daily to acquire all the essential requirements for development and growth. Each package contains six servings.

Pallets of food will be delivered to FUMC Grapevine, and volunteers will put them together into packages to be shipped around the world. We will need about 40 volunteers per shift (from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) to serve at stations with assigned tasks (like measuring a portion of soy, rice, seasoning, nutrients, etc. into a plastic bag, sealing, etc.). Each bag contains six meals (all dry), grouped, packed into a box and sealed for delivery. Children and youth are welcome to serve as well. Childcare is provided. If you'd like to help, register at www.firstmethodistgrapevine.org/kah. Please let us know if you will be taking advantage of childcare so that we can have enough nursery workers available.

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ACADEMIC ESSAY

The following paper was written for a graduate-level course in New Media, taught by Dr. Robert Schihl at Regent University. It has been reformatted and provided here as a sample of writing style. It has not been revised or updated for today's considerations in New Media.

New and Emerging Media and Communication Technologies and Their Influence on Volunteerism
by Melissia Mason

Although technology has made life easier in many ways, the fact remains that some needs must be filled by an actual person. For non-profit organizations, the charity and physical presence of volunteers is required to sustain many of their activities. Volunteers are needed for a wide variety of activities that benefit communities. Some volunteer activities are done through local churches, while others are a part of civic or other non-profit organizations. Much of the work to feed and clothe the needy, disseminate vital information, or increase quality of life is performed by volunteers.
Although technology seems to be a logical answer to many non-profit needs (marketing, fund-raising, information dissemination, etc.), one might think that technology has little or no influence over the people-based volunteer aspect of non-profit organizations. However, the use of communication technologies now has a vital impact on volunteerism in the United States. Emerging technologies have created both outlets for "virtual volunteers" and innovative ways to connect people with volunteer opportunities in their interest areas.

Recruiting Dilemma
Historically, volunteers have been difficult to recruit. Since more and more families rely on two incomes, a major source of volunteer recruits – stay-at-home-mothers – has been lost (Wylie 170, Hammonds and Jones 100). Keith Hammonds and Sandra Jones reported that the rate of volunteerism in the United States had declined to 94.2 million in 1991, according to an

Independent Sector study (100). Independent Sector reports that volunteerism for 2001 was at 83.9 million ("Giving and Volunteering"). This constitutes a drop of almost 11 percent in volunteerism in ten years. The statistics reported from the United States Department of Labor for 2003 show an even greater decline. The report states that there was a rise in volunteers from the previous year, resulting in a volunteerism rate in the United States of 63.8 million, or 28.8 percent of the population (U.S. Department of Labor 1).

For churches, the need for volunteers can be crucial to the ability to minister. Bill Hybels, pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, notes that even this large congregation has a point at which the funds are no longer available to hire more staff members (75). In order to continue to expand ministries, the church must increase its number of volunteers. In the case of Willow Creek, the need is to double its number of volunteers from 7,000 to 14,000 (Hybels 76).

People may have the desire to help, but they are busy with their own lives and careers. Even in the church, people may see the need for volunteering in ministry, but see time as a barrier. One Willow Creek employee describes this as "laying heavy ministry burdens on already-busy people" (Hybels 76). In 2002-2003, the number one reason people gave for ceasing volunteer activities was a lack of time (U.S. Department of Labor 13). This perceived lack of time creates a dilemma for non-profit organizations: How do we find volunteers who are willing and able to help us?

Technology and Volunteer Recruitment

Recruitment of volunteers can be a frustrating venture for non-profit organizations. However, emerging technologies have added an entirely new source from which to draw volunteers: Internet users. The convenience of the Internet is now being used by hundreds of volunteer organizations to locate and draw in valuable volunteers.

Do-it, a British volunteer recruitment organization, has allocated their entire marketing budget to online activities, including the recruitment of volunteers through banner advertisements and tailored email lists (Walker 11). The Volunteer Center of Lubbock, a volunteer recruitment organization in Lubbock, Texas, relies on its web site to make the community aware of urgent needs and to advertise on-going volunteer needs in the community. The national United Way agency is also posting volunteer opportunities on the web, just as regular employment opportunities are posted on company sites. These are just a few examples of the non-profit organizations that are now recruiting volunteers via the Internet.

In addition to individual organization sites, many websites are now emerging which provide directories of organizations and listings of volunteer opportunities. Extensive sites like volunteermatch.org and 1-800-volunteer.org include search features which allow site visitors to match their specific talents and interests to volunteer opportunities in their area. Impact Online, the organization behind the volunteermatch.org website, reports approximately 40,000 visitors each month to the site ("High-Tech" 33).

New technology holds promise in attracting younger citizens to engaging in civic activity as well. Those who have been raised up in the "net" generation are finding an increasing need to make significant contributions to the world, especially in the months and years after the September 11 attacks (Ellin). Department of Labor statistics show an increase in volunteering over the past year in the 16-24 and 25-34 age categories (2). If the Internet can be used to connect with and motivate young people, then they might be encouraged to volunteer for non-profit organizations, ministries, community events and civic organizations (Carpini 348).

Although the presence of volunteer opportunities posted online adds to the convenience of finding a place to volunteer, it does not compensate for the lack of time which many people cite as their main reason for not volunteering. However, a new era of "virtual volunteerism" is helping to make volunteering more convenient for busy people.

Virtual Volunteers

Randy Tyler, volunteer coordinator and webmaster at Macdonald Youth Services in Winnipeg, was desperate for volunteers. After going online to recruit volunteers, Tyler found that there is a wealth of talent and expertise just waiting to be tapped. One example Tyler gave of a successful virtual volunteering partnership involved a gentleman who responded to one of Tyler's online advertisements and subsequently programmed an entire database, which he then e-mailed to Tyler. The organization even ended up using a logo designed by a Ukranian man (Hawaleshka 43). Not only was a need filled with "virtual volunteers", but the transition into web-based volunteer recruiting also facilitated cooperation between individuals and organizations from opposite sides of the world.

Virtual volunteerism is reminiscent of careers which allow telecommuting or working from the home. The assignments given to virtual volunteers can usually be completed from the home with the help of a telephone or computer and Internet access. According to the Service Leader Virtual Volunteering website, jobs typically involve either technical assistance or direct contact ("Examples of Virtual Volunteering"). The "Examples of Virtual Volunteering" article goes on to list many different virtual volunteer opportunities, including:

- Conducting online research
- Providing professional expertise through web design, writing, strategic planning, computer programming, accounting or similar services
- Serving as an advocate in online communities such as support groups, discussion boards, chat rooms or newsgroups
- Translating information into other languages
- Making telephone contact with other volunteers or with those in need.

Virtual volunteering opportunities open doors for those who may not be able to volunteer through traditional means. In addition to those who are constrained by time and family responsibilities, there are many eager potential volunteers who are elderly, live in remote areas, or suffer disabilities (de Raad). Technology now enables individuals under such prohibitive circumstances to participate fully in society, including volunteering from the home.

Technology and the Culture of Volunteerism
The migration of volunteerism toward cyberspace can raise concerns regarding the development of community and personal contact. If, as Annette Petrick asserts, "the biggest reason why people don't volunteer is because no one asked them to" (L61), then what constitutes "asking"? Does posting a website with lists of volunteer opportunities suffice? Or do people require personal contact before they will pursue volunteer work?

Drawing a parallel between evangelism and recruiting volunteers, Bill Hybels points out that one key to evangelism is developing a relationship (78). If successfully recruiting volunteers involves knowing their individual interests, having a personal relationship with them, and *then* asking them to volunteer… where does that leave all of the organizations who recruit online?

Obviously, the online volunteer matching services have filled some need or they would not be so successful. However, we must remember that recruiting volunteers cannot become a computerized, impersonal task. Matching volunteers with opportunities to serve can be complicated and often requires compassion, patience and personal contact. Letting people know what jobs or opportunities are available is only one small part of the task of recruiting and retaining volunteers. Conveying benefits, determining volunteer capabilities, inviting to serve, following up, and mentoring are just a few of the factors that also contribute to a pleasant volunteering experience (Petrick L60-61).

Bill Hybels asserts that we should "create a culture in which the value of volunteerism is upheld and where staff members and lay leaders are taught how to move church members into the best possible volunteer niches" (79). Although Hybels is describing the need for a culture of volunteerism within the church, this same need may be applied to any other non-profit organization. Creating a culture of volunteerism is what encourages others to serve. Perhaps one of the ways to translate this culture into cyberspace is through the personal interactions that take place in discussion threads, chat rooms, and listservs.

Whether the issue is developing a culture of volunteerism or matching volunteers to their perfect niche, it is clear that the use of technology as a matching facilitator should be an addition to (not a replacement for) personal interaction. Developing relationships with people, determining their interests, and then asking for their involvement seems to be key to promoting volunteerism.

Conclusion
New technologies are often motivated by profit. However, Jason Willett, director of communications for Impact Online (volunteermatch.org), asserts that emerging technologies are found to be especially significant if they create "lasting and valuable social benefits as well" (258). The lasting and valuable benefits that the Internet (and other new technologies as they emerge) can have toward encouraging service through volunteerism are profound.

Providing information is the function of many Internet sites, and non-profit organizations should be no different. Organizations who post volunteer opportunities online are expanding their audience and attracting a new set of

untapped talent. One of the grand benefits of online volunteer matching must be the relative inexpensive of posting opportunities, a factor which is likely on the minds of non-profit organizations.

In addition to the added exposure for volunteerism, the possibilities inherent in new technologies allow for creative new ways of getting things done. Volunteers who can work from home and volunteer around busy schedules may be more likely to accept the challenge. Virtual volunteerism holds great promise for fulfilling the needs of non-profit organizations.

Beyond the excitement of technological innovation in volunteerism, volunteer work is based in a desire to serve. A focus on the needs of others is what is required of individual volunteers and the organizations for which they work. Many churches have become self-centered, looking inward instead of out at the world around them. We, as Christians, can learn much from other non-profit organizations which have seen the possibilities that technology presents and embraced them for the benefit of all.

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