

**EMPOWERING THE SINGLE WOMEN OF MOUNT ZION  
AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH AGES 25 TO 50  
TO IDENTIFY THEIR SPIRITUAL GIFTS FOR USE IN THE CONGREGATION**

**A professional project submitted to the Theological School of**

**Drew University in partial fulfillment of the**

**requirements for the degree,**

**Doctor of Ministry**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **EMPOWERING THE SINGLE WOMEN OF MOUNT ZION**

#### **AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH AGES 25 TO 50**

#### **TO IDENTIFY THEIR SPIRITUAL GIFTS FOR USE IN THE CONGREGATION**

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In this ministry project, I facilitated through the Holy Spirit, the empowerment the single women of Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, New Brunswick, New Jersey. The ages of the women were from 25 to 50. Their spiritual gifts were identified for use in the congregation. This involved four phases of the projects which were Phase One taking the Spiritual Gift Assessment to identify their gifts. Phase Two was spiritual development to enhance the identified gifts. Phase Three was to develop a ways and means to use their spiritual gifts in a ministry. Phase Four was to show the spiritual growth through a group exercise of developing a ministry using your spiritual gift or enhancing a ministry the women will already involve. The project timeframe was designed from January through May, 2013.

The various empowering methods were Sacred Space/Prayer Candles; Journals and Note taking; Bible Study and Reflection; and the Circle of Prayer. Other mediums used included but not limited to scripture, videos, poems and discussion.

The women of Mount Zion at the end of the project were operating within their spiritual gifts and this ministry continued.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

**Women of Purpose** - This is the name of the Ministry Team or Lay Advisory Team. The ministry team will be called Women of Purpose or Lay Advisory Committee and will include seven people. Six of the members are women members of the church. Two women are ordained clergy and four women are ages 25 to 50 all are members of the church. There is one male who is not a member of the church. He is an ordained clergy and has a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership.

**Focus Group** – Includes all the single women between the ages of 25 to 50 from the Mount Zion AME Church and the Advisory Committee. The purpose of the focus group is to contemplate an outline for ways and means to develop the spiritual gifts. The women will give suggestions, comments and feedback as this project unfolds.

**Leadership** – For the purpose of this project everyone is a leader and has a gift. Leadership is the ability to have others follow you in your giftedness to help or influence them to achieve or accomplish a common task in ministry.

**S.M.A.R.T. Action Plan** – S.M.A.R.T. is a learning tool giving criteria to guide in the setting of objectives. The Women of Purpose used their own S.M.A.R.T. action plan which stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timeline Action Plan with Who, What, Where, When and How components.

**Spiritual Gifts** – Are the gifts as defined in I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and Romans 12 for the strengthening of the body of Christ and empowering women to access and maximize their God-given potential.

**Spiritual Gift Assessment** – Spiritual Gifts Assessment (sometimes referred to as a Spiritual Gifts Inventory, Test, Survey, Analysis, or Questionnaire) will help to determine which Spiritual Gift(s) God has given to the participant. I used the Rick Warren assessment and modified it to identify 17 of 28 Spiritual Gifts by presenting the women with 120 statements that they are to respond to by selecting: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, or Always to indicate how well each statement applied to them. Their selection will help determine which Spiritual Gift(s) God has given to each woman. The seventeen spiritual gifts that I used for this project, with the women at Mount Zion are as follows: Administration, Apostleship, Creative Communications, Discernment, Encouragement, Evangelism, Faith, Giving, Hospitality, Helps, Intercession, Leadership, Mercy, Prophecy, Shepherding, Teaching and Wisdom.

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To the women of Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, thank you so very much for your time, your prayers and your gifts. As Paul told Timothy, in II Timothy 2:7, "...Stir up the gift of God inside you..." I pray continued blessings to all of you wonderful empowered women of God.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE NEED TO IDENTIFY SPIRITUAL GIFTS

I started my Doctor of Ministry project while I was a member of Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Shortly after the project was completed, I was called to another church as the Chief of Staff. It was hard to leave Mount Zion. However, in keeping with my project, I responded to the new call from God where I could use my spiritual gifts with a new congregation.

#### The History of Mount Zion Methodist Episcopal Church

Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church in New Brunswick, New Jersey has a rich history of sacrifice, a long tradition of dedication and has been in existence for over 185 years. It was built upon a solid foundation of hard-working, bible-believing, God-fearing people. While the United States was still experiencing many injustices especially with the historical plague of slavery inflicted on African Americans, the congregation was formed by a people with a vision, a people with a hope, and a people with faith in their God.

Mount Zion is the oldest African American Church in Middlesex County. It has not only provided spiritual guidance to its congregants but also donates clothing and food, in addition to providing transportation, financial assistance and housing.



Mount Zion strives to meet the needs of its community; however, there is always room for improvement. The church has seating capacity for 1,200 people and is centrally located in New Jersey. For this reason it becomes the host church in the African Methodist Organization. Some of the events are the Annual Women's Missionary Society, the Learning Experience Weekend, the New Jersey Annual Conference (when it is New Brunswick District's turn), and the Annual Advent Service at Christmas to name just a few. Mount Zion is very effective at hosting events and good at helping the community. Given the prominence of the church and the fact that it is in the public eye I wanted to see the single women advance further in using their spiritual gifts. As a single woman in ministry, I could not help but notice the absence of single women using their spiritual gifts. This absence caught my attention.

One reason I initiated this project was to identify the individual spiritual gifts of women and help develop them within a church context. I believe that, if spiritual gifts were identified and utilized with the women at Mount Zion, the impact would be even greater collectively, in ministering to the community. The question I asked myself is: how can I begin to raise the awareness of spiritual gifts in women at Mt Zion? So, I begin with myself and telling my story about identifying and developing my own spiritual gifts.

### My Beginning

As a woman of God, I can attest today that the scripture in Psalms 118:24, "This is the day that the Lord has made let us rejoice and be glad in it"<sup>1</sup> is true. I pondered this as

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<sup>1</sup> Michael D. Coogan, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 879.

a child because I have always heard this phrase and wondered how church members could expect you to ‘rejoice and be glad in it’ when so many things were not going well. As I have matured in my Christian journey, I understand that we “rejoice” because of the joy that is on the inside of each of us and not necessarily what is occurring on the outside, which tends to be physical in nature. For example, I had foot surgery and could not walk, a divorce, and grieved the death of my grandfather. In the middle of these unpleasant and sad events, I still had joy on the inside. I have learned that it is okay to get mad, and be upset or hurt, nonetheless real joy is in knowing Jesus. If Jesus is with you, then you can make it through the situation. I believe God is in our midst even when we are too young to realize it. By young, I mean in age or in maturity in Christ. To give an example, I would like to reflect on how I “rejoiced” in what others may have thought to be a negative situation, but God used it for good. It was my speech impairment when I was a young child.

Who would have ever thought that the second oldest of six children, born with a speech impairment, would be a minister leading the Women’s Ministry and teacher in the African Methodist Episcopal Church? I thank God for my Kindergarten teacher who saw a special gift in me and recommended to my mother that I should be pulled out of regular classes (twice a week for an hour), to have corrective speech therapy. I went from speech therapy class in kindergarten, which helped me be more confident speaking, to now preaching to hundreds of people. My personal challenge of speech impairment was identified and developed. My God is able and my God is awesome! This is what I believe my project is all about in a nutshell: identifying the special spiritual gift of women and developing them further.

Throughout this journey with my project and in my ministry, I felt my calling was to help other women find their unique spiritual gifts and develop them. Instead, I found a greater gift inside myself in the embodiment of the Holy Spirit. In the process of working on this project, I have learned so much about myself, while working with others. Each gathering of the women that I was working with brought me closer and closer to God. I became so aware of the power of God in my life and the gifts that I have been given. This spurred me on to helping the women of my congregation to reflect on their gifts as well.

I believe that everything a church needs as far as gifts for ministry is already in the church and all we have to do is tap into the gifts that God has given us. I could see this in the women of Mount Zion and wanted to set these gifts free to work! I noticed that the single women of the church were often left out or not called forth to use their gifts in the service of the Lord and congregation in a public way. The focus of my project is the helping single women from ages 25 to 50 years old at Mount Zion AME Church identify their spiritual gifts. The lack of spiritual gift identification has limited the participation of some of the single women in the local church practice and life.

What prompted the launching of this Doctor of Ministry project were my observation and my experience that single women age 25 to 50 was not exercising their spiritual gifts in the ministry at Mount Zion. I noticed several women who did things around the church but did not realize that what they were doing was a ministry. These things include: preparing food, visiting the sick and shut-ins, working with the children while parents are in choir rehearsal, or doing gardening in front of the church. These

activities should be classified as ministries. However, before we classify the ministries, we need to identify the spiritual gifts.

The seventeen spiritual gifts that I worked with the women at Mount Zion are as follows: Administration, Apostleship, Creative Communications, Discernment, Encouragement, Evangelism, Faith, Giving, Hospitality, Helps, Intercession, Leadership, Mercy, Prophecy, Shepherding, Teaching and Wisdom.

Many women in our church seemed to have gifts and talents that had not been tapped into, because their gifts had not been identified or they were not allowed to exercise them within a particular ministry setting. Many of us may confuse or use interchangeably “talent” with “gifts of the Holy Spirit.” They are not the same. A talent is a special natural ability, while a spiritual gift is from God, and is used for the purpose of ministry. Many of us may confuse or use interchangeably “talent” with “gifts of the Holy Spirit.” They are not the same. A talent is a special natural ability while a spiritual gift is from God use for the purpose of ministry. A talent is not a spiritual gift unless or until it is used for “the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”<sup>2</sup> There are similarities and differences between talents and spiritual gifts. Both talents and gifts are from God to us. Both grow in effectiveness with continual use. Both are intended to be used on behalf of others, not for selfish purposes. First Corinthians 12:7,<sup>3</sup> is illustrative, in that it states that spiritual gifts are given to benefit others and not the bearer of the gifts.

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<sup>2</sup> Michael J. Christensen and Carl E. Savage, *Equipping The Saints: Mobilizing Laity For Ministry* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 116.

<sup>3</sup> Michael D. Coogan, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (Oxford University Press, Third Ed, 2001), 285.

Paul is clear in talking about spiritual gifts. A person (regardless of his or her belief in God) is given a natural talent as a result of a combination of genetics and cultural environment or because God desires to endow certain individuals with certain talents. Spiritual gifts are given to all believers by the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:3,6).<sup>4</sup> The Holy Spirit gives to the believer the spiritual gift(s) He desires the believer to have (First Corinthians 12:11).<sup>5</sup> Some women have a natural ability and they use it for the glory of the God. A few women were reluctant, because this was new and they needed to adjust after having their gift identified. Because of the uncertainty of having a spiritual gift, some women in my church seem to have experience hesitation in exercising their God-given gifts.

Some of the women at Mount Zion seemed to experience hesitation in using their spiritual gifts, because of they feared becoming leaders in the church. This was a concern to me because I did want to see untapped spiritual gifts that used for the glory of God and the enrichment of congregations and the community. More specifically, it seems that women who had husbands in church were given more opportunities in ministry than single women. On occasions, I was left out of functions such as going to dinner or attending a play or being called on to be a co-worship leader because it is preferred for those participating to be married. I was told once, “We did not ask you because you did not have a mate.” Because I do not have a mate, does that mean I cannot co-lead a

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 260-261.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 285.

worship service? This question brings me to the topic at hand which is the untapped spiritual gifts as referenced in the scriptures.

I will be using four Pauline Scripture passages to reference spiritual gifts and to provide the primary biblical basis from which the conventional view of spiritual gifts are derived. The scriptures are as follows: I Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-32, Romans 12:6-8, and Ephesians 4:11. While the Scriptures I chose were from the New Testament, I still appreciate and respect the Old Testament perspective and consider it vital to this project as well.

The reason why I chose this ministry project was because I belong in this category of single women. I was fortunate to take a course in spiritual formation and in this course it helped enhanced my spiritual gifts for ministry. I was able to identify my spiritual gifts which propelled me into active ministry within the church. In addition to helping other women in ministry identify their spiritual gifts; I pulled my magnifying glasses out and examined my own motives. In taking a closer look at the reason, I wanted to see whether or not what I was experiencing in some aspects of ministry was the norm. I believe that if we can have women identify their spiritual gifts, women can begin to find ways and means to develop their gifts and grow to become leaders in their church and community. I realize some of the old ways of thinking is historical, and the renewing of the church's attitudes need to take place both in men and women throughout our denomination. Part of my project is to develop ways and means to identify spiritual gifts.

Part of my Ministry Project as I interpreted Ephesians 4:13,<sup>6</sup> was to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up. We are all working to reach greater faith, learn of the Son of God, and become mature in the fullness of Christ.

One of the instruments used was the Rick Warren Spiritual Gift Assessment. The assessment had 120 questions. While some women exhibited hesitation in taking the assessment, it was not a test. The assessment was a part of the ministry project. It was about taking adult learners in small groups and developing what God has already given them. The first phase was to identify the gift. The second phase was to empower the women and help them identify their gifts instead of to know that they have a gift. The third phase is to identify how the women will use their spiritual gift within the church. I made a recommendation to incorporate this into the new members' class and share gift endowment information with various ministry leaders. What was achieved in this project was that women identified their spiritual gifts. They were given the confidence to pursue and excel in the development and practice of their gift for the glory of God and the edification of the congregation. In order to move forward, the pastor would need to take the lead and be willing to allow women to work in their various and multiple gifted capacities. This meant that while the individual woman is allowed to grow, the ecosystem or church culture had to be conducive to a growing and developing environment. For this to work effectively, our church need to learn more about change as corporations do for example, "The Disney people (and Maturana) understand that you do

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<sup>6</sup> Michael D. Coogan, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (Oxford University Press, Third Ed, 2001), 324.

not change organisms—you design an environment in which organisms thrive, respond, and change themselves”.<sup>7</sup>

### The Need for Leadership to Raise Awareness of the Identity of Spiritual Gifts

The leader of a congregation in the African American tradition must be equipped with administrative tools of leadership to enable the flock to function efficiently and effectively on a variety of levels in and outside of the church walls. The pastoral leader is faced with a multiplicity of challenges, often with limited or inadequate resources.<sup>8</sup> One of the limited resources is with the lack of awareness of identifying and knowing their congregation’s spiritual gifts. If this is difficult for the pastoral leader it is equally difficult for a ministry.

Effective leadership, then, is important to develop strong and competent ministries. This is especially critical in the African American tradition because leaders who are needed can create, articulate, and communicate a liberating spiritual vision, the vision is to enable others to be more than they have; provide prophetic insight, and urgently help those they influence to recognize that there is a future.<sup>9</sup> The question then becomes how do we do this? We do this through teaching, praying and allowing people opportunities to participate in areas in which they have not had prior experienced. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit in us, we attempt to empower women to make

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<sup>7</sup> R. Paul Stevens and Phil Collins, *A Systems Approaches to Congregational Leadership* (Alban Institute Publication, 1993), 40. Quoted Jay Efran and Michael Lukens.

<sup>8</sup> Vashti M. McKenzie, *Not Without A Struggle* (The Pilgrim Press, Ohio), 63.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.



informed decisions and listen to the voice of God in them. In exercising your spiritual gift, you are in a sense a leader.

As a leader, your gift grows and you are empowered to do ministry. As your ministry develops, you are responsible in your role as a leader within that ministry. Being trained and equipped is important in leadership because we are ambassadors of Christ.

What is leadership and what does it mean in the context of my project?

Leadership is the ability to bring people together for the accomplishment of common goals.<sup>10</sup> Women leaders generally encourage participation, share power and information, enhance other people's self-worth, and get others excited about their work. Women leaders tend to solicit input, teach, and create positive working environments.<sup>11</sup> This is not to say that men do not do this as well. I was intentional in doing those things while holding my women's group. When I speak of empowering, I think of someone giving you the power and the support to accomplish something. Empowering is a major component of female leadership. Women tend to empower others to feel that the leaders respect his or her judgment.<sup>12</sup> The average woman in ministry at Mount Zion is working three jobs: one at the local church, one in another vocation, and one at home.<sup>13</sup> For women in the ministry, it is a constant balancing act. It is important to note, while men can stay home also, part of her family duties are to stay home for six weeks after the baby is born or when a child is sick, and carry them to the doctor. How do women find time to

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<sup>10</sup> Vashti M. McKenzie, *Not Without A Struggle* (The Pilgrim Press, Ohio), 64.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

develop their spiritual gift while juggling three jobs at once? It is so important for each woman to discover and develop her spiritual gifts. It has to be an intentional daily process.

As mentioned before, I used a gift assessment tool with 120 questions and divided the women in small groups based on their results of their gifts assessment. Nurturing of their gifts occurred during the course of the five sessions (one held each month).

Individual meetings were held with each participant to discuss her gifts. After the nurturing of the gift is done, along with a review of the personality type, I developed a personal profile of each member. The nurturing of the gift was done through empowering methods such as journaling or sacred space which is discussed in the methods listed in Chapter Three. The personality types were discussed so participants could identify their personality type and that of others. This too is explained in Chapter Three.

I then met with the pastor and shared the information so the pastor could find a place of service for their ministry gift at Mount Zion Church. I believe that the role of the church concerning spiritual gifts is, to continue the practice of assessing spiritual gifts and placing people in areas where their gifts can be nurtured and developed.

### The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts

God has a purpose for each of our lives; a gift that is greater than any vision that either we or others could possibly have for us.<sup>14</sup> God also expects women to participate in the life and growth of the church as the congregation lives out the meaning of the

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<sup>14</sup> William Watley, *God Wants You To Grow: In How to Live Beyond Your Limitations* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2003), xi.

kingdom in its local context.<sup>15</sup> God wants us to grow because growth is a sign of life.<sup>16</sup> Growth is not a matter of improving the wrapping, but rather improving the product.<sup>17</sup>

The purpose of ministry gifts is three-fold: For the equipping and perfecting of the Saints, for the working of the Ministry of the Gospel, and for the edifying of the body of Christ. For the purpose of my ministry project, I wanted to identify a limited number of gifts, so I may think of ways and means to develop them.

Part of my Ministry Project as I interpreted “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Ephesians 4:13,<sup>18</sup> was to prepare God’s people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up. We are all working to reach greater faith, learn of the Son of God and to become mature in the fullness of Christ.

The ultimate aim of the spiritual gifts that Christ placed in His Church is to help people. One of the questions I asked the women was, “Are we prepared as a church and are we prepared as individuals to receive all that God has for our lives?”<sup>19</sup> What is hampering our growth and causing so much confusion in our own faith journey as well as in the life of the church is our lack of knowledge and wisdom of God.<sup>20</sup> Our lack of knowledge is in knowing who we are in Christ and who God is calling us to be. How can

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<sup>15</sup> Watley, xii.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>18</sup> Coogan, 324.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 61.

we equip ourselves and others? These are some of the questions asked in the small groups which helped get us thinking about our spiritual gifts and its purpose.

This is meaningful because we are called to equip ourselves “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” (Ephesians 4:11).<sup>21</sup> The concern as discussed with the Women of Purpose (Advisory Committee) and for myself was exploring what the concept “perfecting of the saints” meant for us individually and as a group. My response while we are not perfect, we are to strive for perfection. We will make mistakes along the way, but God has made provisions for our mistakes called grace and mercy. Every day we get another chance and brand new mercies every day. This is essential information to know as we identify and develop our gifts.

What also makes this meaningful as one of the women pointed out, from the scripture, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant”, (I Corinthians 12:1)<sup>22</sup> God wants us to know our spiritual gifts and our spiritual gifts are not for ourselves.

Since the women discussed the theme scriptures, I mentioned Romans 12: 1-2,

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 324.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 284.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 260.

I wanted to share with the women that this scripture is also relevant to the development and empowerment of spiritual gifts because in the text, Paul is begging them to present themselves as living sacrifices. We have the mercies of God to help us be holy and acceptable to God. Our reasonable service is through the help of the Holy Spirit. This is a daily task of us working on ourselves by renewing our minds daily. By reading the word of God, we can as we grow discern what is good, acceptable and perfect will of God according to the book of Romans 12:1-2.<sup>24</sup> As we continued speaking and discussing related scriptures concerning gifts, I wanted to share and I mentioned another scripture. In Ephesians, 4:7, “But, unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of God.”<sup>25</sup> I mentioned this scripture because as we strive for perfection, we will move and grow at different paces. The grace God extends to me may be a different grace that God extends to you.

In order to prepare God’s people to use spiritual gifts for works of service and so that the body of Christ may be built up there are three principles I learned from Dr. Ciangio<sup>26</sup> and shared with the group were as follows:

Believing: Believe in God. For God loves you for who you are and where you are right now in Christ.

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<sup>24</sup> Coogan, 260.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 324.

<sup>26</sup> Dr. Donna Ciango Professor of Spiritual Formation from Drew School of Theology. Class notes dated January 2012.

Belonging: We belong to God. Because you have accepted Jesus Christ, as your personal Savior, and believe that on the third day after Jesus' death, He rose from the grave and with all the power in His hands and that same power mentioned in Acts 1:8, that Jesus had, he gave to us who believe.<sup>27</sup> Because of that belief, we have a relationship with God.

Becoming: Become empowered. I may not be what you want me to be and I may not be what I want to be, but, I am becoming what God wants me to be.

Having introduced to these three principles, I feel that some of the women at Mount Zion church are unaware of their spiritual gifts and or their purpose. The Church does not lack any spiritual gifts. The challenge is to discover them!

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<sup>27</sup> Coogan, 185-186.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR USING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

In reflecting upon my theological and biblical research for this project I found that the Holy Spirit, who is my counselor and guide, took full control. As I studied the key scriptures for this ministry project, the Holy Spirit played a vital role. The importance of the project was to identify our spiritual gifts. We cannot identify and develop our spiritual gifts without the help of the Holy Spirit and the love of God. In Matthew 22:37- 40, Jesus said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.”<sup>1</sup>

The theological theme woven throughout this ministry project is spiritual guidance by the love of God through the Holy Spirit. If we want to be empowered women of God we need the Holy Spirit and we need love. One of the first fruit of the spirit is love. In Galatians 5:22,<sup>2</sup> there are nine characteristics within the fruit of the spirit. Love, Joy and Peace are toward God. Longsuffering, Gentleness, Goodness is toward each other, and Faith, Meekness and Temperance are toward self. I believe love is the first one because it is the most difficult. As an empowered woman of God seeking to identify and use my spiritual gifts, I have to learn to love past the pain, love during

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<sup>1</sup> Michael D. Coogan, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (Oxford University Press, Third Ed, 2001), 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

sacrifice, and love even with criticism. As empowered women of God, we will experience love that is stronger than steel, softer than down feathers, and more resilient than elastic. We cannot identify our spiritual gifts without the love of the Holy Spirit.

The key scriptures I want to discuss are: Ephesians 4, I Corinthians 12, and Romans 12. I chose these scriptures because they speak to the biblical understanding of spiritual gifts. However, love is the theological theme. Before discussing the scriptures supporting the biblical understanding, I also want to speak about scriptures concerning the theological understanding of love because it is crucial that everyone identify and develop their spiritual gift, to empower people for ministry as supported by I Corinthians 12: 1, “Now concerning spiritual gifts brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.”<sup>3</sup> Not only do God want us to be informed about our spiritual gifts, God wants us to identify and be empowered to use our spiritual gift.

The focus of the ministry project as I have stated was to empower the single women of Mount Zion Methodist Episcopal Church ages 25 to 50 to identify their spiritual gifts for the use in the congregation. My desired outcome was to develop the women as leaders according to their spiritual gifts. What propelled me to this project was in my own spiritual formation I found that having a relationship with the Holy Spirit assists me in identifying my spiritual gifts by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead me. My first Biblical reference is taken from the Book of Ephesians Chapter 4.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Coogan, 284.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 320.



In powerful poetic language the letter to the Ephesians celebrates the author's vision of the church. According to God's eternal plan for humanity, Christ's death brought together both Jews and Gentiles into a new, unified community. The new life of believers is one of knowledge and spiritual power.<sup>5</sup>

The letter to the Ephesians ties in with the spiritual gifts because it is the author's way of sharing God's purpose for the church. God's vision for us is to have a new life of hope to use your spiritual gifts. A critical part of that new life is the Holy Spirit.

### The Love of God Through the Power of the Holy Spirit

We know the Holy Spirit was active and present at the beginning of creation, thus, as God created heaven and earth, the birth and creation of the Christian church was active and present and is powered by the Holy Spirit in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. Ten days after Jesus ascended into heaven, many gathered together in Jerusalem for the Jewish harvest festival that was celebrated on the fiftieth day after Passover. While they were indoor praying, a sound like that of a rushing wind filled the house and tongues of fire descended and rested over each of their heads. This was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the flesh promised by God through the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-29).<sup>6</sup> The Women of Purpose had a similar experience with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our sessions as we gathered in our circle of prayer. This outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the prayer sessions was expressed in praise, tears and the speaking in tongues. Another supporting biblical reference tying the Holy Spirit to spiritual gifts is in the book of Acts.

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<sup>5</sup> Coogan, 320.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 1299.

In Acts 19:1-11,<sup>7</sup> While Apollos was in Corinth; Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus. Paul introduced the Holy Spirit to the believers. They knew of John's baptism of repentance, but Paul laid hands on them and they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. When the Holy Spirit came upon them they spoke in tongues and prophesied. God did perform extraordinary miracles through Paul. This passage of scripture was used to remind us of what can be done through the Holy Spirit. An example of this was in our first meeting and in the closing prayer. The Holy Spirit was in the midst of our testimony as we shared of how we each came to Mount Zion and in our prayer circle. The women were free to praise and worship God. My heart was touched as the women shared their stories of struggle and how they arrived at Mount Zion. God can work through you.

We can see how the Holy Spirit worked through the life of John Wesley. John Wesley was an 18<sup>th</sup> century Anglican evangelist and founder of the Wesleyan Tradition. He expressed his experience with the Holy Spirit with the phrase, "I felt my heart strangely warmed." Wesley felt trust in Christ. Wesley stated, "It was Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."<sup>8</sup> I believe Wesley's statement is supported by the biblical reference in I Corinthians 2:12, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been

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<sup>7</sup> Coogan, 223.

<sup>8</sup> Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet* (New York University Press, 2008), 40.

freely given to us by God.”<sup>9</sup> As we walk in our journey to develop our spiritual gifts, and persevere in prayer, refusing to end the prayer until we hear from God, we should be determined in our pursuit being who God wants us to be. Another person that was determined, who impacted me and who we can see the Holy Spirit at work in his life is Bishop Richard Allen.

Bishop Richard Allen was born a slave and bought his freedom. He was the first elected and consecrated bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Bishop Allen was a true itinerant preacher, traveling the circuit on the east coast. Bishop Allen was self-taught and formed the Free African Society, a non-denominational religious mutual aid society for the black community. Bishop Allen continued his Methodist ministry, and founded Bethel, which became the "Mother" church of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the first independent black denomination. This information is important to women of Mount Zion because it tells of his struggle and how he persevered. This is a part of our church history and inspiring for us today. This is told also because Bishop Richard Allen inspired the original church motto which was “God Our Father, Christ Our Redeemer and Man Our Brother.” Led by the Holy Spirit at the 2008 General Conference the motto was changed to read “God Our Father, Christ Our Redeemer, the Holy Ghost Our Comforter, Humankind Our Family.”<sup>10</sup> The Holy Spirit is important to the African Methodist Episcopal denomination and to this ministry project.

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<sup>9</sup> Coogan, 271.

<sup>10</sup> *The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 2008* (Tennessee, AMEC Sunday School Union, 2008), 1.

The Holy Spirit speaks to us in the deepest levels of our being, and the Spirit knows what we truly need and desire. We should be encouraged because the Holy Spirit sees beyond our superficial understanding of our problem to the real issue that needs resolving. The Spirit's answer to us is on the basis of our need and on God's plan. The Spirit's answer to us is always in keeping with the will of the Father for us.<sup>11</sup> An example of this is during our second session I shared Marianne Williamson's poem our "Deepest Fear". The opening line reads, "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure."<sup>12</sup> The purpose of the poem was to ignite the power that is within us through the Holy Spirit to identify our spiritual gifts and empower us to use them. Once we individually identified our deepest fear which some shared aloud we went to God in prayer and allowed the Holy Spirit to remove the fear. The Women of Purpose (Advisory Committee) and group were free to move forward in their individual spiritual gifts in ministry. I was moved as well.

As I studied the book of Ephesians, Paul in Chapter 4:1 says he is a prisoner in the Lord. "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called" I noted that he said "in" the Lord. We identified our spiritual gifts and used Paul's analogy of being a prisoner "in" the Lord. This means to me that God through the Holy Spirit is in full control. A prisoner moves at the will of the guards and it is the Holy Spirit that guards us. Paul begs us to lead a life worthy of the calling

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<sup>11</sup> Charles Stanley, *Relying on the Holy Spirit* (Tennessee, Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1996), 51.

<sup>12</sup> Marianne Williamson. *Our Deepest Fear*. This inspiring quote is taken from Marianne Williamson's book *A Return to Love* Though often quoted as part of Nelson Mandela's moving inaugural speech, "Our Deepest Fear" does not appear in the speech. <http://www.inspiringcommunity.org> (accessed January 28, 2012).

to which we are called. This is the beauty of being a prisoner in the Lord that He guards us and asks that we make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. In Ephesians 4:7,<sup>13</sup> “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ,” this is one of the key verses for this ministry project, each of us is given grace according to the measure of Christ’s gift.

As I worked with the women at Mount Zion, we were reminded that each of us has a gift and that it was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. I limited my ministry project, to working with seventeen spiritual gifts because I wanted the women work in small groups with other women with like gifts. The seventeen spiritual gifts that I worked with the women at Mount Zion are as follows: Administration, Apostleship, Creative Communications, Discernment, Encouragement, Evangelism, Faith, Giving, Helps, Hospitality, Intercession, Leadership, Mercy, Prophecy, Shepherding, Teaching and Wisdom. These spiritual gifts that were identified to equip the women for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ according to Ephesians 4:13. This happens when we come into the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God. We can only come into that knowledge of the Son of God through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit allows us to grow into the knowledge as indicated because the scripture in Ephesians 4:13 by the use of the phrase, “the maturity”.<sup>14</sup> “Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the

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<sup>13</sup> Coogan, 324.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 324.

whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”<sup>15</sup> Maturity shows growth, development, and life experience over a period of time. This allows us to grow in the measure of the full stature of Christ.

The Holy Spirit allows us the full stature of Christ, is an individual progression in our spiritual journey. Hence, we identified our spiritual gifts through the Holy Spirit, we come into the knowledge of the Son of God through the Holy Spirit and we mature in our spiritual gifts through the Holy Spirit.

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren and sisters I would not have you ignorant.” In I Corinthians 12:1,<sup>16</sup> “In framing the ensuing argument, Paul sets Jesus as Lord in authority over spiritual gifts and presents the confession Jesus is Lord as the criterion of being caught up in the Spirit.”<sup>17</sup>

We have a variety of gifts that come from the same source. In Corinthians 12:4, “There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.”<sup>18</sup> We have identified that source as the Holy Spirit. The diversity of these gifts is not the issue. The issue is the use of the gifts for the common good. In a group discussion with the women, the question was asked are the gifts ranked. My response was that humans may rank the gifts, but I believe all gifts are needed. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 324.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 284.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 320.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 285.

for common good. All gifts are activated by the Holy Spirit who allots to each one individually as the Holy Spirit chooses. Paul in I Corinthians 12:12 wrote, “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ.”<sup>19</sup> Paul’s analogy of the body shows that all gifts are needed and all gifts are important. Paul shares with us in I Corinthians 12:31 that God will show you a still more excellent way. “But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And I show you a still more excellent way.”<sup>20</sup> As we exercise our spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit for that more excellent way, we are reminded that we should let the Holy Spirit lead. What I found in group discussions and even within me, we have a tendency to want to lead instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to lead us. As the women of Mount Zion shared in sessions this difficulty was overcome as we humbly submitted to the will of God the more excellent way as reference in I Corinthians 12:31.

The next scriptural reference that shows a “more excellent way” in developing your spiritual gift is in the book of I Corinthians. Before I present another lesson learned from the group with the scriptures I want to address the prophetic powers or the speaking and interpreting in tongue which is also mentioned in I Corinthians 13. The question was asked why I omitted the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues. While I appreciate and respect all the spiritual gifts, I limited my ministry project to only seventeen gifts. Although I did not choose speaking in tongues or interpreting tongues in my spiritual gift

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<sup>19</sup> Coogan, 285.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 286.

assessment, I believe they are both very important gifts and possess the qualities of love and the Holy Spirit.

As we read, I Corinthians 13:2, “And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.”<sup>21</sup> Having a spiritual gift and not having love accompany, it is an improper use of the gift. It is through the love that we can express our diversity of the gifts that comes through the Holy Spirit. “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” as stated in I Corinthians 13:17.<sup>22</sup> The positive attributes of love glorifies the qualities of our spiritual gifts and emphasizes the future fulfillment. Paul, in I Corinthians 13, stressed love and closed with comparing learning to being a child and then becoming an adult. Paul stated in I Corinthians 13:12-13, “...Now I know only in part; then I will know fully...” “And now, faith, hope, and love abide, in these three; and the greatest of these is love.”<sup>23</sup>

Having love while using your spiritual gift was another lesson learned in the group sessions as we used various methods to empower women in their spiritual gifts. While it is said Jesus loves you and we believe that to be true, at a deeper look, we felt as women the Holy Spirit taught us that we need to love ourselves through Christ. As the women shared their various stories of how they got to Mount Zion, we were all reminded of the love of Christ that bought us to this church. Through sharing our stories, we

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>22</sup> Coogan, 286.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 286.



learned lessons of love. While learning the lesson of love according to Corinthians 13:2, it was demanding although it is required. I listened to the various stories of hardships, challenges and losses, and it was a cleansing experience to release all that the women kept in their hearts. This experience became an empowerment tool and allowed us to move to the next level. I Corinthians 13:17, "Love endures all things" states all things. In reviewing the scriptures we found, that love is not easy, but love is required.

Paul states in I Corinthians 14:1-2, "Pursue love and strive for the spiritual gifts and speaking mysteries in the Spirit."<sup>24</sup> For the purpose of my ministry project, I wanted to identify a limited number of gifts, so I could think of ways and means to develop the seventeen spiritual gifts I selected. In conjunction with the seventeen gifts selected, I also wanted to share with the group that though we have been through something we are not ashamed of our testimonies which is part of telling about the good news or the gospel of Christ. In Romans 1:16-17, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith;" as it is written, "The just shall live by faith".<sup>25</sup> This is a confession of faith. God brings human beings into right relationship. God's faithfulness elicits human trust. Salvation offers us an opportunity to repent. Through our testimonies of how we arrived at Mount Zion, we gain power to be more outspoken concerning Christ. As we closed each session with prayer, the deepest longing inside each of us was that the Holy Spirit hears us.

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<sup>24</sup> Coogan, 286.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 243.

Paul said in Romans 8:26, the Holy Spirit "...makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."<sup>26</sup> The Holy Spirit carries the meaning of our prayer to the Father. As women empowered to use our spiritual gifts, it is good to know, as we pray the Holy Spirit is interceding for us. We have the Holy Spirit inside of each us. Since the Holy Spirit dwells inside everyone who have accepted Jesus Christ's gift of salvation, we are to keep our temples holy.

The biblical reference found in the letter of Paul to the Romans in Chapter 12 speaks of the universal accountability of our Christian salvation that by the mercies of God, we present our bodies as living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service of giving back to God. In Romans 12:1,<sup>27</sup> "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." We can attain this reasonable service through the Holy Spirit. By the mercies of God, our holy living in our spiritual discipline allows us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice. This is a form of spiritual worship. I reminded the women of Mount Zion that we have to be intentional in our spiritual formation of presenting our bodies as living sacrifices. For it is by the grace given and the measure of faith that God has assigned, that we receive our spiritual gifts.

In Romans 12:3, "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 255.

<sup>27</sup> Coogan, 260.

soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”<sup>28</sup> Because of the grace given, God assigned the diversity in the spiritual gifts which cannot be measured; nor can humans think more highly of themselves than they ought. Gifts are given for the community. As I shared with the women, what their spiritual gifts were, I reminded them that all spiritual gifts are important. Some women were surprised that they had certain spiritual gifts, such as discernment and evangelism. I pointed out that the purpose of this ministry project was to identify and develop the spiritual gifts.

Another supporting passage of scripture that I would like to share is the Holy Spirit and the use of gifts in found in the book of Acts. In the book of Acts the Holy Spirit is the main character. The focal point is salvation in the resurrection, which is marked as the crucial turning point of history. The mission of the early church was expansion of the teaching of Jesus Christ and throughout the Roman Empire under the direction of the Holy Spirit according to the purpose of God.<sup>29</sup>

In Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” And having “witnesses” share their experiences was part of the key factor in promoting continuity in the church. As I worked with the women of Mount Zion, and we shared experiences at our sessions, it was apparent that the sharing was a key factor in forming relationships. In our first sharing session, each had an opportunity to introduce ourselves and tell something about ourselves and how we arrived at Mount Zion. In the

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<sup>28</sup> Coogan, 260-261.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 183.

midst of telling of stories, something happened as each woman spoke. We applied our “sacred space” rule which is “what was said in the session stayed in the session”.

Because of the sacred space rule, this allowed the women to share freely. One of the discoveries in this process was that even though our circumstances were different, the gratitude to the Lord for all the women received was gratefulness. Gratefulness of how the Lord was consistent throughout the sharing process. Charles Stanley in his book, “Listening to God” states that there are at least eight ways in which God spoke to His people in Bible times: Direct revelation, dreams, written words, prophets, circumstances, angels, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.<sup>30</sup> We need to be familiar with the various ways God speaks to us. Since we are speaking of the spiritual gifts and the relation to the Holy Spirit it is good to know that one of the eight ways in which God speaks is through the Holy Spirit. What happened during Pentecost in the Book of Acts, is an illustration of the Holy Spirit and how God speaks.

As previously stated the Holy Spirit is the driving force in the book of Acts. Pentecost was an “Aha moment.” The Holy Spirit gives us insight. One may ask, “What is the evidence that you are filled with the Holy Spirit?” Two scriptures point out this evidence, Acts 2:4, “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.”<sup>31</sup> It is the Holy Spirit that gives us ability to perform our spiritual gifts. The second scripture that shows that we are to strive to be filled with the Holy Spirit is I Corinthians 14:1, “Pursue love and strive for

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<sup>30</sup> Charles Stanley, *Listening to God*, 18.

<sup>31</sup> Coogan, 187.

the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesize.”<sup>32</sup> God is love. In order to strive for the spiritual gifts we need love and not fear. As the scripture reads in II Timothy 2:7, “...for God did not give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind.”<sup>33</sup>

How do I move in the power of God? We first must understand “what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe Ephesians 1:19.”<sup>34</sup> He wants us to know this power that raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at the right hand of God. We have the same power if we believe Acts 1:18.<sup>35</sup> “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem...”

An important reason women are rising up to fulfill the destiny God has for them and moving in different areas of expertise and ministry is because they are learning to rely on the power of God to prepare them and open the doors. Women are realizing they are not an afterthought of God’s creation, but created for a special purpose.<sup>36</sup> As women of God, we need to search the Scriptures for the promises of God. There is divine power in the promises of God.<sup>37</sup> As women of God being empowered to use our spiritual gift for ministry this also allows us to use the gift in the community as well.

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<sup>32</sup> Coogan, 287.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 322.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>36</sup> Stormie Omartian, *The Power of a Praying Women*. (Harvest House Publishers, 2002), 18.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 19.

## The Influence of Historical Settings for Women in Church

In looking at the social rationale of this ministry project, I would like to share a little of history for African American women in ministry. Jarena Lee was the first African Methodist Episcopal licensed woman preacher. Jarena Lee professed a call to the gospel ministry and kept a detailed record of her experiences. The record was later published. I encouraged the women of Mount Zion to keep a detailed record of their experiences in their journals especially noting the development of their spiritual gifts.

Lee's tremendous preaching gift provides an inspiring legacy for African American clergywomen in particular. She models courage, commitment, and dedication in ministry without official recognition, title or ordained status.<sup>38</sup> This information was important for the group because Jarena Lee was a pioneer for African American women in ministry particularly in the African Methodist denomination. Other committed AME women, along with Lee, called themselves, "the Daughters of the Conference." They were Sylvia Murray, Elizabeth Cole, Harriet Felston Taylor, and Amanda Berry Smith.<sup>39</sup> Amanda Berry Smith became the first female minister officially ordained by the AME church in 1870.<sup>40</sup> Sara Allen, wife of Bishop Richard Allen was inspired by these women. Sara assisted runaway slaves, hiding, feeding and clothing them in their home and in the church. The untidy appearance of the ministers at the African Methodist Episcopal Church's first annual conference inspired her to organize the Daughters of the Conference,

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<sup>38</sup> Vashti M. McKenzie, *Not Without A Struggle* (The Pilgrim Press, Ohio), 32.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>40</sup> Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet* (New York University Press, 2008), 234.

officially designated in 1827.<sup>41</sup> These AME women mended the garments of the ministers, gave them food, and provided them with the material support they needed to survive. This was ministry. The work of the Daughters of Conference continued long after Sara's death.<sup>42</sup> Each woman had their own struggle during the time of Reconstruction and Post Reconstruction era in the AME church. I did not research what the women theologies were whether they were feminist or womanist. These women were instrumental in articulating women's gifts, the call to leadership, and ordination within the AME Church.<sup>43</sup> In the history of the African Methodist Episcopal church, these women influenced me to move forward in ministry.

Ministry is the ongoing expression of Christ's life in the world. It is so important to God that He sent the Holy Spirit upon Jesus' request to fill us, and enable us to minister through our spiritual gifts. We minister according to the degree that we allow the Holy Spirit to work in us and through us. Our ministry is the ministry of the Holy Spirit.<sup>44</sup> I was inspired by Bishop Vashti Mckenzie's book entitled, "Not Without A Struggle." The significance of giving this information in our group session was to inform the women that we all have struggles and can be pioneers in our various ministries using our spiritual gifts. I focused on the struggles and challenges the author Bishop Mckenzie mentioned in the book and how to relate them to us today. For example, Jarena Lee had

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<sup>41</sup> Encyclopedia World of Biographies, Sarah Allen, <http://www.pbs.org> accessed February 12, 2014.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>43</sup> Vashti M. McKenzie, *Not Without A Struggle* (The Pilgrim Press, Ohio), 33.

<sup>44</sup> Stanley, *Relying on the Holy Spirit*, 77.

children and needed a babysitter, so she may go on the circuit and preach.<sup>45</sup> As women in ministry, we have the same type of struggle today as we develop our spiritual gifts and do ministry. Even to attend the sessions was a challenge for some women. In reviewing with the women in our African Methodist history, it was important to tie in the social rational and the value of knowing our history of whom we are, who we were, and who God wants us to be.

### The Empowered Women of Purpose on the Journey

In conclusion, the Holy Spirit that dwells in each of us as believers empowers us to exercise our spiritual gifts. We are the empowered Women of Purpose on the journey of developing our spiritual gifts. As we recite the Apostle's Creed we are reminded that the Holy Spirit is an equally important part of the Triune God. As stated in the African Methodists 25 Articles of Religion, one of our historic documents, what we believe is stated in the Forth Article, "Of the Holy Spirit" which reads the Holy Spirit proceeded from God the Father and God the Son. This Article of Religion acknowledges the importance of the Holy Spirit. Today, I would like to acknowledge the importance of the Holy Spirit in developing our spiritual gifts.

I was fortunate to work with women from Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal church. These women were between the ages of twenty-five to fifty. The purpose was to identify each woman's spiritual gift and then assist them in developing

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<sup>45</sup> Richard S. Newman, *Freedom's Prophet* (New York University Press, 2008), 234.



the gift. In working with the women, it was the Holy Spirit that led us and guided us. Because we accepted Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, and believe that because Jesus died on the cross for us, we are reconciled with God. Being in relationship with God, we receive the benefit of having the Holy Spirit come and dwell within us. As we grew in grace, we made room for the Holy Spirit to work on the inside us.

At the first session, with the women the Holy Spirit showed up. We laughed, we cried, we shared and women were renewed. As the Holy Spirit moved around the room from woman to woman a new revelation was given to each us. We shed baggage that we came with to the session. The three primary scriptures I Corinthians 12:8-10, 28-32, Romans 12:6-8, and Ephesians 4:11 were read. Because of the renewing of the spirit within each of us, a new revelation of those scriptures was made known to each one of us. I heard the scriptures read and walked away with a renewed way of thinking. In II Corinthians 5:17<sup>46</sup>, we read we are a new creature and in Lamentations 3:22-23<sup>47</sup> we received new mercies every day. Each woman walked away renewed, a new person knowing we have new mercies given to us every day.

In speaking of our experiences, the Baptism in the Spirit was a high moment in our lives. We felt the Spirit's presence and experienced the power of God in an unusually strong way. For a proper understanding of who the Holy Spirit is and how He works in our lives, we must go to God's Word.<sup>48</sup> The will of the Holy Spirit: "But one and the

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<sup>46</sup> Coogan, 299.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 1174.

<sup>48</sup> Stanley, *Relying On The Holy Spirit*, 2.

same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” (I Corinthians 12:11).<sup>49</sup> Operating under the will of the Holy Spirit through the love of God we each received spiritual gifts. The distributions of those spiritual gifts are determined by the Holy Spirit. What I wanted to emphasize to the women at Mount Zion was having a relationship with God is important. God loves us. Through the relationship with God and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit your spiritual gifts will develop. We do not select our spiritual gifts. For it is by the grace given and the measure of faith that God has assigned, that we receive our spiritual gifts. Ephesians 1:13 reads, “You are sealed with the promise by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>50</sup> You belong to God forever. “...stir up the gift of God inside you...”<sup>51</sup> With the gift of the Holy Spirit you can be empowered to exercise your faith to activate the spiritual gifts God has given you.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 321.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 358.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE WOMEN OF PURPOSE: THE PROJECT PROCESS

#### The Lay Advisory Team

Prior to meeting with the women to start the ministry project the Women of Purpose, met with the Pastor for approval and insight. The Women of Purpose was the name of the Advisory Committee and included seven people. Six of the members were women members of the church. Two women were ordained clergy from the church and four women were ages 25 to 50 are members of the church. There was one male who is not a member of the church but was ordained clergy and had a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership. I would like to note that initial approval was given by the Pastor and midway through the ministry project the church received two new co-pastors a husband and wife team. They accepted the project and the process so that we could continue developing gifts. I reported to the woman pastor monthly on the progression of the project.

I suggested the name Women of Purpose for the ministry project at our initial advisory meeting. I wanted to have a name for the ministry project that would give it focus. The two scriptures that inspired the name for the advisory committee was "...She shall be called woman..." is taken from Genesis 2:22<sup>1</sup> and "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to

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<sup>1</sup> Coogan,14.

his purpose.” Romans 8:28.<sup>2</sup> I believe if we are called according to God’s purpose and this name for the ministry project group would be fitting. The male member accepted the name without hesitation because he understood this was to empower women to use their spiritual gifts. All the members of the Advisory team agreed with the name, Women of Purpose.

### Methodology for Conducting Project

The Women of Purpose used their own S.M.A.R.T. action plan which stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timeline Action Plan with Who, What, Where, When and How components. S.M.A.R.T. is a learning tool giving criteria to guide in the setting of objectives. The specific target area for improvement was to identify each woman’s spiritual gift. The measurable or indicator of progress was manageable, meaningful and motivational. Once the spiritual gift was identified, I used an array of ways to motivate and cultivate the gifts as explained in detail in Phase 1 listed below. This project was achievable because the goal was to identify each woman’s individual gift which we discovered. I was the facilitator. The Women of Purpose was action-oriented because the project involved performing group exercises as well as accomplishing individual exercises as explained in the four Phases below. This project was relevant as I identified a need for single women ages 25 to 50 to identify their spiritual gifts. The timeline used was from January 2013 to May 2013 with the results reported in Chapter Three, The Evaluation.

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<sup>2</sup> Coogan, 225.

The Women of Purpose engaged 15 women ages 25 to 50 from Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church in the spiritual gift activities. These women took the Rick Warren Spiritual Gift Assessment that was modified and had 120 questions. The Spiritual Gift Assessment was modified because I only identified seventeen spiritual gifts instead of the known twenty-eight spiritual gifts. (Appendix) There were four phases in this project and five sessions. The four phases were: Phase One – The Women of Purpose, Phase Two – The Women of Purpose Spiritual Development, Phase Three – The Empowered Women of Purpose, and Phase Four – The Empowered Women of Purpose Spiritual Growth.

There were five sessions held with the women of Mount Zion and a final session with the advisory committee and the instructor. We met once a month from January 2013 to May 2013 on a Saturday. The actual handouts are in the appendix section of the paper. I will explain the four phases below however for more details of each session please see in the Appendix by date of each individual session.

#### Phase One - Women of Purpose

In the first phase, the Women of Purpose met with the Pastor for approval and insight. We read a book entitled, *The Circle Maker* by Mark Batterson. It was a New York Times Bestseller about praying circles around your biggest dreams and greatest fears. The book was discussed and each member pulled points from the book that we thought were significant such as “God’s Grammar, Never put a comma where God puts a

period and never put a period where God puts a comma.”<sup>3</sup> Sometimes we think God is finished and God is just silent. The Women of Purpose created a focus group and I spoke with the women ages 25 to 50 to address what they believe their needs are for their spiritual gifts to grow. Some of the needs of the women were they needed time alone with God, difficult at times finding child care, and not knowing what their gifts were.

At the first session in January, an agenda was given out to each woman. The members of the Advisory Committee each participated with functions in the agenda such as opening prayer and the reading of the keys scriptures for the session which were I Corinthians 12:1, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.” Ephesians 4:7, “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” Romans 12:4-6a. “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.”

We prayed over the spiritual gift assessment and then distributed an assessment to each woman. There was no time span for taking the assessment. The spiritual gift assessment was administered and they were to respond to the inventory portion of the assessment of what they believe their gifts were. Some of the women thought the spiritual gift assessment was too long. Some women over analyzed the assessment and wanted to leave some questions unanswered. I explained the assessment is designed for them to make a choice on which response is closest to their choice based on selecting

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<sup>3</sup> Batterson, *The Circle Maker*, 89.

never, rarely, sometimes, often, and always. After the Spiritual Gift Assessment was taken, I explained the purpose of the project which is to find ways and means to identify the spiritual gifts of single women ages 25 to 50 of Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church in order to use their spiritual gifts in the congregation. My desired outcome was to develop the women as leaders within their own spiritual giftedness. Following the Group discussion and questions, I introduced three approaches toward working to be empowered to use their spiritual gifts which were Sacred Space and Prayer Candles, Journals and Note taking, and Bible Study and Reflections. Sacred Space is allowing time to pray, meditate and read the word or just allow God speak to you. Prayer is more than a thought it is our communication system with God. I brought in a journal and asked the women to start keeping a journal of their prayer requests and to write down the questions that are raised during the session and their personal responses. One of the purposes of the prayer journal was to see how and when God answers your prayers. This builds your faith in God and it shows your growth in prayer requests as they change. The purpose of writing the questions is to spark internal reflection. These combined efforts assist in empowering women to have a closer relationship with God and identify their spiritual gifts through the Holy Spirit. We decided that minutes would be taken at both meetings.

#### Phase Two – The Women of Purpose Spiritual Development

For the second phase, at the beginning of each session an agenda was given to each woman as they entered. Based on what was learned from the spiritual gift assessment and discussed at the focus group, the Women of Purpose (Advisory

Committee) developed the following opportunities for spiritual development: videos, poems, group discussion and prayer. For example, the Awesome People of 2013 video was a ten-minute video of people doing awesome things, such as tightrope walking blind, flipping while skiing, and rock climbing. The lesson I wanted to draw from showing that video was God was with these people as they did awesome things. How much more will God through the Holy Spirit be with us as we do the work of the ministry using our spiritual gifts?

One of the poems read was “Our Deepest Fear” by Marianne Williamson.<sup>4</sup> An excerpt from the poem is as follows, “Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.” We explored our deepest fear. Some shared their deepest fear. I took this opportunity to ask questions of the poems which led to others questions such as, “What inhibits us as women not to move forward in ministry?” We need to be honest with ourselves and with our fears so we may move past them. I then read a passage of scripture from Genesis 3:8-15 and asked two questions that God asked, “Where are you?” and “Who told you, you were naked?” These questions are important because God asked Adam who created him. God created us for praise and to exercise our spiritual gift. Where are you in ministry? Where are you with your walk with Christ? Where are you? God wants to walk with you.

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<sup>4</sup> Marianne Williamson, *Our Deepest Fear*. This inspiring quote is taken from Marianne Williamson's book *A Return to Love*. Though often quoted as part of Nelson Mandela's moving inaugural speech, "Our Deepest Fear" does not appear in the speech. <http://www.inspiringcommunity.org> (Accessed January 28, 2012).



Secondly, “Who told you, you were naked?” This is crucial and a turning point for empowerment. God called you blessed. God said you were created in His image. God said you are fearfully and wonderfully made. Who told you, you were naked? Who told you, you were too old, too fat, too thin, too dark, too lazy. Who told you, you were not smart? Who told you, you were naked? My response was first to consider the source. Most people mean well when they tell you, you are naked, but consider the source. It was a serpent that told Adam he was naked. God created Adam and knew who Adam was. It is God who decides what you need and what you can and cannot do. Next listen to what the Holy Spirit tell you, who you are. Other well-meaning people tend to base their perspective of who you are and call you naked. We are becoming what God wants us to be.

At another session a woman read, “Empowered Woman” by Sonny Carroll from my laptop. This poem was very motivating and encouraging for women. We discussed each line in the poem. The opening line reads,

The Empowered Woman, she moves through the world with a sense of confidence and grace. Her once reckless spirit now tempered by wisdom. Quietly, yet firmly, she speaks her truth without doubt or hesitation and the life she leads is of her own creation.<sup>5</sup>

This poem like “Our Deepest Fear” by Marianne Williamson had a transforming effect on the women. The poem allowed for those “aha!” moments. You are somebody in Christ. We each pulled out a line from the poem that we identified with for ourselves.

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<sup>5</sup> Sonny Carroll, Pearls of Wisdom: Awakening Personal and Global Consciousness, “*Empowered Woman*” <http://www.saphyr.net/women/empwoman.htm> (accessed February 20, 2012).

The Women of Purpose had various participant roles on the agenda such reading scripture, saying a prayer or offering insight on a comment that was made. Each agenda item was designed to give some form of encouragement or empowerment incentive, in addition to explaining the ministry project and the requirements. The women were given their spiritual gifts based on the assessment given along with a list of the spiritual gifts, the gifts function and the scripture reference.

A questionnaire was designed and given at each session. Some questions and responses on the questionnaires were as follows: What have you learned that would help develop your spiritual gift? One response was “Pray then listen for God’s message.” Another question on the questionnaire was, “What would you like to see in this initiative to help your spiritual development?” The response was, “To continue the discussions and fellowship. Hear others and share my experience helped my growth and understanding.” Each participant was asked to keep a journal, to assess her own personal growth and reflection on the session. Some questions for the journal were as follows: Where are you in ministry? Where are you with your walk with Christ?

The spiritual development phase for the women of Mount Zion was part of the spiritual journey. We learned we need to be intentional in our spiritual development plan to allow us to grow in areas and to heal. We will be committed to our quiet time of silence and solitude in prayer along with Bible reading, scripture memorizing and giving God praise.

### Phase Three – The Empowered Women of Purpose

For the third phase, the women were asked to develop a way they could use their spiritual gifts in a ministry. Due to the African Methodist Episcopal New Jersey Annual Conference held in March, with Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church serving as the host church, there was no physical meeting held, but an email was sent out March 16, 2013 to the women. The women were asked based on the information given at the first two sessions to identify a ministry or enhance a ministry. With the assistance of the Advisory Committee there were seven elements to this assignment. The elements of the assignment were the name of the ministry, the Scripture to support the ministry, the need of the ministry, the purpose of the ministry, how can you use your gift in this ministry, the components for this ministry to work, and how long will it take to implement your ministry. The women were divided into six groups by spiritual gifts, which were Group 1 Helps, Group 2 Faith, Group 3 Mercy, Group 4 Hospitality, Group 5 Leadership, and Group 6 Evangelism. I was able to form six groups, although there were fifteen women in the single women age 25 to 50 categories, the ministry was opened to other women in the church who took the assessment and attended the sessions.

Individual sessions were held with individuals and group emails were sent to each group according to their spiritual gift along with telephone calls to the women to assist them. Within these individual sessions and individual group sessions according to spiritual gifts, I briefly spoke of working and dealing with the sixteen personality types

from Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thusen.<sup>6</sup> I wanted the groups to be mindful of the various personality types, so they may be prepared in interacting within their respective groups. I knew of one or two women who had strong personality types and I did not want their personality type to keep them from being in a group. While I did receive an email or two concerning this matter, I believed the Holy Spirit was in control. This personality matter was on my prayer list during time for meditation.

During this time apart, it was also used as our mediation time. As mentioned in the beginning of the paper, my ministry project was an agenda item at the Minister's meetings; therefore this project was discussed at every meeting. This allowed the Pastor to be updated on my ministry project for input.

With the work done in Phase One and Phase Two, this ministry assignment allowed the empowered Women of Purpose to be self-sufficient in developing their ministry assignment. Part of the purpose of this ministry assignment given to the women, was to build opportunity for ministry, strengthen their confidence and enhance their passion for ministry.

#### Phase Four – The Empowered Woman of Purpose Spiritual Growth

##### The Presentations

For those women prepared, they shared the March 2013 ministry assignment.

Two women groups were prepared and a third woman shared what was on her heart. It

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<sup>6</sup> Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thusen, *The Workplace Profiles. In Excerpted from Type Talk At Work* (Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1992).

was suggested by the Advisory Committee that the two women groups prepared make an appointment with the pastor and share their ministry ideas. After hearing their ministry ideas a few of the other women were inspired to continue developing their project. Those that presented did it with poise and confidence. The women allowed the Holy Spirit to use them through their personality.

Some of the other women shared concerns about becoming leaders of their respective group. I reminded them one purpose of being an empowered women of God, was to be confident in leading. A leader is someone with the power to project either shadow or light onto some part of the world and onto the lives of the people who dwell there. A leader shapes the ethos in which others must live, an ethos as light-filled as heaven or shadowy as hell.<sup>7</sup> We then discussed our spirituality.

Spirituality, like leadership, is a hard thing to define. Spirituality takes us inward and downward, toward the hardest realities of our lives, rather than outward and upward toward abstraction, idealization, and exhortation. The spiritual journey runs counter to the power of positive thinking.<sup>8</sup> While it has only been four months, it is still a journey. A journey I hope the women will continue in developing their spiritual gifts.

At the last session, there was an Education in Spiritual Gifts PowerPoint presentation presented by Reverend Doctor Older Azard. The purpose of this session was to look at our spiritual gifts from an educational perspective. Reverend Doctor Azard posed several questions for the women to consider while developing their spiritual gift.

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<sup>7</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak, Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 78.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

One of the questions was, “How do I continue to grow and develop in my Spiritual Gift?” Doctor Azard’s response was taken from Matthew 5:15, “No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.” Doctor Azard stated we should continue doing what we were doing and listening to God. He also mentioned that we should seek wisdom from God in our understanding.

We have other ministerial opportunities to grow in, such as prayer, Bible Study and Sunday Worship Service. Doctor Azard shared the benefits of knowing the educational aspect of your spiritual gifts. Knowing your spiritual gifts can bolster your glory to God, and give you a sense of self-worth in service. One pitfall is because the flesh is involved. We should be careful not to offend others when using our spiritual gifts. We cannot control others perception, but we can be careful not to offend. For example, you may have the gift of administration, but you are not the chairperson of the ministry. As Christians we need to be mindful of how we approach people in offering our gifts. Doctor Azard also shared that being gifted does not necessarily mean one is anointed. However, having an identifiable spiritual gift from God can be a sign of spiritual anointing.

Doctor Azard concluded by telling us that, being educated and spiritually gifted can produce spiritual growth and maturity, a sense of purpose, a better relationship with others, and a better relationship with God. The women were in awe at the different perspective Doctor Azard gave them. As one women stated, “I am glad this point was brought out about being the chairperson”. The pastor also attended this section and placed emphasis on the example Doctor Azard gave pertaining to having the spiritual gift and not being the chairperson or ministry leader of that ministry. The pastor also

commented on having the anointing and how important the anointing is in doing ministry. During this discussion, I mentioned Phase Two, of working within groups and dealing with the various personality types. I reiterated identifying the Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thusen sixteen personality types<sup>9</sup> in conjunction with having the spiritual gift and not being the leader.

In the final stage of this phase, I met with the Pastor and shared the way in which the gifts we identified could be nurtured and used in the church. A follow up meeting was held with the participants to share individual assessments. The Pastor addressed the group on what she observed as the spiritual growth in the group as whole and how some people are already displaying some ministry enhancements and volunteering in other ministries. All of this ministry project relied on interviews and included the same set of questions.<sup>10</sup> The method for this Doctor of Ministry project was the use of the spiritual gift assessment and questionnaires after each session along with individual interviews to discuss the individual's spiritual gift. It was also a small group model. The goal of having the small group model was for identification of the gift.<sup>11</sup> In presenting excerpts from this work, I report progress of women's development for spiritual formation to be empowered to exercise their spiritual gifts.

For the women of Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church, I hope this work will offer a representation of their responses and will enable them to recognize their

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<sup>9</sup> Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thusen, *The Workplace Profiles, In Excerpted from Type Talk At Work* (Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1992).

<sup>10</sup> Carol, Gilligan, *In A Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Bill Easum and John Atkinson, *Go Big: With Small Groups* (Nashville: Abingdon Press), vii.

experiences for growth in spiritual formation and in their spiritual development. My overall goal was to identify the gift and expand the growth of women in their spiritual development.<sup>12</sup> Empowering is to know you have a gift and be able to use it.

## Research Analysis of Spiritual Gift Assessment

### The Spiritual Gift Assessment

The first section of the Spiritual Gift Assessment was to determine whether you were in the required category. It asked whether you were married or single. For this study, widows and divorcees were included as single. Then it asked whether you were in the age category of 25 to 50. Because in earlier discussions with the pastor we opened all sessions to all women, so to identify who was not in the selected age category. I added two other age bracket categories. They were age group 13 to 24 and age group 51 and older.

The Spiritual Gift Assessment (sometimes referred to as a Spiritual Gifts Inventory, Assessment, Survey, Analysis, or Questionnaire) will help determine what Spiritual Gift(s) God has given to the participant. I used the Rick Warren assessment and modified it to identify 17 of 28 Spiritual Gifts by presenting the group with 120 statements that they were to respond to by selecting: Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, or Always to indicate how well each statement applied to the individual.

The seventeen spiritual gifts that I worked with the women at Mount Zion are as follows: Administration, Apostleship, Creative Communications, Discernment,

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<sup>12</sup> Bill Easum and John Atkinson, *Go Big*, 3-4.



Encouragement, Evangelism, Faith, Giving, Helps, Hospitality, Intercession, Leadership, Mercy, Prophecy, Shepherding, Teaching and Wisdom. There are four categories of gifts leadership, communication, motivational and practical.<sup>13</sup>

I would like to state some of my discoveries that came from placing the 120 questions into an Excel spreadsheet. Question number twenty-two; read “I enjoy reassuring and strengthening those who are discouraged.” Most participants gave this a rating of four which meant “often” or gave it a five that represented “always”. What this told me is the women came to the ministry project with the desire to reassure and strengthen others who are discouraged. It was my hope that the sessions we had together strengthened the women. Question fifty read, “I pay close attention to the words, phrases, and meaning of those who teach.” Again, most participants gave this a four which represented “often” or a five that represented “always”. I found this to be true in the sessions as the women would share with me some of the things I said which made an impression on them.

A unique fact from the responses to question fifty-two which was, “I can identify and effectively use the resources needed to accomplish tasks.” All participants gave this a four representing “often”. I found this to be true. As I presented the information to the women I noticed the women implementing the methods and techniques in their lives and in their ministry. Question number eighty-seven read, “I am a risk-taker when it comes to developing new projects or ministries.” This question was evenly split with the number one for “never”, number two, “rarely” or number 4 “often”. I found this to be

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<sup>13</sup> Spiritual Gifts Descriptions, <http://www.churchgrowth.org/giftlist.php> (accessed April 18, 2013).

interesting, because those women who selected the “never” and “rarely” categories, worked on the ministry project assignment, given in March 2013, which was to devise a ministry or enhance a current ministry. This suggests they are risk takers.

For some of these women, this project was a challenge, but they prevailed. I give credit to the Holy Spirit for empowering them to move ahead in ministry. I believe this ministry project helped to enhance their spiritual courage for developing new projects or new ministries with the Pastor’s approval. Question eighty-eight read, “I am creative and imaginative”. The majority of the women chose number 4 “often” or number five “always”. What this showed me is, while some women are creative and imaginative, some were apprehensive about starting new projects or ministries.

What I loved about their responses to Question ninety-five which were, “I do whatever I can to make people feel that they belong” is that it opened the door to love and opportunity to help others. We discussed some ways we can open the door to love. For example, a telephone call to sister to check on them or a dropping a card saying I am thinking of you. The women chose number 4 “often” or number five “always”. On the last question, “Do you feel God moving you to a higher level in ministry?” I found that all selections were chosen 1 represented Never, 2 represented Rarely, 3 represented Sometimes, 4 represented Often, and 5 represented Always. This illustrated to me that there were mixed emotions concerning moving to a higher level in ministry. I am not sure if, I can contribute this the diversity of this response to the broad range of diversity in the group.

While we have a broad age range from 25 to 50, we also had a broad range in the definition of single which meant divorced, never married, or widowed. Coupled with the personality range, described in Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thuesan, "The Workplace Profiles"<sup>14</sup> discussed how to determine the sixteen personality types. In moving forward after the women took the assessment, I kept the various personality types in mind.

In this ministry project, with developing spiritual gifts, we also have to look at the various personality types, based on individual motivational triggers. Each type has strengths and "allowable weakness."<sup>15</sup> As discussed in the spiritual gift sessions the motivation for each woman is different. Motivation is an empirical science. It will never be possible to isolate and measure all the variables and all the effects.<sup>16</sup> Based on the limits set for this project, it is important to identify and focus on spiritual gifts for ministry. Meaning is sought in ministry. Using your spiritual gift leads to ministry. We established the goal and explained to the women, the importance of their roles in this ministry project. The Holy Spirit designed a high acceptable norm which was praising God. We were designed to praise and worship God. When we praise God and worship God, God tells us who we are in Him. We developed a consistent interpretation of

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<sup>14</sup> Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thuesan, *The Workplace Profiles, Excerpted from Type Talk At Work* (Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group), 1992.

<sup>15</sup> Whiteley Philip, *Motivation*, 76.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

success which was encouragement.<sup>17</sup> This encouragement we have, we can share with others.

I used various types of encouraging methods. I would like to share the five encouraging methods I used throughout this ministry project to cultivate our spiritual gifts. The encouraging methods used to cultivate our spiritual gifts I named them the Spiritual Garden. The Spiritual Garden was the Circle of Prayer, Differentiation, Sacred Space, Clearness Committee and Fellowship.

### Cultivating Our Spiritual Garden

#### Circle of Prayer

One of the important methods used during this ministry project was the circle of prayer at the end of each session. Drawing the circle of prayer at our sessions around our dreams, is not just a mechanism whereby we accomplished great things for God. It is a mechanism whereby God accomplishes great things in us.<sup>18</sup> With the circle of prayer, it allowed whoever wanted to pray have an opportunity. We stand in a circle and make prayer requests and praise reports for ourselves or others. I asked someone to volunteer to lead us in prayer then, led by the Holy Spirit, different women prayed following the lead women praying. We started out holding hands, but always ended up crying and

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>18</sup> Mark Batterson, *The Circle Maker: Praying Circles Around Your Biggest Dreams and Greatest Fears*, Front flap.

hugging. The way the women reacted to the prayer was a time of releasing whatever was on our hearts to give to God. As previously stated, we believe in praise so praising God at the end of the prayer for us goes without saying. We all looked forward to the prayer time at the end of each session.

### Differentiation

Another method used during this ministry project was the acknowledgement of Differentiation. Differentiation is a process in which a person moves toward a more intentional and thoughtful way of life. Differentiation is the relative ability of people to guide their own functioning by

- Thinking clearly
- Acting on principle
- Defining self by taking a position
- Coming to know more about their own instinctive reactions to others
- Learning to regulate those reactions
- Staying in contact with others
- Choosing a responsible course of action

Differentiation is a process that takes place in relationships. It is about balancing two life forces—individuality and togetherness—when interacting with others. As the facilitator of this ministry project, I found that you will always be dealing with the differentiation process and its delicate balance.<sup>19</sup> This method was important because

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<sup>19</sup> Peter Steinke, *Congregational Leadership in Anxious Times: Being Calm and Courageous No Matter What* (The Alban Institute, Herndon, Virginia. 2006), 19.

in the third session I gave out a spiritual gift assignment so that the women may work in groups according to their spiritual gifts. I wanted the women to understand their differences. This method was very helpful as we have various personality types working together. Some felt that because of one or two of the women's personality type that it would be difficult to work together. However, following the checklist on functioning with differentiation and building relationships of individuality and togetherness they managed through the assignment.

### Sacred Space for Your Spiritual Garden

This method used was the solution-focused method which is a tool that we can use to cultivate our own spiritual garden. It is uniquely suited to make us more discerning, hopeful, and grateful. Solution-focus work is active. Meaning you should be doing something when using this method such as praying or listening. You learn holy listening and seeing things differently. Holy listening is sitting still and listening to God. You realize you can use thanksgiving for solutions, change and transformation. When praising God, things change.

Sacred Space is allowing time to pray, meditate and read the word or just allow God speak to you. This is a challenge because for some women with family, work, school, the household and church obligations finding the time can be difficult. However, we discussed tithing is more than your treasure. It is your time and your talent as well. Ten percent of our time would be two hours and forty minutes a day. We decided to start small and use twenty minutes and forty seconds. This exercise is for when the women are at home to allow time to commune with God. We get busy during the course of the

day and as women of God we need time to hear from God. The prayer candle is to set the atmosphere.

One of the women in the group donated the scented candles for each woman in the group. We also prayed over the candles that they be used for the glory of God. One of the suggestions I made to the women were to sandwich their prayer request. Have a scripture relating to your request in the beginning of your prayer and at the end of your prayer request. Always praising God you will see things change or God changes you to be able to handle the situation. You petition your eyes to see the changes that are happening.<sup>20</sup> You petition your eyes, by not focusing on what you see or going through. You focus your eyes past your situation and see yourself coming through the situation. I brought in a journal and asked the women to start keeping a journal of their prayer requests and to write down the questions that are raised during the session and their personal responses.

One of the purposes of the prayer journal was to see how and when God answers your prayers. This builds your faith in God and it shows your growth in prayer requests as they change. The purpose of writing the questions is to spark internal reflection. These combined efforts assist in empowering women to have a closer relationship with God and identify their spiritual gifts through the Holy Spirit. Personal Bible Study is always encouraged. The three scripture reference passages I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and Romans 12 were given as suggested readings. The women were asked to read the

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<sup>20</sup> Margaret Kornfield, *Cultivating Wholeness: A Guide to Care and Counseling in Faith Communities* (Continuum International Publishing Group, New York and London. 2000), 142, 143.

scriptures and reflect on what the scriptures meant to them. At the next session, the women can share what each passage meant to them or how God spoke to them through that passage of scripture. Sacred Space for your spiritual garden was foundational for the women as an empowering tool in developing their spiritual gifts.

### Clearness Committee

The final method used was the “clearness committee”. First, we did a recap of the previous sessions from January, February and March 2013. I answered any questions the women had. We developed a “clearness committee”. A “clearness committee” is a process in which the group refrains from giving you advice but spends three hours asking you honest, open questions to help you discover your own inner truth.<sup>21</sup> However, our clearness committee was to allow the person to present their spiritual gift assignment without any interruptions. During our group discussion I asked the question, “What is your vision for your life?”<sup>22</sup> The purpose of asking this question was to allow the women to think about the question not in their head but also in their heart.<sup>23</sup> This question was written in the women’s journal for reflection. The Advisory Committee was a part of every session. This question was pondered by one of the women ministers of the Women of Purpose committee. After the session, we exchanged dialogue about the question from a ministerial perspective. How does this impact our lives and our

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<sup>21</sup> Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 31.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.



ministry? At the closing of our discussion, we all agreed this was a good reflective question for our journals.

### Presentations

Having a presentation portion of the session was important. It gave the women an opportunity to prepare for and demonstrate their gifts in a ministry idea. For those women groups prepared, they shared the March 2013 ministry assignment. Two women groups were prepared and a third woman shared what was on her heart. It was suggested that the two women prepared make an appointment with the pastor and share their ministry ideas. After hearing their ministry ideas it inspired a few of the other women to continue and develop their project. Part of my methods was using encouragement and positive thinking.

The spiritual journey runs counter to the power of positive thinking.<sup>24</sup> While it has only been five months, learning is a process. Following our closing prayer sessions, we always had fellowship with light refreshments.

### Fellowship

Fellowship is just as important as the actual session because it allowed the women to talk among themselves. Some friendships were formed and other ideas for ministry were also shared by the women during fellowship time with each other. I believe having refreshments made the discussion flow easier. What I also observed during the fellowship time was it allowed time for ministry updates in the church and how they

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<sup>24</sup> Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 80.

could incorporate some of what they learned with other ministries they were already a part of. This ministry project was a learning experience not only for the women, but for me as well. I left every meeting not wanting to leave and looking forward to the next meeting. While I prepared an agenda and brought books, poems, and videos, I never knew how the Holy Spirit was going to bless us.

## Evaluation

I believe this Doctor of Ministry project was successful because of the women's involvement, open communication and the usefulness of their contributions.<sup>25</sup> My theological understanding of the Ministry in this project is the acknowledgment of the Holy Spirit coupled with love to empower women of God to exercise their spiritual gifts. My theoretical and practical understanding of engaging in this ministry project is the model that Jesus used to teach his disciples. Jesus took time to train them and allowed them to grow. Jesus demonstrated to them ministry and allowed them to pursue ministry through their personality. While each disciple was different the ultimate goal was to empower them to use their spiritual gifts for ministry to go and tell of the good news! The same can be said for this women's group. They were empowered to use their spiritual gifts to go and tell of the good news in various ways and forms. The women of Mount Zion put this into practice by starting new ministries and enhancing the current ones.

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<sup>25</sup> Philip Whiteley, *Motivation*, 77.

In this ministry project, I attempted to empower women to identify their spiritual gifts and believe in themselves. I believe that the women felt empowered to use their spiritual gifts. What I discovered was that in exploring the ministry gifts you need the Holy Spirit. Once you discover your spiritual gift, God will move you to new levels. All of the participants and self-included, was aware of one or two of their spiritual gifts while taking the assessment. It was always a spiritual gift from the assessment that we did not know we possessed. For example, I scored high in discernment. I never knew I had the gift of discernment. The gift of discernment according to the definition I used were "The special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to know with assurance whether certain behavior purported to be of God is in reality divine, human, or Satanic."<sup>26</sup> I am still working on developing this spiritual gift.

So the spiritual gift we scored high in, and did not know about, was the spiritual gift we each decided to work on during the course of the project. While I was an observer of the process and facilitator of each session, I was also a participant in seeking to discover what gifts God had bestowed on me as well. While helping other women through ministry, I discovered that you also help yourself. In the midst of sharing what I learned to make each session meaningful, I also was exposed to the Holy Spirit and was moved to a new level. From Proverbs 3:5-6, I believe that "trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding" is a personal learning experience. Another discovery is, "In all your ways acknowledge God, and God will make your path

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<sup>26</sup> Spiritual Gifts Descriptions, <http://www.churchgrowth.org/giftlist.php> (accessed April 18, 2013).

straight.”<sup>27</sup> For me, this ministry project allowed me to straighten out some crooked paths in my own life such as weight loss, having a closer walk with God, and better relationship with family. This ministry project cost me something that money could never buy such as time, energy and weight loss, but through it all I gained in learning experience to trust in Jesus and to depend on God.

I found in doing this paper that the servant-leader is the best leader. I came to each session as a servant to assist as the Holy Spirit facilitated each session. This worked best because although I had an agenda, having the Holy Spirit lead gave the group a dynamic charge. We were not restricted to the agenda and we did not have a certain time we needed to end. Once a month we blocked the morning from 10 am until the afternoon. We looked forward to how God was going to move in our sessions. While, as previously mentioned, the women’s group asked me to be the leader; I encouraged others to step forth. This was the purpose of the ministry project to empower women to use their spiritual gifts. This ministry project offered an opportunity of having a gift that was not identified, revealed in an open environment in which they can flow. My leadership style is to allow the power of Holy Spirit to flow. While some may find this style to be unorganized and causes confusion; however, the women found it to be inspiring and invigorating, and the freedom to express themselves in a sacred place. The members from the Women of Purpose (Advisory Committee) also agreed that the manner in which the sessions were facilitated was breathtaking as the Holy Spirit led us especially during our prayer time.

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<sup>27</sup> Coogan, 908.

The Women of Purpose (Advisory Committee) met with the women of Mount Zion at every section. The Women of Purpose had been trained in their duties and made aware of the nature and scope of this project along with the Pastor. All of the Women of Purpose read the Project and understood the purposes and goals proposed in the Prospectus. The Women of Purpose also shared their personal growth within this project as they were also a part of every section.

This project has affected my ministry enormously. I wanted this ministry project to be a blessing to the women of Mount Zion, inside I was blessed and God has opened so many doors and windows for me. As each woman moved to a deeper depth in the Lord, I found myself moved by God. While being empowered to develop our spiritual gifts, God also strengthen our spiritual formation. Because I move myself out of the way, I was allowed to believe that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

The key learning derived from this project, from which others may benefit or build upon, is that there is a gift inside the each of us. Find your pain, and you will find your passion, find your passion and you will find your ministry. Find your ministry then exercise your spiritual gift. When your gift and your ministry match, you will never get tired, bored or run out of ideas, because it rises up inside you and is bursting to come out. Your spiritual gift and your ministry complement each other. All we need is an opportunity to express ourselves through the Holy Spirit and the environment to enjoy

what God has placed in each one of us.<sup>28</sup> As they have gone deeper into their spiritual journey, these women deeply desired to sense the presence of the Holy Spirit and to learn.

For the project results, the first change observed through the project was a shift in the participants' perspective regarding their relationship with God and other people. While the women had an opportunity to share their stories, it gave them a voice to be heard. This project provided the tools for each participant to understand and develop her relationship with God independently. The women had an opportunity to engage in theological reflection as we shared various scriptures throughout the sessions. I focused on the importance of establishing a relationship with God. As the project went forward, the participation became more and more voluntary in performing items from the suggested agenda such as reading scripture, offering to lead a prayer or the reading of a poem. The participants desire to know God deeper was expressed in their conversation and in their public prayers. The spiritual changes rippled through the congregation and were noticed by those who did not directly participate in the project.

The participants sharing their spiritual experiences with other women were encouraging as they interacted in the congregation. Such interactions were very effective in drawing other women's attention to the concept of a spiritual formation journey in this project. Interestingly, such interaction became a ripple effect with other women in the church. The most notable change in terms of both intimacy and spiritual growth was that

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<sup>28</sup> Carl E. Savage and Michael J. Christensen, *Equipping the Saints: Mobilizing Laity for Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press), 161.

the women started breaking down the façade that they hid behind after the initial session. Throughout the project, it was visible that the conversations were becoming more and more authentic and transparent with true feelings.

Remarkably, what has changed because of the implementation of this project is the women's confidence they have demonstrated in themselves as they take on various ministries. Having the opportunity to witness such transformation in women through the Holy Spirit enhanced my learning experience and reshaped me in my spiritual journey. I recognized spiritual and relational growth in each woman and the group as a whole. The women sharing their stories was a vehicle for their transformation in their spiritual formation.

The most valuable lesson I learned through this project is that I had not anticipated this great work of the Holy Spirit. The project is successful, exceeding what I had expected. In this project, I witnessed the work of the Holy Spirit. I paid close attention to and tried to understand what the Holy Spirit was saying to the women of Mount Zion and me. A good indicator of the effectiveness of this project is the ministries formed from the ministry spiritual development project I gave them in session three and the initiative the women are taking in chairing other ministry projects. I hope the women of Mount Zion continue to dedicate time to reflect on what God was telling them through prayer and the scriptures.

In my opinion, the tangible outcomes of this project are the successful connection of the participants and the Holy Spirit along with the development of spiritual growth. The Women of Mount Zion identified and started developing their spiritual gifts. The

overall quality of effectiveness of the project is far beyond my measure of excellence. I contributed this all to the love of God through the Holy Spirit.

In Romans 6:23, God gave us the gift of salvation which is eternal life through Jesus Christ, if we believe.<sup>29</sup> In addition to the gift of Salvation, God gives us spiritual gifts which are great presents from God. Please open yours.

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<sup>29</sup> Coogan, 252.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE WAY FORWARD

#### What I have learned

I have learned that you cannot take a life out of history, psychology and politics; are all deeply entwined. History, psychology and politics have bearing and influence on our lives. We each bring to the table our stories with the impact of history in us. This ministry project was to find ways and means to identify and develop spiritual gifts for the women of Mount Zion. Included in this project, was the history of the church, the history of African American women in the African Methodist Episcopal Church and some of our personal stories of how we grew in developing our spiritual gifts. After watching the Amazing Video that was inspirational, it caused women to want to step out on faith. The video opened the door for the women to speak about their faith and their fear. It literally changes the voice: how the human story is told, and also who tells it.<sup>1</sup> As several women in the group shared their stories at different times, we saw that experience made individual history in their lives through the retelling of their story. They are somebody in Christ.

I have become increasingly aware of the crucial role of women's voices in maintaining or transforming in a patriarchal world. I say this because, while women have made great strides in the African Methodist Episcopal Church by having three Women

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<sup>1</sup> Carol Gilligan, *In A Different Voice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), xi.

Bishops (Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie, Bishop Carolyn Tyler Guidry, and Bishop Sarah Frances Davis), along with having female Presiding Elders and female Pastors of leading churches, this is still a patriarchal world in my opinion. I am not referring to the church, I am referring to this country, as the canonical books in the bible were written by men and the Constitution of the United States was signed by our founding fathers. I mentioned the history, psychology and politics because all of this has bearing on women as they discover their spiritual gifts. Speaking depends on listening and being heard; it is an intensely relational act.<sup>2</sup> The listener has to want to hear you and what you say. That is not to say that there are no good male listeners to hear women's voices, but since my focus was on empowering women I know that women need to be heard. Being heard builds relationships not only in church but in other arenas as well.

Relationships require a kind of courage and emotional stamina which has long been a strength of women, both insufficiently noted and undervalued.<sup>3</sup> Relationship requires connection. It depends not only on the capacity for empathy or the ability to listen to others and learn their language or take their point of view, but also on having a voice and having a language. I believe listening is an acquired skill. People talk all the time. You hear people say, "I hear you!" and the other person respond, "But, you are not listening to me." As women of God in this ministry project, while we may not express it all the time, we learned the importance of listening to each other and not just hearing a person talk. Listening should be part of the training in developing your spiritual gifts.

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<sup>2</sup> Gilligan, *In A Different Voice*, xvi.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xix.

I thank the women of Mount Zion for listening to me while I was on this journey. I was a participant of the blessing shared in this experience as well as an observer. While I was hoping one of the women would take this project and continue it as a ministry, the women of Mount Zion wanted me to be the leader after the project was completed. I kept emphasizing that a leader would rise from the group. Shortly, after I completed the project, I received an email from someone who wanted to continue the project as a ministry and be the leader.

Leadership cannot emerge until a person has taken his or her place in the system both to influence and be influenced by the system.<sup>4</sup> This was a personal journey for each woman as well a corporate journey for the group. The age group was from 25-50. The group consisted of single women, divorced women and widows. There was diversity in various areas. No gift emerge where there is togetherness without diversity nor where there is diversity without togetherness.<sup>5</sup> We had togetherness in the midst of diversity within this group.

### The Empowered Woman of Purpose

Dr. Michael Christensen professor at Drew asked a question I thought was valuable to empower women on this passage. “What would happen in every local church, if gifts were called forth, developed, trained, and utilized on a regular basis?”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Paul R. Stevens and Phil Collins, *The Equipping Pastor: A Systems Approach to Congregational Leadership* (Alban Institute, Herndon, Virginia. 1993), 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>6</sup> Michael J. Christensen and Carl E. Savage, *Equipping The Saints: In Mobilizing Laity For Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, n.d), 109 .

In having all of this we would have a healthy body of Christ because everyone would be operating in their spiritual gifts. This would become not only a church that saves, but a church that transforms. With transformation it takes time to nurture the gift after it has been identified. Nurturing, as discussed in Chapter Three, *The Project: Cultivating Our Spiritual Garden*, was a foundational building block for the women as an empowering tool in developing their spiritual gifts.

After the nurturing of the gift is done along with a review of the personality type, I developed a personal profile of each member and used the solution-focus method explained in Chapter Three *The Project: Cultivating Our Spiritual Garden*. A solution-focused method is a tool that we can use to cultivate our own spiritual garden. I then met with the pastor and shared the information so that the pastor could find a place of service for their spiritual gift in the Church.

The role of the church concerning spiritual gifts is to continue the practice of assessing spiritual gifts and placing people in areas where their gifts can be nurtured and developed. Deepening, equipping, and ministering are the three essential elements in the life of a disciple. The way forward is to continue these three essential elements. Please note these are three steps in the discipleship process.<sup>7</sup>

**Deepening** is about relationships with God, self and others. The foundational relationship of the disciple is with God in Jesus Christ. It is that relationship that has touched and transformed the person, that relationship that has led the person to stake a life claim of being a disciple. Discipleship is a continuing process of

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<sup>7</sup> Jeffrey D. Jones. *Traveling Together: A Guide For Disciple-Forming Congregations* (Hendon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006), 46.

growth in relationship with God, Christ, and Spirit. Personal Growth is an inward journey.<sup>8</sup>

**Equipping** is about preparation. Your gifts, call, skills and knowledge are all a part of who you are. Our gifts are in our uniqueness. Recognizing the gifts is important to the disciple, because it is a means through which we can participate in God's mission in the world. Knowing and nurturing the gift leads to a sense of call.<sup>9</sup>

My ministry project focused on the identifying and equipping of the spiritual gifts. It was rewarding to me as each woman identified their gift. Not only was I a part of them identifying their spiritual gift, I also shared in the nurturing of the spiritual gift.

**Ministering** is about involvement. It is our participation in God's mission of redeeming all creation. The gifts we have, the call we receive, the skills and knowledge we acquire are put to the test in ministering.<sup>10</sup>

During our last meeting I shared the above elements in the life of a disciple and I also shared this scripture from Acts 1:8. "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."<sup>11</sup> The women of Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal church have been in empowered to identify and develop their spiritual gifts through the love of God and power of the Holy Spirit. The women's responsibility is to be witnesses and exercise their spirit gifts.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 46-47.

<sup>10</sup> Jeffrey D. Jones, *Traveling Together: A Guide For Disciple-Forming Congregations* (Hendon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2006), 56-60.

<sup>11</sup> Coogan, 186.

### Recommendations:

My recommendation is to incorporate this project in the new Disciples class at Mount Zion and share gift endowment information with various ministry leaders. During the new Disciples class which has six sessions, the last session is focused on discussing the spiritual gifts and having the new members taking the spiritual gift assessment. Following the results of the spiritual gift assessment a meeting is held with the individual and the information is forwarded to the Pastor and the Class Leader. In the African Methodist Episcopal Church, a Class Leader is assigned to every new disciple. The Pastor matches the individual or family of comparable status such a married couple with a married couple. The Class Leader is there as support as the new disciple and family gets acclimated in church. Next the information is shared with the Christian Education Director to incorporate various Christian Education opportunities throughout the year in order to develop the spiritual gifts along with the individual meeting with the Pastor.

It is imperative to spiritual development to add a component to the New Discipleship session to define and discuss spiritual gifts and to take the spiritual gift assessment. Following that session, the Class Leader will know the spiritual gifts and will work with individuals to develop the gifts by using the methods I introduced as well as other methods presented by the Director of Christian Education. The new disciple should meet with the Pastor so that the Pastor will know their spiritual gifts. The Christian Education Director can then develop Christian education opportunities collectively and individually to develop the spiritual gifts. I recommend implementing this in four phases for this ministry project.

The first phase is to form the Advisory Group and to have a focus group for ways and means to identify and develop the spiritual gifts. While I offered several methods for cultivating the spiritual gift and empowering tools for spiritual development, I know there are others. The Advisory Group would be the Pastor, the Director of Christian Education and the Class Leaders. The Pastor may want to appoint a Spiritual Formation Ministry leader if the Director of Christian Education is unable to be the leader. In Chapter Three, I discussed ways and means to identify and develop the spiritual gifts.

The second phase is when the member is in New Discipleship Ministry to identify the gift. The purpose of the New Discipleship Ministry is to provide an opportunity for new Disciples and particularly new Christians, to learn and understand first the establishment of the church including an historical overview of the early church; and second, the structure, purpose and mission of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.) including its history, its doctrine, what the A.M.E. Church believes and in whom we believe. At the end of the sixth week session, the spiritual gift is identified and the new disciple is introduced to the Director of Christian Education and to Class Leader. Both the Director of Christian Education and the Class Leader is told of the spiritual gift that has been identified.

The third phase is to empower each individual to know they have a gift and work with their Class Leaders. Class Leaders are to provide spiritual care, report to the pastor on

members in need, and basically give support and encouragement of the members within in their class.<sup>12</sup>

The fourth phase is to determine how the individual will use their spiritual gift within the church. In meeting with the Pastor and the Christian Education Director they will find a place in church to use the spiritual gift. The Christian Education Director will develop materials and workshops to enhance the spiritual gift. This can be both for the individual and collectively for a group. Dr. Christensen did an excellent summary of how to equip the saints for ministry. For convenience I have listed it below. The question Dr. Christensen raised was, “How shall we equip the saints for work of ministry in the new era?”

1. Motivate for ministry
2. Actualize the priesthood of believers
3. Organize small groups for the sake of community
4. Build leadership teams around spiritual gifts
5. Evangelize through seeker-sensitive worship
6. Learn how to circuit ride in the twenty-first century
7. Reorder the ministry of the baptized.<sup>13</sup>

I found the above summary of how to equip the saints for ministry very helpful. First, we motivate for ministry. We do this through identifying needs and interest in our

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<sup>12</sup> Doctor Allen W. Parrott, *Class Leaders Training Manual: Empowering Class Leaders for Effective Lay Ministry* (BMB Printing Summerville, South Carolina. 2002), 14.

<sup>13</sup> Michael J. Christensen and Carl E. Savage, *Equipping The Saints: In Mobilizing Laity For Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, n.d.), 12.



church.<sup>14</sup> You may need a focus group to find out what the needs and interest are.

Surveys are good, but have limitations. In a group you can ask follow up questions and receive explanations. By actualizing the priesthood of believers, you remind the people we are God's own people, we also are God's royal priesthood.<sup>15</sup>

With my group project, I initially reminded the women that while this is a school project it is also a ministry project. I was not the leader we each had equal parts in this project. Although the Pastor opened this up for all women at Mount Zion, I was able to organize a small group for the sake of this project. In small groups, we formed relationships. That is not to say that relationship is not formed in large groups. But the opportunity lends itself better in a small group because of less people and comfort of speaking to a small group. In small group you had the opportunity to learn everyone. I took the fourth criteria "Build leadership teams around spiritual gifts" and incorporated that technique into the empowering the women at Mount Zion.

In our third session together, the women were given a ministry assignment according to their spiritual gifts. They could work together or independently. With the ones who had group projects, there were more components to them because it was a group project and everyone had a part. Within the group because they had a distinct part they became leaders of that part. For example, doing the gardening while one was the designer another one's role was to select and transport the needed items for the gardening. Dr. Christensen spoke about "Evangelize through seeker-sensitive worship." Because, other

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 43.

women in the church saw a change in the women coming to the group other women start coming and showed interest in my project. While I kept the project open to all women of Mount Zion, those that were there from the first session have something the other women cannot experience because they were not there. The original group evangelized through seeker sensitive worship in their other ministries such as choir rehearsal and Church School. It was understood that the meetings were sacred space, and because of that sacred space rule it was the evangelistic seeker tool that drew other women. Another crucial element of Dr. Christensen was to learn how to circuit ride in the twenty-first century. I used every new millennium technology I could for this ministry project. I used the laptop, PowerPoint, video from YouTube, the website to download empowering poems, conference calls, and group emails to name a few. I gave the group information in various forms and ways.

In today's ministry you have to be multilayered, multifunctional, and open to new technology. The last element, but certainly not the least, is reordering the ministry of the baptized.<sup>16</sup> This is a spiritual interpretation of moving the people of God from the baptismal font into the full flow of ministry. This is not just in church, but to the community and world mission as well. Find your passion for ministry, and flow within the stream of your gifts and calling.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 160-161.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 161.

## Conclusion

Some of the Women at Mount Zion did not reach an appropriate level of confidence initially in exercising their spiritual gifts. After we discussed the poem “Our Deepest Fear” by Marianne Williamson, the women overcame their lack of confidence. God doesn’t call the qualified; God qualifies the called.<sup>18</sup> If you want to keep growing spiritually, you need to keep stretching. How? By going after dreams that are bigger than you are.<sup>19</sup> As women of God we are empowered to exercise our spiritual gifts. How do I move in the power of God? We first must understand “what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe (Ephesians 1:19).<sup>20</sup> He wants us to know this power that raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him at the right hand of God. We have the same power, if we believe. (Acts 1:8)<sup>21</sup>

An important reason women are rising up to fulfill the destiny God has for them and moving in different areas of expertise and ministry is because they are learning to rely on the power of God to prepare them and open the doors. The women of Mount Zion are realizing they are not an afterthought of God’s creation, but created for a special purpose.<sup>22</sup> I encouraged women to tell their stories and give voice to who they are in Christ. As women of God we need to search the Scriptures for the promises of God and review them daily to stay theologically engaged in biblical reflection. Theological

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<sup>18</sup> Mark Batterson, *The Circle Maker* (Zondervan, Michigan, 2011), 76.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>20</sup> Coogan, 322.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 186.

<sup>22</sup> Omartian, *Praying Women*, 19.

reflection was central to the learning experience in this project. There is divine power in the promises of God. (Timothy 1:9)<sup>23</sup> God has a purpose for each one of us women and men. You are called according to His purpose. (Roman 8:28)<sup>24</sup>

Christianity is all about Discipleship, but that is hard for us to accept. We want to be the leader who takes people to success and greatness. As Leonard Sweet wrote, “Jesus says, I’m your leader who takes you to the cross.” Leaders wear crosses. Followers bear crosses.<sup>25</sup> As empowered women of God our experiences strengthens us for the journey. Is the life I am living the same as the life that God wants to live in me? We discussed in our second session the importance of our vocation and call. Vocation does not come from willfulness, no matter how noble one’s intentions. It comes from listening to and accepting “true self” with its limit as well as its potentials.<sup>26</sup> Seeking a path more purposeful than accumulating wealth, holding power, winning a competition, or securing a career, it is to live a life other than one’s own.<sup>27</sup>

As an observer, I work with a paradox that runs as a thread through this paper: To release individuals I did not concentrate on just liberating individuals. I concentrated on the single women group as whole. The group through the Holy Spirit is who actually

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>25</sup> Leonard Sweet, *Viral: How Social Networking Is Poised to Ignite Revival* (Water Brook Press, Colorado Springs, Colorado ), 64.

<sup>26</sup> Palmer, Parker J, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2000), Front flap.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 2.

equipped the women. When the congregation is a healthy system, individual members thrive because of the empowering influence of the life of the body and the Holy Spirit.<sup>28</sup>

At Mount Zion the women had a pastor with a vision to equip women for ministry, as proposed in Ephesians 4:11-12. The impact of this experience for the women and for me were immediate and continues to this day. The Holy Spirit inspired this spiritual initiative and helped women to see themselves and each other in a different light. The women's voices were heard by God and by the group.<sup>29</sup> God has a purpose for each of our lives that is greater than any vision that either we or others could possibly have for ourselves.<sup>30</sup> As I close this chapter and end my paper, I want to close with this scriptural passage. "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us. To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 5:20 -21."<sup>31</sup> God's glory was certainly revealed in these wonderful women!

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<sup>28</sup> Paul R. Stevens and Phil Collins, *The Equipping Pastor: A Systems Approach to Congregational Leadership* (Alban Institute, Herndon, Virginia, 1993), 2.

<sup>29</sup> Carol, Gilligan, *In A Different Voice*, Back flap.

<sup>30</sup> William D. Watley, *God Wants You to Grow* (Judson Press, Pennsylvania, 2003), xi.

<sup>31</sup> Coogan, 325.

## APPENDIX A GROUP SESSIONS

Women of Purpose was the name of the Ministry Team (Lay Advisory Committee). The ministry team was called Women of Purpose or (Lay Advisory Committee) and was comprised of seven people. Six of the members were women members of the church. Two women were ordained clergy with one has a Ph.D. in Psychology are from the church and four women were ages 25 to 50 are members of the church. There was one male who was not a member of the church but was ordained clergy and had a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership.

There were five sessions held with the women of Mount Zion and then a final session with the advisory team and the instructor. We met once a month from January 2013 to May 2013 on a Saturday. Below I have taken each session by month. The actual handout is in the appendix section of the paper.

January 26, 2013

On January 26, 2013 we met and had our first session. The advisory team named “Women of Purpose” was the session participants on the agenda. We opened with prayer led by Reverend Doctor Antoinette Farmer who incorporated the three key scriptures in her prayer. The key scriptures were then read by Reverend Leslie Zoe Williams. Time was given for each woman to find the scripture either in their bible or use the agenda given. We discussed each scripture listed below. Each woman was encouraged to read the full chapter of the reference background scriptures: I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, and Romans 12.

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.” I Corinthians 12:1

“But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” Ephesians 4:7.

“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.” Romans 12:4-6a.

I explained the purpose of the project which is to find ways and means to identify the spiritual gifts of single women ages 25 to 50 of Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church in order to use their spiritual gifts in the congregation. My desired outcome was to develop the women as leaders within their own spiritual giftedness.

Following the Group discussion and questions I introduced three approaches toward working to be empowered to use your spiritual gifts which were Sacred Space and Prayer Candles, Journals and Note taking, and Bible Study and Reflections.

- Sacred Space/Prayer Candles

Sacred Space is allowing time for you to pray, to meditate and to read the word or just have God speak to you. This is a challenge because for women with family, work, school, household and church obligations finding the time can be difficult. However, we discussed that tithing is more than your treasure. It is your time and your talent as well. Ten percent of our time is two hours and forty minutes a day. We decided to start small and use twenty minutes and forty seconds. This exercise is for when the women are at home to allow time to commune with God. We get busy with the course of the day and as women of God we need time to hear from God. The prayer candle is to set the atmosphere. One of the women in

the group donated the scented candle. We also prayed over the candle that it be used for the glory of God.

Henri J. Nouwen who was inspired by the ancient teachings of St. Anthony and the Desert Fathers, *The Way of the Heart* clears before us a spiritual path consisting of three stepping-stones: **Solitude** (learning not to be alone but to be alone with God); **Silence** (the discipline by which the inner fire of God is tended and kept alive); and **Prayer** (standing in the presence of God with the mind in the heart).<sup>1</sup>

Solitude is the place of purification and transformation, the place of the great struggle and the great encounter the place of our salvation. Silence makes us pilgrims. Secondly, silence guards the fire within. Thirdly, silence teaches us to speak. While the women enjoyed the solitude with God the difficulty for them and me was the silence. We are used to speaking to God, but allowing that quiet time actually takes time and discipline. We are each called by God into ministry through the words of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8).<sup>2</sup> Discovering our personal calling means to surrender, seek, and listen to God. The prayer of the heart opens the eyes of our soul to the truth of ourselves as well as the truth of God. The prayer of the heart challenges us to hide absolutely nothing.<sup>3</sup> Solitude is a place of great struggle and great encounter of the false self, and the encounter with the loving God who offers himself as the substance of the new self. Once we have given these fantasies their due and let them wander off, we will see that we are dealing here

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<sup>1</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Way of the Heart* (The Random House, 2003), Forward.

<sup>2</sup> Coogan, 186.

<sup>3</sup> Nouwen, 22.



with the Holy place where ministry and spirituality embrace each other. It is a place called solitude. To understand the meaning of solitude, we must first unmask the ways in which the idea of solitude has been distorted by the world.<sup>4</sup> Solitude is a place we can recharge our battery. Solitude is a place where we gather new strength to continue the ongoing competition in life.<sup>5</sup> Solitude is not a means to an end. Solitude is its own end. It is a place where Christ remodels us in his own image and frees us from the victimizing compulsions of the world.<sup>6</sup> Having quiet time for prayer is important in developing your spiritual formation.

### Meaningful Prayer Life

In our session we talked about making time and having a meaningful prayer life. One of the demonic ruses is to make us think of prayer primarily as an activity of the mind that involves above all else our intellectual capacities. This prejudice reduces prayer to speaking with God or thinking about God.<sup>7</sup> Prayer is more than a thought it is one of our communication methods with God. As women we can pray anytime and anywhere. However, the focus is on that quiet time and learning to listen to God. Prayer requires hard mental work and is quite fatiguing, especially if reflective thinking is not one of our strengths.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>6</sup> Nouwen, 22.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 69.

Time did not allow use to use some of Hesychastic prayer techniques, which leads to that rest where the soul can dwell with God, is the prayer of the heart that reveals truth.<sup>9</sup> The prayer of the heart is the prayer of truth. It unmask the many illusions about ourselves and about God and leads us into the true relationship of the sinner to the merciful God.<sup>10</sup> Keeping in mind the importance of prayer in our lives also introduce journaling. Journaling is significant because it clarifies our thinking. It helps us understand our context of things we note and our feelings at the time. Journaling also allows us to ask essential questions that we can then go to God in prayer. Journaling is very beneficial for personal growth and self-reflection.

- Journals/Note taking

I brought in a journal and asked the women to start keeping a journal of their prayer requests, and to write down questions that are raised during the session and to write down their personal responses. One of the purposes of the prayer journal was to see how and when God answers prayers. This builds your faith in God and it shows your growth in prayer requests as they change because God answered their previous prayer request. The purpose of writing the questions is to spark internal reflection. These combined efforts assist in empowering women to have a closer relationship with God and identify their spiritual gifts through the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 76.

- Bible Study and Reflection

Personal Bible Study is always encouraged. The three scripture reference passages were given as suggested readings. The women were asked to read the scriptures and reflect on what the scriptures meant to them. At the next session, the women can share what each passage meant to them or how God spoke to them through that passage of scripture.

#### Prayer over Spiritual Gift Assessment

We prayed over the gift assessment and then distributed an assessment to each woman. There was no time span on taking the assessment. You can take as long as need to complete the assessment. Details of the Spirit Gift Assessment will be discussed in the Spiritual Gift Assessment Section of the paper. (Appendices) There were three concepts introduced to me by my professor Dr. Donna L. Ciangio Professor of Spiritual Formation from Drew School of Theology. I shared these concepts with the women.

#### Believing:

Believe in God. God loves you for who you are and where you are right now in Christ.

#### Belonging:

Belong to God. Because you have accepted Jesus Christ, as your personal Savior, and that on the third day, He rose and with all the power in His hands, that same power, that Jesus had, he gave to us who believe. Acts 1:8.

#### Becoming:

Become empowered. I may not be what you want me to be and I may not be what I want to be, but, I am becoming what God wants me to be. <sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Dr. Donna Ciangio Professor of Spiritual Formation from Drew School of Theology, Class notes dated January 2012.

### January Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes were taken at this session. Because of the Sacred Space rule excerpts from the minutes are removed.

### February 2013

Our next meeting was Saturday, February 23, 2013. We opened with prayer followed by watching the You Tube Awesome People Video of 2012.

#### Awesome People Video

This was a ten-minute video of people doing awesome things, such as tightrope walking blind, flipping while skiing, and rock climbing. The lesson I wanted to draw from showing that video was God was with these people as they did awesome things. How much more will God, through the Holy Spirit, be with us as we do the work of the ministry using our spiritual gifts? The women asked to see this video again, so I played it again. It was a great encouraging motivator.

For those that missed the last session they were allowed to sit at a special table and take the gift assessment. I allotted time at the end of the session to go over last month's agenda. The Sunday bulletin notice is listed below.

#### Sunday Bulleting Notice

**Empowering Women of Purpose!** Our next meeting will be **Saturday, February 23, 2013 @ 11:00 am.** If you would like to take the Spiritual Gift Assessment, you may do so at that time. Please bring your journals and healthy light refreshments. We have

some awesome women among us! You may schedule with Rev. Battle to discuss your Spiritual Gift Assessment results. For more information, please see Rev. Battle.

Another tool that I shared was a poem by Marianne Williamson entitled, "Our Deepest Fear".<sup>12</sup> I had asked woman read it loud and clear for everyone then a second woman and then myself. The purpose of doing this exercise was first we seen that with God through the Holy Spirit we can do awesome things, but what stops us it is our deepest fear. My fear is not your fear and your fear is not my fear. We each have different life experiences and different fears. We talked about each sentence in the poem. For some women, it was an eye opener that they had allowed themselves to be stopped by fear.

### **Our Deepest Fear**

**By Marianne Williamson**

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure.  
It is our light, not our darkness  
That most frightens us.

We ask ourselves  
Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous?  
Actually, who are you not to be?  
You are a child of God.

Your playing small  
Does not serve the world.

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<sup>12</sup> Marianne Williamson, *Our Deepest Fear*. This inspiring quote is taken from Marianne Williamson's book *A Return to Love*. Though often quoted as part of Nelson Mandela's moving inaugural speech, "Our Deepest Fear" does not appear in the speech, <http://www.inspiringcommunity.org> (accessed January 28, 2012).

There's nothing enlightened about shrinking  
So that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine,  
As children do.  
We were born to make manifest  
The glory of God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us;  
It's in everyone.

And as we let our own light shine,  
We unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.  
As we're liberated from our own fear,  
Our presence automatically liberates others.<sup>13</sup>

Jesus often used questions to draw out his listeners.<sup>14</sup> I took this opportunity to ask questions of the poems which lead to others questions for example, what inhibits us as women to move forward in ministry. Everyone recognized that reality of something inside them that has for too long gone unanswered, and the private pain of living under mushroom clouds of fear and despair that contaminate their daily life. Living in fear, pollutes our thinking of what we are able to do through the Holy Spirit. I raised several questions from Dr. Sweet's book *Viral* such as, "What is the truth about truth? Is there such a thing as "absolute truth"? If so, is absolute truth the same as abstract truth? Is truth primarily something known to the intellect, or is truth something known to the soul? Is truth an intellectual assertion or a moment, or both? Why was one of Jesus's signature phrases "I tell you the truth"? Are there different kinds of truth? And what does it mean

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<sup>13</sup> Marianne Williamson, *Our Deepest Fear*. This inspiring quote is taken from Marianne Williamson's book *A Return to Love*. Though often quoted as part of Nelson Mandela's moving inaugural speech, "Our Deepest Fear" does not appear in the speech, <http://www.inspiringcommunity.org> (accessed January 28, 2012)

<sup>14</sup> Leonard Sweet, *Viral: How Social Networking Is Poised to Ignite Revival* (Water Brook Press, Colorado), 23.

to live “untruthful” lives? <sup>15</sup> We need to be honest with ourselves and with our fears so we may move past them.

I then read a passage of scripture from Genesis 3:8-15<sup>16</sup> and asked two questions that God asked, “Where are you?” and “Who told you were naked?” There is no excellence without passion, without intensity of intentionality.<sup>17</sup> I included this statement because we should be intentional in identifying and developing our spiritual gift for ministry. Once your gift is identified, and development starts, I believe the passion is what motivates you to excellence.

I believe the two questions God asked Adam is relevant for us today. Where are you in ministry? Who told you were naked? Or who told you who you are and who you are not.

These questions are important because God asked Adam who created him. God created us for praise and to exercise our spiritual gift. Where are you in ministry? Where are you with your walk with Christ? Where are you? God wants to walk with you.

Secondly, “Who told you, you were naked?” This is crucial and a turning point for empowerment. God called you blessed. God said you were created in His image. God said you are fearfully and wonderfully made. Who told you, you were naked? Who told you were too old, too fat, too thin, too dark, or too lazy. Who told you were not

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>16</sup> Coogan, 15.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 35.

smart? Who told you were naked? My response was first to consider the source. Most people mean well when they tell you are naked, but consider the source. It was a serpent that told Adam he was naked. God created Adam and knew who he was. It is God who decides what you need and can and cannot do. Next listen to what the Holy Spirit tells you who you are. Other well-meaning people tend to base their perspective of who you are and call you naked. We are becoming what God wants us to be. This goes back to our first session of Believing, Belonging and Becoming what God wants us to be.

### March 2013

Due to the African Methodist Episcopal New Jersey Annual Conference, held in March and Mount Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church was the host church, there was no physical meeting held, but an email was sent out March 16, 2013. Individual sessions were held along with individual and group emails and telephone calls. Below is an excerpt of the email sent, so I will explain certain components within the email.

Empowering Women of Purpose!

Hi Ladies,

I greet you in the awesome name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I trust all is well! I hope that during this Lenten Season we are finding our quiet time and our sacred space. I hope you are making good use of the candles and the journals.

So far we have had two very productive meetings and our next meeting is Saturday, April 20, 2013 at 10:30 am. I am hoping you bring the below assignment with you when we meet.

We know that we have gifts from God and that they are to be used for the up building of the kingdom of God.

Below are seven questions that I would like for you as a group to answer for your ministry. Next to each question, I have given you an example. However, you are not limited to my example or my form. Please move as the Holy Spirit leads.



Questions	Example
<b>The name of the ministry</b>	Little Lambs
<b>The Scripture to support the ministry.</b>	Children of the Promise, Rom 9:8
<b>The need of the ministry.</b>	For example, during adult choir rehearsal, maybe the teens could help the children with homework or learning a Scripture.
<b>The purpose of the ministry.</b>	To focus the children on something positive while parents are in rehearsal.
<b>How can you show your gift in this ministry?</b>	I have the gift of teaching and would like to work with the Director of Christian Education to implement some ideas on learning Scriptures and keep the children excited about learning.
<b>The elements for this ministry to work.</b>	<p>8-10 teenagers willing to rotate every week. I will need at least 2 teens each week.</p> <p>Director of Christian Education outline a theme for the Scriptures to be learned and give the teens ways and means of teaching.</p> <p>Parents would be responsible for making sure children's area and the bathroom (children use is left cleaned)</p>
<b>How long will it take to implement your ministry?</b>	Because I need to meet with Director of Christian Education and seek buy in from the parents and order some supplies such as flash cards, construction paper and crayons. It will be a month before I will have everything in place.

Below is a list of names under a gift. I have grouped you by your gifts. In using your gift, I am asking that you work with the persons in your group via email or telephone or meeting. However, you prefer to either develop a ministry based on your gifts or enhance a ministry that you are already in.

I organized six groups; each group consisted of four people. The women was placed in the group that they scored the highest value on the spiritual gift assessment. As previously stated, I allowed other women to participate in the sessions that did not fall into the age and single category and kept their data separate. I met with each woman individually to tell them about their assessment of the spiritual gifts. I also allowed other

woman to take the gift assessment and I scheduled time to review the previous sections with those who missed sessions.

### The Spiritual Gifts Groups

The groups were as follows: Group 1 Helps, Group 2 Faith, Group 3 Mercy, Group 4 Hospitality, Group 5 Leadership, and Group 6 Evangelism.

Within your group you were encouraged to go N.U.T.S. which meant never underestimate the Spirit. I wanted the women to feel free and not limit themselves in creativity and allow the Holy Spirit to use them and work through them.

During the month of March, the time was also used to as our vocation time.

Vocation is rooted in the Latin for “call”. Vocation does not mean a goal that I pursue. It means a calling that I hear. Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am.<sup>18</sup> As previously mentioned, we allow the world to tell us who we are and we need God to tell us who we are in Christ through the Holy Spirit. Today, I understand vocation quite differently not as a goal to be achieved but as a gift to be received.<sup>19</sup> The story of my journey is not more or less important than anyone else’s. What I learned about myself through this ministry project is to trust in the Lord with all my heart and lean not on my own understanding. I felt morally compelled to work on urban crisis such as women shelter, clothing, transportation, and job placement. If we are unfaithful to true self, we will extract a price from others. We will make promises we cannot keep, build houses from flimsy materials, conjure dreams that devolve into

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<sup>18</sup> Parker J. Palmer. *Let Your Life Speak* (Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint, California), 4.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

nightmares, and other people will suffer if we are unfaithful to true self.<sup>20</sup> In other words, be who we are and allow the Holy Spirit to develop us. As women, I found that we could unmask in this group.

### April 2013

On April 20, 2013 the group met. We opened with prayer. The agenda was given. (Appendix) A woman read “Empowered Woman” by Sonny Carroll from my laptop. (Appendix holding on approval of author). This poem was very motivating and encouraging for the women. We discussed each line in the poem. This poem like, “Our Deepest Fear” by Marianne Williamson<sup>21</sup> had a transforming effect on the women. The poem allowed for those “aha!” moments. You are somebody in Christ.

We read Luke 4:18 and 19 and talked about ministry and our call. Within in Luke 4:18 and 19, there is ministry work that is listed and need to be done. I poised a question for the journal. God, what is my ministry? Reflect on how God has prepared and equipped you for ministry.

For homework, I asked the women to find the Scripture that supports their ministry. We did a recap of the previous sessions; January, February and March 2013. I answered any questions the women had. We developed a “clearness committee”. A “clearness committee” is a process in which the committee refrains from giving you advice, but spends three hours asking you honest, open questions to help you discover

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 31

<sup>21</sup> Marianne Williamson. *Our Deepest Fear*. This inspiring quote is taken from Marianne Williamson's book *A Return to Love*. Though often quoted as part of Nelson Mandela's moving inaugural speech, "Our Deepest Fear" does not appear in the speech, <http://www.inspiringcommunity.org> (accessed January 28, 2012).

your own inner truth.<sup>22</sup> However, our clearness committee or women in the session was to allow the person to present without any interruptions. The question I asked for women to write in their journals were, “What is your vision for your life?”<sup>23</sup> During our group discussion I asked that question for the purpose to allow the women to think about it not in their head but also in their heart.<sup>24</sup>

### Presentations

For those women prepared, they shared the March 2013 ministry assignment. Two groups were prepared and a third woman shared what was on her heart. The Advisory Committee suggested that the two groups prepared make an appointment with the pastor and share their ministry ideas. After hearing their ministry ideas a few of the other women were inspired to continue developing their project.

Some of the women shared concerns about becoming leaders of their suggestive group. A leader is someone with the power to project either shadow or light onto some part of the world and onto the lives of the people who dwell there. A leader shapes the ethos in which others must live, an ethos as light-filled as heaven or shadowy as hell.<sup>25</sup> I reminded them one purpose of being empowered women of God. We then discussed our spirituality. Spirituality, like leadership, is a hard thing to define. Spirituality takes us inward and downward, toward the hardest realities of our lives, rather than outward and

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<sup>22</sup> Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 31.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

upward toward abstraction, idealization, and exhortation. The spiritual journey runs counter to the power of positive thinking.<sup>26</sup> While it has been four months, it is still a journey. A journey I hope the women will continue in developing their spiritual gifts.

### May 2013 Fellowship

On May 18, 2013, following the presentation and discussion of ministry ideas we had fellowship. Fellowship is just as important as the actual session, because it allowed the women to share experiences with each other. Some friendships were formed and other ideas for empowerment as also shared by the women with each other. I believe having refreshments made the discussions flow easier. What I also observed during the fellowship time was it did allow time for ministry updates of happenings in the church and how they could incorporate some of what they learned with other ministries they were involved in.

### Circle of Prayer

The Circle of Prayer became another important portion of the session, as women started feeling comfortable discussing empowerment methods and praying. Different women started to speak and volunteer to lead in prayer. The women also started praying for their ministry and spiritual gifts. The women began to look forward to the Circle of Prayer and to the moment of sharing before the prayer request.

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<sup>26</sup> Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak*, 80.

## May 2013 Advisor's Meeting

On May 8, 2013, I met with Dr. Donna L. Ciangio, Professor of Spiritual Formation from Drew School of Theology along with the advisory team Women of Purpose. I also invited all the women who participated in the Empowering Women of Purpose sessions. I opened the session in prayer. At this session, Dr. Ciango introduced herself and shared her purpose of attending this session, which is to see if I had a real session, and to speak with the advisory team, as well as offer insight on my project. The Advisory Committee introduced themselves and shared their ministries and background. The new female pastor also shared her interest and support in this ministry project.

Dr. Donna Ciangio asked me to share some of the methods and techniques I used with the women. I also shared the agendas, poems and other documents listed in my appendix that were brought to the women. Dr. Ciangio spoke individually to the advisory team for their input on what I presented. There was discussion not only with the advisory team but with the pastor and myself. Dr. Ciangio had instructional comments and suggestions for my project. I thanked the pastor for her support and encouragement. I also thanked the Women of Purpose for their invaluable contribution of love in this ministry project. Dr. Ciangio had an opportunity to speak again to the Advisory team and the pastor individually. We had had light refreshments. Reverend Doctor Azard closed in prayer.

## Education in Spiritual Gifts PowerPoint Presentation

On May 18, 2013, there was an Education in Spiritual Gifts PowerPoint presentation presented by Reverend Doctor Older Azard. The purpose of this session was to look at our Spiritual gifts from an educational perspective. I opened with prayer and I introduced Reverend Doctor Azard. Dr. Azard posed several questions for pondering and for the women to consider while developing their spiritual gift. A questionnaire was given at the end of the session. This presentation originally scheduled for the April session, but there was a scheduling conflict. Normally after the Advisor attends a session, that is the last session. I wanted to ensure that I shared all that I had prepared for the women. Dr. Ciangio was informed that due to a scheduling conflict, we had one more session after her session and she was shown the Education Spiritual Gifts PowerPoint presentation. The Education Spiritual Gifts PowerPoint presentation was part of the discussion on May 8, 2013 meeting.

Dr. Azard shared the benefits of knowing the educational aspect of your spiritual gifts. Knowing your spiritual can bolster your glory to God, and give you a sense of self-worth in service. One of the pitfall are because the flesh is involved, be careful in how others may perceive you and your spiritual gift as not to offend. For example, you may have the gift of administration, but you are not the chairperson of the ministry. As Christians we need to be mindful of how we approach people in offering our gifts. Dr. Azard also shared that being gifted does not necessarily mean one is anointed. However,

having an identifiable spiritual gift from God can be a sign of spiritual anointment. Dr. Azard concluded with being educated and spiritually gifted can produce spiritual growth and maturity, a sense of purpose, a better relationship with others, and a better relationship with God. The women were in awe at the different perspective Dr. Azard gave them. As one woman stated, “I am glad this point was brought out about being the chairperson”.

The pastor also attended this section and laid emphasis on the example Dr. Azard gave pertaining to having the spiritual gift and not being the chairperson or ministry leader of that ministry. The pastor also commented on having the anointing and how important the anointing is in doing ministry. During this discussion, I mentioned Phase Two, of working within groups and dealing with the various personality types. I reiterated identifying the Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thusen sixteen personality types<sup>27</sup> in conjunction with having the spiritual gift and not being the leader. I thanked the Women of Purpose and the Pastor again. The Pastor assured the women that this ministry will continue and she thanked me for doing the ministry project. I was glad to be a part of the learning experience with the single women at Mount Zion ages 25 to 50 to identify and develop their spiritual gifts. At this last session, we closed in a circle of prayer and hugged each other.

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<sup>27</sup> Otto Kroeger and Janet M. Thusen, *The Workplace Profiles: Excerpted from Type Talk At Work* (Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, 1992).



## APPENDIX B THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The spiritual gift list with the definition of each gift was given to the women on March 19, 2013.<sup>1</sup>

**Administration:** The special ability that God gives to certain members of the body of Christ to understand clearly the immediate and long-range goals of a particular unit of the body of Christ and to devise and execute effective plans for the accomplishment of those goals. This gift is a leadership gift and is often characterized by people who lead the body by steering others to remain on task. These people generally are concerned with the details of how to accomplish tasks, and tend to be masters at delegating specific tasks to other people according to their gifts and talents. Scriptures: Luke 14:28-30; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Titus 1:5.

**Apostle:** "The special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ which enables them to assume and exercise helpful leadership over a number of churches in spiritual matters which is spontaneously recognized and appreciated by those churches." The Bible calls many others, beyond the Twelve and Paul, apostles: James (Galatians 1:19), Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14), Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25), Silas and Timothy (1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2:6), Andronicas and Junia (Romans 16:7), and others (1 Corinthians 15:5, 7; 2 Corinthians 8:23; 11:13). This gift is a leadership gift and is in continuing need today for the strengthening of churches and the establishment of new

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<sup>1</sup> Spiritual Gifts Descriptions, <http://www.churchgrowth.org/giftlist.php> (accessed April 18, 2013).

churches. This gift should be looked for in regional directors, church planters, and denominational leaders. Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 2:20; 4:11. **Note:** Many spiritual gifts inventories combine the gift of apostle with the gift of missionary because the Greek word is the same, meaning "sent one" (literally, one sent with authority, or as an ambassador or representative). These gifts have been separated here with the distinction that the missionary gift is focused on cross-cultural work, where the apostle gift is focused on overseeing the expansion of the Church in a given area, regardless of culture.

**Creative Communication:** The special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ which is to communicate God's truth through a variety of art forms. Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the children of Israel. Praise for the Lord's Mercies a Psalm of David. Psalms 103 Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Then David danced before the Lord with all his might; and David was wearing a linen ephod. 15 So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet. Jesus used of Parables to describes the creative communication. And with many such parables He spoke the word to them as they were able to hear it. This is a practical gift. Scriptures: Deuteronomy 31:2; Mark 4:33; 2 Samuel 6:14-15.

**Discerning of Spirits:** "The special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to know with assurance whether certain behavior purported to be of God is in reality divine, human, or Satanic." This gift is a practical gift. Christians with this gift can recognize the true motives of people and also recognize when a person is

distorting the truth or communicating error. This person often can recognize when Satan or other evil spirits are at work in a given person or situation. Scriptures: Matthew 16:21-23; Acts 5:1-11; 16:16-18; 17:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:10; Hebrews 5:14; 1 John 4:1-6.

**Encouragement/Exhortation:** "The special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to minister words of comfort, consolation, encouragement, and counsel to other members of the Body in such a way that they feel helped and healed." This gift is a communication gift. This gift is often called "encouragement," but exhortation is used here because the gift is not limited to the connotations that the name "encouragement" implies. Those who use this gift within a teaching or ministry situation are often driven to give practical application to their insights. Often, those gifted in this gift desire step-by-step plans of action to help others mature in Christ. Exhorters often find it natural to discover insights from personal experience when validated and amplified in Scripture. Scripture: Luke 3:16-18; Acts 11:23; 14:22; Romans 12:8; 1 Timothy 4:12; 5:1; Hebrews 10:25. **Note:** Exhortation, Prophecy, and Teaching are considered the communication gifts. The distinctions for each gift are often confused. Often, gifted communicators have a mix of these gifts. Exhortation focuses on personal and practical application of the message or truth being communicated. Prophecy focuses purely on the message or truth to be communicated. Teaching focuses on bringing thorough or adequate understanding of the message or truth being communicated.

**Evangelism:** The special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to readily share the gospel with unbelievers in such a way that men and women often become Jesus' disciples and responsible members of the Body of Christ. This gift is a

practical gift. While the task of evangelism is an important spiritual exercise that all Christians should be involved with, God gifts certain members with an ability to have unusual sensitivity to when someone is ready to accept Christ, and will generally have greater success in leading people to Christ than other Christians. People with this gift should be active in training others to share their faith. Scriptures: Acts 8:5-6, 26-40; Ephesians 4:11-14; 2 Timothy 4:5.

**Faith:** Without faith it's impossible to please God. Everything the Lord does for us is accessed through faith. In Ephesians 2:8, Paul says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:" It's God's grace that saves us, but not His grace alone. If that were so, then everyone would be saved because God's grace has come to all men "God ... calleth those things which be not as though they were." God's faith goes beyond sight. God's faith operates supernaturally, beyond the limitations of our natural faith. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The hearing is not only an audible hearing. It is also hearing from the inside of your heart. We access God's faith through His Word." The communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus." "God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith". The more we trust God the stronger our faith gets. This is a practical gift. Scriptures: Hebrews 11:6; 1 John 5:4; Titus 2:11; Romans 4:17; Romans 10:17; Philemon 1:6; Romans 12:3.

**Giving:** "The special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to contribute their material resources to the work of the Lord with liberality and cheerfulness. "This gift is a practical gift. While all Christians should practice the

discipline of giving through the minimum of 10% (tithe), God gifts certain members of the body to give remarkably greater amounts of their income with liberality and great joy. These people have an acute awareness that all they have belongs to the Lord and they are merely stewards, therefore they know that God will supply their needs and richly bless them in their giving. Scriptures: Matthew 6:2-4; Mark 12:41-44; Romans 12:8; 1 Corinthians 13:3; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7; 9:2-8; Philippians 4:14-19. **Note:** This gift is often associated with the gift of voluntary poverty, as many with the gift of voluntary poverty also have the gift of giving. However, not all with the gift of giving also have the gift of voluntary poverty. See notes on voluntary poverty for more information.

**Helps:** The special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to invest the talents they have in the life and ministry of other members of the Body, thus enabling those others to increase the effectiveness of their own spiritual gifts. This gift is a practical gift. People with this gift often enjoy doing routine tasks in order to free others to do the ministry God has called them to do. People with this gift are often not looking for recognition for the work they do. Scriptures: Mark 15:40-41; Luke 8:2-3; Acts 9:36; Romans 16:1-2; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 2 Timothy 1:16-18. **Note:** The gifts of Helps, Mercy, and Service are often confused. Helps focuses on Christian works and freeing others to accomplish their God-given ministries. Mercy focuses on people in distress and reflects God's love and compassion. Service focuses on accomplishing little tasks that may otherwise go undone in order to move the greater goal of the ministry or church toward completion.

**Hospitality:** "The special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to provide an open house and a warm welcome to those in need of food and lodging."

This gift is a practical gift. Those with this gift have an acute awareness of visitors and have a desire to make all people feel welcome. People with this gift enjoy visitors in their home, and are usually not bothered if someone stops by and their home is not spotless.

Those with this gift are a key to helping new people become a part of the group.

Scriptures: Acts 16:14-15; Romans 12:9-13; 16:23; Hebrews 13:1-2; 1 Peter 4:9.

**Intercession:** Intercession is prayer that appeals to God for your needs and the needs of others. But it is also much more than that. Intercession involves believing God's word and obeying God's will. Intercessory prayer takes place in this spiritual world where the requests for our own lives, our families, our friends and our nation are lifted up to God.

As you begin your prayer, take comfort knowing that you are not alone. The Holy Spirit also is interceding on your behalf! In God's time, your persistence in intercessory prayer will grow a fruitful life for you and the lives of those around you! This is a practical gift.

Scriptures: Ephesians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 10:3,4; Ephesians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 10:3,4; Luke 10:19; 1 John 4:4; Hebrews 7:25; Romans 8:26,27,34; Philippians 3:12; Luke 11:8; Luke 11:10.

**Leadership:** "The special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to set goals in accordance with God's purpose for the future and to communicate these goals to others in such a way that they voluntarily and harmoniously work together to accomplish those goals for the glory of God." This gift is a leadership gift. People with this gift are often focused on the greater goal of the group and are not overly concerned

with the details. Leaders delegate tasks and details to others to accomplish the greater goal. Leaders are visionaries. Leaders have followers-a visionary without followers is not a leader. Scriptures: Luke 9:51; Acts 6:1-7; 15:7-11; Romans 12:8; 1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17.

**Mercy:** "The special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to feel genuine empathy and compassion for individuals (both Christian and non-Christian) who suffer from distressing physical, mental, or emotional problems, and to translate that compassion into cheerfully done deeds which reflect Christ's love and alleviate the suffering." This gift is a practical gift. Those with this gift find themselves visiting and assisting those in need, and often feel the pain of the person they are helping within themselves. People with this gift find it extremely difficult not to help those who seem less fortunate than themselves. Those with this gift generally enjoy helping those with physical or mental problems and do well in ministries involving visiting hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, and shut-ins. Scriptures: Matthew 20:29-34; 25:24-40; Mark 9:41; Luke 10:33-35; Acts 11:28-30; 16:33-34; Romans 12:8; Jude 22-23. **Note:** The gifts of Helps, Mercy, and Service are often confused. Helps focuses on Christian works and freeing others to accomplish their God-given ministries. Mercy focuses on people in distress and reflects God's love and compassion. Service focuses on accomplishing little tasks that may otherwise go undone in order to move the greater goal of the ministry or church toward completion.

**Prophecy:** Prophecy means "to speak the truth" or "to proclaim." The motivational gift of prophecy is primarily concerned with speaking forth the truth. The Word of God helps

us to understand characteristics and avoid misunderstandings associated with the gift of prophecy, and it shows us how we use that gift when we walk in the Spirit. The gift of prophecy is one of seven motivational gifts identified by God's Word in Romans 12:6-8. Scriptures: Acts :16; 2 Peter 1:21, Mark 11:2, Zechariah 9:9.

**Shepherd:** "The special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to assume a long-term personal responsibility for the welfare of a group of believers."

This gift is a leadership gift. This gift is often called "pastor," however, that name has a connotation of a specific position in the church. In actuality, when pastors have this gift, their ability to continue sustained growth in their churches is greatly diminished, as they tend to require a certain level of interaction with every member of their congregation.

Those with the gift of shepherd have a great need for long-term relationships. Shepherds will sacrificially give themselves to other people in such a way that they are built-up in their faith. Shepherds take personal responsibility for the successes and failures of those in the group that they invest themselves in. Scriptures: John 10:1-18; Ephesians 4:11-14; 1Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-4.

**Teaching:** "The special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to communicate information relevant to the health and ministry of the Body and its members in such a way that others will learn." This gift is a communication gift. People with the gift of teaching enjoy studying the Bible and related materials in order to communicate what they have learned to other Christians. Those with this gift find it easy to organize vast amounts of information in such a way as to make it easy to communicate, understand, and remember. Scriptures: Matthew 7:28-29; 28:19-20; Acts 15:32; Romans



12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; Ephesians 4:11-14. **Note:** Exhortation, Prophecy, and Teaching are considered the communication gifts. The distinctions for each gift are often confused. Often, gifted communicators have a mix of these gifts. Exhortation focuses on personal and practical application of the message or truth being communicated. Prophecy focuses on the urgency and impact of the message or truth being communicated. Teaching focuses on bringing thorough or adequate understanding of the message or truth being communicated.

**Wisdom:** Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your Paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6. Wisdom is both a practical and a leadership gift. It is a practical gift because you do not need to be the leader to have wisdom. For example, written in II Samuel 12, when David had Nathan as his wise counsel, Nathan was not the leader. It is also a leadership gift because a leader has wise people on their team such as Moses had his father-in-law Jethro who told him to have leaders under him. Wisdom comes with experience God in various situations and circumstances. Wisdom is given through the Holy Spirit. Wisdom has vision and wisdom knows no age. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. Scriptures: James 1:5 Psalm 111:10; James 1:5; II Chronicles.

APPENDIX C SPIRITUAL GIFTS ASSESSMENT

Mt. Zion AME Church  
Rev. Angela M. Battle, Facilitator  
Spiritual Gift Assessment

Please check one of the following:

- Married  Single (For this study, Widows & Divorcees are included)

Please check one of the following age groups:

- Age group of 13 to 24  Age group of 25 to 50  Age group 51 and older

Instructions: Respond to the following statements according to the scale below by placing an X in the box that best describes you.

1= Never    2=Rarely    3=Sometimes    4=Often    5=Always

Please answer according to who you are, not who you would like to be or think you ought to be.

- ①②③④⑤    1. I like to organize people, events, and tasks.
- ①②③④⑤    2. I have a strong desire to start churches in places where they do not presently exist.
- ①②③④⑤    3. I enjoy Challenging people’s perspective of God by using various forms of art.
- ①②③④⑤    4. I can readily distinguish between spiritual truth and error, good and evil.
- ①②③④⑤    5. People who are struggling emotionally or spiritually say I am an excellent listener.
- ①②③④⑤    6. I can communicate the gospel to others clearly and effectively.
- ①②③④⑤    7. I have a strong capacity to trust God for the difficult things in life.
- ①②③④⑤    8. I give liberally and joyfully to people in financial need or to projects requiring financial support.

- ①②③④⑤ 9. I enjoy working behind the scenes to support the ministry of others.
- ①②③④⑤ 10. I open my home to minister to people in need.
- ①②③④⑤ 11. I take prayer requests from other and pray consistently for them.
- ①②③④⑤ 12. I find that I have a strong capacity to attract followers to my team.
- ①②③④⑤ 13. I have the ability to feel to pain of others who are suffering.
- ①②③④⑤ 14. I can speak in a way that brings conviction and change in the lives of others.
- ①②③④⑤ 15. I am at my best when leading and caring for a small group of believers.
- ①②③④⑤ 16. I am able to teach God's Word clearly and effectively.
- ①②③④⑤ 17. Others seek me out for advice about spiritual or personal matters.
- ①②③④⑤ 18. I am careful, thorough, and skilled at managing details.
- ①②③④⑤ 19. I am a self-starter with a pioneering spirit.
- ①②③④⑤ 20. I enjoy developing and using my artistic skills (art, drama, music, photography, etc.)
- ①②③④⑤ 21. I am able to discern a person's character based upon first impressions.
- ①②③④⑤ 22. I enjoy reassuring and strengthening those who are discouraged.
- ①②③④⑤ 23. I consistently look for opportunities to build relationships with lost and unchurched people.
- ①②③④⑤ 24. I am convinced that God is going to accomplish something special through me.
- ①②③④⑤ 25. I give more than a tithe so that kingdom work can be accomplished.
- ①②③④⑤ 26. I have a strong capacity to identify practical needs and do something about them.
- ①②③④⑤ 27. I enjoy meeting new people and helping them to feel welcomed.

- ①②③④⑤ 28. I strongly sense that I am ministering to others as I pray.
- ①②③④⑤ 29. I am able to influence others to achieve a vision.
- ①②③④⑤ 30. Suffering people gravitate to me and find me comforting to be around.
- ①②③④⑤ 31. I feel responsible for confronting others with the truth.
- ①②③④⑤ 32. I have a deep desire to protect believers from people and beliefs that may harm them.
- ①②③④⑤ 33. I feel responsible for confronting others with the truth.
- ①②③④⑤ 34. I can often find simple, practical solutions to complicated and confusing problems.
- ①②③④⑤ 35. I can clarify goals and develop strategies or plans to accomplish them.
- ①②③④⑤ 36. I am willing to take an active part in starting a new church.
- ①②③④⑤ 37. I help people understand an active part of starting a new church.
- ①②③④⑤ 38. I can see through phoniness or deceit before it is evident to others.
- ①②③④⑤ 39. I give hope to others by directing them to the promises of God.
- ①②③④⑤ 40. I find that unchurched people enjoy spending time with me.
- ①②③④⑤ 41. I am rarely surprised when God turns obstacle into opportunities for ministry.
- ①②③④⑤ 42. God has greatly blessed me with life's provisions in order to help others.
- ①②③④⑤ 43. I willingly take on a variety of odd jobs around the church to meet the needs of others.
- ①②③④⑤ 44. I genuinely believe the Lord directs strangers to me who need to get connected to others.
- ①②③④⑤ 45. I enjoy praying for long periods of time, and I receive leadings for what or whom God wants me to pray.
- ①②③④⑤ 46. Many people place a lot of trust in me and my leadership abilities.

- ①②③④⑤ 47. My friends believe that sometimes I allow people who are “down and out” to take advantage of me.
- ①②③④⑤ 48. I boldly expose cultural trends, teachings and events that contract biblical principles.
- ①②③④⑤ 49. I get excited about helping new believers grow to maturity in Christ.
- ①②③④⑤ 50. I pay close attention to the words, phrases, and meaning of those who teach.
- ①②③④⑤ 51. I am able to select the most effective course of action from among several alternatives.
- ①②③④⑤ 52. I can identify and effectively use the resources needed to accomplish tasks.
- ①②③④⑤ 53. I am challenged by a big vision to accomplish what some believe is impossible.
- ①②③④⑤ 54. I like finding a new and fresh ways of communicating God’s truth.
- ①②③④⑤ 55. I tend to see rightness or wrongness in situations.
- ①②③④⑤ 56. I reassure those who need to take courageous action in their faith, family, and or life.
- ①②③④⑤ 57. I invite unbelievers to accept Christ as their Savior.
- ①②③④⑤ 58. I am able to trust God in situations when most others have lost all hope.
- ①②③④⑤ 59. I limit my lifestyle in order to give away a higher percentage of my income.
- ①②③④⑤ 60. I see spiritual significance in doing practical tasks.
- ①②③④⑤ 61. I like to create a place where people do not feel alone.
- ①②③④⑤ 62. I pray with boldness because I know that God works in response to prayer.
- ①②③④⑤ 63. I set goals and manage people and resources effectively to accomplish them.
- ①②③④⑤ 64. I enjoy visiting people in hospitals or nursing homes.

- ①②③④⑤ 65. I see most actions as either black or white, with very few gray areas.
- ①②③④⑤ 66. I can faithfully provide long-term support and concern for others.
- ①②③④⑤ 67. I like to take a systematic approach to my study of the Bible.
- ①②③④⑤ 68. I can anticipate the likely consequences of a group's or an individual's actions.
- ①②③④⑤ 69. I like to help organizations or groups become more efficient.
- ①②③④⑤ 70. I gain deep satisfaction from creating something out of nothing.
- ①②③④⑤ 71. I apply various artistic expressions to communicate God's truth.
- ①②③④⑤ 72. I receive affirmation from others concerning the reliability of my insights or perceptions.
- ①②③④⑤ 73. I strengthen those who are wavering in their faith.
- ①②③④⑤ 74. I openly tell people that I am a Christian and want them to ask me about my faith.
- ①②③④⑤ 75. I am convinced of God's daily presence and action in my life.
- ①②③④⑤ 76. People regularly come to me with requests for help in meeting their financial needs.
- ①②③④⑤ 77. I like to find small things that need to be done and do them without being asked.
- ①②③④⑤ 78. I enjoy entertaining people and opening my home to others.
- ①②③④⑤ 79. When I hear about people who are hurting or in need, I feel burdened to pray.
- ①②③④⑤ 80. I influence others to perform to the best of their capability.
- ①②③④⑤ 81. I can look beyond a person's disabilities or problems to see a life that matters to God.
- ①②③④⑤ 82. I am known by others as a person who does not back down from confrontation.
- ①②③④⑤ 83. I enjoy giving guidance and practical support to a small group of people.

- ①②③④⑤      **84. I can communicate Scripture in ways that motivate others to study and want to learn more.**
- ①②③④⑤      **85. I give practical advice to help others get through complicated situations.**
- ①②③④⑤      **86. I enjoy learning about how organizations function.**
- ①②③④⑤      **87. I am a risk-taker when it comes to developing new projects or ministries.**
- ①②③④⑤      **88. I am creative and imaginative.**
- ①②③④⑤      **89. I can identify preaching, teaching, or communication which is not true to the Bible.**
- ①②③④⑤      **90. I like motivating others to take steps for spiritual growth.**
- ①②③④⑤      **91. I get extremely frustrated when I cannot share my faith.**
- ①②③④⑤      **92. I enjoy challenging others to trust God.**
- ①②③④⑤      **93. I find it difficult to understand why more Christians do not given more help to those with real needs.**
- ①②③④⑤      **94. I prefer being a helper, assisting others to do their job more effectively.**
- ①②③④⑤      **95. I do whatever I can to make people feel that they belong.**
- ①②③④⑤      **96. I see specific answers in direct response to my prayers.**
- ①②③④⑤      **97. I am able to cast a vision that others want to be a part of.**
- ①②③④⑤      **98. I delight in bringing hope and joy to people living in difficult circumstances.**
- ①②③④⑤      **99. I will speak God's truth, even in places where it is unpopular of difficult circumstances.**
- ①②③④⑤      **100. I can gently restore wandering believers to faith and fellowship.**
- ①②③④⑤      **101. I can impart information and skills to others at a level that makes it easy for them to grasp apply to their lives.**
- ①②③④⑤      **102. I can apply scriptural truth that others regard as being practical and helpful.**

- ①②③④⑤      **103. I can visualize a coming event, anticipate potential problems, and develop backup plans.**
- ①②③④⑤      **104. I am convinced that the future of any country lies in starting fresh ministries.**
- ①②③④⑤      **105. I need to get alone to reflect and develop my imagination.**
- ①②③④⑤      **106. I can sense when demonic forces are at work in a person or situation.**
- ①②③④⑤      **107. I am able to challenge or rebuke others in order to foster spiritual growth.**
- ①②③④⑤      **108. I seek opportunities to talk about spiritual matters with unbelievers.**
- ①②③④⑤      **109. People are amazed at my ability to trust God to provide in the most difficult situations.**
- ①②③④⑤      **110. I believe I have been given an abundance of resources so that I may give more to the Lord's work.**
- ①②③④⑤      **111. I readily and joyfully use my natural or learned skills to help whenever needed.**
- ①②③④⑤      **112. I can make people feel at ease even in unfamiliar surroundings.**
- ①②③④⑤      **113. I am delighted when someone asks me to pray for them.**
- ①②③④⑤      **114. I figure out where we need to go and help others to get there.**
- ①②③④⑤      **115. I enjoy doing practical things for people who are in need.**
- ①②③④⑤      **116. I feel compelled to confront sin wherever I see it and to challenge people to repentance.**
- ①②③④⑤      **117. Christians often seek me out for counsel when making important decisions in their lives.**
- ①②③④⑤      **118. I have noticed that people who sit under my teaching experience spiritual growth.**
- ①②③④⑤      **119. I have insights into how to solve problems that others do not see.**
- ①②③④⑤      **120. I feel God is moving me to a higher level in ministry.**



**Please select from the list below 2 gifts you believe you have.**

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administration | <input type="checkbox"/> Apostleship   | <input type="checkbox"/> Creative Communication                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discernment    | <input type="checkbox"/> Encouragement | <input type="checkbox"/> Evangelism <input type="checkbox"/> Faith          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Giving         | <input type="checkbox"/> Helps         | <input type="checkbox"/> Hospitality <input type="checkbox"/> Intercessions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership     | <input type="checkbox"/> Mercy         | <input type="checkbox"/> Prophecy <input type="checkbox"/> Shepherding      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching       | <input type="checkbox"/> Wisdom        | <input type="checkbox"/> My gift is not listed                              |

## APPENDIX D SPIRITUAL GIFT ASSESSMENT SCORING GUIDE

1__	18__	35__	51__	69__	86__	103__	__ Administration
2__	19__	36__	53__	70__	87__	104__	__ Apostleship
3__	20__	37__	54__	71__	88__	105__	__ Creative Communication
4__	21__	38__	55__	72__	89__	106__	__ Discernment
5__	22__	39__	56__	73__	90__	107__	__ Encouragement
6__	23__	40__	57__	74__	91__	108__	__ Evangelism
7__	24__	41__	58__	75__	92__	109__	__ Faith
8__	25__	42__	59__	76__	93__	110__	__ Giving
9__	26__	43__	60__	77__	94__	111__	__ Helps
10__	27__	44__	61__	78__	95__	112__	__ Hospitality
11__	28__	45__	62__	79__	96__	113__	__ Intercession
12__	29__	46__	63__	80__	97__	114__	__ Leadership
13__	30__	47__	64__	81__	98__	115__	__ Mercy
14__	31__	48__	65__	82__	99__	116__	__ Prophecy
15__	32__	49__	66__	83__	100__	117__	__ Shepherding
16__	33__	50__	67__	84__	101__	118__	__ Teaching
17__	34__	51__	68__	85__	102__	119__	__ Wisdom

APPENDIX E JANUARY 26, 2013 SESSION

**EMPOWERING THE WOMEN  
OF  
MOUNT ZION AFRICAN EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
TO IDENTIFY THEIR SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

Rev. Angela M. Battle, Facilitator

January 26, 2013

**Opening Prayer:** Rev. Dr. Farmer

**Key Scriptures:** Rev. Leslie Zoe Williams

*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.* I Corinthians 12:1

*But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.*  
Ephesians 4:7

*For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us.* Romans 12:4-6a.

**Reference Background Scriptures:** I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4, Romans 12

**Purpose of Project:** Rev. Angela M. Battle

**Group Discussion/Questions:**

- Sacred Space/Prayer Candles
- Journals/Note taking
- Bible Study

**Pray over Gift Assessment:**

- Believing
- Belonging
- Becoming

**Fellowship**

## APPENDIX F GIFT ASSESSMENT HANDOUT JANUARY 26, 2013

### **EMPOWERING THE WOMEN Of Mt. Zion AME Church**

**Rev. Angela M. Battle**

#### **JESUS GAVE GIFTS TO US** (Ephesians 4, I Corinthians 12, Romans 12)

- It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, and there are many other gifts.
- To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

#### **THE PURPOSE OF MINISTRY GIFTS**

- For the perfecting of the Saints.
- For the work of the Ministry.
- For the edifying of the body.

#### **WHAT IS THE ULTIMATE AIM OF THE MINISTRY GIFTS!**

The ultimate aim of the ministry gifts Christ placed in the Church is to help us to grow up into His image.

**We are many members in one body of Christ.**

- **Believing**
- **Belonging**
- **Becoming**

*I beseech you therefore, my children, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. Romans 12:1-2*

## APPENDIX G MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 26, 2013

**Facilitator: Rev. Angela M. Battle**

**Opening Prayer:** Rev. Antoinette Farmer

**Key Scriptures:** Rev. Leslie Z. Williams

I Corinthians 12:1 - *Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.*

Ephesians 4:7- *But, unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of God.*

Romans 12:4-6a- *For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every member one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given us.*

**Handouts/Equipment Provided:**

Meeting Agenda; Gift Assessment Handout; Prayer Scented Candle for each participant.

**Jesus Gave Gifts to Us:**

Reference Background Scriptures: Ephesians 4, I Corinthians 12, and Romans 12

- It was He who gave us some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, and there are many gifts.
- To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

**Project Purpose:** Rev. Angela Battle

Rev. Battle provided a brief explanation of the purpose of the meeting. She explained that she was a Drew University doctorate thesis candidate, and would be providing controlled, confidential testing of those women interested in volunteering to participate in working with her for this thesis, who were between the ages of 35 to 50. She had to determine the defined age group, so that her research would not become too broad in data, in for her to complete within a specific time frame, as required from her collegiate supervisors. Though, there was an age cutoff, she would still assist those women interested in identifying their spiritual gifts, so that they could offer these voluntary, spiritual gifts to Mt. Zion, as church members. She identified that all questions would be answered, as she progressed through the discussion points and during the question and answer period, afterwards. In addition, she informed the participants that there was a light refreshment buffet being offered, upon the completion of the testing portion of the project. Access to bathroom facilities were identified as available as needed, without concern for permission to leave, since as church members, they knew their locations.

### **The Purpose of Ministry Gifts:**

The ultimate goal aim of the ministry gifts Christ has placed in the church is to help us to grow into His image.

- For the perfecting of the Saints:**
- For the work of the Ministry:**
- For the edifying of the Body:**

### **Group Discussion:**

1. **Sacred Space:** Define a space where you can have time to have spirit contact with God. For some, this can be a private space, especially designated without the concern of the interruption by other family members. However, for a house filled with many children, such as small children, this space might be the bathroom, where you can find some spiritual solitude, and be able to communicate to God in prayer. This will take commitment, which is hard to do, when so many things are demanding your time. Jobs, family, home, parents, church, and whatever requires a portion of your time. If you think about tithing to the church, you know that God asks for “one-tenth” of your earnings, but let us try to associate this same principle to our time spent with Jesus, if we used a single day, as our baseline, which is 24 hours a day, it would be impossible to just keep praying to God, because other things would demand our attention. So, if we break the 24 hour time period, into hours and 40 minutes, unfortunately, we would not be able to commitment fully to this, either. So, let us try to begin our commitment to pray to God, by starting with two (2) minutes and four (4) seconds of actual time spent with God, praying to Him. This seems more feasible, correct? Well, we us all try to provide 2:04 to God, each day to begin with, and build upon the time spent with Him, as we identify areas where we have more time, to give Him, so we can communicate with God, as though it is second nature... Only 2 minutes and 4 seconds, not much time at all!

**Prayer Candles and Incense:** In the stories of the Bible, there are recordings that incense had been used during the rituals within the temples, or at the altars. “God loves a good scent! He loves the smell of praise and worship. The scent tells him, you, and us who you are as we worship.” So, the use of incense and scented candles is alright to use within your sacred space, if you so choose to do so! Today, there are numerous candles available that have various scents to calm your spirit, and bring a beautiful aroma into your sacred space. The candles which were donated by Rosline D., are called “Calming Waters,” and each candle has a 100 burning time, and no soot residue. Let us thank Rosline for her kind donation, she will have to go to work, so, let us pray for her safe journey, as well.

2. **Journals and Note-taking:** Make private time for studying your Bible, journaling, and praying to God. You can increase your learning, by speaking with other Christians, as well.

We want to utilize our journals and note-taking to grow in grace with God. This is a method of using our journals to record the date, time, and even the place where we were growing in our relationship with God. By recording our prayers we had asked for, and it is also important to record those prayers that were answered or not. Because if the prayer was not answered, it might be for there is a reason, for a better or bigger blessing, far more than you had envisioned. Because remember prayers are answered not, by our wishes, or wants, but, “By the Will of God.”

3. **Bible Study:** Again, make private time for studying your Bible and praying to God. You can increase your learning, by speaking with other Christians, as well. The ultimate gift of the Bible is to assist us in growing in His image, because it provides us guidelines by which to govern ourselves, as Christians.

**Pray over Gift Assessments:** We are members in one body of Christ.

These are the things, I want you to remember, as we bless the gift assessments:

**Believing:**

Believe in God. God loves you for who you are and where you are, right now in Christ.

**Belonging:**

Belong to God. Because you have accepted Jesus Christ, as your personal Saviour, and that on the third day, He rose and with all the power in His hands, that same power, that Jesus had, he gave to us in Acts 1:8.

**Becoming:**

I may not be what you want me to be, and I may not be what I want to be, but, ***I am becoming what God wants me to be.***

*I beseech you therefore, my children, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto god, which is your acceptable service. And be conformed to this world: But, be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is good, acceptable, and perfect, will of God.* Romans 12: 1-2

## APPENDIX H FEBRUARY 12, 2013 SESSION

**EMPOWERING THE WOMEN OF PURPOSE**  
**MOUNT ZION AFRICAN EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
**TO IDENTIFY THEIR SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

Rev. Angela M. Battle, Facilitator

**Opening Prayer:**

**Poem:** “Empowered Woman” by Sonny Carroll

**Key Scriptures:** Luke 4:18 &19

**Questions for Journal:** God, what is my ministry?

*Reflect on how God has prepared and equipped you for ministry.*

**Homework:** Find the Scripture that supports your ministry.

**Review:** January

**Discussed the Spiritual Gifts:**

**Circle of Prayer:**

**Fellowship:**



APPENDIX I FEBRUARY QUESTIONNAIRE

**EMPOWERING THE WOMEN OF PURPOSE**

**MOUNT ZION AFRICAN EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
TO IDENTIFY THEIR SPIRITUAL GIFTS**

Rev. Angela M. Battle, Facilitator

February 12, 2013

**Questions:**

**1. Have you taken a gifts assessment?**

**2. What are your gifts?**

**3. How are you using the gifts God gave you?**

**4. How do your gifts help others?**

**5. Would you like to be used by God?**

**6. What are you doing to be used by God?**

## APPENDIX J MARCH 19, 2013 ASSIGNMENT

**Empowering Women of Purpose!**

Hi Ladies,

I greet you in the awesome name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

I trust all is well! I hope that during this Lenten Season we are finding our quiet time and our sacred space. I hope you are making good use of the candles and the journals.

So far we have had two very productive meetings and our next meeting is **Saturday, April 20, 2013 at 10:30 am. I am hoping you bring the below assignment with you when we meet.**

We know that we have gifts from God and that they are to be used for the up building of the kingdom of God.

**Below are seven questions that I would like for you as a group to answer for your ministry. Next to each question, I have given you an example. However, you are not limited to my example or my form. Please move as the Holy Spirit leads.**

Questions	Example
<b>The name of the ministry</b>	Little Lambs
<b>The Scripture to support the ministry.</b>	Children of the Promise, Rom 9:8
<b>The need of the ministry.</b>	For example, during adult choir rehearsal, maybe the teens could help the children with homework or learning a Scripture.
<b>The purpose of the ministry.</b>	To focus the children on something positive while parents are in rehearsal.
<b>How can you show your gift in this ministry?</b>	I have the gift of teaching and would like to work with the Director of Christian Education to implement some ideas on learning Scriptures and keep the children excited about learning.
<b>The elements for this ministry to work.</b>	8-10 teenagers willing to rotate every week. I will need at least 2 teens each week.  Director of Christian Education outline a theme for the Scriptures to be learned and give the teens ways and means of teaching.  Parents would be responsible for making sure children's area and the bathroom children use is left cleaned)
<b>How long will it take to implement your ministry?</b>	Because I need to meet with Director of Christian Education and seek buy in from the parents and order some supplies such as flash cards, construction paper and crayons. It will be a month before I will have everything in place.

Below is a list of names under a gift. I have grouped you by your gifts. In using your gift, I am asking that you work with the persons in your group via email or telephone or meeting. However, you prefer to *either develop a ministry based on your gifts or enhance a ministry that you are already in.*

### **GROUPS**

**Group 1 - HELPS**

**Group 2 – FAITH**

**Group 3 – MERCY**

**Group 4 - HOSPITALITY**

**Group – 5 LEADERSHIP**

**Group – 6 - EVANGELISM**

I am still assessing other assessments, so your group may receive an additional person.

Please feel free to call or email me any time after Sunday, March 24, 2013. I am preparing for Board of Examiners and preaching on Sunday. My cell is 908-337-7334 and email is [ambattle123@yahoo.com](mailto:ambattle123@yahoo.com).

## APPENDIX K APRIL 20, 2013 SESSION

## EMPOWERING THE WOMEN OF PURPOSE

## MOUNT ZION AFRICAN EPISCOPAL CHURCH

## TO IDENTIFY THEIR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Rev. Angela M. Battle, Facilitator

**Opening Prayer:**

**Poem:** *“Empowered Woman”* by Sonny Carroll

**Key Scriptures:** Luke 4:18 &19

**Questions for Journal:** God, what is my ministry?

*Reflect on how God has prepared and equipped you for ministry.*

**Homework:** Find the Scripture that supports your ministry.

**Review:** January, February & March

**Presentations:** *The labor and birthing process*

**Questionnaire:** Please fill out in preparation for discussion

**Announcements:** Tentative date of next meeting, Saturday, May 4, 2013 at 10:30 am.

**Circle of Prayer:**

**Fellowship:**



## APPENDIX M PASTOR'S EVALUATION

### **Spiritual Gift Assessment**

**May 18, 2013**

1. Did this ministry project help learn and develop the women's spiritual gifts?
2. Did any new ministries, initiatives, ministry enhancements or projects get birth out of this ministry project? What from this project will continue?
3. Can you please share your experience from a pastoral perspective of ministry project both positive and the challenges?
4. How would you say this project impacted the congregation?
5. How was the leadership style of the Doctor of Ministry candidate?
6. Please add additional comments you would like to add about the ministry project or the Doctor of Ministry candidate.

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