

ASSIST THE WIDOWED WOMEN OF MAPLE HILL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL

CHURCH DISCOVER THEIR GIFTS AND TALENTS FOR ACTIVE MINISTRY

MAPLE HILL, NORTH CAROLINA

A professional project submitted to the Theological School of
Drew University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Doctor of Ministry

Congregational Growth and Development and Concentration

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Abstract

ASSIST THE WIDOWED WOMEN OF MAPLE HILL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL
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By Gloria F. Fields

The scriptures teach that God cares greatly for the widow, “Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.” Acts 6:1 ESV

This project comes from observing my mother take on the role of a widow after the death of my father. The term “widowhood takes on more than just being a word that describes the state of a women who’s spouse is deceased. As a pastor, called to shepherd God’s people; carries the responsibility of ensuring that all of God’s people are active participants in the church and not view the state of widowhood as just being. The project attempts to assist the widowed women of the church to discover their God given gifts and talents for active ministry in the hope of them using their gifts and talents in the church. The project will examine the reasons why the widows are not involved in an ongoing ministry. The project will focus on the status and functions of the Christian widowed women of Maple Hill African Methodist Episcopal Church and their views of widowhood as they will be encouraged to become involved in an ongoing active ministry of the church. The project will take place for sixteen (16) weeks in five phases, (1st) a survey will be given to the congregation to help identify the ministries of the church. (2nd) phase, a survey to help identify the widows of the church; these widows will be ask to participate in the Doctoral Project.

The (3rd) phase will consist of the widows participating in a number of learning components. The (4th) phase will be the study from the book “Serving from the Heart; finding Your Gifts and Talents for Service.” In the (5th) and final phase the women will be challenged to identify their ministry based on their gifts and talents profile; and make the decision as to how to use their gifts in the church and the local community; and the final question, “Where shall I Go From Here?”

Special Acknowledgements

To the Great People of Maple Hill African Methodist Episcopal Church; the Church that helped me to grow in Christ Jesus. I am humble and grateful that God the Creator of all things would entrust me with such a precious gift; “You” His people. It is with a heart of gratitude and sincere thanks to all the wonderful members of Maple Hill African Methodist Episcopal Church that sets on the side of Highway NC 53 East in Maple Hill, North Carolina; small in structure, but has a big heart, the “Mother Church” of the community.

I possess no words of my own that can express my love and earnest desire to see you grow in Christ. We have been together for many years and the journey has not always been easy; but yet the God we love and serve keep making a way out of no way for us. “To God Be All Glory and Praise For The Great Things He Has Done.”

To the community churches, the pastors and their members, I THANK YOU for your love and steadfastness shown toward me; I thank you for your endurance and your unconditioned love given unto me.

To the Members of the Project Committee: Consultant Mr. Ralph Parker, Reverend Alase G. Brown and the Reverend Doctor Patricia L Freeman.

The Project Team: Mrs. Helena Lee and Mrs. Faye Hankins; Sisters Brenda Lisane and Clorinda Molly and to all the wonderful widowed participants; Sisters Lucile Fleming, Willie Bannerman, and Elisa Ricks who thought it not robbery to come and glean from the fruit of the “Spirit”. To all of you; “Thank you Once Again and May God Forever Bless You and Your Families.” And to my colleagues; Sisters and friend, Rev Dr. Orea Jones-Wells and soon to be Rev. Dr. Pam Stanley, thank you for your encouragement and support.

Dedication

This project is dedicated to those who were special in my Life; To “The love” of my life Phillip M. Fields (deceased), to both my parents now deceased, father Robert Mc Millan and to my mother Frances Agatha Parker-McMillan, who went home to be with the Lord long before I began this project; a widow of the church that taught me how to live as a God fearing women. And to all the women who may in their life time may become a widow. To those women who have chosen to serve God as a widow, and not self-serving. To the widowed women of the church those who have stood the test of time knowing full well that God has a place for you. “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” Galatians 6:9 (KJV)

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INTRODUCTION

Reflection of My Beginning Ministry

I have been blessed to serve in ministry for many years and in many ways. I served as the only female lay reader for Howard Air Force Base Chapel in the Canal Zone of Panama for 3 1/2 years and as a Church School teacher for the 7-9 years of age; as well as the Acolyte Director. After returning to the United States to be assigned with my husband to Ellsworth Air Force Base I became once again the only female lay reader until I left the Base Chapel to attend one of the local area churches in down town Rapid City. There I serve as a Stewardess and a Church School Teacher. Upon returning to North Carolina, our home state and becoming a member of Mount Olive African Methodist Episcopal Church; I became a Missionary and their Young People's Department Director. Part of my ministry as a Missionary was preparing and serving meals with my husband along with one of our church sisters' (Joy), for the elderly every Saturday morning as well as the Thanksgiving meals we served out of the side of the family van, moving from one part of the city to the next.

With a newly assigned pastor came additional and more interesting work; I was asked to teach the new members class, and to lead a women's' program, but my passion was in mission work, and outreach ministry. I tried recruiting others to work with me but had only one taker. She, (Joy) and I would go into public housing seeking the needs of the residents and encouraging them to come and participate and become a part of the church, some did but there were so many who would not and gave very good reasons as to why they would not involve themselves with the church. I served the church as a lay person until I heard a voice which I believe to be God, say "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the

shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers”¹; ‘I have called you’, I took this to be the will of God for me to do more work, so I sought to do more missionary work. I really did not know what to do; and for months I kept what I heard to myself until I finally had a talk with my pastor Rev. Artie Odom. He asked me what was I called to do and I told him, it was the called to serve as a Missionary, his reply was “are you sure, you are already doing that?” My reply was yes; for it is better to be called up than to be called down. So I was licensed at the North Carolina Annual Conference the same year as a Missionary. In less than a years’ time, the same voice I had heard before said “I have called you to a higher level”; upon this saying I acknowledged and accepted that God was calling me into another ministry of His choosing and not my own. So once again I spoke with my pastor after much prayer; it was as though he had been waiting for me to return, He didn’t same surprise at all. I began to seek God to make sure that my calling was sure. I am sure now that I am called to teach and to counsel; for these was the directions I heard. God began to open doors of higher learning in that I may be used to glorify His name. In obedience to the Master of my life I enrolled in a Masters of Counseling program and upon completion and at the request of Bishop Vinton R. Anderson; who seeking students to send to Seminary, I volunteered to go and obtain a Master of Divinity degree so that I might better serve Gods people and that His name be praise. I am thankful for the opportunity that was afforded me by the Bishop and the AME Church. I believe I am better prepared to serve God’s people as a servant. My learning has opened my eyes to the various ministers of the Church and the needs of the people. It has propelled me as a leader into unchartered areas of ministry and in doing so I found that being able to converse with others who have the love and passion for the

¹ John 10:1-5, *The Thompson Chain –Reference Bible*, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana : B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988)

things of God has opened my mind to new ways of doing ministry.

Being a leader and taking on the leadership role, means having direction and staying the course or on track in which one has been given the opportunity to serve and the initiative to explore uncharted waters. There are those that may want to be a leader but will not seek the necessary means to obtain it for the fear of the cost they will have to pay. Bishop Vashti M. McKenzie in her book Strength InThe Struggle written on Leadership Development for Women has quoted Leighton Ford as saying that there are two factors; “there are leaders who take the lead and move people to fellow them. Ford goes on to conclude that any consideration of leadership must include the position of the leader, plus the process employed and the personality of the leader. In many instances leadership comes at a cost and not too many are willing to suffer the cost for the true mission of the church”.²

Being appointed to a leadership role is no easy task; to carry the Christian message means to die to self and be willing to comfort those that go into battle with you: praying that you have paid attention to Gods voice and working with God rather than for God. For we are to be God’s fellow worker; we cooperate with His will in mission.

God’s Appointed Place

Since being appointed to my first charge as an African Methodist Episcopal Church pastor I have become a widow and find the work to be just as innovating as it was when I had a partner he too being in ministry to consul and encourage me, I still stand on faith that God will keep you and bring you through the storms of life. In view of the fact that my husband passed three (3) years after being appointed to this charge and I am still here twelve (12) years later seeking Gods’

² Bishop Vashti M. McKenzie, *Strength In The Struggle; Leadership Development For Women*, (Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 2001),

will for the people. I know God has a plan as He always does, but we as humans cannot always see it; yet when we look around and see what is happening we can get a glimpse of Gods' work. Only God can have placed us in a familiar setting after twenty three (23) near a military base.

Maple Hill African Methodist Episcopal Church is located in Maple, North Carolina a (see appendix # 2) rural area of Pender County located in the south east part of the state. Located within the short distance of the Church is Camp Lejeune Marine Base; the largest Marine Base on the East Coast. The base and surrounding community is home to active duty and dependents, retiree and civilian employees. This population generates almost \$3 billion in commerce each year, coming from payrolls and contracts to support the structure required to train and equip our modern Marines. All of which are located within a thirty (30) minute or less drive from Maple Hill, North Carolina. According to the report of 'First Review'; (Appendix #2)³ currently there are 54,156 persons, residing in the area. This represents an increase of 25,301, or 87.7% since 1990. During the same period of time, the U.S. as a whole grew by 25.9%. This may be based on the up sizing of the Marine Corps Base which is a 246-square-mile military training facility in Jacksonville, North Carolina. The base with its 14 miles of beach make it a major area for amphibious assault training, and its location between two deep-water ports Wilmington and Morehead City also allows for fast deployments. The main base is supplemented by five satellite facilities: Marine Corps Air Station New River, Camp Geiger, Stone Bay, Courthouse Bay, Camp Johnson, and the latest addition to the facility, the Greater Sandy Run Training Area.

The town ship of Maple Hill is located between the city of Burgaw and Jacksonville; employing many of the local residents of area. Maple Hill African Methodist Episcopal Church is the oldest Black congregation in the community, founded by an evangelist in 1869; it is considered the "Mother Church" of all the other churches founded in the community. The church

³ Appendix # 2 Percept Ministry Area Profile

is situated on an acre of land purchased for five (\$5.00) dollars by parents of the congregation on Highway 53 East which is one of the main thoroughfares connecting Burgaw to Jacksonville. The rural community is surrounded by what is now dormant uncultivated farmland which was once grown and harvested by many of the church member's ancestors and was their only source of revenue.

Here the parishioners gather every Sunday morning for the eleven O'clock service. It has only been in the past twelve years that the church has gone to all Sunday services. For many of its 146 years the worshipers only came together on the second, fourth and sometimes on the fifth Sundays while attending the other churches' 1st and 3rd Sunday services. Many of the church members were born into the family of Methodists and continue to embrace the Methodists tradition with enthusiasm and are ready to participate in the traditional style of service as they were taught; but over the years there have been varying ages that have joined with the congregation, thus pioneering new and innovative ways; rather than a non-traditional way of worshipping; a young adult choirs (all women) is now in place and are now a key component in leading the congregants along with the youth in the worship service on the third Sunday. When the third Sunday service was added to the worship schedule not everyone agreed because the children and youth would be in charge of leading the congregation, but over the pass years it has grown in attendance.

The church style has been strictly traditional with the mean interest of the people in the area being that of spiritual development. With this being said; the potential for resistance to change is somewhat high based on gender and age which is a significant factor for resistance and with that being said it would give reasons as to why widowed women are not active or as active as they might be because of rooted traditions.

Though Maple Hill is of the Methodists denominational tradition; the church is not as

immovable as some of our typical A.M.E. Churches, with the usual ritualistic service every Sunday, it has now become more of a mixture of the old as well as the new, intertwining spirituality and religion in hope of developing passionate Christians with their tradition.

I am now serving as the first female Pastor of this rural church with 224 names on the Roll that will celebrate its 147th anniversary on the 4th Sunday in the month of September 2015. The Congregation is made up largely of women and a number of them are widows. We are open to trying new ministries; we operate a Food Bank and Prison ministry as well as served the community as a Summer Lunch site. We were awarded some grant funds by the state of North Carolina to provide services to the local community. The grant has since cease and we struggle to keep some of the service operational but God has sustained us and keep making ways out of no way. I believe that if I am a willing vessel God is able and He will supply the need. Therefore I never give up on any situation or circumstance I always keep the faith and put my trust and hope in God, He is in control and nothing can happen without His permission. We are all here by and for a divine purpose, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.”⁴ It is my desire as a widow to connect with other widows that have a passion for the things of God and it is my hope that we can all work together in partnership to the glory of God. It is my prayer that every ministry that exist and the ones to be established will flourish as we share and collaborate with each other.

We are all called into this great work, and none of us can do it alone. No pastor can single handedly fulfill the divine calling, regardless of how gifted he or she may be unless every one

⁴ 1 Peter 2:9-10, John 10:1-5, *The Thompson Chain –Reference Bible*, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana : B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988)

catches the fire and are willing to fan the flames. There should be an urgency to share Gods saving grace with others; and I do admit that there was some hesitation at first about being a female pastor, but I have come to enjoy the learning and sharing with others in what God can and will do in various ministries of the Church.

When we read that many Churches are facing declining membership for various reasons. I pose two questions; 1) are the churches using what God has given it; or could it possibly be because its mission has not been clearly identified and embraced and therefore the congregations are not fueled and empowered to do mission work. The leader of the church needs to share the vision with all the people so that they may be able to do the work of missions together. I think that it may be true that some are leaving the church because they want to do more in mission and are not given the opportunity or the opportunity was not there. Let me be clear about the leaving of the church. It should be understood that people leave in many ways; it does not always mean that a person leaves to go to another church, or even join another church, it could be that they are just staying away from the church where their name is on the roll or simply not participating for feelings unbeknown to others; that of feeling useless.

Traditional Christianity is good and by no means do I discount it, but “Christianity traditionally as it has been taught to exclude women from the ministry, supported racial segregation, confused church and state, and held slaves. Perhaps tradition as we know it is best left in the pass as a museum piece to be guarded; and understood as the clay of Christian experience... and to be crafted with faithful care.”⁵ But let us be mindful not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. The church needs to get back in touch with God and do the teaching He has commanded and authorized by His anointed power. I have heard many say that the church is not in touch with the people; so I now ask the 2nd question, why is it that the people are not in

⁵ Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity For The Rest Of Us: How The Neighborhood Church Is Transforming The Faith*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006), 47.

touch with the church; for the church is that body of believers that share the common belief that we are all sinners saved by the wonderful grace of God through His Son Jesus the Christ, but as it is written “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard and how shall they hear without a preacher?”⁶

There are many issues facing the Church today; and while there are probably any number of topics I could have chosen, I have decided to address the Widows of the church. The project’s concept is that of growing the church using the thought of “Widowed Women” of the church as the main focus. The project seeks to assist the widowed women of the church to discover their gifts and talents for active ministry in the hope of them becoming ‘Active Members’ of the church by engaging in a ministry of various kinds. The project will seek out reasons as to why the widows of the church are not involved in ongoing ministries of care to others and themselves. The proposal will look at the status and functions of some Christian widowed women of Maple Hill African Methodist Episcopal Church and their views of the Church and that of widowhood as they will be encouraged to become involved in an ongoing active ministry in their local church.

As the project began to unfold the widowed women of the church, those who initially signed up and said that they would be a part of the project began to withdraw; it is needless to say this caused me some anxiousness. I wanted to believe from the onset that this would be very enlightening as well as challenging when it came to the recruitment of participants and their commitment.

We are living in a different time and place in which I grew up. The idea that there are

⁶ Romans 10:14, *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible*, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana : B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988)

widows that have nothing to do and looking for something to do in the church, especially in a rural Black Church is a misnomer. The church is not on everyone's priority list and not every widow in the church share the same interest when it comes to the things of God. I thank God for the faithful and committed that stayed with the project until the end.

CHAPTER 1

WIDOWHOOD

“Let a widow be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, having been the wife of one man, having a reputation for good works; and if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints’ feet, if she has assisted those in distress, and if she has devoted herself to every good work.” (1 Timothy 5:9–10)

“Widowhood is defined as the status of an individual who was legally married to someone who subsequently died. Widowhood is a subject that is global; it will occur regardless of race, class or socioeconomics. At some point one or the other one of the married partner will die. The death of a husband can usually cause a dramatic change in the living partner’s way of life. The death of a husband at an advanced stage of marriage is more in keeping with what is anticipated; therefore it is easier to except the loss when it happens.”¹

A widow in the biblical sense may be a daughter, a mother, a sister, a niece, or an aunt who loses her husband through death. Caring for such a woman is a privilege and a manifestation of God's compassion.

“In the early church there were groups of widows who served in some officially recognized capacity. The requirements for being put on the list, reminiscent of those for church leaders found in chapter 3 of I Timothy makes this evident. This godly group of women had a spiritual and practical ministry directly to the women and children of the church. They also

¹ Karen C Holden, Kim A. Meeryoun, *Widowhood: Economic Issues*, (Encyclopedia of Aging: 2002). Encyclopedia.com (January 24, 2014) .

ministered indirectly to the men by virtue of their influence on the women. They fulfilled Paul's injunction in Titus 2:3–5 that older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored. Their duties may have included assisting with the baptism of women, visiting the sick, visiting prisoners, teaching and the chastisement of younger women, aiding the younger women in rearing and nurturing their children, and providing hospitality for visitors and strangers. They may have also assisted in placing orphans into proper Christian homes. This was an extremely vital ministry to the Roman government, in view of the fact that orphaned or abandoned children often became slaves, prostitutes or gladiators. With their own husbands gone and their children grown, the widows would have the time to pursue such essential ministries.

This group of widows existed in the early church is known from extra-biblical sources. In the late first and early second centuries, Ignatius and Polycarp both wrote about such women, while Tertullian, who lived in the early part of the third centuries, also alluded to the widows of the time. In the third-century a document known as the Didascalia, and the fourth-century Apostolic Constitutions both referred to an Order of Widows.

It is questionable as to whether or not if all the widows on the list were supported by the church; some no doubt were, while others had resources of their own. Paul makes note of what makes a widow eligible for support. He argued in verse 9 the following three (3) points:

First, a widow should be no less than sixty years of age. It was at that age that men and

women should become priests and priestesses; it was acknowledged that sexual passion began to wane at age sixty and therefore the age requirement ensured that the widow would not be obsessed with self desires and the elder woman would have the time, maturity, character, reputation, and compassion to serve the Lord and the church. Whereas a younger woman, she might become dis interested and abort her commitment to the Lord and remarry.

Second, a widow should have been married only once. One who is or was totally devoted to her husband, in purity of action and attitude. The widow that did not come up to this requirement was considered not be an appropriate role model for younger women to emulate.

Third, a widow should be known for her standards and good works and her outstanding uprightness should be common knowledge to all just as the elders and deacons. Her spirituality had to be above reproach and be evidence of the kind of woman she was.

Paul defined five qualities that are considered types of good works that should be required of any woman. He calls for all women to be inspired and seek to be of such spiritual virtue as to be put on the list to serve the church should they become widows.

First, she must nourish children Teknotropheo (brought up children) appears only here in the New Testament. This views the widow as a godly Christian mother, rearing children to follow the Lord. This is considered one of the women's greatest privilege and responsibility and for doing so she would be saved in childbearing, if she continued in her faith, charity and holiness with sobriety.

Paul does not devalue women who were not able to have children, or who had the ability

to remain single because such did fulfill a unique role in the life of the family of God. Having children was the norm, in spite of this; he gives this as a common value. A woman with no children of her own could exhibit this quality by nurturing orphans. Only a woman with this experience could possibly instruct younger women on how to bring up godly children.

Second, she should be known for her kindness and hospitality to strangers as well as friends and relatives just as the elders. She should show and express the same sacrificial devotion to the needs of people she does not know. Christians away from home depended on the hospitality of other Christian believers because there were no motels or hotels and inns, or they were either they were often filthy and dangerous. Phoebe was applauded as being a helper to many by opening her home to the Christians that were in need of shelter and food. This offers more evidence that the list was not one of destitute widows that needed any type of support; for had it been different this kind of widow would hardly have been able to open her homes to provide for others.

Third, she should be one who was willing to wash the feet of saints. This stresses that the widow should be humble and have a servant's heart, she gives of herself to those in need and never seeks to exalt herself, though she may not have washed the traveler feet, she would have made provisions for it to be done by one of her slaves.

Fourth, she was to assist those in thlibo, which means in distress and could be translated those under pressure. Her life was to be devoted to helping those under any sort of pressure, whether physical, mental, or emotional. She was also to assist those of Eparkeo (financial needs) as a godly widow she was to assist in the financial needs, using her financial resources.

Fifth, she devotes herself to every good work, Epakoloutheo this describes the widow who eagerly and carefully gives herself to the pursuit of good deeds. These qualities define the character of a widow that is qualified to serve the church, so they must also be accepted as the core principles for every Christian woman to follow in her life, so when the day comes and she is considered for service in the church, she will be qualified.

These qualities illustrate God's design for Christian widowed women and should be her uppermost concern and by following them she recognizes that she can and will make a profound impact on the earth and everything on it.

“Widowhood affects almost half of all women over age sixty five (65). Each year, nearly 700,000 women lose their husbands and remain widows for an average of 14 years. Women tend to marry men several years older and therefore outlive men by nearly six (6) years. There are 11 million widows to 2.6 million widowers, a ratio of 4.3 to 1.”² As Christian widows there is hope for us for in the scripture we will find these words in John 16:22, “And ye now therefore have Sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”³ We can be assured of all of Gods' promise to us. His words will light our path way in all we attempt to do in His name.

“Widowhood isn't easy. Following the initial numbness, a widow is thrust into a tunnel of grief hoping to emerge with a new identity as well as relationships and activities to fill the emptiness. Widows often ask themselves, “What do I call myself now? Am I still a wife, or must I

² <http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/health/widowhood-effect-strongest-months-study-article>.

³ John 16:22, *The Thompson Chain –Reference Bible*, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana: B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988).

now refer to myself as a widow because my husband is gone?” “What is my purpose? Where am I needed? What role do I play?”

It has been the experiences of some to encounter what numerous persons have said and that is “The first year is considered the worst as it is the “year of firsts:” the first anniversary, the first birthday, Thanksgiving, Christmas . . . all spent without that spouse of so many years. It is especially during this time that close friends and family members who shared a meaningful relationship with the deceased are invaluable. Other widows who have experienced a similar loss are also a deep source of comfort. Scripture tells us: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God” II Corinthians.⁴ The second year does not bring immediate relief, but is a year of rebuilding and healing. By the end of the second year, statistics show that widows are no more likely to be depressed than other women their age. Also, at least a third of widows report discovering new strengths and talents

This is where we find ourselves to day; searching, trying to uncover the hidden treasures in our earthen vessels for we are “Treasures of Clay” and Gods’ word speaks to us saying “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels that the Excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are troubled on

⁴ II Corinthians 1:3-4, *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible*, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana : B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988).

every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.”⁵

Let us remember that at the end of the day it is not about us it is all about our God, therefore we should be mindful that “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”⁶ I am not saying that all widows will find it easy to make the transition of not having a husband; they may become secluded and want to be alone. We know that God never gives up on us and we as the body of Christ must not ever give up on each other especially our widows. We should try to help them make a new life as some will struggle to find a new purpose in life.

By God’s handiwork many are called and few are chosen. I see myself as one that has been called to carry the mantle of leadership; being that because I am a widow and a pastor in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, I am compelled to use that which has been placed in my hands by the authority of God and entrusted to my care as well as the endorsement of the church to shepherd God’s people. Now the conviction that lay heavy on my heart is to move all people; widows included forward to work toward the vision and mission of the church.

⁵ II Corinthians 4:5-12, *The Thompson Chain –Reference Bible*, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana : B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988).

⁶ I Peter 4:11 , *The Thompson Chain –Reference Bible*, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana : B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988).

I realize that I am no less obligated to labor in the work of the church than those sitting in the pews. The church's assignment is mandated by the world's greatest "Mission Statement" and it is validated by the Great Commission of Jesus Himself saying "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and the Holy Ghost; Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world".⁷ These scriptures defines the purpose and validates the work of the church; it gives a reference point as to where, why and how we should began to provide services in the church as well as in the community and thus it confirms our existence as a church and establishes the relationships between God and His people. God would never have given us the "Great Commission" to go into all the world and preach the gospel if it was never intended for us to actually move forward on it.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church draws its theological concept from the Wesleyan tradition. It has always been about the people. The beginning of the AME church dates back to "1787 when Richard Allen and many other black worshippers withdrew from St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia after being pulled from their knees during worship in a gallery they did not know was closed to black Christians. In protest, they all left St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church that day according to Allen never to bother them again.

As its mission statement states the African Methodist Episcopal Church vows "to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and environmental needs of all people by spreading Christ's liberating gospel through word and deed. At every level of the Connection and

⁷ (Matt 28:19-20, *The Thompson Chain –Reference Bible*, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana: B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988).

in every local church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church shall engage in carrying out the spirit of the original Free African Society, out of which the AME Church evolved: that is, to seek out and save the lost, and serve the needy”⁸ as outlined in the AME book of Doctrine and Discipline.

The AME Church just like many other denominations has had their vision and mission statements in place for many years. The mission is accomplished through the training, teaching and preaching of the pastors and laity and yet our membership continues to reduce in size. The African Methodist Episcopal Church with its very clear and simple words for mission is to teach the mind to think, the heart to love and the hands to work for all of humanity with God finds itself struggling to keep members from leaving or getting them to attend on regular bases. The vision and mission statement has not changed since its founding fathers for more than two hundred years.

The A.M.E. Church is a form of Methodism that provides an orderly system of rules and regulations that places emphasis on a “plain and simple gospel”. Therefore the ultimate purposes are: (1) make available God’s biblical principles, (2) spread Christ’s liberating gospel, and (3) provide continuing programs which will enhance the entire social development of all people.”

⁹And though the full statement is more thoughtful and weighty and the intend is the same; and yet the facts as they are, it is disappointing to say that the some of the local churches in which I have

⁸ Dr. Johnny Barbour, *The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Publishing House, 2008), 16.

⁹ Dr. Johnny Barbour, *The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Publishing House, 2008), 16.

had the privilege to served have not entirely embraced this concept. It struggles to develop its own identity and vision or mission statement; let alone the vision or mission of the entire Connectional Church.

Winseman says that “a lot of congregations are too closely tied to the institutional religion, and are simply going through the motions of “doing church”¹⁰ and I tend to agree with this to a point, I see it more as the church leader / pastor along with the congregation not being able to see the vision as it applies to the local church and its community and therefore leaves a congregation be wildered and the Pastor frustrated of the whole matter as it pertains to the vision and mission as a whole. It must be remembered that the vision and mission of the institutional church may not be the vision of God; in the sense the church loses its identity and purpose in which God call it into existence. So the thought would be that in order for any church to be successful it must first be committed to God’s vision and then identify its mission. To say this is to acknowledge that the church is lacking in its understanding of its sole purpose, thus it cannot see a vision or mission for direction in the community and therefore not able to accomplish the vision or the mission of the entire denomination. As with many churches it has the potential and means to be a thriving church, all the necessary ingredients are in place yet in spite of this the church has remain underdeveloped in its few to none ministers that are needed for the community. It is just a fossil of what it could really be should it grasp Gods’ Divine Vision and Mission for its true existence in its particular locale. The true mission of every church is the same “that of calling all of humankind unto repentance” the only difference is how shall the mission be fulfilled by those that

¹⁰ Winseman, Albert L., *Growing An engaged Church How to stop “Doing Church” And Start Being The Church Again*; (New York, NY; Gallup Press 2006), 8.

partner with God to bring it to fruition? The church must regain its focus, that of calling humankind unto repentance and discipleship and there is none who can better tell the story than those that have received the gift of “Salvation” and has a steadfast walk with Jesus Christ and willing to share their unwavering faith.

Disciples that are willing to teach and prepare the people to use their God given gifts and talents to develop ministries, preparing more disciples for the various ministries that are needed in the congregations and local community. There are many churches that are not able or willing to grow their church because they are unable or their unwillingness to use what members they do have and this can be troublesome as well as challenging. Is it the leaders of the church that have a major role in helping the numbers stay up; are the leaders not able or willing to put together ministries that influence and encourage the heart of the people, is it the ministries, or lack thereof that the people are leaving; what is it going to take for the congregations to grow?

Once we have a clear understanding of what a true leader of God’s people will or will not do we can move beyond the leadership itself, such as personality and attitudes. According to Ezekiel this is what a pastor should not do “Thus says the Lord GOD to the shepherds: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through

all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them.”¹¹

Surely this contradicts the true nature of one of God’s leaders. The Shepherd is the minister of the God’s kingdom here on earth, and to not do that which is required of him or her as a shepherd would be liken unto a hireling. It should be said that leadership in the church is not a technique, a style, or the acquisition of skills, but is solely a manifestation of the Spirit of God. So the finally analyses is unpretentiously define it is a matter of the heart; a heart that has been cultivated and shaped to do good works in the name of Jesus which seeks nothing for itself and lives for the purpose of bringing God’s vision and the churches mission to fruition. So the next thought would be the teaching, not a thought or an opinion but that which is totally based on scripture/s.

Albert Winseman warns that “the vast majority of mainline Protestant churches are experiencing serious chest pains on a regular basis, theses churches are massive heart attacks waiting to happen and that it is time for major surgery and a radical lifestyle change.”¹² The churches need to revisit the scriptures to achieve its mission for which it was called.

Then the next question arises, ‘who will teach’ and more often than any of us want to admit the very answer is seating on the church pews. I propose that there are many setting in the pews waiting and wanting to be called out but are afraid because of their and our inability to

¹¹ Ezekiel 34:2-6, *The Thompson Chain –Reference Bible*, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana: B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988).

¹² Albert L. Winseman, *Growing An engaged Church How to stop “Doing Church” And Start Being The Church Again*; (New York, NY: Gallup Press, 2006), 4.

discern what God is saying to the church. I would propose that the widowed woman of the church, those that are of aged or “seasoned” as I like to call them that have experienced God’s saving grace and life far beyond my years would be a great fit and an excellent resource for the church to invest in establishing new and meaningful as well as thoughtful ministries as they are needed throughout the church and the community as long as they are saved, willing and prepared. If we all would take the time and seriously look throughout the congregations of the church no doubt in most cases there is a very strong indication that 75 to 80 percent of the congregation consist of widows that are of retirement age or better, many of whom have or will outlive their husbands. And the vast majority of them have never been considered, or considered being a leader in the church nor have they thought of being instructed in what gifts and talents they possess. These widowed women still have the need for human companionship and the desire to carry on and to be able to make positive contributions to the churches to which they belong and attend as well as the communities in which they live. If we were to take an inventory of the various ministries that exist, if any in many of the Black churches, they would consist of food banks, clothing, outreach and prison and the list may go on. These ministries are wonderful to have, but rarely do we find or see a widows /widowers ministries listed in the ministries offered by the church but we only need to stop and take a look at those that are participating in these ministries and ask ourselves the question as why they are doing it, is it because of their love for that particular ministry or are they doing it because of their brokenness and looking for a bandage to cover their hurt and dejected spirit and in part this is another reason for this project.

The church could enlarge its self by embracing all its members in general and especially the widows of the church, equipping them to use their gifts and talents as agents of the “Good

News” for kingdom building because of their long standing in the Christian faith community.

“Many Christians today, including clergy and some scholars, presume that women played little to no role in the Jesus movement in the early church. But women did in fact play a critical role in the Jesus movement and were prominent leaders along with men in a wide variety of roles in the early church.”¹³ Paul relied on the spiritual gifts of the early church and makes mention of them several times in his writings. The church must cease looking at the box that is before it and open the box and use the gift there in. The leaders must take in consideration all those sitting in their pews, and especially widows and widowers, and acknowledge that it has to do a better job in providing ministries of healing for the broken and wounded of spirit caused by the death of a spouse. More thought of who is listening and what is being preached from the pulpit is needed. This brings me back to what was said earlier and still holds true that 75 to 80 percent of the congregations consist of women and many of them are or will become widows of the congregation that have never considered being a leader in the church nor instructed in their spiritual gifts or talents. This says to me that these women need to see themselves in scripture before they will ever become active in any ministry of the church.

The leaders of the church must come to terms as did my mother’s pastors. He realized that there was a need and he could not meet it at the time and was willing to share the ministry with another person of the church that was capable, willing, and seasoned in many of life’s area circumstances and prepared by the church.

¹³ Karen, Jo Torjesen, , *When Women Were Priests: Women's Leadership in the Early Church and the Scandal of Their Subordination in the Rise of Christianity*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993), 11.

Preparing the Foundation for Service

In the beginning of this project some of the widowed women were not as engaging and open as I had hope for them to be. The questions about my call and to serve as their first female Pastor was an excellence place to start our discourse. Several questions of how did you (I) know you were called into ministry, and what made you say yes, and what is your story? To put their minds at ease I shared my life's story and how I had come to this place in life. I had to admit to them that at first there was some hesitation, but after learning my family history, the call to ministry with much prayer, it seem only natural that this was where I belonged, teaching and counseling in Gods house was the perfect place to start was with Church History and Women in the early Church. As with anything, one needs to know the beginning of a thing. Admittedly some of the women at first were hesitant and reluctant to share their opinion openly about female ministers because traditionally they were taught that women were not to be the leaders of the church and I had no problem with this; relating that I understood. Sharing that I could find my- self in the scripture references in the Bible. For many there was the lack of knowledge of the female in the scripture and especially those that were widows and in ministry. I enlighten them of the various authors and their writings and books on the female participation in the Early Church, such as Roger Gryson's writings, Ministry of Women which offers a comprehensive interpretive study of literary and canonical texts, using some epigraphical evidence as support. Georges Martimort, in his Deaconesses, did a comprehensive study on female deacons; Susannah Elm's Virgins of God about the development of female asceticism in the context of the wider ascetic movement. Giorgio Otranto's groundbreaking article on female Presbyters in the West, Ottanto /Rossi's Priesthood, collects and discusses all known inscriptions of female presbyters that can be

interpreted as referring to officeholders, and the book of Ute Eisen, Women Officeholder has the most comprehensive inscriptional evidence to date. Inquiring if there were any more questions and of course there were a few and from there we were able to move beyond the unknown. In the end many had to admit that they had no knowledge of women especially the widow's diverse roles in the scriptures. These women needed to be assured that God has a plan far beyond what we sometimes, think, know, believe, or have been taught. As a pastor and minister of the Gospel I agree whole heartily that we have heavy responsibility to teach the unadulterated truth to all people, men, women, boys and girls. We are to use the knowledge God has given us.

As a part of my learning I wanted to share with these women that they have gifts and talents to be used in the church. Following approval of the Ethical Review Board I began to bring this project to fruition in September 2014. The initial step actually began with sharing a survey (appendix #1) that was given in class at the onset of my enrolling in the Doctoral Program "Congregational Growth and Development" at Drew University presented by the instructor and Advisor Rev. Dr. Kevin Miller. Upon delivery and return of the survey taken by the congregation I was educated by the fact that many of the parishioners did not know what ministries existed in the church and what church ministries could be established and offered to the community. In preparing for the project another survey was made specifically for widows (appendix # 6.1), that were not members of the local congregation, but a part of the local community.

Afterwards I asked the widowed women of the congregation to take the survey (appendix # 6.2). At one of the Church Conferences and the Official Board I asked other women of the congregation that were not widows and unmarried if they would be willing to become

participations in the project. The project was to provide the evidence needed to encourage the widows and some others that even today women are welcome and needed to participate in the various ministries of the church.

I am usually comfortable talking with people, especially if I have known them for a while, but for the task at hand it was totally uncharacteristic for me. I approached this undertaking of getting to know what other widows were thinking and how they were coping with the death of their spouse with some hesitation. But once I was able to find and establish some common ground with them, from there on all were open, and all those I made contact with were willing and wanting to share their stories of the life they had shared with their spouse for many years.

It was thought-provoking to note what and how many of these widows felt about their church in particular, and their understanding of the mission of their denomination when it came to the ministry of caring for its widows. It is interesting to note that a number of them were not aware of the widows in the bible and that widows carried a special place in Gods' heart. Some were not even cognizant of the roles women held in the early church. And again this was right on target for the project, in the sense of me wanting to know why so many of the widowed women in the church were not actively participating with any ongoing ministry of the church.

To get started here several questions were formed and answered; does the church have ministries and who are they designed for? Are there any ministries designed specifically for the widows of your church and if so were they made aware of them? Was there an invitation extended to them and if so, when was the invitation extended, before the death of the spouse or during the transition? These are just a few of the questions that were conceived during my interviews. Some

questions and information I never had to ask once the conversation began. As I said many wanted to communicate what they were feeling and the thoughts they were thinking. They knew they were still alive and yet felt as though they had died. They had no one to walk with or share their stories and they were dismissed just as the one who had passed. There are many people who professed they cared, but within weeks they had all disappeared. I could relate to all that was being said.

As I mentioned before the inspiration for this project came from observing my mother and other women as they took on the role of widowhood. While watching and listening to many of them speak about the “new norm” some expressed little hope or aspirations to participate in any type of active church ministry. I began to wonder why widows would be so dismayed; when now was a time to really work in the church and serve God at will. What would or could stop or hinder a widow of good health and sound mind from being involve in some type of ongoing ministry in their church?

One of the questions my mother asked herself after the death of my father was “what will I do now?” Of course she, like many, did not ask the question right away, but in time as one focuses on what days are left as a widow, and what is it they can do to fulfill the rest of their days here on earth, I too might would have asked that very same question, “what do you do when you have always been active in the church, is there anything else” had I not been involved in some type of ministry already? Those that were interviewed admitted that they had continued to attend their church meetings, had prepared meals for their pastor and sang on the church choir, participated on the Mother Board, and visited the sick. Yet after the death of their spouse they all

desired to do and be more. These women were only known or recognized by the name pinned to them by the spouse who was no longer alive. They carried the burden of loosening themselves from the past and propelling themselves into the future, the “New Norm”. Only those who have experienced the effect of death would understand that which I make reference to.

No one can truly feel or understand what is being said unless he /she has experienced the separation and isolation it brings, the experience of not being included by the mere fact that you are no longer a pair. Many have traveled down the path and it is a road that no one wants to take, but by all probability, if you marry and stay married, one spouse will depart in death. And if it is you who is the survivor, there will be some decisions you will have to make. For one example for sure well be, what will I do with my time; especially now that I am a Christian widowed woman who loves God and if you have never known anything else but that of being a wife and by the grace of God a mother? Some of the questions that well be asked is “what is my purpose; besides that of a wife and mother; why did God create me, why am I still here? We may think we know for what purpose we were created, but what has God said about our total make-up and purpose? Our lives are to be the reflection of God’s divine purpose and therefore we are to bare wittiness of it and it is my personal belief that it is not just a wife and mother. So helping widows transition into a “new norm” is a wonderful opportunity for the church to teach on the gifts of the Spirit.

The following interviews are of women I have had the pleasure to meet; and somehow as God often does, has allowed us to connect through His persistence as we engaged in conversation of the passing of our husband’s. The widows interviewed varied in age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and church denomination. They shared brief nuggets of their stories willingly, hoping that

they would be a voice to encourage other widowed women to be free in what is now their “New Norm”. If telling our stories could be summarized it would be that of giving hope to all women, but especially the widowed women of the church and without glamorizing, or glorifying death this is to inform them that grief and sorrow have come and while in the mist of despair and loss of hope this is not the end of our story for God is a Healer and Redeemer of the wounded and broken spirit.

Stories of Widowhood

Full names are not disclosed because of confidentiality. I would like to thank all persons for their willingness to share a small part of their life’s story with me and others who will read and glean from our path.

Interviewed: September 21, 2013

Mrs. B.

“Although I sometimes found/find it difficult to go to church because of all the couples and families that are there, I know that church can be a true blessing on some occasions. Being a widow always makes me feel as if I am the strange person, as though I am the one out of place. But somehow I continue to push forward and go on; because I do feel it is important to be in church. It is not that I was helped by the church when my husband passed; in fact it was as though I did not exist nor needed any help. At first I became angry and then bitter and it took me a while to get over it. Sometimes, even now I want to get angry but I know that is not Christ like. It has been some time and I still have not found true peace within myself nor with the church”.

Interviewed: September 30, 2013

Mrs. L.

“I have been humbled by the response of my church. As small as it is, I was shocked at the number of women that were widows and I didn't know it. Some have been widowed more than 40 years; some have re-married. They all have been generous and caring and I know I can ask the men of the church for help if I need it, but I've been careful about that; if I need any help I always try and wait until my son is in town or my son in-law is able to do whatever I need to be done. Being at church is painful at times because of the memories of my husband; he was very active and this brings up strong emotions when I am there”.

Interviewed: September 2013

Mrs. S.

“When my husband died it was hard for me to go back to church alone at first. Not that my husband was a church goer; in fact he never attended except for special occasions. But I knew that God is faithful and somehow I found strength in my weakness to let God be God, It was by His strength that I am able to go on”.

Interviewed: September 2013

Mrs. D

“Mrs. D. sums things up by saying, “I cherish the wonderful memories, the times we had together; the many memories, the good and the bad, and that helps me get through the difficult

times. When I begin to feel sorry for myself, I start to recount the pleasurable times we shared. She often finds herself saying, I wish he (her husband of 45 years) could be here to see our grandchildren and our great grandchildren to see how they have grown and what they are becoming. How she wished they could have lived out their dreams of family trips together. She concludes that there will never be another like her beloved husband; so she just thanks God for all He has given her; her family and friends and try to serve Him the best she knows how”.

Interviewed: October, 2013

Mrs. M

“My husband and I attended church together for 41 years, so going alone was terribly difficult at first. Our church had nothing in place for widows. I didn't want to leave my church and go somewhere else because we raised our children here. So I got together with some of the other women of the church and we asked our pastor to start a noon day Bible study; we now meet once a week sharing our widowhood and the many concerns about our family and community. We are in constant support of each other’s needs and as widows we have learned that we have so much in common”.

Interviewed: October 2013

Mrs. G.

This interview is very timely in my life. It has been one year since the passing of my dear husband. I am very thankful to have someone to talk to; for all the help, care, and wisdom that has been offered to me from other widows. I have gone to the cemetery by myself and that has been

hard. I had cried many times alone until another widow came and offered me comfort, “knowing what I was feeling”. A friendship has developed over the months. I don’t cry as much anymore because God has given me a friend that understands. We are both happy in the Lord and it is our desire to be able to share with other widows what God can do in our sorrow, and that is; He can and will provide for us a peace that passes all understanding.

Just as these conversations were important, so were the ones quoted by Martha Alter Chen who wrote “Why Widowhood Matters? In her findings she experienced many of the same feelings, attitudes and thoughts as I did.

“We are considered bad omens. We are excluded from all “auspicious” events. We are expected to stay by ourselves. We are not treated as human beings with life, a body and emotions.”

“I never worked outside our home before my husband’s death. Now, my two unmarried daughters and I work as agricultural laborers. If I work too hard, I suffer chest pain and shortness of breath.”

“I had to raise my children on my own. There was no one else to help me.”

“When I was married, I was Mrs. Donnell. I was somebody. Now that my husband is dead, I am nobody!”

According to Chen’s report “widows are everywhere but they are rarely seen, let alone heard. These women are considered an ‘invisible group’ and their concerns are not adequately addressed by public policy makers. Growing evidence of their vulnerability, both socio-economic and psychological, as evident from the feelings cited above, there are now many conventional

views about this “invisible group”¹⁴ and yet there has been little said in the churches about this group. Very rarely if ever are they mentioned in the church through the preached word.

Having been with this Congregation for many years, I realized that I had not fully informed the congregation about the various ministries that did exist and their objective as a church. This project presented itself to be a great opportunity to teach the participants and the congregation from time to time on the subject of Early Church History itself and that of Women’s Ministry and especially the history of The Widows of the Church during this time period. The rationale was to illustrate not only that women were used by God in the early stages of the church’s development, but widows as well. With this thought in mind of growing and developing new ministries, it seemed most appropriate that a widow’s ministry in the church should come forward.

The material to be presented was designed to have the women to first embrace and understand their womanhood, knowing that we are all products of our upbringing and teachings. The course of study consisted of various biblical stories of widowed women (appendix # 8) and how they were used by God. The women were to share their stories and that of their mothers or any other relative that may have been a part of their life that was a widow. Realizing that in doing so they would also show other widows how they too should take on womanhood and support each other as each one tried to identify their gifts and talents for the use of the church and community.

Without any doubt there is the notion that for anyone to grow they must first know who

¹⁴ *The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), The Knowledge for Health (K4Health) Project is supported by USAID’s Office of Population and Reproductive Health, Bureau for Global Health, under Cooperative Agreement #GPO-A-00-08-00006-00. K4Health is implemented by the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (CCP).*

they are and where they are. Knowing who you are, and what is it inside of you is the thing that gives you your identity; knowing your makeup and being comfortable in one's own skin, and then there is understanding what drives you? Your passion and how can you develop the next step, that of finding the approach to get you where God means for you to be. This means becoming aware of one's self and gifts and talents (appendix # 9). The gifts and talents God requires us to use for the sake of the kingdom. God has given each of us gifts and talents, so that the church should grow and produce fruit. For our purpose I called them ministries, ministries that are needed in the church and community.

The intent to assist the widowed women of the church in finding their full purpose in life after that of a wife or mother and how they might be used by God if they were willing to allow Him to do so. They needed to identify their gifts and talents and become aware as to how they are to be used so as to bring forth much fruit. The project would expand ministries that were already in existence and develop new ministries and in particular a widow's ministries that would consist of women that were available and willing to discover their gifts and talents and be coached in a small groups setting (see appendix # 9). A ministry made up of widowed women in the local church who would walk alongside the new widow to bring comfort and healing, sharing their stories one with one another. These women would be willing to share with their fellow church members and the local community what it is to be a widow and how to get involved in the church ministries as well as ministries for the community (see appendix # 9).



My Beloved Mother

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

Proverbs 31:31

CHAPTER 2

THE TWO WIDOWS I KNEW

I grew up in Southport, a city in Brunswick County, North Carolina; what I considered as a child a small town in the south of nowhere. Both of my parents were reared in the local area with strong Christian values which they instilled in their children. I consider myself to be very blessed to have been born to such wonderful parents. My grandmothers died while my parents were young. My father's mother died at the time he was sixteen (16) and my mother's at the age of nine (9). This had a great impact on both of their lives and thus they poured out of their young experience of not having the love of their mothers on to their children. I believe that they must have felt they had missed out on the love they would have been given them by their mothers had they lived longer.

My parents made sure that we were cared for by every lawful available means possible, the love and the nurturing they gave to each one of us and never slighting a one; always making sure that each of us felt important and special, giving each child the love and attention they thought we were desirous of. My parents raised me and my five (5) siblings on a modest income. We were not rich, that is at least not by the world's standard; and yet we never had a need for anything. The love and caring for each other was more than enough to go around. There was so much love that my parents often would invite my cousins to come and spend the summer months with us. Making a total sometimes of eighteen (18) young persons all under the age of thirteen (13) with me being the eldest of them all. These are some of my most treasured moments of my young life.

I learned at that tender stage of life what it meant to share what you have with others. Not only did my parents provide for the immediate family but also shared with the extended family and the community, church and school. These memories I have embraced and they shall always be a part of my upbringing, and therefore a part of whom and what I am and what I have been called to do with my life. Both of my parents are deceased but there is still a very strong bond between my siblings and me. I desire to nurture and love others, as I have been given the gift of love. I shall cherish my life for the things God has allowed me to witness and I appreciate every experience I have encountered the good the bad and the indifferent because it brings me full circle in my caring and sharing for others as God has cared for me; and I ask the question; can I not care for the human race? I believe I can and God allowing, I shall.

My parents both were Christians as I have said before; my mother was raised as a Methodist and my father was raised Baptist. My father had a love and a fascination for cars and out of this grew his own business. He taught Auto Mechanics at the local high school; while my mother was a stay at home mom; she often ran her errands and prepare the meals while we were at school so she would be at home when we arrived. She always made sure the family was taken care of; she was the first one up on most mornings and the last to lie down at the end of the day.

As a family we attended one of the local Baptist churches in our local community. Several of the members were teachers at the local school we attended. We were always under caring and observant eyes, and that of misbehaving was not tolerated. My seventh (7th) grade home room teacher was a musician and a member of my home church. One of the songs I learned while in her class was "Let Us Break Bread Together" which opened another pathway in getting to know my classmates; not only did we study and play together in school, but we had a common togetherness

in the Lord. There in that classroom we would give thanks to God and His Son Jesus as our Savior. As I look back, I say that every child in that class room attended their local church. How I know this to be true is that every year all the local Black churches of the community would host a gathering and all the young people would attend as to represent their local church. At that time God was the center of the ‘Black’ community and nothing was done without the acknowledgement of His goodness shown towards us as a people. In this I learned that no one can really thrive or survive without God. This event brought the whole Black community together, thus sustaining us through the violent times that we would face in the years to come. My mother encouraged her family and the community to be prayerful in all things.

My mother has had the greatest impact in my life because of her faithfulness to God first, her family, both immediate and extended, as well as the community. And it is out of my small town experiences and the love of the extended family, my church and those mothers of the church that shared their Godly wisdom with the young parents of the time on how to bring up their children; some who had no children but were willing to nurture me and others in those tender years; being obedient to the scriptures “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Proverbs 22:6, The Thompson Chain –Reference Bible, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana : B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988).

There was one mother of the church that did not have any children of her own but cared for all the children. She was special in all of our eyes, Mrs. Sarah Lee. I remember the Sunday when she became a widow; at the time I did not know what a widow was or what the word meant. It is now as I look back and remember her, that there are two things that come to

A virtuous woman



Summer of 1985

Top left: Alease, Patricia, Gail (centered) Mrs. Sarah Lee, Phil and Faye Bottom left: John and William

Southport, NC

mind, she never remarried and continued to serve the church faithfully with all she had until she died. Always having an encouraging word for the young people to be all God intended them to be, using their God given resources. Prior to her passing and years after leaving the town I grew up in, there were many occasions upon visiting my parents I would stop by to visit Mrs. Sarah. She never wanted us to call her Mrs. Lee, just 'Mrs. Sarah' and I never asked her why. While visiting with her she would often bring up the days when I was a young girl growing up in the church, saying "the young girls are changing, they don't want to listen to the older women of the church, but 'take you Faye' (me, my middle name) you would always listen."

Many years have come and gone. I do miss as well as enjoyed those visits with her. I am a widow now and I am thankful for the time I had with her as a child as well as an adult. I am most appreciative of her for reminding me of the days of old; her love for her husband Mr. Herbert Lee and her new husband, God. There were other widowed women in the church that I knew, but Mrs.

Sarah stands out along with one other woman, my mother, (Frances). They were women of unwavering faith and a love for God and family in a time when women were oppressed and not given many places of opportunities to work in the church. Thank God for these two women and the many others that shall give an account of their glorious work in His name.

After the death of my father, Robert my mother remained a faithful woman of the church, but that did not keep her from uttering the questions that so many other widows do, “What am I going to do with the extra time I have and I am no longer a wife. What would she now do after the passing of my father, she was now at an age where she did not have to leave the home on a daily bases for work and yet viable enough to make a positive contribution to society. All her children were now fully grown and out of the house and the grandchildren no longer needed to be picked up or carried from place to place. She had served her family faithfully and the time had now come where she did not know where to focus her extra time and energy. She had always been active in the church, attending her church meetings, preparing meals for the pastor when asked; singing in the choir, participated on the Mother Board. She continued to remain faithful in collecting and delivery of the Daily Bread devotional as she visited the sick and shut-in, and yet she desired to do so much more now that my father, her husband, her lifelong partner of more than forty-five (45) years was gone. The grandchildren no longer required her service as chauffer and the love of serving others; the thrill of getting behind the wheel of her car to go about helping others. She still found herself unfulfilled. As my mother and I talked over the years after my father’s passing, she would often mention Noonday Bible Study for the elderly of her church. She informed me that many of the elderly of the church did not come out for Bible study for several reasons. The pastor was not able to attend because of the traveling, and the people, herself included, did not

like going home in the dark especially in the winter months. “It gets dark early”, she said. This was an ongoing conversation until, I as a pastor proposed to her that she should have a dialogue with her pastor to see if it would be possible to start a Noonday Bible Study once a week with one of the Deacons. Her pastor gave it some thought and allowed the noon day Bible study to take place in his absence with his blessing.

As proud as I am of my mother, I recognize that not only did she have a ministry, but all of us were born with certain gifts and talents for the purpose of serving God by way of serving humankind and it is only when we earnestly strive to stay committed and serve from our hearts will we find our true purpose in life and our ministry. I believe this is one of our assigned duties here on earth.

My mother’s teaching is so embedded in my being that I find myself doing and saying many of the same things she said and did; encouraging and up lifting others to do and be better. I believe God has a way of preparing humans for their divine purpose in life; “For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose.”¹⁶ Not some things, or most things, the things that are pleasing, or the things that are comfortable but “All Things” it does not matter what they are or who you are or whether we like it or not, and those things we call good or bad happens to us all.

We all had better come to the realization that we are only here for a while and that life is too precious to just set and mourn over what has been. A new day has come, wake up and see the needs that are around you; become attentive to the needs and wellbeing of others. Learn to rejoice and be glad of the new possibilities and opportunities; for we shall give an account of the time

¹⁶ Romans 8:28, *The Thompson Chain –Reference Bible*, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana: B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988).

given us here on earth. Try to find and develop whatever gifts and talents God has given you with confident, knowing that you “can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth”

¹⁷Philippians 4:13 for they shall be used to the Glory of God.

God has called all of us to ministry and we are to serve Him by serving others. I am glad my mother took it upon herself to look for ways and opportunities to serve God and others. She was a true witness to the scripture, “Work while it is day; for when night comes, no (man/woman) can work)”. My mother went home to be with the Lord not many days after the Bible study began. She had fulfilled another one of her divine purposes and this was completed by finding her ministry in establishing the noontime Bible study, which continues unto this day. God created my mother to be a woman that would become a wife, mother and “a servant”.

Yes, it is true; like mother, like daughter, my mother and I were very much alike and little did I know how much we were alike until the death of my husband. It was beyond my thought or imagination that I would soon follow my mothers’ course in life and tread the pathway; of widowhood so soon; becoming a widow three years earlier than she did. I am thankful for my mother’s teaching and God’s word that is keeping me focused as to who I am and what it is I have been called to do. God continues to make ready those servants that will serve; even a widow.

I believe that all Christians are called to develop whatever gifts and talents God has given them and they are to make the most of these gifts and talents to the fullest. The gifts and talents one possesses are not to be used selfishly for his or her gain, but to be used as a means of drawing the lost into the kingdom. Throughout the scriptures God searches for men and women that are

¹⁷ Philippians 4:13 The Thompson Chain –Reference Bible, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana: B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988).

disciplined and will commit to serve others and not themselves. God seeks servants of courage, strength and faith, those that are willing to go the distance no matter the cost. I don't think that a servant's gender or their status in life matters to God as long as they are seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

It goes without saying that the entire church body must be given an opportunity to use their God given gifts and talents in positions of ministry where they can make use of them freely. But many of us know that women, although they are a part of the laity of the church are not always involved in the decision making process in the church and knowingly or unknowingly many of the women long for opportunities to serve their church and they need to admit to it openly.

In the book Partners In Ministry: Clergy and Laity, both Roy W Trueblood and Jackie B. Trueblood say that we all need to consider the following four (4) notable "Assumptions"¹⁸ when laity and clergy partner in ministry.

1. All baptized Christians are called into ministry.
2. There are no levels of leadership in the church, only different functions depending upon one's personal gifts and graces, the call of God, and the confirmation of the church.
3. To be effective, laity and clergy need to work as teams in every local situation and abide by an agreed –upon set of covenants or ground rules for behavior.
4. In order to fulfill assumption number two, clergy and laity need to receive skill training in how to live by the ground rules; and they need to receive this training together.

The idea of this project was conceived long before the outline was requested and brought

¹⁸ Roy W. Trueblood, Jackie B. Trueblood, *Partners In Ministry: Clergy and Laity*, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 15.

forth for approval; for it was born in the inner self the “Spirit” from observing my mother as she took on the role as a widow. It is with much prayer and great expectation that this project will enlighten the women of the local church and many others to search out their gifts and talents and use them to serve all of humanity. It is my belief that God’ desires are forever wanting and waiting for us to move forward to face new challenges knowing full well that we will need the help of the Almighty. So as we begin our work, we want to keep this in mind “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”¹⁹

19 Philippians 1:6, The Thompson Chain –Reference Bible, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana: B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988).

CHAPTER 3

I TOO AM WIDOW

On June 15, 2012 at 5:17 PM, one of my lifelong reservations came to pass; my husband Phillip, the man who was my lover, my companion, my best friend and the father of my children went to be with the lord. The onset hours of waiting and not knowing when the end would really be the end of life as we had grown to know it was coming to an end. Yes, life for me ended and yet it began anew in so many ways on that day. As I stood there as the nurse did what is required of her in the moments; I could feel the tears began to fall from my eyes; I began to wonder many thoughts as I tried to gaze out of the window looking out across the hospital rooftop as the sun began to set. The tears were warm and the lament was of pain and sorrow for the both of us.

As I stood by my husband's bedside I reconciled within myself that once I left the room, crossing the doors' threshold there was no turning back; and for some incongruous reason I knew life for me would be transformed in a way that I could not explain then, nor am I able to explain at this time. In my not knowing and yet knowing what the future held for me, the one thing I did know and comprehended it very well and that was, once I crossed the threshold, once I was on the other side of the door I would be a widow.

All my life I have been told that I was a person of strength and that I could take anything and keep it going, and in part that has been somewhat true. But this was different, I didn't want to be strong, I wanted to be weak and vulnerable. I wanted to feel all that I should feel in moments like this, the hurt, pain and sorrow and whatever else one should feel at the death of her husband of many years. The one I had learned to lean on for support and encouragement and yet in all that I was feeling and thinking, I never asked why was this happening or who would be there for me? These were not the questions to ask because somehow I already knew the answer. The question

was “how am I going to leave the room?” I knew that staying in the room was not an option and at some point I would have to leave. I could not have stayed if I wanted to; it was not the place for the living. My only option was to move forward, to go through the door, to cross over just as my husband had done. So I took a step and then another or at least I thought I had; in all actuality I had not moved. It was as though I was frozen in time. I found myself just standing in one place and staring into the hallway. I was not able or ready to close the door on this chapter of my life, so I just stood there hearing but not listening to the nurse’s question, “are you alright”, I don’t remember what answer I gave her, but I do recall feeling an out of body experience, a numbness. I remember it all; just as if it was yesterday and I did finally draw close to the doors’ threshold and crossed it. I tried to prepare and accept what God had done in His wise provenance; that of calling me to the state of Widowhood.

Yes! I am now a “widow”, after (47) years of marriage I now face the unwanted prospect of returning to an empty house at the end of every day. There would be no more he and I. The life I had grown accustomed to for more than forty seven (47) years had come to an end; that of being connected to another human being, that of being recognized as a couple, a pair, the twosome, that of being the perfect match up was over. The commitment we had so long ago made to each other to stay in our marriage until “death do us part”. We had kept our promise to God and to each other, we had finished our course together and the time had now come for us to depart. We vowed before God, to ourselves and others to stay committed to each other in our relationship through thick and thin, for better and for worse, in sickness and in health, to never give up on each other and we did just that with the help and blessings’ of God. When we say that the person or persons are committed to something or someone, it is the act of sticking with whatever is at hand and the likelihood of that they will see it through to the finish. God so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son, and The Son was so committed to God the Father and to all of humanity that He was willing to give His life; should we do any less? The commitment to love God, each other and

others carried us to the finish line as a couple.

The question did arise thereafter; what shall life be like after all those years of growing and becoming familiar and attached through a devoted and strong commitment to one another I knew life would be different and I would have to face some challenges and make some hard decisions I had never had to make before on my own. And even now the commitment still evolves to the one God gave me to love, for true love is everlasting and does not end in death, at least not for me.

I now can say I better understand without any hesitation what the scriptures mean when in the book of Genesis it says “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”¹ But Mark says it this way “And the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh”² I have found this to be very true; that of one flesh. Early on during my husband illness; it was just the two of us and God. Because of my husband’s inability to speak, I spoke for him, his likes and dislikes. We became one as we walked together the path that would come to an end, the road that would lead to his death and would bring all things to completion on this side as we once cherished it to be.

I agree and do accept this scripture, and the belief that ‘the two shall become one.’ I would not be so inclined to say this had I not experienced it for myself, so this is said unequivocally knowing full well that all experiences can bring all us to a point where we will have to acknowledge the will of God and come to an understanding that God is in control of all of life and He brings all of life events to an end at His appointed time. God does all things justly for His mercy is everlasting and I can say that truly God has shown me love, grace and mercy; through

¹ Genesis 2.24; *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible*, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana: B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988).

² Mark 10:8, (NASB).

this most arduous time in my life and yet I yield to the Master's will and therefore it is with the up-most respect and love for my deceased husband that I realize that life does go on beyond the grave as God continues to extend His loving kindness to me.

As one that married at a young age; a war bride of the Vietnam Era, I know full well what it is like to feel alone even when you have family and friends around to offer comfort, support and encouragement. I don't want to mislead anyone or give a distorted impression that all this has been painless because it has not; for my heart does ache from time to time and only God could mend and replace that which He has left as a deficit. Despite my situation I can say as the song writer "after all I have been through I still have Joy" and that is a comfort to me.

I can truly say that knowing that God is with me I am not so heavy laden with distress or so afflicted with pain that I am paralyzed and not able to endure life as God intend for it to be for me and that is, living to bring Him Glory, God my 'Comforter' never leaves me and continues to care for me. I am assured with the joy that gives me hope in a time of sorrow; when there is no one to talk too; 'The Comforter' is near and supplies all my necessities from day today and in spite of how I may feel or what I may think. It should be noted that not all widows will have the same thought or feel the same, because one size does not fit all as it is so often quoted and this must be understood by all.

It has been seen in many cases, that the spouse of the deceased husband is often left bewildered because "Our society is set up so that most women lose their identities when their husbands die. Marriage is a symbiotic relationship for most. Wives draw their identities from their husband. "They add themselves to their men, and pour themselves into them. It is wrenching enough to lose the man you love without losing yourself as well."³ Women who marry should be

³ Lynn Caine, *Widow: A Triumphant True Story That Offers Hope For All Women Facing New Life Challenges* (New York, NY: Bantam Books), 1987, 1.

taught early on how to live after the death of their spouse. There is a lesson to be learned and that is “we begin life connected; as an unborn baby is joined to a mother who provides the nutrients and an environment necessary for the development of a new life. The relationship of the fetus to the mother is one of utter dependence, a matter of sheer survival. Every human beings life’s sojourn the same way; the pregnancy ends; the uterine attachment is broken; the child is born. The first experience of separation for every human being is birth.⁴ “There is no life without either attachment or loss; hence there is no life without grief. To become a separate individual involves undergoing a first lesson, that of becoming detached.”⁵

The first marriage was that of attachment between man that was made from dust and his mate taken from his side, so from the very beginning relationships were created to provide fulfillment and fruitfulness for both the male and female. “It is crucial to understand the role of pain in the pattern of growth. ‘No pain no progress’ is a dictum of universal applicability. At the center of life, so the Christian contends, is a cross. It is the emblem of suffering and shame. It may be painful to us to allow another to suffer in order for growth to be facilitated. But the mothers of infants, the teachers of adolescents and those associated with the medical arts all know just how essential pain is to human growth.”

This can be said of a marriage; as the husband and wife begin a new life together they come with great expectations and hope of always being together. They look forward with the thought of forever; not knowing what the future holds but trusting that the other person will always be there. The attachment brings about the feeling of being secure as they attach themselves to one another to the point that the two are inseparable and can only be separated by death which

⁴ Kenneth, R., Mitchell, Herbert Anderson, *All our losses All our Griefs: Resources for Pastoral Care*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1983), 20.

⁵ Kenneth, R., Mitchell, Herbert Anderson, *All our losses All our Griefs: Resources for Pastoral Care*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1983), 21.

causes pain for the one left behind.

Early in the marriage I resolved within myself that one of us would leave the other behind. I supposed this was God's way of preparing me for what would someday become my reality; so having done this at the very start allowed me to love and embrace every day that was given to my husband and I. I sometime wonder if I may have grieved my husband early on in the marriage. "All too often grieverers are afraid to confide their real feelings to others, and are all too often afraid to admit their real feelings to themselves."⁶ Yes I miss my husband dearly and the thought of me not seeing or hearing his voice hurts, but God has promised to be my all and all and that is enough for me. As a woman of God I have learned to trust Him in His wise providence and as best as I can to move with His flow in all things.

Yes, I have my moments but I am not so overtaken with grief that of "reactive depression which is said to move through three predictable stages; shock, suffering and slow recovery"⁷ that I am not able to function. The death of my husband was not a shock; not really. I didn't know when it would come, but I knew that it would come. Death can only shock when we don't expect it or don't want to accept it. And to say that death brings suffering is to focus on oneself and not on the deceased.

I do not consider my-self to be a selfish person and to say that the death of my husband has caused me suffering would not be true. "Suffering is a matter of choice, not a matter of imposition. We choose the way of suffering."⁸ To believe or contemplate such a thing would be for me to think only of myself and death is not about self it is about life. It would be selfish to

⁶ Bernadine, Kreis, Alice, Pattie, *UP From GRIEF Patterns of Recovery*, (Minneapolis, MA: Seabury Press), 1969, 2

⁷ Bernadine, Kreis, Alice, Pattie, *UP From GRIEF Patterns of Recovery*, (Minneapolis, MA: Seabury Press), 1969, 2.

⁸ Watchman, Nee, *The Character of the Lord's Worker: Being a Molded for the Master's use*, (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry 1994), 28.

want the person you love to live a life of suffering. “We have to realize that suffering and having a mind to suffer are two different things. Having a mind to suffer implies that we have a desire to willingly suffer for Christ’s sake”⁹ and that I am willing to do. The slow recovery is only if one would like to do so. But I chose not to do so and so the “new norm” has been rapid.

I have always known that God has a plan for me and He had already worked it out by the time I had come to this point in life. I have not had to ask myself what I shall do now that my husband is not a part of my everyday life any more. From the very beginning God had already appointed me to a place and a work to do for such a time as this. I do find myself sometimes anxious, that of being excited about what new venture is ahead, but I am not stressing or feeling lonely for what lies ahead; I know I exist for a purpose; but for some widows the transition from wife to widow has left them in a state of distress and ruffled because they lose themselves in their spouse, and having done so they are left feeling abandoned, lonely, isolated and even perplexed. The pain that is carried for the loss of a spouse can take the path of many turns; and hopefully each turn, they will encounter will be a source that can bring about tranquility, healing, strength and a sense of life’s purpose.

I found that in order to be restored and move to what would become the “new norm” for me I had to accept the change that had taken place; that of “metaphase” (the second stage of cell division, during which chromosomes line up in preparation for separation. I had to learn how to embrace my transformational period, that of finding a new purpose for life; that for which I think we as married women were all created to do; to know, the purposefulness of life outside that of being a wife and a mother. As a wife and a mother I had the opportunity to grow and share my growth with my family and not be relegated to that of being just a wife and mother, there is

⁹ Watchman Nee, *The Character of the Lord’s Worker: Being a Molded for the Master’s use*, (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1994), 2.

nothing wrong with being just a wife and mother; but not all women are cut from the same cloth. As a widow I am able to share my growth with others and not just my family.

While going through the transformation period I had to concede to the loss and all the emotions it brings, acknowledging the hurt, the weariness, the frustration, disappointment and pain that death had caused; and as a counselor I knew that finding a safe place was what I needed, a place where I could talk about my pain and the grief that I carried which would allow me to heal; I found none in the local church. I thought as a pastor the church was or should have been that place where I would find solace, a place where those of like mind and kindred spirit come together and offer support and encouragement; but there was none. Oh I know that the church believe it does a good job, not a great job, but one good enough to help the widow as well as others move from sorrow to functional. But all too often the widows as well as other members of the church want more than just a prayer. They want to be counted among the living, to be more than a number and to do more and not be just a name on the roll, but are limited because of our social order in society as well as that of the church.

My grief was personal, and I needed to embrace the reality that death had come and done once again what it always does; that is, it brings separation and always shows up as an uninvited guest. To be truthful about the matter, death would never have received an invitation to visit me ever again, for I had encountered it more times than I care to count or remember. But as God would have it to be, death will continue to come as an uninvited and unannounced guest to all of us and the best we can ever do is acknowledge that death is always pending and that as it came once it will come again; so we should put things in order as best as we can and be ready whether death visits us or our love ones.

Though we do not all grieve the same way, this does not diminish the fact that grief is pain and pain is pain no matter how it comes upon us, I am reminded that even in the midst of my worst sorrow, my sovereign and loving God is near and can be trusted to bring me comfort. God is a God of concern and of relationships so the pain and heartache that I may experience is not in vain for God is able to use all things for the good of it all.

I believe that Jesus understands, and because I believe “the Lord is close to the brokenhearted”¹⁰ I could find comfort in the nearness of God which aids in reducing the sadness that brings separation by death of my beloved. I hold fast, always remembering that my Savior was separated from His heavenly Father as He hung on the cross and cried out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”¹¹ Yet He would not come down but endured the pain and separation for my sins out of love for me as well as others. “The biblical record makes it clear that loss is not unknown to even the most faithful of God’s people, and that loss is neither punishment nor a violation of the order of creation”.

God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is concerned and therefore provides us with comfort in our afflictions that we may be able to comfort others by way of the same care according to Paul’s writing of 2 Corinthians “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God”.¹²

The acknowledgement of widowhood is the esteeming of the change of status and the

¹⁰ Ps. 34:18), *The Thompson Chain –Reference Bible*, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988).

¹¹ (Matt. 27:46). *The Thompson Chain –Reference Bible*, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana: B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988).

¹² II Corinthians 1:3- 4, NIV.

question is who will come alone side her to offer her comfort and healing? Though the widow is now detached from her spouse it does not mean that she is separated from God. But what it does mean is that God has a need and wants someone who cares enough and has experienced the very same emotional strain too share and offer comfort to help her to get beyond this unfamiliar place. In some cases it will or may be another widow who is able to provide such care.

As a counselor I know all too well that finding a safe place was necessary, a place where I could sit with those of same spirit, people that would listen and allow me to just talk about the pain and grief I carried, a place where people would not judge and allow me to heal in my own time. It was sometimes stressful not knowing of any persons or places (not even in a local church) that could offer me the comfort or support needed. Even in the very church I Pastored there is not a ministry for widows or widower (s). I thought, as a pastor, the church was or should have been that place where I would find solace, a place where those of like mind and kindred spirit come together and offer support and encouragement; but there was none. Oh, I know that the church believes it does a good job, not a great job, but one good enough to help the widow and widower as well as others move from sorrow to functionality. As a denomination we supposedly provide care for the caregivers under the auspices of Minister's Spouses, Widows and Widowers Organization plus PK's. Under their constitution they are to provide a system of support for the entire minister's family. This "Organization shall promote activities to develop unity, togetherness and strength for the family as a unit and shall endeavor to provide a place of acceptance, compassion, comfort and involvement for widows and widowers, as well as provide a strong ministry for the children of ministers'(PK)".¹³ This service is not open to all just the mentioned few, so there are many that go unnoticed therefore unserved.

¹³ Dr. Johnny Barbour, *The Doctrine and Discipline Of The African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Publishing House 2012), 477.

All too often the widows and widowers and other members of the church want more than just a prayer. They want to be nurtured and counted among the living, to be more than a name on the roll and to do more but are limited because of our social order in society and the church. The society we live in is set up so that most women lose their identity when they marry and never recover or are restored to their natural state, that of just being a woman. Often the Christian women do not take or have not had the time to fully develop their purpose in life outside that of being wife and mother. Many have accepted the world's view of them, that of being passive and content which places them in stereotypical roles' that deny their individuality and restrict self-expression. And yet society says women can do anything their heart desire as long as their responsibility is fulfilled; that of being the perfect wife and mother first.

Thank God for giving us the opportunity to discover who we were meant to be in Christ Jesus.

CHAPTER 4

The Historical Perspectives

On Widows of the Church

This chapter will study the historical and theological events that connect to the groundwork of the project with the widows. Here we acknowledge that there are barriers in today's churches that are not pronounced openly, but know that they exist. One of these is the lack of participation of the widows in the church. Very few widows take on regular, active roles in ministry. For many years the women in the church sat quietly with no input while their husband's led the church. Many of these women never recognized their aspirations or full purpose in life. They were never openly given the opportunity to operate in the gifts and talents other than being a wife or mother. I have very little tangible evidence at this time to say this is concrete, but growing up in a time where women were not allowed to be anything but mothers of the church led me to believe this may be true somewhat today.

We know all too well that there were denominations that would not and some still today will not have women to be leaders of their churches. "According to Cynthia Epstein, being black and female is one of the most cumulatively limiting of all the negatively evaluated statuses, and the majority of black women professionals in most occupations are often seen as inappropriate, or they are undervalued, this view is common among professional black clergywomen in white denominations who must struggle not only with sexism but must do so against the backdrop of

pervasive racial chauvinism.”¹ The Bible makes mention of the various women’s ministries that were favored by God and welcomed by the early church, that of prayer hospitality, teaching and evangelism. Throughout the bible we can find offices being held by women as apostle, prophet, pastor deacon, and elders in the church.

The widows in the Old Testament referred mainly to the question of remarriage. If a man died without children, his wife, now becoming widowed was supposed to marry the brother-in-law, her deceased husband’s brother and if he refused to make her his wife he would become an embarrassment to the family. In the New Testament the widows received their support from the Apostles. It was their responsibility to collect the charitable funds that were collected and pass them on for distribution to the widows that were in need. One of the early Christian Church ministries was that of taking care of its widows; found in the sixth (6th) chapter in the Book of Acts.

Women’s Ministry in the Early Church

According to Reverend Kathryn J. Riss writings *Women’s Ministries in the Early Church*, “scripture mentions a wide variety of women's ministries that were approved by God and praised by the early church. New Testament offices held by women include apostle, prophet, pastor, deacon, elders and widows. In addition, Paul names a number of women as well as men whom he called “fellow workers.” These women were the apostle's colleagues in ministry. The New Testament relates to the ministry activities of women which included that of prayer, hospitality, teaching and evangelism. A number of prominent leaders, scholars, and benefactors of the early

¹ C. Eric Lincoln, Lawrence H Mamiya, *The Black Church In The African –American Experience*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 299.

church were women and despite the neglect by many modern historians, the diligent researcher can still uncover a rich history.”²

We see that Paul celebrates many of the men and women that were his colleagues in ministry whom he titled “fellow workers”, those belonging to the same group, occupation, rank and location” in Book of Romans. In the Book of Romans the sixteenth (16) Chapter and the seventh (7th) verse; we see Paul paying tribute to a woman by the named of Junia “Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles and who also were in Christ before me.” He considers her as being an extraordinary woman.

Junia The Apostle

“In Romans 16:7, Paul praises Junia as “outstanding among the apostles.” Despite the modern mistranslation of her name as masculine “Junias” or “Junius,” no commentator prior to the 13th century questioned that this apostle was a woman. John Chrysostom, whose writings often express misogyny, also spoke of Romans 16:7, “O how great is the devotion of this woman that she should be counted worthy of the appellation of Apostle!” This unanimity of testimony over a millennium is particularly striking since it remained during a long period of eroding toleration of women's ministries in the medieval church. The reason for the witness is simple: all the ancient Greek and Latin manuscripts commending the outstanding apostles in Romans 16:7 read either “Junia” or “Julia”, both feminine forms.”³

“Paul considered Junia as one of his kinsman and fellow prisoner. She like Paul; had suffered persecution and imprisonment for the Gospel. Her ministry and faith were known beyond

² Reverend Kathryn J. Riss, *Women's Ministries In The Early Church*, (God's Word to Women, Copyright, 2005).

³ , Bernadette Brooten “Junia”... “*Outstanding among the Apostles*”, A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declarations, (New York: Paulist Press, 1977), 141.

the walls of the church”.⁴

According to Paul, Junia had become a Christian before him; his conversion occurred just a few years after the Resurrection of Christ, Junia must have been one of the earliest converts to Christianity and may have been one of the founders of the church in Rome. The Roman church was already well established before Peter and Paul arrived there.

According to the New Testament, apostles are given by God, workers of miracles, witnesses who proclaimed Christ's resurrection, founders and leaders of churches, preachers, teachers, disciples, and financial managers of the church. While not every apostle was necessarily involved in all these ministries, there is no reason to think that a recognized apostle such as Junia was barred from any of them. Unlike many of the churches today, the 1st century believers honored the women Ministers God gave them.

Women Used As Witnesses of Jesus

From the very start of the early church, women were active in the birth, death and resurrection and ministry of Jesus. Women were significantly involved in the proclamation of the event of Easter. It was the women that the angel reminded that they had already been instructed by Jesus about His death, burial and resurrection and their witness remains an integral part of the Gospel to this day. Matthew, Mark and Luke all record a significant group of women had followed Jesus in his Galilean Ministry.

The early church considered Mary Magdalene an “apostle to the apostles,” and Luke

⁴ Today Christian History.Net @2015 Christianity

relied heavily on the testimony of women as he wrote both Luke and Acts. The involvement of women continued into the first few decades of the church, attested by both biblical and extra-biblical sources. A number of women served as leaders of the house churches that sprang up in the cities of the Roman Empire, the list include Priscilla, Chloe, Lydia, Apphia, Nympha, the mother of John Mark, and possibly the “elect lady” of John’s second epistle.

In the 2nd century, Clement of Alexandria wrote that the apostles were accompanied on their missionary journeys by women who were not marriage partners, but colleagues, “that they might be their fellow-ministers in dealing with housewives. It was through them that the Lord’s teaching penetrated also the women’s quarters without any scandal being aroused. Paul in his letter mentions Phoebe in Romans chapter sixteen (16), a deacon of the church at Cenchreae. He calls her a prostatis or overseer. This term in its masculine form, prostates, was used later by the Apostolic Fathers to designate the one presiding over the Eucharist. And Paul uses the passive of ginomai (to be or become). In the passive, it indicates ordination or appointment to an office. Phoebe was appointed by Paul as an officer presiding over many. The church in Rome was asked to receive her and assist her in the business of the churches.

The four daughters of Philip were thought to be prophetesses Acts 21:9. They were viewed as belonging to the first stage of apostolic succession.

2nd-Century Church Women

Just as the letters of Paul abound in references to his female associates in ministry, the Apostolic Fathers also mention women as stalwarts in the faith. Twice Ignatius sent greetings to Alce, whom he calls especially dear to him. He also greeted Tavia and her household; perhaps she was another house-church leader.

Women in Consecrated Orders

There were outstanding women that were in ministry and consecrated in specialized Orders. These orders included ecclesial widows, virgins, presbyteries and deaconesses. Sometimes such women were formally ordained and sat with the rest of the clergy in front of the congregation. Mary McKenna suggests that the disadvantaged women who accompanied Jesus in his Galilean ministry formed the beginning of the Order of Widows. Tertullian complained of a virgin who was admitted to the Order of Widows at the age of 19.

These widows were supported by the gifts of the congregation, and in turn were expected to pray for their benefactors as well as for all other members of the church. Their duties and qualifications were developed from the instructions found in the book of first Timothy chapter five (5), widows were clearly part of the ordained clergy found in the 5th-century reworking's of earlier material from Hippolytus's *Apostolic Tradition*. The selection process and ordination service of widows parallels those of deacons, bishops and presbyters. The document applies the title "presbyteries" to these women, and six (6) times refers to them as "the widows who sit in front." During communion, they stood by the altar, close to the bishops, presbyters and deacons, and within the veil that screened off the laity. These widows assumed pastoral responsibilities such as instructing female catechumens and the ignorant. They assembled those who desired to live a pure life for prayer and encouragement, rebuking the wayward, and seeking to restore them.

Women Used As Deacons

Clement of Alexandria made reference of Paul's reference to deaconesses in the book of Timothy; Origen alluded to Phoebe, the deacon that Paul mentions in the Book of Romans. The text teaches with the authority of the Apostle that women were instituted deacons in the Church. This was the function which was exercised in the church of Cenchreae by Phoebe, who was given high praise and endorsed by Paul. The text teaches two things: that there were women deacons in the Church, and those women, by their good works deserve to be accepted in the diaconate. The feminine form deaconess did not come into use until about 100 A.D. As late as the end of the 4th century, diaconos might well be a man or woman and the order of deaconesses as separate from that of widows appears clearly delineated in the first half of the 3rd century. Deaconesses assisted in the baptism of women, anointing them with oil and giving them instruction in purity and holiness. They could give women communion who was sick and unable to meet with the entire church. The Apostolic Constitutions even specified that both male and female deacons might be sent with messages outside the city limits. The ministry of the widow was largely that of prayer, fasting, and laying of hands on the sick, while the deaconess, usually a younger woman, undertook the more physically and strenuous tasks. The ancient documents show that deaconesses were ordained. The Council of Chalcedon put into place the prerequisites for the ordination of deaconesses, and the Apostolic Constitutions contains their ordination prayer.

Women Elders Of The Church

The feminine form of "presbyter" or elder appears often, though it is often interpreted as

“old woman.” At times the expression means women who were part of the clergy.

Women That Were Used As Priests

There are even a few scattered references connecting women to the priesthood. Pseudo-Ignatius’s Letter to the Tarsians commands that those who continue in virginity be honored as priestesses of Christ.

Widows of our Church’s should not have to remarry to feel welcomed or look to other places to feel needed or wanted. Let us consider all of God’s people, including the widows and the widowers of our churches and get involve with them as they make their transition to what will become the “New Norm” for them. As we have seen there is a place no matter the age or gender.

God is love and in turn wants us to love one another; so we should seek ways of sharing our love with those who no longer have the reassuring partner that offers comfort support and love. A church ministry for widows that can offers support and encouragement to widows that now feel what we once felt and experienced the pain that death brings are better able to walk alongside with those that are experiencing grief will be better able to connect and understand the position the new widow now finds herself in. Being associated with caring and loving people of the church and persons who have experienced the transitional state, that of widowhood; can be of great comfort and support while the heart mends and memories are arranged in an orderly fashion that can and will express a life of harmony and bliss.

For me the term ‘widow or widowhood’ takes on more than just being a word that describes the state of a woman who’s’ spouse is deceased. As a pastor, one who is called to shepherd God’s people, and a widow; the word and though takes on the added responsibility of ensuring that all of God’s people are active participants in the church and not viewed as just

another person without a spouse; that of widowhood as just that of being.

As a widowed pastor I have wondered why so many women, especially those that were widowed; were not active participants in their local churches. In the almost three (3) years since my husband's death I think I better understand why so many are drawn to Seniors Citizens Centers and not to the church especially the Black Church. The Church is not too receptive to those women that are not attached to another person.

It has been said many times that some things or people don't change until it hits you in the face: Oh so true, now that I am a "widow" and a pastor I am more conscious and equipped to act on the needs of the widows of the church. I see that they should be given the opportunity to join in with other persons in the church that might be struggling to make the transition from being a duo to solo. They should be educated in the fact that being a widow is not a curse and they are a blessing as well as work to be done in Gods' house. Let it be known that being a widow is not the end of life; for God has purpose for all life.

I can only pray that this under taking in trying to "Assist The Widowed Women of Maple Hill African Methodist Episcopal Church Discover Their Gifts and Talents For Active Ministry" will enhance, enlighten, and encourage the local church in which I pastor as well as my denomination to take a more earnest thought toward its many ministries in the local church and especially that of a Widows' Ministry. It behooves us all to acknowledge that no one lives forever and therefore as a church and pastors we should better prepare ourselves and the congregation not for just the funeral but the aftermath as well. How to live after the death of a spouse must be shared by many. "As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is

coming, when no one can work.”⁵

The Church Has to Take Its Rightful Place

The Church cannot afford to remain an isolated institution, it needs to perceive itself as an integral part of the political social, and economic system and until the church recognizes this it will remain virtually powerless in terms of its ability to bring about change in the lives of people. The time has come for the church to be aware of and understand that the hope of real change resides in its own people. The church is one of the most powerful cultures in a local community, but much of its power has been diluted by its failure to recognize its own strength. “Paul and others believed that God supplied abundant spiritual gifts to equip the church “for the work of ministry and for building up the body of Christ”⁶

The pastor of the church must regain his or her position as the leader of the church appointed by God to lead the people to a greater height than themselves. He or she have been given the responsibility and will give an account of their labors to proclaim the message of God in every season. The pastor must remember that they can share some of the responsibility, but cannot abdicate their charge and call of God just as the “Apostles preached the kerygma (the preaching of Christianity, the proclamation of Jesus, the risen Christ; They all shared in the exhortation; the teachers taught people the content and the tradition of Christian faith. Elders provided oversight and leadership of the congregation. Administration handled the business

⁵ John 9:4, NIV.

⁶ Ephesians 4:11-12, *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible*, KJV (Indianapolis, Indiana : B.B. Kirkbride Bible Company, INC., 1988).

functions of the community. Pastors often cared and provided counsel to the lonely, the sick, and bereaved. Deacons served the personal needs of the poor, the widows, and the orphans. Thus the Laos of God were gifted for ministry. ”

We as Pastors and leaders of God’s church must be willing and able to build the bridges; that is to encourage the people from being inactive to growth. Employing Gods words so that His will is done through the people. We as leaders are the ones that have to end the apathy, arrogance, confusion and falsehoods coming out of the church and keep the focus on the message of preaching Christ the Crucified. We are to do this because the mission of the church is about Christ and not us. And because it is about Christ we as pastors will need to be obedient to Gods will and avoid any distractions. As leaders we are to be committed to Jesus Christ and concentrate on what God has called the church to do; to go forth and make disciples of the people.

As things are changing all over the world so the church will need to change in its religious views and how it must operate to serve in the community where it is located. The church must move out of its comfort zone and into a new arena of missions’, that of serving all people, the young and the seasoned, the rich as well as the poor, the have and the have not’s, it is about the people and their souls which is rarely mention.

John Wesley, founder of Methodism; “in the middle of the eighteenth century recognized that the Church of England had lost its focus on helping people build relationships with God. The church existed as a fortress, isolated from the problems and pressures of society. The Church of England had displaced Christian community with institutional structure. Wesley had a concern for the integrity of the church. Maintaining the institution of the church was important, but only as

long as the institution fulfilled the fundamental mission of the church.”⁷

Albert L. Winseman, warns “a lot of congregations are too closely tied to intuitional religion, and are simply going through the motions of “doing church.” These churches and their leaders need to wake up before it’s too late; they must start being in missions rather than maintenance.”⁸ For this to take place the “Word” of God must be planted and embedded in the hearts of each human being in a way that it will beckon all to come and become committed and stay engaged in the workings of the church. The mission of the church starts within its own walls and should become second nature to the believer. They should always be looking for ways to assist and serve one another so that the church might become strong enough to serve others besides themselves; thus growing an engaged congregation and a community that is spiritually healthy.

According to Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi in his book “Missions An Essential Guide” he says that “traditionally, the term “mission” has been confused with the term “missions. For many Christians “missions” refers to the activities that the church does to communicate the gospel to those who are non –Christian. Therefore it is very common to find the term “missions” conveying overseas ministry, a crossing of geographical boundaries, and or a ministry beyond the national church denominations.”⁹ But a better view of mission is that of understanding that “Mission is the participation of the people of God in God’s action in the world.”

Should we take God at His word and act upon His mandates and believe that “the world is

⁷ Dan R. Dick and Evelyn Burry, *A New Kind Church: A System Approach*, (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 2006), 17.

⁸ Albert L. Winseman, *Growing an Engaged Church: How to Stop ‘Doing Church’ and Start Being the Church Again*, (New York, NY: Gallup Press 2009), 8.

⁹ Carol F. Cardoza-Orlandi, *Mission An Essential Guide*, (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1961), 13.

in need of the life-giving love of Jesus Christ, we'd better do everything we can not only to strengthen existing local congregations, but also to effectively plant new churches that meet the needs of and proclaim the Gospel of emerging generations.”¹⁰ Some may ask how this can be done with a decreasing congregation of the various denominations and declining numbers in membership in the church. One only needs to stop and to know that little is much in the Master's hand and that all things are possible for those that believe, it only takes a faithful few; and who can you find more faithful than a well- prepared gifted widow. One of the assignments of the church today should be that of making them disciples of Jesus and help them to develop their gifts for ministry. For this to happen, there must be a reaching out, therefore the task is to find the right way to break through those cultural barriers that separate one from the other; that of generational and gender while addressing the social, political, theological and spiritual as well. The church needs to get in the presence of God so that its heart may be in tune to God's voice and become obedient to His will.

I know that as our communities have become more diverse; I as a church leader must possess skills and abilities to minister; and yet be rooted and grounded in the gospel of faith and true to the calling of serving God as well as his people using those gifts God has given me for His purpose. While acknowledging that no matter whatever gift/s I may have; they were given to me for His glory and the edification of the people; using them with efficiency and not bury them. It is better to risk all for God and come up short than never make an attempt to use what I have been given for the betterment of humankind. I am not to let any barriers hinder the work of God.

There are barriers in the churches that will not allow all women to fully participate in

¹⁰ Carol F. Cardoza-Orlandi, *Mission An Essential Guide*, (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 1961), 15.

many of the existing ministries of the church. The lack of participation of the widows in the church is because of what women have been taught. The “woman’s position in the Bible is largely that of subordination to her father or her husband according to what has been passed down through the ages. Many of the women of church today have not been taught that both men and women were put in prison because of their faith.

The true word brings to light what influence women held as leaders and to what extended in the Christian community. Today the younger women are becoming more active but very few widows take on regular, active roles in ministry because they are perceived to be fragile and not having any strength for the task, but the evidence I present shows that this would be the lack of knowledge of Church History as we have seen it unfold in these very pages and the other would be the interpretation of the Scriptures, particularly the scriptures found in Paul’s epistle which speaks of women are to keep silence in the church, I Corinthians 14: 34-37. The interpretation of this passage of scripture has been one of the most controversial of the New Testament and has often been misused to justify the refusal and the rejection of women being used in the church. This misinterpretation has been passed down through the generations and many pastors along with their congregation have not done a thorough painstaking and meticulous study on these scriptures and because they have not, many women continue to sit silently in today’s churches because of what has been passed down for years. Waiting for someone to give them permission to be more active in God’s church. It can only be with a full comprehensive study and the Holy Spirit that we can understand the true meaning of what the biblical writer is saying about any given Scripture and this would whole true for I Corinthians 14: 34-37 and especially since it was written in a language that the average person does not understand or use every day. This would

lead me to believe that many of the congregations as well as some pastors are not familiar with Koine Greek language; in which is the language the New Testament was written some 2000 years ago. We must learn to speak power to truth, meeting the people where they are so that their needs will not go lacking and we are to do this as humbly and as humanly possible.

When reading the scriptures we see and know that God created woman to be a helpmate (helper). Before Eve came on the scene Adam was not totally complete with just himself; it was not until God reduced him in the flesh and the spirit and formed Eve that he became complete. By this we recognize the will of God from the very beginning of creation had a plan for woman and that was to be beside and not underneath or behind, varying in function but equal in the scheme of life; that of giving, receiving and sharing. There are many who do not see God's intent for women, not even among the women themselves; they toil to prove that they are just as good as the one that was chosen out from among them and still there same to be a struggle of being true to one self for fear of being put down for being real.

Even in my own denomination it was an ambitious thought for the females to become Bishops of the church. At the time when "Bishop, John Adams of the Second District (my Episcopal District) of the A.M.E. Church (now retired) probably spoke for our denomination at the time when he predicted that "women will achieve the post of bishop in due time when they have accumulated enough experience as pastors and presiding elders and developed a reputation for leadership in the A.M.E. church."¹¹ How can one determine the destiny of another?

God created us to be used in His plans not our own. We are to use every gift and talent we

¹¹ Eric C. Lincoln, Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black In The African – America Experience*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 299.

have to and for the Glory of God. When we began to use what we have been given with the right mindset God will give even more. God is not selfish; He gave His very best, His Only Son, and we were designed to do no less, we are to serve others and He has given us the gifts to do so. Using the gifts and talents God has given us is important for growth. Those who do not use their gifts and talents become as a sponge full of water. Once it is full of water it is not able to absorb any more until it is relieved of what it already has. So to be able to grow the Christian must relieve them-self through serving others, building up the body of Christ, the church. The community will only be as strong as the church. The church is the strength of the community. “The church was designed by God to be on the move in the world, not setting in the corner of the neighborhood waiting for the needy to show up on its doorstep.”¹²

As a widow and a woman of God I am humbled to this calling and blessed to be able to serve God’s church. My passion is to get God’s people moving. I look forward to serving Gods people even in the mist of my own trials, for it only lets me know that I am not above the hurt and pain of those that I serve. I take comfort in the mist of it all, knowing that I serve a God who can do anything but fail when He is given the space to be God.

I believe having integrity is a big part in being a pastor or good leader and this should be held in high esteem. The pastor or leader should have a genuine desire to see the people grow and their lives change for the better and their soul and spirit take flight. One who cares for the people and will ask the question/s what is it that I can do to make a difference in the lives of the congregation they serve and the lives of the local community. The test of a true pastor or great

¹² Eric C. Lincoln, Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black In The African – America Experience*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 299.

leader is found in giving oneself in service to others. To seek, reach and teach all of Gods children whoever they may be.

The pastor should always remember that they are there as a servant and not to be served, sent to raise the human spirit and not a budget alone. Given the authority to empower the powerless to give hope to the hopeless through and by means of giving of self, lead as an example. Have and feel compassion about a matter or issue but by all means put actions with the feelings. Let the eyes be open to see and the heart be able to receive the plans of God to meet the needs of the people. God's true leaders are concerned primarily with the welfare of others and not so much in their own comfort or prestige. Part of the mission for this project was to help the widows become more engaged in the life of the church. To have them more informed about the workings of the church and transform their way of thinking about being a part of an ongoing ministry in the local church as well as our denominational connectional level.

CHAPTER 5

PREPARING TO SERVE

In pursuing to bring this project to fruition I began in September 2014; the outline that will follow is a description of the many months of research and interaction with the Advisory Committee and Advisory Team, the congregation and the widows themselves.

The initial step began with sharing a survey that was given in class at the onset of me enrolling in the Doctoral Program “Congregational Growth and Development” at Drew University; presented by our instructor Dr. Kevin Miller. Upon delivery and return of the survey taken by the congregation I was enlighten by the fact that many of the parishioners did not know what ministries existed in the church and what the church could in ways of ministry offer the community.

Having been at the church for some years I realized that I had not been very informative about the various ministries that did exist and their mission as a church. I found this to be a great opportunity to educate the congregation as to what God requires of us and that He had given all of us gifts to be used in the church. And in using the gifts and talents He had given, the church should grow and produce more needed ministries in the community. With this thought in mine of growing by developing new ministries in the church and sharing with the local community the thoughts of more ministries would come forth and particularly a widow’s ministry as part of the church. A ministry in the local church with the women that was available and willing to discover their gifts and talents in a small group setting. The intent is to assist the widows in finding their full purpose in the scheme of life and how they might be used by God at this time in their life if they were willing to allow Him to do so. In the process the widow would be shown how they

could embrace and encourage other widows how to identify their gifts and talents for the use of the church as well as the community.

To get started in preparing for the project another survey was made ready specifically for widows (see appendix # 6) that were not members of the congregation. I am comfortable talking with people, especially if I have known them for a while but for the task at hand it was totally uncharacteristic for me as I approached this undertaking of getting to know what other widows were thinking and how they were coping with the death of their spouse as I found some common ground and from that point on all dialogue was open, and all those I made contact with were willing and wanting to share their stories of the life they had shared with another for many years.

It was interesting to note how many of them felt about the church; their church in particular, their understanding of the mission of their denomination when it came to the ministry of caring for its widows. This was right on target for the project, in the sense of me wanting to know why so many of the widowed women in the church were not actively participating with an ongoing ministry of the church.

Here several questions were formed and answered: does the church have ministries and who are they designed for? Are there any ministries designed specifically for the widows of the church and were they made aware of them? Was there an invitation extended to them and if so, when was the invitation extended; was it before the death of the spouse or during the transition? These are just a few of the questions that were conceived during my interviews. Some questions I never had to ask once the conversation began. As I said many wanted to communicate what they were feeling and the thoughts they were thinking. They knew they were still alive and yet felt as though they had died. There was no one to walk with or share their stories; they were dismissed

just as the one who had passed on. There were many who professed they cared, but within weeks they had all disappeared and I could relate to all that was being said.

As I mentioned before the inspiration for this project came from observing my mother and other women as they took on the role of widowhood. While watching and listening to many of them speak about the “New Norm”; some expressed little hope or aspirations to participate in any type of active church ministry. I began to wonder why widows would be so dismayed; when now was a time to really work in the church and serve God at will. What would or could stop or hinder a widow of good health and sound mind from being involve in some type of ongoing ministry in the church?

One of the questions my mother asked herself after the death of my father was “what will I do now” after the death of my father. Of course she like many do not ask the question right away, but in time as one focuses on what days are had left as a widow, what is it they can do to fulfill the rest of their days here on earth? What do you do when you have always been active in the church, is there anything else? Only those who have who have experienced the effect of death would understand.

No one else can feel what is being said unless they have experienced it. It is a road that none would want to take, but by all probability if you marry and stay married one will depart in death. And if it be you that is the survivor, there will be some decisions you will have to make. For example, what will I do with my time; especially now that I am a widowed Christian woman that loves God, and especially if you have never known anything else but that of being a wife and by the grace of God a mother? One of the questions we as women should ask ourselves is; what is my purpose why did God create me? We somewhat know what the human race thinks about us,

but what does God say. He created us for His divine purpose and not ours. So to know our purpose we must seek the creator of us and be true to who we are.

Helping widows transition into a “New Norm” is a wonderful opportunity to grow the church and help widows transition to a vibrant member of the congregation all the while they learn of their gifts and talents. So having conversed with widows who were at different stages of their widowhood and with various denominational backgrounds it was time to introduce the project and share my experiences with others.

To initiate the project I made a phone call to one of my former high school instructors who referred me to an acquaintance of many years. And to get an Advisory Committee involved I spoke with those I thought may have the potential to work with me as a learning student because of their professional background and their Christian beliefs. I felt that they could work and interact with others and therefore I extended them a letter of invitation to participate (see attachment # 3). After the Letters were formed and sent to persons of varying experiences with education and training outlining the prospections of the project, I waited to receive them back. After receiving the letters of acceptance for participation, additional phone calls were made to those that accepted the invite a time, date and place for the first meeting was given. (see appendix # 4). Upon the date, time, and place being set, the participants came together and the project was then presented in more detail; some questions were asked and to their satisfaction answered. Upon their acceptance of the project a scheduled time, date and place with their approval for another meeting. The Advisory Committee was put in place and a chairperson was elected to oversee the process; the agenda and schedule. This process took place in a matter of three weeks. All that transpired thereafter is documented in the Advisory Committee progress notes. It was then time to

form an Advisory Team. The process for putting together an Advisory Team took more time because of the scheduling of our Official Board meetings. From this board widows and non-widows were solicited to be participants in the project. Many showed an interest and initially thirteen persons said that they would like to be a part of the project. A date and time was offered and all agreed that they would meet on the said date and time at Maple Hill AME Church. Upon the first meeting the introduction of the project was presented outlining the intended (appendix 6) (Purpose), the depth (Scope) of the project, and the lesson plans (appendix # 8).

PURPOSE

The purpose of the project was to assist the widowed women of the church to discover their gifts and talents for active ministry. At the end of the sessions all participants will be asked to commit to an ongoing ministry that best fits their discovered gifts and talents. Should there be no appropriate or existing ministry befitting the participants desired ministry that match their gifts and talent profile; then they will be encouraged to establish or join in a ministry that is best suitable for their talent, gifts and abilities as well as that of the church and the local community as God inspires them.

SCOPE

The project will be led by the pastor and the Advisory Committee Members from the local area. The pastor along with the Advisory Committee will follow and evaluate the project along with the Advisory Team and the local congregation of Maple Hill African Methodist Episcopal Church. The project will be so designed as to assist the widowed women in all stages of widowhood of the church, discover and understand their gifts and talents, and use them as to take

part in or establish an active ministry. The project will look at the status and contributions they bring or could offer to the local congregation and community in an ongoing ministry.

The coming together as a group is a major component as the group gathers and making sure that there are some basic rules that all must bear in mind and that is; all that is said stays in the room. When bringing the group together request them be honest and assure them that all that is said will remain confidential among all group members as each shares their life stories. This is a major factor and one of the ways often groups become dysfunctional because of loose lips. And once again explain the purpose and scope of the project and the importance of their participation. To help keep the group on task remind them of the time and purpose for which they have come together while allowing for some flexibility.

Outline of Project

The project will take place over a sixteen (16) week period of time and the participants of the project committee will seek to identify their gifts understanding their purpose. The group will participate in telling their story, listening and hearing stories of their mothers and other family members as widows and widows of the community. As the stories began to unfold the group will move on to Biblical stories in which they will discover the widows of the bible and their stories (appendix 7). The lessons will then move on, telling and learning the history of the early church and the roles of women and particular the widows in establishing the church (appendix8). Drawing near to the end the group will move into understanding “Spiritual Gifts”. These lessons should open up the avenue for the women to seek what gifts they have and its purpose. Some will be better informed of their passion and why they have the compassion that resides within them.

As the group grows in the knowledge of God and gifts they each possess, they should become excited as to who they are and what they were designed to be. After having discovered their gifts they will need to acknowledge that using their gifts must come from the heart. When serving from the heart it gives God the glory and the people being served will be edified.

The lessons will come from a United Methodist Church curriculum six (6) week session and activities entitled Serving from the Heart: Finding Your Gifts and Talents for Service with the study guide by Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile. (See appendix # 9) From these lessons some will go on to establish ministries while others should become more involved than before. The lessons will instruct the widows that they need not wait for the pastor to start a ministry when a ministry waits' within them ready to be exposed. It is my belief that some of the hesitation of non-participation often stems from always seeing or having men in leadership and not women; who are willing to follow and never lead.

From these lessons the women should learned that women can be free from the thought that God does not use women in certain positions in His church. Their hearts should become open and the will to be and do what God has designed them to be and do in His name; and as a result of the project and the learning process the widowed women along with the others should be move to empowerment and that of liberation in that they have no more excuses not to serve the church in some capacity.

It is the prayer that all will gleam something from the experiences they have encountered and in doing so put their learning into action. It is my prayer, hope and desire that Maple Hill African Methodist Episcopal Church will grow as God desires it to do and as the Church grows that these special and unique women will be allowed to use their Godly gifts and talents in an

ongoing ministry and not for just for an occasion, but serving from their “Hearts” forever.

There is a great expectancy in assisting the widowed women of the church to discover their gifts and talents for active ministry. The anticipation and suspense of the women becoming more than just wives, mothers and widows; not that there is anything wrong with this, for this is the way God designed the woman and the plans He has for her as she desires to be more in Him.

The very thought of being more and doing more excites me in that it is liberating to think that God thought enough of me to impart gifts and talents that I make help grow the church that His Son died for. How is it that one cannot be moved or get excited about Gods’ love for them and wanting to share that love for and with others?

CHAPTER 6 EVALUATION

As of June 2015 the structure and process as detailed in the Prospectus for timetable meetings, research, leadership recruitment and collaborative work was accomplished, but not all the participants at that time had turned in their defined ministry and some surveys were never returned. I found that there were days of pressure to get all the information compiled and typed; I may have overdone the research portion in trying to cover my topic. In the wee hours of the project the graphs were never completed.

Considering the gravity of the project I think I have given the project considerable attention as far as obtaining the necessary information essential for my research subject. I have had some coaching and some encouraging words from one of a cohort partner and therefore I have been able to somewhat stayed the course; between going to ball games and church obligations. The one thing that kept me on task was that of gathering of enough information and how to organize the chapters to say what it is I wanted to express showing an authority on the subject at hand. Getting the project started from the beginning was not as challenging as the writing portion. There are so many do's and don'ts and must haves and I struggled for weeks trying to put it together before I set down to write and rewrite.

At the beginning of the project I was not sure how I should approach the subject matter; the one thing I tried to keep in front of me at all times was to stay focus on the topic and gather the information relevant to the subject of widows. I was able to put the Project Specifications Outline in place in a timely manner but there were times I could not meet because of church obligations and some family matters. The participants were always on time and ready to participate in the learning process.

The congregation was informed about the project in the very beginning and the widows were recruited from the membership. Initially Thirteen (13) widows from the congregation said they would take part, but only a few committed themselves to stay and to see the venture come to completion. The entire congregation was receptive of the project and anxiously waiting to see what ministries will develop. The congregation was kept abreast of the progress of the Project and the collaboration with various notices and announcements of what was taking place. Encouragement to get the project done was offered from time to time, but no one offered to do any typing and only one for editing.

Throughout the process contact was always made: either by a personal visits or phone calls. All thoughts and ideas was a collaborating effort by all involved. Once the project was implemented the student /candidate no longer met on a weekly bases; contact was made every other week by phone calls or e-mail with the exception of the candidate and the Advisory Committee Members in the last two (2) weeks of the project.

There has been a great impact stemming from the Project thus far; in that it has compelled the congregation to be more mission minded; noticing the needs of those around them, things that were never thought of before. As we have become a team through our learning to understand the project, it has affirmed our goals as a church body, and from time to time we revisit set goals and the ministries that should exists in the church and the idea of developing new ministries, with more of a theological and spiritual insight as to our purpose for existing in the community.

At the end the Advisory Team participants worked on a project that would enhance church spirit and growth by hosting a Rainbow Tea for the community. Here they announced the introduction of the new Widow's Ministry. At the end of the project the Advisory Committee Members and the Advisory Team participates evaluated the project and discuss its outcome at their last meeting held in June as we prepared for our site visit.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The project was structured in such a manner that it was able to accommodate and assist the widows in discerning their own gifts and talent as well as those of others. Many of those that participated, their strength and weakness were exposed. A gifts and talent instrument was used at the end to match the participant's ministry undertakings as to keep them encouraged and committed. Just as I am bringing the writing of this project to closure the church has been blessed with another new ministry. We have been offered an opportunity and we have accepted a proposal to partner with the state of North Carolina as one of its 21st century grantees for the next four (4) years. The administrator for this project found and validated her gifts and talents while participating in the widows group. Her compassion for the youth of the community and her passion to serve the community has all come to fruition. From the lessons learned some of the women are more open about who they are and want they would like to do as well as what they would like to see the church do in the community. Thus far to date a summer program is being established to minister to the needs of the youth of the community for the summer. The food bank outreach ministry was able to provide more meals to needy families with the help of the missionary society and the congregation. The church now wants to assist more in the needs of the Community; they want to use the church facilities as a place of providing and delivering more services.

From these lessons some have gone on to establish ministries while others are more involved than ever before. The lesson taught the widows that they need not wait for the pastor to start a ministry when a ministry waits within them ready to be exposed. It has been an eye opening experience for the participants who may have thought that they had nothing to offer the church.

There is more of an openness now that may not have existed before as well as an awareness of who God made us all to be; knowing that God has given all of us gifts and talents to be used in the church. The pastor and widows will continue to meet from time to time for follow-up and the possibility of other ministries being established; such as a Young Women Ministry.

As of the results of the project the widowed women and other participants are liberated and empowered to do church ministries of varying kinds to meet the need of the congregation as well as that of the community. It is with much prayer and that Maple Hill African Methodist Episcopal Church will grow as God desires it to, and that these special and unique women will be allowed to use their Godly gifts and talents in an ongoing ministry serving from their “Hearts” to help grow God’s church.

CONCLUSION

With the primary focus having been on that of assisting the widowed women of the church understand and know that God did use women in the Early Church, and still does, even today. The widowed women now know that their gifts are needed in today’s church and that their faith through bible studies and fellowship can provide encouragement, comfort, and support for the other women who have and will transition into a “New Norm”; as a widow. These widows are to be reminded that the God we serve is Lord and have made provisions for the widows. They should at all times acknowledge that God will keep the promises that have been made concerning the widow.

As we have come to an end of what we have discovered about our God, the church and ourselves; there remains much more work to be done. For sure there should be more teaching of the scriptures as it pertains to Gods’ people; who they are and what gifts and talents they possess. Not only what they possess but how they should be used in the kingdom of God. Not that we will

ever know it all, but for sure we will not die for trying.

The church needs every person and there is a place for every person; if not, then make a place. Inventory the congregation for ministries that might be needed in the local church as well as the local community. Bring your prayers before God ask how to provide for those that have suffered loss. Don't be afraid to start a widow's /widower's ministry. The church must improve its ways in which it serves its people and especially those that are truly widows in deed. They should not have to feel as a cast away as though there is no need for them.

Yes, I am a widow, but this is not the end of my story for my hope is not in what I loss but what I have gained through the loss, the right to give all of self for the Lord. I am found in the loss of who I am and who really cares and therefore I have not lost but gain.

Here are a few suggestions for those who want to start a widow's / widower's ministry:

Call a meeting, do a church survey to see who would be interested and have one of the widows who have gone through the course of "Serving from your Heart" class lead the group. Extend an invitation to other churches to come and be a part of this small group ministry, you may want to make it a community project.

- Get names, telephone numbers and address for future reference and point of contact
- Invite widows in all stages of widowhood to participate
- Do not leave any women out who want to be a part of this ministry
- Have the group set their own schedule as to when they will meet
- Allow them to select their chairperson

Equipment needed

- Space large enough to accommodate the number of people attending

- Bible
- Pencils and paper
- Hand Outs of Credible Resource
- Tables and Chairs
- Computer/ Projector and monitor /screen

Let us increase the growth of our Churches by encouraging our widows and widowers alike to participate in an active ministry while encouraging other churches of the local community to start a small group widows / widowers' ministry and once a year celebrate. Have all the widows / widowers from the local churches come together in celebration with a "Rainbow Tea" in celebration of God's goodness shown toward them as widows / widowers.

Advisory Board Chairperson

Mrs. Helena Lee



APPENDICES

APPENDX 1

Congregational Growth and Development
Doctor of Ministry program – The Theological School
“Church Growth Shaped by Community Outreach and Mission”
Ministry Audit Survey

Internal Ministry Audit Survey

1. How many outreach ministries does your church have?
2. What outreach ministries did you inherit and what ministries were created under your spiritual inspiration? Name / Describe them.
3. Which outreach ministry is most effective?
4. Which is least effective?
5. Which outreach ministry would *your leaders* say is most effective?
6. Least effective?
7. What percentage of your annual budget is set aside for community outreach and mission?
8. How many persons joined your congregation in the last year?
9. How many people have left your congregation in the last three years?
10. Why have these persons left?
11. In what ways are youth and seniors incorporated in the outreach efforts of your ministry setting?
12. What do you think the community needs and expects from your ministry?

Leadership Audit Survey

1. What is our church / ministry known for in the community?
2. How many people have you invited to worship in the last three months?
3. How would you describe our church or ministry to someone not familiar with us?
4. What are your dreams for the church or ministry?
5. What kind of new ministry do you feel we need to start at the church?
6. What is our most effective outreach ministry? Why?
7. What is our least effective outreach ministry? Why?
8. What do you believe the community needs or expects from the church or ministry? Why?

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 2

[75]

Maple Hill AME Church
17788 North Carolina Highway 53 East
Maple Hill, NC 28454

Study Area Definition:
County



View 2012

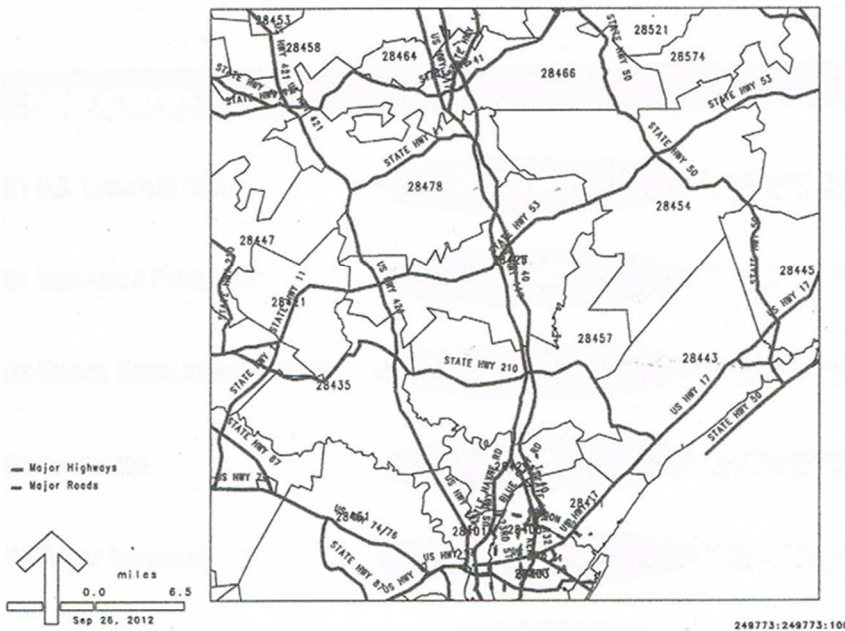
People and Place ... pgs 2 & 4

Community Issues ... pgs 3 & 5

Faces of Diversity ... pgs 2 & 4

Faith Preferences ... pgs 3 & 6

Study Area with Zip Codes



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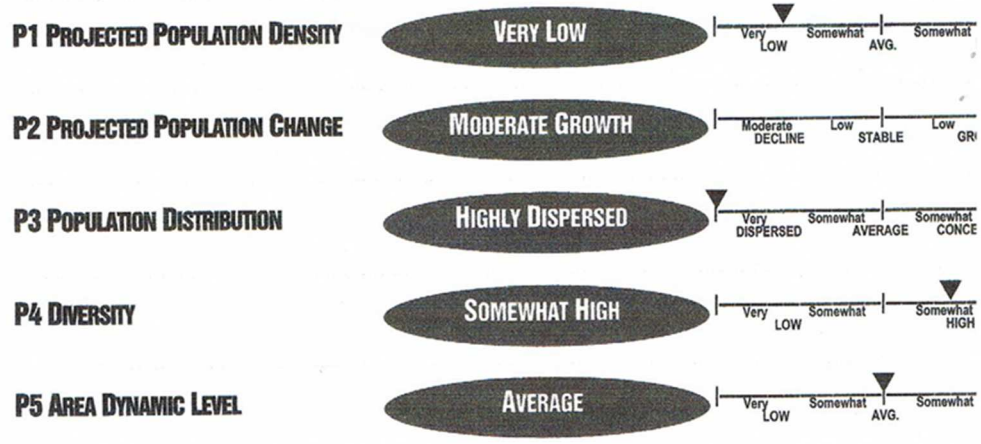
View 2012

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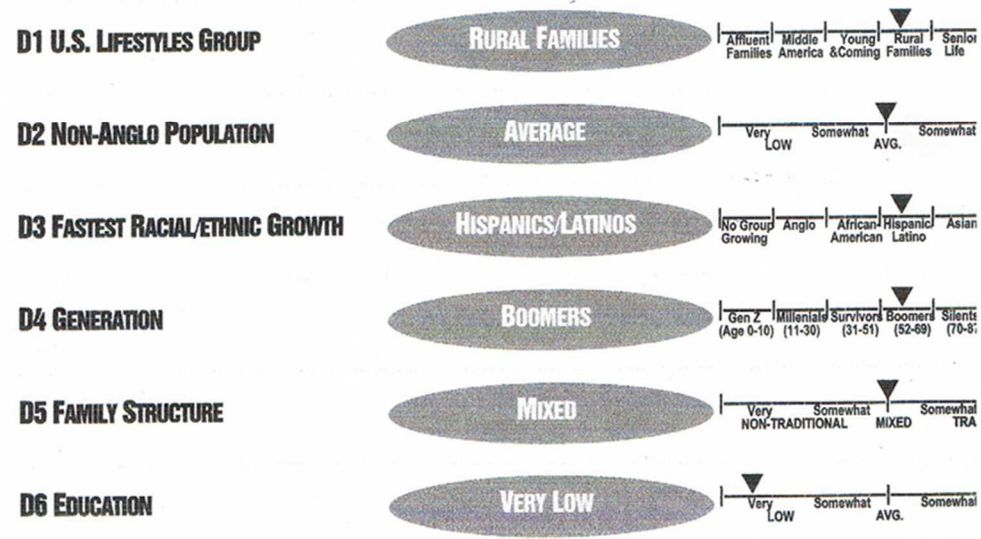
Study Area Definition:
County



People and Place



Faces of Diversity



View 2012

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 Maple Hill, NC 28454

Study Area Definition:
County



Faith Preferences Detail

F1: What is the likely faith receptivity?

Overall, the likely faith involvement level and preference for historic Christian religious affiliations is *very high* when compared to national averages. (see MAP page 15)

Households By Faith Involvement Level	Not Involved	Somewhat Involved	Strongly Involved
Study Area	25%	30%	45%
U.S. AVERAGE	35%	30%	35%

F2: What is the likely giving potential in the area?

Based upon the average household income of \$53,706 per year and the likely contribution behavior in the area, the overall religious giving potential can be described as *somewhat low*. (see MAP page 4 and 17)

Households By Religious Giving Potential	Average Annual Household Income	Households Contribute More Than \$500 per Year to Church
Study Area	\$53,706	32%
U.S. AVERAGE	\$67,315	31%

F3: Do households prefer an overall church style which is more traditional or contemporary?

Based upon likely worship, music and architectural style preferences in the area, the overall church style preference can be described as *somewhat traditional*. (see COMPASS pages 3 and 4)

Households By Church Styles Preferences	Worship: Traditional	Music: Traditional	Architecture: Traditional	Worship: Contemporary	Music: Contemporary
Study Area	19%	25%	29%	26%	16%
U.S. AVERAGE	20%	24%	27%	26%	20%

F4: Which general church programs or services are most likely to be preferred in the area?

Church program preferences which are likely to exceed the national average include: *Bible Study and Prayer Groups, Personal or Family Counseling, Spiritual Retreats and Divorce Recovery Programs*. As an overall category, programs related to *Spiritual Development* are the most significant based upon total number of households and comparison to national averages. (see COMPASS page 2)

Households By Church Program Preference Category	Spiritual Development	Personal Development	Community/Social Services	Recreation
Study Area	31%	9%	21%	3%
U.S. AVERAGE	25%	10%	20%	3%

F5: How likely are people to have some religious preference?

In the study area, 88.8% of the households are likely to express a preference for some particular religious tradition or affiliation, somewhat above the national average of 85.1%. (see MAP page 15)

Households By Religious Preference	No Preference	Non-"Historic Christian" Groups	"Historic Christian" Groups
Study Area	11%	2%	87%
U.S. AVERAGE	15%	8%	77%

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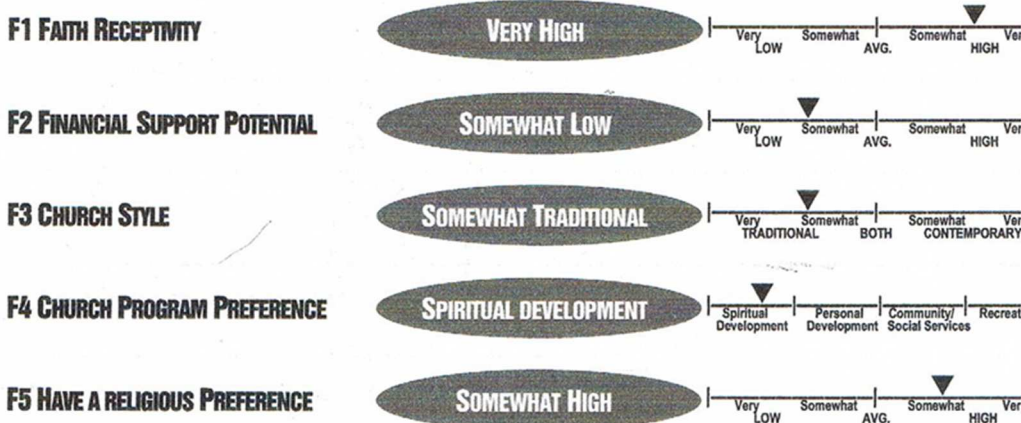
Study Area Definition:
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Community Issues



Faith Preferences



View 2012

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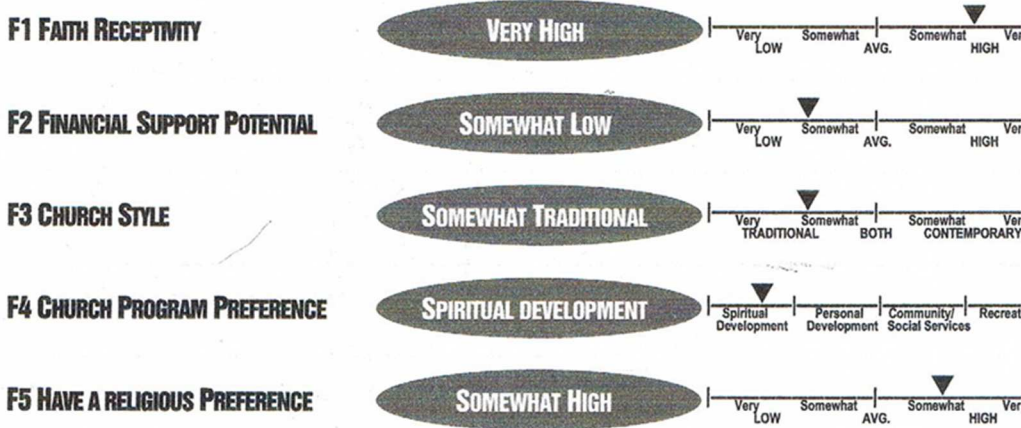
Study Area Definition:
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Community Issues



Faith Preferences



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HIRST™ View 2012

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Study Area Definition:
County



Community Issues

C1 PRIMARY CONCERNS



C2 RISC LEVEL (Stress Conditions)



C3 POTENTIAL RESISTANCE TO CHANGE



Faith Preferences

F1 FAITH RECEPTIVITY



F2 FINANCIAL SUPPORT POTENTIAL



F3 CHURCH STYLE



F4 CHURCH PROGRAM PREFERENCE



F5 HAVE A RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE



APPENDIX 3

DMIN Project

Letter of Request for Participation

To: _____

From: Gloria F. Fields

Subject: Serving as an Advisor to Doctoral Candidate

Hello _____ this letter is to inform you that I have been recommended by the faculty of Drew University School of Theology as a Doctoral Candidate. I am now in the stage where I must seek the help and advice of others to help me complete the project "Assisting the Widowed Women of Maple Hill AME Church discover their gifts and talents for active ministry." I am writing this letter as a request that you would be a participant and serve as one of five (5) Advisors for the next nine months, October 2013 – June 2014. Thank you for your time and consideration. I have enclosed a reply letter and a self-address envelope. Please check the ability in which you are willing to or cannot be a participant. Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to call, I may be reached at one of the following numbers:

Church: _____

Home: _____

Cell: _____

Again thank you:

Gloria F. Fields
Gloria F. Fields
DMIN Candidate

DMIN Project
Letter of Response for Participation

To: Gloria F. Fields

From: _____

Subject: Serving as an Advisor to Doctoral Candidate: Gloria F. Fields

Please check one:

Yes I will serve as one of your advisors

I will not be able to be a participant as an advisor

At this time I am not able to serve as an advisor. Please keep me informed as to others ways I may be of assistance to you.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Contact Numbers: Home _____ Cell: _____

APPENDIX 4
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Rev Alease G. Brown

Rev Dr. Patricia L. Freeman

Sister Faye Hankins

Sister Helena Lee

CONSUTANT

Rev Dr. Patricia L. Freeman

Dr. Ralph H. Parker

Advisory Board Meeting
D MIN Project

November 6, 2013

Progress Note:

Having sent out letters for person to be a part of Drew Theology Department Doctoral Program, those that were interest came to gather with the student/ candidate for a lunch at the nearby Restaurant on November 6,2013 at 12:45. Those that were in attendance were asked to make a commitment to work as advisors in the Doctoral program. They that were in attendance agreed; Mrs. Helena Lee will serve as Chairperson and the student/ candidate will serve as secretary. It was agreed upon that the group would become officially known as the Advisory Board for the Drew DMIN Project, The Board will provide the following;

- Give supervision and guidance
- Monitor times and dates
- Review and make suggestions

The student will provide the following;

- The approved DMIN Project w/ timeline
- Type all documents of presentations and lesson plans
- Present all work for review
- Give clarity of project development and progress

The Board agreed to meet every week for the next six (6) here after at the same place and time.

With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned.

D Min Project Session Schedule

Advisory Committee Meetings

Month	Date	Topic / Subject
September	9/21- 10/25	Interviews of Widows
October	30	Selection of Committee/ Phone calls for Planning Session (date time and place)
November	6	Planning Session w/ Team, lunch, Introduction of Project (set schedule, dates time and place)
	13	Proposal for a survey designed with project Team
	20	Review designed purposed survey for distributed (Need more questions, make revisions)
	27	Team review of revisions, still more revision needed (restate the questions)
December	4	New revision made and reviewed by team reduce the number of questions
	11	Revised purposed survey finalized; reviewed and ready for distributed
	18	Purposed Topics reviewed
	25	Christmas Break
January	1	Christmas Break
	8	Discussion of Scriptures and Topics for Widows of the church (leadership)
	15	No Meeting
	22	Review of topics and material
	29	No Meeting
February	5	Update phone communication
	12	No Meeting
	19	Phone communication
	26	Introduction of Material for study Phone Call

Advisory Board Meeting Schedule (Continued)

Month	Project in place	Extra Material Given		
February 26th	Order Study Material			
March 5th	Introduce Material to Advisory Board for review	Approved By All		
March 12th	Prepare Survey for Advisory Board			
March 26th	Share Survey	Survey Not Completed		
April 9th	Extend an invitation to luncheon	Seven (8) Responded		
April 22nd	Make transportation arrangements			
April 26th	Luncheon	One (1) Canceled		
June 7, 2014	Request Advisory Board meet with team participants	Canceled		

Advisory and Team Final Meeting
D MIN Project

June 14, 2014

Progress Note:

Advisory Board and Team Committee meeting called to order by the Pastor of Maple Hill AME Church. Prayer was offered by the pastor Gloria Fields, The session was turned over to the Chairperson Mrs. Helen Lee. Mrs. Lee led the group discussion on the following three articles.

- FORGIVENESS; THE DOORWAY TOO HEALING AND RECONCILIATION
- Widow is moving on, but daughter can't
- The Lord's Prayer (Traditional)

There was a time for questions and comments. She thanked everyone for allowing her to participate in the project and look forward to seeing and being with them again. The church said that they were glad that she could be a part of the process.

The second half of the session was led by Pastor Fields; student/candidate, requesting input about the sessions and the learning outcome; all the participants gave their thoughts and committed to becoming actively involved in some type of church ministry. Some are seeking to enhance the ministry they are now involved in while another is considering starting a ministry in the church that will include the entire community. This session was very informative as well spiritual. The discussion of the possibilities for ministry put us well pass our usual time. Both the Advisory Board and Team Committee concluded their time together by completing the evaluation with the understanding that they will meet again to meet with Drew Universities' Site Advisor Dr. Kevin Miller in the next week or so. At completion of all the laboring and hard work a prayer of thanksgiving was given and the session closed on a high note. Amen! Amen!

Advisory Board Meeting
D MIN Project

November 13, 2013

Progress Note:

Advisory Board meeting called to order by Chairperson Mrs. Helen Lee

A prayer was offered

Old Business

- Review of DIM project

New Business

- Designed of survey
- How many questions
- Who will get survey
- Suggestion made (not enough questions)

With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned with a prayer.

Advisory Board Meeting
D MIN Project

November 20, 2013

Progress Note:

Advisory Board meeting called to order by Chairperson Mrs. Helen Lee

A prayer was offered

Old Business

- Design survey

New Business

- What question should be asked
- How shall the Survey be designed
- How many questions, 40-45

Student will prepare survey for presentation at next Advisory Board meeting to be held November 27, 2012. With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned with a prayer.

Advisory Board Meeting
D MIN Project

November 27, 2013

Progress Note:

Advisory Board meeting called to order by Chairperson Mrs. Helen Lee

A prayer was offered

Old Business

Design survey

- What question should be ask
- How shall the Survey be designed
- How many questions, 40-45

New Business

Redesign survey

- Change question format
- Reduce number of questions

Next meeting will be on December 4, 2014. With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned with a prayer.

Advisory Board Meeting
D MIN Project

December 4, 2013

Progress Note:

Advisory Board meeting called to order by Chairperson Mrs. Helen Lee

A prayer was offered

Old Business

- Redesign of survey presented
- Question format Changed
- Reduce number of questions

New Business

- Redesign of survey
- Reduce number of questions

Next meeting will be on December 11 2014. With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned with a prayer.

Advisory Board Meeting
D MIN Project

December 11, 2013

Progress Note:

Advisory Board meeting called to order by Chairperson Mrs. Helen Lee

A prayer was offered

Old Business

- Number of questions Reduce

New Business

- Redesigned Survey presented

The survey receive its final approval from Advisory Board for distribution Next meeting will be held for the purpose of reviewing and selecting topics December 18, 2013. No further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned with a prayer.

Advisory Board Meeting
D MIN Project

December 18, 2013

Progress Note:

Advisory Board meeting called to order by Chairperson Mrs. Helen Lee

A prayer was offered

Old Business

The survey receive its final approval from Advisory Board

Ready for distribution In January 2014

New Business

Presentation of Topics

- Historical Perspective
- Widows in the Church part I, (Article)
- By Grace to You; Via Internet (8 Pages)
- Women in Church History (Article)
- WOMEN'S MINISRIES IN THE EARLY CHURCH
- THE APOSTLE JUNIA
- By Rev. Kathryn J. Riss; Via Internet (6 Pages)
- THE NEGLECTED HISTORY OF WOMEN IN THE EARLY CHURCH (Article)
- BY Catherine Kroeger; Via Internet (7 pages)
- Presentation of Topics
- Bible and Theological Perspective
- Widows (Article)
- From Catholic Online (3 Pages)
- Instructions Concerning Widows (Article)
- Bible Gateway, Via Internet (1 ½ pages)
- A peek at God's Perspective (Article)
- By Myron Horst; Via Internet (4 Pages)

Next meeting January 8, 2014; continue discussion of topics and scriptures. With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned with a prayer.

Advisory Board Meeting
D MIN Project

January 8, 2013

Progress Note:

Advisory Board meeting called to order by Chairperson Mrs. Helen Lee
A prayer was offered

Old Business

Topics for Presentation

- Historical Perspective
- Bible and Theological Perspective

New Business

Scriptures; Holy Bible (KJV, NISV)

Topics

- Widows of the Bible; Article (Scripture KJV)
- THE BIBLE ON WIDOWHOOD (Article) Via Internet (1 Page)
- Leadership Ministry Article); Via Internet (13 Pages

Advisory Board will review articles for relevance.

Next meeting January 22, 2014; Review of topic and material. With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned with a prayer.

Advisory Board Meeting
D MIN Project

January 22, 2013

Progress Note:

Advisory Board meeting called to order by Chairperson Mrs. Helen Lee
A prayer was offered

Old Business

More topics

- God's Call
- Capacities of severing
- Serving with the right Motivation

The discussion is whether or not I have too many topics am I trying to cover. It has been said that I have too much. It is suggested that I remove some of the articles or use some of the articles as extra readings material or home work.

New Business

Since the project has started there is no need to meet every week, it is suggested that the Advisory Board communicate every other week by phone. All has agreed that the student inform the Board by phone as to how the project is progressing. There will be no meeting held January 29, 2014. All up dates will be done by phone starting February 5, 2014 With no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned with a prayer.

APPENDIX 5

ADVISORY TEAM MEMBERS

COPYRIGHT PERMISSION AND SCHEDULE

CHAIR

Helena Lee

MEMBERS

Faye Hankins

Willie Bannerman

Lucile Flemings

Brenda Lisane

Clorinda Malloy

Elisa Ricks

D Min Project Scheduled

Team Meetings

Sessions	Date /Time	Subject/Topic
Official Board meeting Church Conference	January 7 7:30 January 12 1:15 – 1:40	Recruitment of Widows Commitment
Introduction	January 18 12:30 - 2:30	Introduction and Purpose of the project
Her story	January 25 12:30 - 2:30	Her story (Our mothers and the church)
The widows	February 1 1:30 - 2:30	What does the scriptures say about the widows
your story	February 8 12:30 -2:30	What is your story as a widow (What Scriptures best fits you)
your Passion	February 8 12:30 -2:30	What is your Passion? Find the Scriptures that best describe your passion
Canceled	February 15 12:30 -2:30	AME Founders Day / Canceled
Yours gifts and talents	February 22 12:30 -2:30	Finding yours gifts and talents Distribute Survey
Serving from our Heart (study)	March 1 12:30 -2:30	Serving from our Heart, a four week (4) study Books will be provided instructor
Canceled	March 8 12:30 -2:30	District Conference / Canceled
Return your Survey	March 15 12:30 -2:30	Review the survey, complete it and bring it with you to the next session March 22, 12:30
Continue Study	March 22 12:30 -2:30	Serving from our Heart
Of Serving	March 29 12:30 -2:30	Serving from our Heart
From our	April 5 12:00 -2:30	Serving from our Heart
HEART	April 12 12:00 -2:30	Serving from our Heart
My heart's desire	April 19 12:00 -2:30	Serving from our Heart Continued Study
A place for Ministry	April 26 12:00 -2:30	Luncheon Where do we go from Here?
My Ministry Defined	May 10 12:00 -2:30	Annual Conference/Canceled
Prepare for site visit Site w/Advisory Team and Committee	June 7 12:00 -2:30	Canceled
My Ministry Defined	June 14 12:00 -2:30	Using My Gift for church Ministry
Visit Site by Drew Advisor Dr. Kevin Miller	June 16/ 17	Time and Date TBA

Appendix
Copyright Permission

To: _____

I, Gloria Faye Fields, request your permission to print /reprint the following items

Your Names and Photos that were taken during and after the sessions of training for “Assist the Widowed Women Of Maple Hill African Methodist Episcopal Church To Discover Their Gifts and Talents For Active Ministry”

I intend to use the copy(s) for the following:

Research Commercial use Reporting Criticism or Review Education

Item(s) to be copied for Drew University Doctor of Ministry Degree Project and future publication/s

Title: Assist the Widowed Women Of Maple Hill African Methodist Episcopal Church To Discover Their Gifts and Talents For Active Ministry

The copies will be used for print /reprint as needed for Publication/s:

[] Permission Granted: _____ Date: _____

[] Permission Not Granted: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX 6

Drew University
 School of Theological
 Doctor of Ministry Program

Project Questionnaire

Thank you for your participation. In answering the following questions you will allow this student to fulfill the requirements for the degree. These questions are so designed to be used for this project. Please select the most appropriate answer that best fit you and try not to leave any blanks. (Return the questionnaire unsigned, your signature is not required).

1. Are you a widow?

Yes No

2. What is your age?

Over 18 less than 35

Over 35 less than 52

Over 52 less than 69

Over 69 less than 86

Over 86 but less than 103

3. What was your age at the time you married? _____

4. What was your age at the death of your spouse? _____

5. How long were you and your spouse married? _____ years ___ Months ___ Weeks ___ Days

6. What was the age of your spouse at the time of your marriage? _____

7. How long have you been a widow? _____

8. Do you still remain or consider yourself a part of your spouses family?

9. Do you make regular visits to your spouse's grave site?

Yes No

10. How was your relation with your spouse?

Very Good

Good

Bad

Very Bad

11. Do you think that you will marry again?

Yes No

12. Have you ever considered remarrying?

Yes No

13. Had you ever lived by your self before marriage?

Yes No

14. Did you work out side of the home while married?

Yes No

15. Do you now work outside of the home at this time?

Yes No

16. Are there any children under the adult age?

Yes No

17. Were you reared in the church as a child?

Yes No

18. Was it by both parents?

Yes No

19. Did you participate in any youth programs of the church?

Yes No

20. Would you consider yourself a Christian?

Yes No

21. Were you a Christian when you married?

Yes No

22. Was your spouse a Christian at the time you married?

Yes No

23. Are you satisfied with your church and its ministries?

Yes No

24. Do you now participate in any church activities?

Yes No

25. Are you content with your level of participate in your church activities?

Yes No

26. Are you seeking or wanting to do more in your church?

Yes No

27. Are you familiar with the various ministries of the church?

Yes No

28. Are you a part of any ongoing church Ministry?

Yes No

29. Do you see yourself as being a part of an active ministry in your church?

Yes No

30. Do you know what your gifts and talents are that could be used for church ministry?

Yes No

31. Have you been given or offered the opportunity to participate where you can use your gifts and talents in the church?

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WIDOWS

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

Home phone _____ Cell phone _____ email _____

Years of being widow _____ Age _____

Ages of children _____ Do you attend this church? _____

What is your greatest need? _____

What is your greatest fear? _____

How can the church help you? _____

What events are you interested in as a widow? Rank preference, 1--low, 5-- high.

_____ Discussion group

_____ Bible study

_____ Social events at church like game nights or crafts

_____ Social outings off campus

_____ One time seminar of resources

Are there other widows who might benefit from this ministry?

What topics would you like for study or discussion?

APPENDIX 7

PREPARENG FOR ACTIVE MINISTRY

Lesson 1 The Old Testament teaching about widows

- The first Widow of the Bible
- Who was she?
- What is her story?

Lesson 2

How does God view Widows?

- Three instances where Christ honored widows.
- The problem the church at Jerusalem had (Acts 6:1).
- How did they solve the problem?
- Why were the widows at Joppa so sad (Acts 9)?
- How did Peter comfort them?

Lesson 3

- The meaning of “widows” (1 Tim. 5:3).
- Your Mother’s story as a Widow
- What is the first principle to guide the church in caring for widows (1Tim 5:3)?
- What is the second principle to guide the church in caring for widows (1Tim 5:4-8)?

Lesson 4

- What kind of commitment does the church need to make in caring for widows?
- You're Story as a Widow in the Church
- Is there a place for you as a Widow in the Church?
- Have you found that place?

Lesson 5

- True spirituality reveals itself in the context of.
- What verse summarizes God's compassion for widows?

Lesson 6

- What is God's evaluation of those who care for widows (1 Tim. 5:4)?

Lesson 7

- How does our church view Widows?
- What is God's evaluation of those who care for widows (1 Tim. 5:4)?

Session8

This session will start our four (4) week study On Serving from the Heart (finding your gifts and talents for service). Our sessions will start at 12:30 and run until 2:30. At the end of the course you will have learned about spiritual gifts and given the opportunity to work at identifying your own spiritual gifts and how you may better serve God and the church and began to identify what your place of ministry for service in the church.

Active Ministry

(Note: All Scripture quotes from the Message Bible, unless otherwise noted.)

1 Peter 2:9-10 “But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God’s instruments to do His work and speak out for Him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference He made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.”

Have you ever wondered what your purpose is? Why you exist and where you are going in life? When we consider this we usually place the emphasis on ourselves, the focus is on us. But what if we view this question from another angle or perspective?

Rick Warren in his book “The Purpose Driven Life,”¹ states, “The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It’s far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by His purpose and for His purpose.”

Later, the author writes, “You must begin with God, your Creator. You exist only because God wills that you exist. You were made by God and for God—and until you understand that, life will never make sense. You were made for God, not vice versa, and life is about letting God use you for His purposes, not your using Him for your own purpose.”

¹ Warren, Rick, The Purpose Driven Life. Publisher Zondervan, 2004.

1Peter 2:9-10—“But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God’s instruments to do His work and speak out for Him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference He made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.”

In this Scripture, we see several things that we will look at briefly today:

1. we are chosen—by God
2. chosen for a purpose—to be priests and a holy people
3. instruments of God—to do His work and to speak out for Him—His witnesses
4. to proclaim the Good News—to give our testimony of the changes He has done in our lives

In Revelation, we read that it is with the blood of Jesus Christ that we have been purchased by God, redeemed and made into a kingdom of priests (Rev. 5:8-10) “The moment he (the Lamb) took the scroll, the Four Animals (Living Creatures) and Twenty-four Elders fell down and worshiped the Lamb. Each had a harp and each had a bowl, a gold bowl filled with incense, the prayers of God’s holy people. And they sang a new song:

Worthy! Take the scroll, open its seals.

Slain! Paying in blood, you bought men and women,

Bought them back from all over the earth,

Bought them back for God.

Then you made them a Kingdom, Priests for our God,

Priest-kings to rule over the earth.”

We are chosen by God:

A. Chosen means selected by God for a special purpose, we are not an accident nor did we choose Him.

1. Romans 11:5-7—“It’s the same today. There’s a fiercely loyal minority still—not many, perhaps, but probably more than you think. They’re holding on, not because of what they think they’re going to get out of it, but because they’re convinced of God’s grace and purpose in choosing them. If they were only thinking of their own immediate self-interest, they would have left long ago. And then what happened? Well, when Israel tried to be right with God on her own, pursuing her own self-interest, she didn’t succeed. The chosen ones of God were those who let God pursue his interest in them, and as a result received his stamp of legitimacy. The “self-interest Israel “became thick-skinned toward God.”

2. Romans 12:5—“The body we’re talking about is Christ’s body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn’t amount to much, would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ’s body,”

3. Galatians 6:14-16—“For my part, I am going to boast about nothing but the Cross of our Master, Jesus Christ. Because of that Cross, I have been crucified in relation to the world, set free from the stifling atmosphere of pleasing others and fitting into the little patterns that they dictate. Can’t you see the central issue in all this? It is not what you and I do—submit to circumcision, reject circumcision. It is what God is doing, and he is creating something totally

new, a free life! All who walk by this standard are the true Israel of God—his chosen people. Peace and mercy on them!”

4. Colossians 3:10-12—“Now you’re dressed in a new wardrobe. Every item of your new way of life is custom-made by the Creator, with his label on it. All the old fashions are now obsolete. Words like Jewish and non-Jewish, religious and irreligious, insider and outsider, uncivilized and uncouth, slave and free, mean nothing. From now on everyone is defined by Christ, everyone is included in Christ. So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline.”

Chosen for a purpose:

A. We are chosen by God for a specific purpose—to be priestly-kings, as priests we have direct access to the very throne of God through our High Priest Jesus Christ. We no longer have to go through a human priest as Israel did with the Levitical priesthood.

1. Hebrews 7:27-28—“Unlike the other high priests, he doesn’t have to offer sacrifices for his own sins every day before he can get around to us and our sins. He’s done it, once and for all: offered up himself as the sacrifice. The law appoints as high priests men who are never able to get the job done right. But this intervening command of God, which came later, appoints the Son, who is absolutely, eternally perfect.” Jesus Christ is our high priest now and forever. No man can or will ever take that office again.

2. Hebrews 8:4-6—“If he (Jesus Christ) were limited to earth, he wouldn’t even be a priest. We wouldn’t need him since there are plenty of priests who offer the gifts designated in the law.

These priests provide only a hint of what goes on in the true sanctuary of heaven, which Moses caught a glimpse of as he was about to set up the tent-shrine. It was then that God said, 'Be careful to do it exactly as you saw it on the Mountain.' But Jesus' priestly work far surpasses what these other priests do, since he's working from a far better plan."

3. 1 Peter 2:5—"Present yourselves as building stones for the construction of a sanctuary vibrant with life, in which you'll serve as holy priests offering Christ-approved lives up to God."

4. Revelation 1:6—"Who made us a Kingdom, Priests for his Father, forever—and yes, he's on his way!"

5. Revelation 5:10—"Then you made them a Kingdom, Priests for our God, Priest-kings to rule over the earth."

6. Revelation 20:6—"and those involved most blessed, most holy. No second death for them! They're priests of God and Christ; they'll reign with him a thousand years."

APPENDIX 8

HISTORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH

History of Women in the Early Church

The Neglected History of Women in the Early Church¹

A number of prominent leaders, scholars, and benefactors of the early church were women and—despite neglect by many modern historians—the diligent researcher can still uncover a rich history. Women were the last disciples at the cross and the first at the empty tomb. They remained integral to the work of the church in its early centuries. Catherine Kroeger scours historical data to compile an impressive collection of stories about noteworthy women in the early church.

One of the best-kept secrets in Christianity is the enormous role that women played in the early church. Though they leave much unsaid, still, both Christian and secular writers of the time attest many times to the significant involvement of women in the early growth of Christianity.

a 2nd-century detractor of the faith, once taunted that the church attracted only “the silly and the mean an Copyright © 1988 by the author or Christianity Today/Christian History magazine.d the stupid, with women and children.” His contemporary, Bishop Cyprian of Carthage, acknowledged in his *Testimonia* that “Christian maidens were very numerous” and that it was difficult to find Christian husbands for all of them. These comments give us a picture of a church disproportionately populated by women.

Why? One reason might have been the practice of exposing unwanted female infants—abandoning them to certain death. Christians, of course, repudiated this practice, and thus had more living females. Also, in the upper echelons of society, women often converted to Christianity while their male relatives remained pagans, lest they lose their senatorial status. This too contributed to the inordinate number of women in the church, particularly upper-class women. Callistus, bishop of Rome c. 220, attempted to resolve the marriage problem by giving women of the senatorial class an ecclesiastical sanction to marry slaves or freedmen—even though Roman law prohibited this.

Women As Witnesses of Jesus²

It is no surprise that women were active in the early church. From the very start—the birth, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus—women were significantly involved. In fact, women were the major witnesses of his crucifixion and resurrection. Matthew, Mark and Luke all record that a significant group of women had followed Jesus in his Galilean ministry, and that they were present at his execution—when the male disciples were conspicuously absent.

All three describe the women’s presence at Jesus’ burial. Luke declares that the women who had followed Jesus from Galilee still followed along as Christ was carried to the tomb. Mark details the care with which Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus noted where He was laid, while Matthew tells how they kept watch over the sepulchre after the men had left. John tells of the group immediately beneath the cross, three women and one man. John alone preserves the garden interview between Mary Magdalene and the Risen Christ.

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² Copyright © 1988 by the author or Christianity Today/Christian History magazine.

The proclamation of the astounding Easter event was entrusted to these women. The angel reminded them that they had already been instructed by Jesus about His death, burial and resurrection. The women remembered and hurried off to tell the men. Their witness remains an integral part of the gospel to this day. The early church considered Mary Magdalene an “apostle to the apostles,” and Luke relied heavily on the testimony of women as he wrote both Luke and Acts.

The involvement of women continued in the first few decades of the church, attested by both biblical and extra-biblical sources. A number of women served as leaders of the house churches that sprang up in the cities of the Roman Empire—the list includes Priscilla, Chloe, Lydia, Apphia, Nympha, the mother of John Mark, and possibly the “elect lady” of John’s second epistle.

In the 2nd century, Clement of Alexandria wrote that the apostles were accompanied on their missionary journeys by women who were not marriage partners, but colleagues, “that they might be their fellow-ministers in dealing with housewives. It was through them that the Lord’s teaching penetrated also the women’s quarters without any scandal being aroused. We also know the directions about women deacons which are given by the noble Paul in his letter to Timothy.” Was that perhaps the role of Junia? She was mentioned by Paul in Romans 16 as “of note among the apostles.” Some have debated the meaning of this verse, but early tradition holds that Junia was a woman and was considered an apostle. John Chrysostom wrote: “Indeed, to be an apostle at all is a great thing; but to be even amongst those of note; just consider what a great encomium that is ... Oh, how great is the devotion of this woman, that she should even be counted worthy of the appellation of apostle.”

Until the Middle Ages, the identity of Junia as a female apostle was unquestioned. Later translators attempted to change the gender by changing the name to the masculine Junias. But such a name is unknown in antiquity; and there is absolutely no literary, epigraphical or papyrological evidence for it.

Paul also mentions Phoebe in Romans 16, “a deacon of the church at Cenchreae.” He calls her a *prostatis* or overseer. This term in its masculine form, *prostatis*, was used later by the Apostolic Fathers to designate the one presiding over the Eucharist. And Paul uses the same verb, the passive of *ginomai* (to be or become), as he uses in Colossians 1:23: “I was made a minister.” In the passive, the verb sometimes indicated ordination or appointment to an office. Thus one might legitimately translate Paul’s statement about Phoebe: “For she has been appointed, actually by my own action, an officer presiding over many.” The church in Rome is asked to welcome her and assist her in the church’s business.

The four daughters of Philip appear in Acts 21:9 as prophetesses. Eusebius viewed these daughters as “belonging to the first stage of apostolic succession.” Another prophetess attested to by extra-biblical tradition is Ammia, who prophesied in Philadelphia during New Testament times, and was received with reverence throughout Asia Minor. The first preserved mention of her dates to about 160 A.D.

2nd-Century Church Women³

³ Copyright © 1988 by the author or Christianity Today/Christian History magazine.

Just as the letters of Paul abound in references to his female associates in ministry, the Apostolic Fathers also mention women as stalwarts in the faith. Twice Ignatius sent greetings to Alce, whom he calls especially dear to him. He also greeted Tavia and her household; perhaps she was another house-church leader.

The Legend of St. Thecla⁴

The legend of St. Thecla has endeared itself to modern women as well as to their earlier counterparts. It is the best known of the numerous apocryphal stories of early Christian heroines. According to the 3rd-century text of *The Acts of Paul*, Thecla, a noblewoman, was converted while listening to the preaching of the apostle. Forsaking her old life, she followed Paul and endured persecution, tribulation and great peril. The story resembles the ancient pagan romances in the repetition of hair's-breadth escapes, the fortitude and nobility displayed by both hero and heroine, and the happy ending. It is, however, a Christianized romance, as are several other of the apocryphal *Acts* and *The Recognitions of Peter*.

Thecla appears as a truly heroic character who endures all manner of suffering for the sake of Christ. After her itineration through Asia Minor with the Apostle Paul, she settles near Seleucia, where she teaches, preaches, heals and baptizes. Tertullian, incensed that Montanist women used her as a model, declared that a deacon had confessed that he fabricated the story "for love of Paul." William M. Ramsay maintained that *The Acts of Paul* contained an authentic 1st-century account, which had been outrageously embellished by the 3rd-century deacon. Dennis McDonald has pointed out that, though the story is almost surely fictitious, this does not obviate the existence of an actual female leader of that name.

Women in Consecrated Orders⁵

Beside the outstanding achievements of individual women stood the ministry of consecrated women in specialized orders. These orders included ecclesial widows, virgins, presbyteresses and deaconesses. Sometimes such women were formally ordained and sat with the rest of the clergy in front of the congregation.

Mary McKenna suggests that the disadvantaged women who accompanied Jesus in his Galilean ministry (Luke 8:23) formed the beginning of the order of widows. The Greek term *cheira* might refer to any woman who found herself in difficult circumstances. Tertullian complained of a virgin who was admitted to the order of widows at the age of 19! These widows were supported by the gifts of the congregation, and in turn were expected to pray for their benefactors as well as for all

⁴ Copyright © 1988 by the author or Christianity Today/Christian History magazine.

⁵ Copyright © 1988 by the author or Christianity Today/Christian History magazine.

There are even a few scattered references connecting women to the priesthood. Pseudo-Ignatius's Letter to the Tarsians commands that those who continue in virginity be honored as priestesses of Christ. The eldersses of Titus 2:3 must be "hieroprepeis," a term that inscriptional evidence suggests should be translated "like a priestess," or "like those employed in sacred service." The walls of the Roman catacombs bear pictures showing women in authoritative stances, with their hands raised in the posture of a bishop. The Ecclesiastical Canons of the Apostles specifically forbade women to stand in prayer (24:1-8). But here we see them standing in prayer, exercising a ministry of intercession and benediction, and dominating the scene. To this day, their steadfast faith and ministry still bless us.

CHAPTER XIV.

Though a widow may have received no commandment, yet she has received so many counsels that she ought not to think little of them. St. Ambrose would be sorry to lay any snare for her, seeing that the field of the Church grows richer as a result of wedlock, but it is absolutely impossible to deny that widowhood, which St. Paul praises, is profitable. Consequently, he speaks severely about those who have proscribed widowhood by law.

82. BUT neither has the widow received any command, but a counsel; a counsel, however, not given once only but often repeated. For, first, it is said: "It is good for a man not to touch a woman."³³⁹⁹ And again: "I would that all men were even as I myself;"³⁴⁰⁰ and once more: "It is good for them if they remain even as I;"³⁴⁰¹ and a fourth time: "It is good for the present distress."³⁴⁰² And that it is well pleasing to the Lord, and honourable, and, lastly, that perseverance in widowhood is happier, he lays down not only as his own judgment, but also as an aspiration of the Holy Spirit. Who, then, can reject the kindness of such a counsellor? Who gives the reins to the will, and advises in the case of others that which he has found advantageous by his own experience, he who is not easy to catch up, and is not hurt at being equalled. Who, then, would shrink from becoming holy in body and spirit, since the reward is far above the toil, grace beyond need, and the wages above the work?

83. And this, I say, not in order to lay a snare for others, but that as a good husbandman of the land entrusted to me, I may see this field of the Church to be fruitful, at one time blossoming with the flowers of purity, at another time strong in the gravity of widowhood, and yet again abounding with the fruits of wedlock. For though they be diverse, yet they are the fruits of one field; there are not so many lilies in the gardens as ears of corn in the fields, and many more fields are prepared for receiving seed than lie fallow after the crops are gathered in.

84. Widowhood is, then, good, which is so often praised by the judgment of the apostles, for it is a teacher of the faith and a teacher of chastity. Whereas they who honour the adulteries and the shame of their gods appointed penalties for celibacy and widowhood;³⁴⁰³ that zealous in pursuit of crimes they might punish the study of virtues; under the pretext, indeed, of seeking increase of the population, but in reality that they might put an end to the purpose of chastity. For the soldier, when his time is ended, lays aside his arms, and leaving the rank which he held, is dismissed as a veteran to his own land, that he may obtain rest after the toils of a laborious life, and cause others to be more ready to undergo labour in the hope of future repose. The labourer, too, as he grows too old, entrusts the guiding

Widows in Ambrose's time did not get to make their own choices like widows of the 21st century. If one was a Christian in Roman times what would be the thought of proper Christian behavior once a spouse has been lost? Ambrose, after writing three letters on virginity to his sister Marcellina, wrote one more letter for widows. This letter gave women alternate choices than to marry, to live their lives as widows. Ambrose had strong feelings toward the actions of virgins and widows. In response to these feelings Ambrose wrote letters to his sister detailing the actions a Christian woman must take in these particular situations.

Ambrose's letter on widows in *De uiduis* pertained to women. This letter is for newly converted Christians from the Roman pagan religion. It is thought that the interested audience would be people who wanted to be full-fledged members of the Roman Christian church. "This audience was likely to contain a diverse mix of lay people with no specific vocation except the call to become full-fledged members of the church" (Marcia Colish, *Ambrose Patriarchs: Ethics for the Common Man*, p 2).

Ambrose used stories from the bible to convey behaviors of widows. All of the stories used in *De uiduis* are of women from the Old and the New Testaments, biblical widows. The behaviors of the widows would resemble the behaviors of a woman of Christian faith. These behaviors are detailed in virtues. The four cardinal virtues are wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice (Robert Grant, *Theology* 141, 10/7/10). Ambrose uses the virtues to detail Christian widow behavior. Commonly the virtues can be deflected when passions are in play, so a widow must not

The letters on widows expressed Ambrose's views on women in the Roman society. "He offered these women a full and unusually independent way of life, appreciated by the Church and having dignity within society" (Pasini, Ambrigo de Milano). He also shared the view that the body is a "human soul made in an image and likeness of God. A temple of the Holy Spirit" (The Fathers and Beyond, p 2). Thus, if the body is a temple from God, then this temple can be destroyed if not maintained. The newly converted Roman Christians needed advisement how to be a Christian in certain life situations. Ambrose did this by the interpretation of from the stories of the Bible. For example he used the story of Deborah. Ambrose used Deborah's story because she was a strong independent women. Deborah used the virtues of wisdom, courage and temperance to gain a victory for her people. "For she taught not only that widows do not need the help of men, but also that they are even a help to men. For she, not held back by the weakness of her sex, took on the duties of men and, having taken them on, brought them to completion.....It is not sex but virtue that makes people strong" (The Fathers and Beyond, p 13). He took on the role of revealing a detailed message to Christian widows by connecting to them on a level they could understand. Ambrose was thought to write the treatise for guidance for women and for aid of a women friend. His friend was widowed, had many children and was a Christian. It is said that she went to Ambrose for guidance on whether to remarry and thus the treatise was written (H. de Romestin, E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth, Church Fathers).

Ambrose does not only write in relevance to the Roman time. One can interpret Ambrose's writings of the past to today's current events. His letter on widows empowered women, by giving them the choices of how to live their lives. He was giving them guidelines to be women of God and to be stronger than they seemed to

be in the eyes of Roman society. There were other options in being a widow than to remarry for farmhands or to bear children. Today, women can use these words as an inspiration or guidelines to a purer life. Maybe women who read his words would think before marrying twice, or realize they can be independent without a spouse. Women today feel the strength of past women inspired by Ambrose. Without these thoughts on actions women were allowed to do in Ambrose's time what would have become of current feminine rights? Maybe Ambrose and his sister started to help pave the way of gender equality.

Ambrose was a manipulator of words. He could take scripture and turn it into what he wanted as a "right" way to do things. If it was not for his skill in writing and in interpreting, society today could have been different. By reading the letters to Marcellina, one can see Ambrose's passion for change of his Roman society. As a woman I can appreciate Ambrose introducing the thoughts of female independence.

If Ambrose was alive today and had the same morals and values that he did in his Roman Catholic society, what would he say about current issues like women becoming ordained as priests? According to the Catholic dioceses "Only a baptized man receives sacred ordination. The Lord Jesus chose men to form the college of the twelve apostles, and the apostles did the same when they chose collaborators to succeed them in their ministry. The college of bishops, with whom the priests are united in the priesthood, makes the college of the twelve an ever-present and ever-active reality until Christ's return. The Church recognizes herself to be bound by this choice made by the Lord Himself. For this reason the ordination of women is

(Ambrigo de Milano). If Ambrose was to choose a side on the issue of men versus women in the priesthood, he would have the wit to use the scripture to uphold his case.

As stated above Ambrose saw the body as a "human soul made in an image and likeness of God" (The Fathers and Beyond, p 2). This statement applies equally to men and women; we are all the same the same in God's eyes. I believe that Ambrose would not deny a woman to become a priest in the Catholic Church if she was to be fully devoted herself, the same as a male priest would of. Rules and laws change with time, especially when they are seemingly outdated. This would be a topic that could use some change and Ambrose may be the right Bishop to do it.





The Life of the Widow - Pt. 5 Rebuilding her Life

Charles Harris

Understandably, the loss of a companion whom one has selected as a partner in marriage for life shatters the world of the widow or widower. Everything changes. Nothing will ever be exactly the same again. In a sense a part of one's life ends on the day of the death of the spouse. The task, then, becomes that of rebuilding a new life for oneself. Such a simple thing as the passing of time helps some. Brothers writes, "I could hardly believe how markedly my sadness, my depression, my fears, my anger, my loneliness, have diminished as the months dragged by. They have not disappeared entirely, but I am healing. And I know it" (Joyce Brothers, *Widowed* [New York: Ballantine Books, 1990], p. 96).

However, Smoke says the rebuilding process comes in three stages (Jim Smoke, *Turning Your World Right Side Up* [Colorado Springs, CO: Focus on the Family Publishing, 1995], pp. 2, 3). The first involves looking back on life and asking, "If only I had . . ." He calls the second the forward-fear projection stage. During that period the questions include, "What if you run out of money? What if you never remarry? What if you get sick and have no one to look after you? What if the stock market crashes and the gasoline supply dries up? What if your children become delinquent? The list is endless" (p. 2). In the third one begins to deal with the present. The widow begins to say, "I can be responsible for myself"; "I can rebuild and go on with my life" (p. 2).

At the death of a spouse, one's life changes permanently, since much of what he or she has known in the past is gone forever. For some time previously the life of the widow has been inseparably entwined with that of another person. Now she hardly knows who she is. Is she still Mrs. John Smith, or should her friends address her as Mrs. Mary Smith? According to Jensen and Ann Landers, it is socially acceptable for others to continue to refer to her as Mrs. John Smith rather than Mrs. Mary Smith (Maxine Dowd Jensen, *Beginning Again: How the Widow Can Find New Life Beyond Sorrow* [Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Book House, 1977], p. 55).

Further, should one no longer wear the wedding ring? Some widows come to a place where they decide to remove it from their finger. Perhaps now they begin to think of the possibility of dating again. Still, as Convissor notes, "We take these steps, but our emotions don't settle obediently into place like cats in the sun" (Kate Convissor, *Young Widow: Learning to Live Again* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992], p. 133). Maybe there is some

truth in what she calls the widow's maxim, "Fake it 'til you make it" (p. 133). Perhaps self-confidence begins to build anew with such actions. Likely the hour has come to think of ~~devote some time to helping others more and less of one's own need of help.~~

The first step in the process of rebuilding one's life is to realize that such is possible. A friend of mine lost his wife suddenly one day in a tragic automobile accident. His own life seemed to hang on a shoe string for many weeks following that event. He was physically unable to attend his sweetheart's funeral. Thankfully, he recovered and lived a normal life several decades afterwards. In time he found another lady who had herself been widowed. The two married and enjoyed a number of years in happiness together. When my wife died, she sought me out and privately commented, "You need to know that there is life beyond the death of a dear companion."

The rebuilding of the widow's life focuses on such things as where to live, whether or not to seek a job, and the question of remarriage. In all of this Marshall suggests simply, "The bereaved must find new and creative patterns for the rebuilding of their lives" (Catherine Marshall, *To Live Again* [New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1957], p. 304).

More Permanent Housing Plans

The question as to permanent housing inevitably arises following the death of a mate. However, almost every writer on the subject of widowhood suggests caution on making a big decision concerning that issue too soon after the funeral of a mate. For example, realize that there may be exceptions, Brothers says, "But if you can possibly avoid it—do not see a new house, do not move, do not make a major purchase, do not make a major change in your life. Put everything on hold for a year" (p. 189).

What about moving in to live with married children? To move in with children is almost certainly to lose one's independence. In fact, the widow may experience a reversal of roles in her relationship with her children. They soon act as if they feel they have shifted to the position of the ones now in charge. They may unconsciously conclude that their mother has moved to a stage of helplessness and in need of someone stronger to make decisions for her. However, Brothers counsels:

Do not let others take over your life. Do not let your children or anyone else step in and take over your life. Do not let them manage your money or your affairs. Too often relatives, and sometimes friends, tend to think they know how the widow should conduct her life and do it better than she does herself. This is rarely the case (p. 187).

Peterson and Briley say:

The widow desires and values the personal independence and sense of freedom. She does not wish to give up running her own household and become a peripheral member of another's. In her own home, she can retain control and determine her own comings and going work patterns (James A. Peterson and Michael L. Briley, *Widows and Widowhood: A Creative Approach to Being Alone* [New York: Association Press, 1977], p. 139).

They conclude that evidence suggests that the two family living arrangement is not the best for most.

Or, what of moving so as to be near to one's married children? Sharing her response to the question with one widow Jensen writes:

My advice was for her to remain here with friends rather than move close to her children. Children, like friends, lead busy lives. They are involved in their own interests. There are times when living in close proximity to your children brings not only loneliness, but frustration. Parents discover the young people don't have much time for them (p. 43).

Further, children may not continue to live in that area indefinitely, or even for very long.

For the older widow, what about moving to a retirement home? Whether or not she continues to own and operate an automobile may influence her decision on retirement home living. Lack of transportation obviously hinders social interaction. Moving into a retirement community may help.

For widows who remarry, Peterson and Briley write, "One basic suggestion is that they do not try to live in the home they had occupied with another mate. There are too many memories associated with that house, constant reminders of yesterday that can add to the ever-present problems of adjusting to any new marriage" (p.174).

Remarriage

A second question the widow faces in seeking to rebuild her life concerns whether or not she desires to marry again. In some cultures the questions regarding remarriage for a widow hardly arise. Peterson and Briley report:

In the traditional Chinese family, a widow was not supposed to remarry; in fact her husband's family could block any new union. Furthermore, she was not allowed to take any of her property into a second marriage. There were both social and economic sanctions against remarriage for the widow (p. 168).

I have even known some Christian believers who consider it wrong to think of marrying again following the death of a spouse. For them, somehow that would be unacceptable. They seem to conclude that the Lord intended for them to have only one companion in life, regardless of what happens. More appears below on the question.

As far as the opinions of friends are concerned, likely the widow will receive conflicting counsel on the question of remarriage. Jensen reports, "Some people tell me, 'Oh, you're young. You were only married thirteen years,'" as if that helps much (p. 16). When it comes to making a decision on whether or not to remarry, certain biblical, personal, and practical questions come into focus. One force in play is obviously availability of potential partners. Most know that the opportunities for remarriage for a widow are noticeably fewer than for widowers. Peterson and Briley write, "The basic problem is the overwhelming plurality of widows over widowers. There are some 251,000 new widowers each year and nearly 600,000 widows" (p. 169).

Biblical Teaching

Some read the writings of Paul selectively and conclude that he opposed remarriage for widows. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, he classified any teaching against marriage as a "doctrine of the devil" (1 Tim. 4 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.%204>);1-3

(<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim%204.1-3>). Further, to the Corinthians he wrote, "A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.%207.39>)). He could not more clearly sanction the right of a person with a deceased companion to select another partner in marriage. They may marry whom they wish; however, they should carefully seek the guidance of the Lord in the matter. Of course, they would begin by eliminating any candidate who is not "in the Lord," not a believer.

Then apostle then offers the alternative of remaining single in the will of God. He says, "In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is—and I think that I too have the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 7:40 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.%207.40>)). He reasons earlier in the letter that singleness has its advantages. He explains, "I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—and his interests are divided" (1 Cor. 7:32-34 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.%207.32-34>)).

Accordingly, those who contemplate marriage should be aware of the fact that "those who marry will face many troubles in this life" (28). That "trouble" can include a combination of several small items. Nye writes:

If you expect perfection, you don't really intend to remarry at all. You want to live with your selective memories of your first husband. If you expect to find a suitable man who has no annoying habits, no personal flaws, and no loyalty to his deceased wife, you must know you are too demanding. You are making sure that you don't marry again (Mirian Baker Nye, *But Never Thought He'd Die: Practical Help for Widows* [Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1978], p. 139).

The deciding factor, then, is the will of the Lord for the life of each person. Considering all that the Bible says on the subject, Scripture shows it is the will of God for most to marry. In the very beginning the Lord declared, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen.%202.18>)). Then He immediately provided Adam a suitable helper and instituted the family as the basic unit of Society. Yet, Paul recognized that some remain single in the will of God and render acceptable service to God throughout life. His conclusion, then, is that "each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him" (1 Cor. 7:17 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Cor.%207.17>)).

Clearly, Paul presents a balanced message in comparing the single and the married life. As in his letter to the Corinthians so in the one to the Romans he wants all to know that remarriage is permissible for the widow. To them he wrote:

By law a married woman is bound to her husband as long as he is alive, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage. So then, if she marries another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress, even though she marries another man (Rom. 7:2 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom.%207.2>)), 3 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom%207.3>)).

In fact the apostle encourages especially young widows to remarry. At the end of offering his reasons behind it, he writes simply, "So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander" (1 Tim. 5:14 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Tim.%205.14>)).

Practical Matters

Certain practical matters enter into the decision of the widow concerning marrying again. These include readiness for remarriage and giving adequate consideration to one's children, especially younger ones.

Readiness for Remarriage: The issue of readiness for remarriage argues against hasty decisions about the matter. For example, Convissor cautions, "However it is very important that we learn to stand alone before seeking another. Relationships formed by need collapse like a house of cards or grow malformed" (p. 140).

Marshall elaborates:

The widow sees as never before that only when she is a whole person does she have enough to contribute to any marriage relationship. She sees that in marriage or out of marriage, she will be lonely unless she is taking definite steps toward finding herself, toward becoming the whole person she is meant to be" (p. 125).

With similar reasoning Davis writes, "I knew the cure for my loneliness was not finding another person to spend my life with but in coming to a comfortableness with all that makes me who I am" (p. 135).

Brothers says, "I have discovered that as the months pass, I am less and less willing to give up the freedom I have—freedom that I never wanted, but, now that I have it, would find hard to relinquish. I have found there are advantages to the single life. And I am not alone in this discovery" (p. 144).

Peterson and Briley also warn against hasty remarriages for widows but for slightly different reasons. They say, "If a woman begins her relationship with eligible males too soon, before the grief period is over, she will ruin her chances by her demeanor" (p. 169).

Jensen says simply, "I firmly believe being unmarried and happy is more to be desired than being unhappy and married." (p. 92).

Brothers observes further, "Older widows seem even more set against remarriage than the younger women. They do not want to go through the process of adjusting to life with another individual, nor do they want to go through the agony of nursing another man through a terminal illness" (p. 146). She says, "A survey of 390 Chicago widows found that only 80 wanted to get married again. When asked why not, their answers were remarkably similar: 'I'm free and independent' was the refrain" (p. 147).

Considering Children: Giving adequate consideration to one's children, especially younger ones, is of further concern to a widow considering remarriage. As an example, Teterud says, "The challenge of introducing a new father to children is great enough, but when the father is

Engaging in Volunteer Work: If the widow is sufficiently financially secure at the death of her husband, she may well consider spending some of her time weekly in volunteer service. What Peterson and Briley say is well-known. They write, "The church remains one of the best opportunities for widowers and widows to find a meaningful social group" (p. 121). More and more congregations schedule activities for their age group, including tours to places of interest.

The Bible offers examples of those whose volunteer work had a base in the church. Among the first to recognize the Baby Jesus as having come from heaven was Anna. She was an aged widow. Yet, despite the fact that she was eighty four years old, Luke says that, "She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying" (Luke 2:37 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%202.37>)). The evangelist designates her as a prophetess. However, since neither prophets nor prophetesses occupied official positions at the Temple, she must have served in a voluntary capacity. Central to her activity there was fasting and prayer.

Widows whose departed husbands have left them financially stable have the opportunity of advancing the kingdom of God through giving. Regrettably, experience teaches that it is the older members more than the younger ones in a congregation whose financial contributions provides the larger part of a church budget. This is not to suggest that the pastor depends on the rich to support the church. Paul took note of the fact that some gave in a church offering "beyond their ability" when at the time they themselves were experiencing "deep poverty" (2 Cor. 8:2 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor.%208.2>), 3 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor%208.3>)). As Jesus observed a widow behaving in a similar matter, He said to His students, "I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on" (Mark 12:43 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2012.43>), 44 (<http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2012.44>)).

Seeking Employment: Loss of a feeling of self-esteem often follows the loss of one's husband. After all, her life may have been some much a part of his work that when that is gone her anchor in life seems to have slipped away. One of the things which may help is a consideration of seeking employment. For some widows, of course, going to work becomes an economic necessity. In any case, Nye says that, if well chosen, "Work can provide you with 'social identity and linkage with others,' with self-respect, self-confidence, and increased stability" (p. 79).

However, some widows may find an opposite experience in seeking employment following a husband's death. Peterson and Briley report such a case. They write:

A few months after Frank's death, Jean returned to work. "I was teaching a class at the time, and I broke down and cried in front of the group on more than one occasion. I worked about five months and found that I just couldn't function. The added stresses of the job were just too much for me at the time" (p. 4).

Summary

Following the initial period of coping with grief, a major task for the widow is that of rebuilding a new life for herself. Such a simple thing as the passing of time helps some. However, the greater part of the needed adjustments requires a conscious and concerted effort on the part of the bereaved person. The rebuilding of the widow's life focuses on such things as where to live, whether or not to seek a job, and the question of remarriage. The lines above have offered specific suggestions to assist her in each of these areas.

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TWO SHALL BE ONE FLESH

Richard I. s. Gan

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"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it:..."

- Gen.1:26-28

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

- Gen.2:7

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

- Gen.2:24

After the creation of the heavens and the earth, God created living creatures to fill the environment which He had specially created for them. He created the fishes in the seas and the birds in the air on the fifth day. And on the sixth day, He formed the animals of the earth. From the smallest to the largest, God made a pair of

and not from a Three-in-One God or so-called Trinity.

The Thought of God was, and is, perfect. In both the invisible and the visible creations, God has demonstrated His power of perfection – perfection in harmony and order. God has set all things, invisible or visible, simple or compound, male or female, to harmonize with one another, like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle which interlock perfectly with one another. God has, according to His own Will, set in order the season and the purpose for each and every living thing.

Hence, when God made a visible physical body from the dust of the earth for the invisible spirit of the Man (Adam) and put him in the environment of the earth, His purpose was for Man to harmonize with the kingdoms of the earthly creatures. The physical Man had access to the realm of the spirits even while he was in the tangible world. He was, in fact, a citizen of two worlds. Man was, and still is, the central theme of God's creation in Christ Jesus.

Though Man had the company of birds and animals, yet he was alone. Unlike the birds and the animals, Man was created in the *image and likeness* of God. None of those creatures was suitable to *meet Adam's needs* – spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and physically. Adam was *not* a part of their kingdoms. In fact, he was charged to exercise dominion over their kingdoms. He was relegated to the low estate of the animal kingdom only after the Fall (Eccl.3:18-20).

***"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of the Man."* – Gen.2:21-23**

The Woman was a by-product of the Man. She was created not

Widows of the Bible

Bible verses related to Widows from the King James Version (KJV)

Genesis 1:27 - So God created man in his [own] image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

Genesis 19:1-38 - And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom: and Lot seeing [them] rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; (*Read More...*)

Genesis 25:22 - And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If [it be] so, why [am] I thus? And she went to enquire of the LORD.

Exodus 20:13 - Thou shalt not kill.

Exodus 21:22-25 - If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart [from her], and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges [determine]. (*Read More...*)

Exodus 22:22-24 - Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. (*Read More...*)

Leviticus 21:14 - A widow, or a divorced woman, or profane, [or] an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a virgin of his own people to wife.

Leviticus 22:13 - But if the priest's daughter be a widow, or divorced, and have no child, and is returned unto her father's house, as in her youth, she shall eat of her father's meat: but there shall no stranger eat thereof.

Numbers 30:9 - But every vow of a widow, and of her that is divorced, wherewith they have bound their souls, shall stand against her.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 - When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give [it] in her hand, and send her out of his house. *(Read More...)*

Ruth 1:1-22 - Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. *(Read More...)*

Ruth 1:3 - And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.

Ruth 2:1-23 - And Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name [was] Boaz. *(Read More...)*

Ruth 3:1-18 - Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? *(Read More...)*

Ruth 4:1-22 - Then went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold,

the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down. *(Read More...)*

1 Kings 17:1-24 - And Elijah the Tishbite, [who was] of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, [As] the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. *(Read More...)*

2 Kings 4:1-7 - Now there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen. *(Read More...)*

Job 10:8-12 - Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me. *(Read More...)*

Job 22:5 - [Is] not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?

Job 22:9 - Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken.

Job 24:3 - They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow's ox for a pledge.

Job 24:21 - He evil entreateth the barren [that] beareth not: and doeth not good to the widow.

Job 29:13 - The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I

grievousness [which] they have prescribed;

Isaiah 10:2 - To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and [that] they may rob the fatherless!

Jeremiah 1:5 - Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, [and] I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.

Jeremiah 7:6 - [If] ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt:

Jeremiah 7:7 - Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.

Jeremiah 22:3 - Thus saith the LORD; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.

Jeremiah 49:11 - Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve [them] alive; and let thy widows trust in me.

Ezekiel 22:7 - In thee have they set light by father and mother: in the midst of thee have they dealt by oppression with the stranger: in thee have they vexed the fatherless and the widow.

Ezekiel 22:29 - The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery, and have vexed the poor and needy: yea, they have oppressed the stranger wrongfully.

Ezekiel 22:31 - Therefore have I poured out mine indignation upon them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I recompensed upon their heads, saith the Lord GOD.

Zechariah 7:10 - And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

Malachi 3:5 - And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in [his] wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger [from his right], and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

Matthew 5:42 - Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Matthew 6:1-4 - Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. (*Read More...*)

Matthew 7:21-23 - Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

(Read More...)

Matthew 18:1-35 - At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? *(Read More...)*

Matthew 23:13-15 - But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in [yourselves], neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. *(Read More...)*

Matthew 23:15 - Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

Mark 12:40 - Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation.

Mark 12:41-44 - And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. *(Read More...)*

Luke 2:36 - And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;

Luke 2:37 - And she [was] a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served [God] with fastings and prayers night and day.

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:17 - For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

John 8:44 - Ye are of [your] father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.

Acts 2:44-45 - And all that believed were together, and had all things common;
(*Read More...*)

Acts 4:32-35 - And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any [of them] that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. (*Read More...*)

Acts 20:35 - I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

Romans 7:3 - So then if, while [her] husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

Romans 10:13 - For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be

1 Timothy 5:9-12 - Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, (*Read More...*)

1 Timothy 5:16 - If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.

James 1:27 - Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, [and] to keep himself unspotted from the world.

1 John 4:1 - Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

THE BIBLE ON WIDOWHOOD

Read the discussion questions and relate them to the following Bible passages about widowhood

<u>LAMENTATIONS 1:1</u>	Scripture recognizes the sorrow of widowhood as she compares it with the loss of Jerusalem.
<u>JAMES 1:27</u>	It's pure worship of God to care for widows and orphans when it's done out of proper motives.
<u>PSALM 146:9 &</u>	
<u>DEUT.10:17-18</u>	God takes care of widows and orphans
<u>JER.49:11</u>	"Your widows can depend on Me."
<u>ISAIAH 1:17</u>	We should defend widows.
<u>ACTS 36 9</u>	Tabitha, a good woman who helped widows is raised from death.
<u>JER.7:6-7 & 22:3 &</u>	
<u>ZECH 7:10</u>	Don't oppress widows, orphans and aliens
<u>MAL. 3:5</u>	The Lord will testify against those who cheat widows.
<u>MK.12:40 & LK.20:47</u>	Scribes who act holy yet swallow a widow's property.
<u>DEUT.27:19</u>	A curse on those who violate widow's rights.
<u>EX.22:20-24</u>	Widow who is wronged cries out to God.
<u>DEUT. 24:17-22</u>	Gleaning right of widows.
<u>DEUT. 14:28-29 &</u>	
<u>26:12-13</u>	Widows share in the tithes
<u>LEV.22:13</u>	Widowed daughter of priest may eat consecrated food.
<u>ACTS 6:1-6</u>	Early Church had special people to care for widows.
<u>1 TIM 5:3-16</u>	Consecrated widowhood is a ministry in early Church.
<u>1 KINGS 17:9-24</u>	Story of Elijah and the widow.
<u>LK.4:25-26</u>	Which widow did God choose?
<u>LK. 17 7:11</u>	Widow's son raised from death by Jesus.
<u>2 KINGS 4:1-7</u>	A miracle to free widow from debt.
<u>RUTH 2</u>	Ruth exercises her rights as a widow.
<u>LK. 2:36-38</u>	The widow Anna prophesies about Jesus.
<u>LK. 18:1-8</u>	Jesus tells story of the widow and the Judge.
<u>LK.21:1-4 &</u>	
<u>MK.12:41-44</u>	The widow's mite.
<u>LK.20:27-34</u>	
<u>& MK.12:18-26</u>	Who's wife is she in resurrection?
<u>1 COR.13:13</u>	True love is eternal.
<u>1 COR.7:39-40</u>	Widow free to marry a Christian man.
<u>1 COR.7:8-9</u>	Paul's advise to widows.
<u>ROMANS 7:1-3</u>	Released from law of marriage.
<u>LEV. 21:14</u>	Priests not to marry a widow. Why,do you suppose?
<u>RUTH 1:8-9</u>	Three widows. Ruth remarries and becomes ancestor of Jesus.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which widow in the Bible impresses you most? Why?
2. In what ways can a widow be of special service to God's people?
3. What is the setting for each passage? Who's talking to whom?
4. What responsibilities, if any, does the Church have for widows?
5. What responsibilities does family have for widows?
6. What responsibilities, if any, does society have for widows?
7. Discuss: With the death of her husband a woman must also die in the sense that she must let go from her old life in order to rise to her new calling as a Christian widow. Compare to Romans 7:4.
8. What other groups are widows listed with?
9. In what ways is a widow more free to do God's work.
10. In what ways can widows help each other?
11. What can we do to help a new widow?
12. Although physical marriage ends with death, a love relationship does not. How do you think this love should express itself, and how shouldn't it? ?

Widowed Women Support One Another In Toronto Community Program

An innovative program whereby newly widowed women get ongoing emotional support from widows who have already resolved their grief has begun operating in Toronto. A researcher with the project notes that *one in ten* Canadian women over the age of 14 is a widow (944,000 women), adding that these women are a high risk group — according to one study 32 percent “suffer marked deterioration in health 13 months after bereavement compared to two percent for the control group”.



Mary Vachon

You're expected to pull up your socks and go on. It's ludicrous. Young women are being told at the gravesite, 'don't worry, you'll be married again in a year'.

Mary Vachon, a mental health consultant at Toronto's Clarke Institute of Psychiatry, which organized the 'Community Contacts for the Widowed' program, told a recent press conference in Toronto that some of the Clarke's own research triggered the plan. It showed that in the year following bereavement, young widows had three times as many hospital admissions as women of similar age, and a 12 percent increase in mortality. Ms. Vachon also noted that in one study 36 percent of suicide victims had lost a parent or spouse in the five years prior to the suicide.

“Our technological level is so high that death is seen as a mistake, a

medical failure. We question it”, she said. “Drugs are used to make death painless and grief painless, but it won't work”. She added that quick funeral ceremonies have been used to deny grief, and in two or three days “you're expected to pull up your socks and go on. It's ludicrous. Young women are being told at the gravesite, 'don't worry, you'll be married again in a year'”.

After a two year pilot study involving 175 widows, the need for an outreach program was clearly established, said Joy Rogers, also a mental health consultant at the Clarke Institute. Of new widows asked to become involved in the program, 88 percent accepted, as did 88 percent of ‘widow contacts’ — women who had been through the grief period. “This is a fantastic acceptance rate”, she stressed. The program is patterned after a Boston ‘widow to widow’ scheme, but with the difference that the Toronto plan will be monitored and its success analyzed. It is the first of its kind in Canada.

New widows are matched with widow contacts on the basis of age, religion and similar life experience, said Ms. Rogers. Contacts act as ‘listening ears’ and are available 24 hours a day. The program also involves weekly drop-ins for coffee and conversation and large group sessions held monthly, with formal topics of discussion and guest speakers. She called the program a ‘stepping stone’ to get these widows back into the social mainstream.

“We've learned a great deal about widowhood”, she said. “We've learned you can't really be helpful until you've been through it. We're not the experts, our widows are”.

“People withdraw from the bereaved”, she continued. “They get impatient or they get threatened. So the widow either puts up a front or through her complaining drives her friends away. They have a lot of anger

they're feeling guilty about, as well as thoughts of suicide. Another widow knows all that”.

After the overwhelming response to the pilot study, a formal agency to run the program was formed, with a central office in downtown Toronto and four satellite services — all run by seven volunteer widow contacts working part time. This number will be expanded as the need arises.

Dr. W. A. Lyall, the psychiatrist who heads the Clarke's Community Resources Service, stressed the preventive aspects of the program and its



Joy Rogers

We've learned a great deal about widowhood. We've learned you can't really be helpful until you've been through it. We're not the experts, our widows are.

enormous cost-saving potential: “I saw a newly widowed patient last week who had no place else to go, no place to let her hair down and just cry”. He said this patient was definitely in need of psychiatric help, perhaps requiring 16 more visits, all of them potentially avoidable: “This can represent a tremendous saving. The patient won't have to see me. The non-professional contact can offer more time, more commitment than could be expected of a professional and the kind of help offered in just driving around looking at drapes, for example”.

Widow contacts, said Dr. Lyall,

Active Ministry

(Note: All Scripture quotes from the Message Bible, unless otherwise noted.)

1 Peter 2:9-10 “But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God’s instruments to do His work and speak out for Him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference He made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.”

Have you ever wondered what your purpose is? Why you exist and where you are going in life? When we consider this we usually place the emphasis on ourselves, the focus is on us. But what if we view this question from another angle or perspective?

Rick Warren in his book “The Purpose Driven Life,”¹ states, “The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It’s far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams and ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by His purpose and for His purpose.”

Later, the author writes, “You must begin with God, your Creator. You exist only because God wills that you exist. You were made by God and for God—and until you understand that, life will never make sense. You were made for God, not vice versa, and life is about letting God use you for His purposes, not your using Him for your own purpose.”

¹ Warren, Rick, The Purpose Driven Life. Publisher Zondervan, 2004.

APPENDIX 9

Serving from the Heart

Finding Your Gifts and Talents for Service

(A Guided Study)

Lesson 1 Introduction and Biblical foundation ¹

Object of this Lesson:

To gain a biblical foundation for understanding spiritual gifts

We will be working with four foundational Bible passages dealing with Spiritual gifts found in the following scriptures:

Passages	Who receives the gifts	For what purpose	List of Spiritual Gifts
1 Corinthians 12			
Romans 12:1-8			
Ephesians 4:1-16			
1 Peter 4:9-11			

The purpose is to see what the Bible identifies as spiritual gifts. Some translations of the Bible may word them a little different, but the essential meaning is the same. Ephesians 4:11, written in Greek make's the pastor –teacher one gift as opposed to listing pastor as one gift and teacher as another.

- List the spiritual gifts in each passage

¹ Cartmill, Carol and Gentile Yvonne: Serving from the Heart: Finding Your Gifts and Talents for Service: (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2011).

- What have you learned about spiritual gifts

Lesson 2 Spiritual Defined ²

Objective of the lesson:

To further understand the biblical foundation of spiritual gifts with the goal of gaining an appreciation for how they manifest themselves today

- Share with others what you know about spiritual gifts
- Read the list of spiritual gifts
- Give the Biblical definition of the twenty spiritual gifts
- Come to an understanding of what each spiritual gift might look like
- How it might they be use within the church
- Tell something interesting they have learned the spiritual gifts

Session 3 Talents and Resources³

Objective of the lesson:

To gain an understanding as distinguished from spiritual gifts and to see how your resources can affect your ministry within the church

Distinguish Talents from Spiritual Gifts

Talents both God given and acquired, every person is born with natural talents Sometimes we confuse talents with spiritual gifts. They can same very similar because both refer to an exceptional ability to do something, but there is some differences, Talents are those abilities that seem to come naturally; Spiritual gifts are given o Christians, while every person (Christian or not) is born with natural talents. Spiritual gifts are used only to glorify God and serve others. One way to distinguish whether ability is a talent or spiritual gift is to consider the purpose and the results. Does the ability serve others to glorify God? Spiritual gifts will have a yes answer to both

² Cartmill, Carol and Gentile Yvonne: Serving from the Heart: Finding Your Gifts and Talents for Service: (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2011).

³ Cartmill, Carol and Gentile Yvonne: Serving from the Heart: Finding Your Gifts and Talents for Service: (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2011).

parts of the question. Acquired skills and expertise can be used to serve others and glorify God as well.

Review the names below what do they have Spiritual gifts or talents. Name what it is they have.

Name	Talents	Spiritual gifts
Peyton Manning		
Celine Dion		
Bill Gates		
John Grisham		

The difference between talents and spiritual gifts

Spiritual Gifts	Talents
Received by every Christian	Received by every Human
Beyond Natural ability	Natural ability / acquired skill/s
Always to serve God	May be used to serve other and to glorify God but can also be used for own purpose

- Name some acquired abilities you have through training or experience
- What acquired talents or skill do you that could be used in service to God
- What are resources
- What resources do you have

Lesson 4 Individually⁴

Objective of the lesson:

⁴ Cartmill, Carol and Gentile Yvonne: Serving from the Heart: Finding Your Gifts and Talents for Service: (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2011).

To discover one's own Individuality and the implications from the ways personal style can effect serving God in church and community

Just as by God's While our individual personalities and preferences help to make each one of us unique, no type is better or worse than any other, however personality traits might make individuals better suited for a particular ways of severing and less so for others. It is because of this that understanding our own individuality becomes so important and helpful. We will be more joyful and effect if we serve in ways that mesh better with our own unique personality even though we might stretch ourselves to sever in ways that do not exactly match if the need arises.

Extrovert	Middle	Introvert
Energized		Energized
through		through
interaction		reflection

Lesson 5 Dreams⁵

Objective of the lesson:

To begin the work of discovering the particular dream or passion God has placed in each person's heart

Lesson 6 Experiences⁶

Objective of the lesson:

To consider how God can use our past experiences for God's purpose.

- Review Dreams and passions
- Participants will share briefly about further insights they have had since the last meeting about her dreams and passions.

⁵ Cartmill, Carol and Gentile Yvonne: Serving from the Heart: Finding Your Gifts and Talents for Service: (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2011).

⁶ Cartmill, Carol and Gentile Yvonne: Serving from the Heart: Finding Your Gifts and Talents for Service: (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2011).

- Split the class, have each person to name at least five significant accomplishments or important events in their lives at least one of these should be a negative or disappointing experience that they came through, survived, or conquered. Write a few words or phrase about each of the experiences. Have the group come back together and listen to each other. Ask the members verbally affirm the person with positive comments relating to the persons experiences. Ask the group what they felt as they were being affirmed by others of the group.
- God did bring something good out of my bad experiences
- I feel affirmed and good about myself
- Others see strengths in me that I wasn't even aware of

Session 7 Putting it All Together⁷

To think about how all the S.T.R.I.D.E. components can help us understand where God wants us to be in ministry and, for those who feel ready, to take the next step toward one-on-one ministry.

Putting It All Together

- Have participants do the S.T.R.I.D.E. Profile
- Have a list of Ministries available
- Have the participants match their profile with ministries
- Have the participants discuss to what extent she is suited to serve in the chosen ministry position described according to S.T.R.I.D.E.
- What insights did the participants receive from the Ministry Matching exercise
- Did the participants see how one component of a person's S.T.R.I.D.E. can make a difference in whether the position was a good fit
- What other thoughts do you have?

⁷ Cartmill, Carol and Gentile Yvonne: Serving from the Heart: Finding Your Gifts and Talents for Service: (Nashville, TN: Abington Press, 2011).

S.T.R.I.D.E. Ministry Profile

I would like a one on one consultation: Yes _____ No _____

If Yes, I prefer: Day _____ Evening _____

NAME: _____ Day Phone _____

E-mail: _____ Evening Phone _____

INSTRUCTOR: _____ Class Ending Date _____

SPIRITUAL GIFTS: my three highest scoring spiritual gifts (in order) are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

TALENTS: _____

RESOURCES: _____

INDIVIDUALITY: I believe my style is _____

Dreams: I sense I have a Passion for: _____

EXPERIENCES: _____

THREE POSSIBLE AREAS OF MINISTRY INVOLVEMENT

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

I AM ALREADY INVOLVED IN THE MINISTRY AREA OF _____

APPEDDIX 10

Maple Hill AME Church

Widows on the Move Rainbow Tea

November 29, 2014

5:00 P.M.

<i>Hymn.....</i>	<i>Sis Willie Bannerman</i>
<i>Prayer.....</i>	<i>Sis Brenda Lisane</i>
<i>Scripture.....</i>	<i>Sis Lucille Fleming</i>
<i>Welcome.....</i>	<i>Sis Clorinda Malloy</i>
<i>Solo.....</i>	<i>Sis Sarah Morrissey</i>
<i>Introduction of the speaker.....</i>	<i>Sis Willie Bannerman</i>
<i>Speaker.....</i>	<i>Sis Helana Lee</i>
<i>Entertainment</i>	
<i>Closing Remarks.....</i>	<i>Sis Lucille Fleming</i>
<i>Pastor Gloria F. Fields</i>	
<i>Benediction.....</i>	<i>Pastor Gloria F. Fields</i>

APPENDIX 11

TERMS / DEFINITION

Active = [ak-tiv] adjective

1. Engaged in action; characterized by energetic work, participation, etc.; busy:
2. Involvement physical effort and action:

Anxiety = anx•i•e•ties. noun, plural

1. Distress or uneasiness of mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune:

Bereavement = be•reave•ment [bih-reev-muhnt] noun

1. A period of mourning after a loss, especially after the death of a loved one: The widow had many visitors during her bereavement.
2. A state of intense grief, as after the loss of a loved one; desolation.

Church= [church] noun

1. Public worship of God or a religious service in such a building: to attend church regularly.
2. Any division of this body professing the same creed and acknowledging the same ecclesiastical authority; a Christian denomination: the Methodist Church.
3. That part of the whole Christian body, or of a particular denomination, belonging to the same city, country, nation, etc.

Didascalia=A Greek work, in eight books, containing regulations of Church life, better known under the name of “Apostolic Constitutions,” the full title being “Constitutions of the Holy Apostles [composed] by Clemens, Bishop and Citizen of Rome—Catholic Didascalia.”¹

Disconnect= [dis-kuh-nekt] verb (used with object)

1. To withdraw into one's private world: When social pressures become too great, noun

End= [end] noun

1. A point, line, or limitation that indicates the full extent, degree, etc., of something; limit; bounds:

2. Termination; conclusion:

Eparkeo: ἐπαρκέω = Greek transliteration: eparkeō implied transliteration: eparkeo
Principal Parts: -, ἐπήρκεσα², -, -, - Numbers Strong's number: 1884 GK Number: 2064
Statistics Frequency in New Testament: 3 Morphology of Biblical Greek Tag: cv-1d (2b)
Gloss: to help, aid Definition: dat., pr. to ward off; to assist, relieve, succor; 1 Tim. 5:10, 16

Epakoloutheo= Original word eipakolougev³

1. To follow (close) upon, follow after
2. To tread in one's footsteps i.e. to imitate his example

Fear = [fear] noun ⁴

1. Reverential awe, especially toward God: the fear of God. Synonyms: awe, respect, reverence, veneration.

Fearful = [fearful] ⁵ adjective .

2. Feeling fear, dread, apprehension, or solicitude:
3. Full of awe or reverence: fearful of the Lord.

Death = [deth] ⁶noun

1. The act of dying; the end of life; the total and permanent cessation of all the vital functions of an organism. .
2. The state of being dead: to lie still in death.
3. Extinction; destruction.

Gifts= [gift]⁷ noun

² © 1987, 2011 by Helps Ministries, Inc., HelpsBible.com

³ © 1987, 2011 by Helps Ministries, Inc., HelpsBible.com

⁴ Dictionary.com, "active," in Online Etymology Dictionary. Source location: Douglas Harper, Historian. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/active>. Available: <http://dictionary.reference.com>. Accessed: January 21, 2014

⁵ Dictionary.com, "active," in Online Etymology Dictionary. Source location: Douglas Harper, Historian. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/active>. Available: <http://dictionary.reference.com>. Accessed: January 21, 2014

⁶ Dictionary.com, "active," in Online Etymology Dictionary. Source location: Douglas Harper, Historian. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/active>. Available: <http://dictionary.reference.com>. Accessed: January 21, 2014

1. Something given voluntarily without payment in return, as to show favor toward someone, honor an occasion, or make a gesture of assistance; present.
2. Something bestowed or acquired without any particular effort by the recipient or without its being earned:
3. A special ability or capacity; natural endowment; talent:

Grief = [men-tl]⁸ adjective

1. Of or pertaining to the mind: mental powers; mental suffering.
2. Of, pertaining to, or affected by a disorder of the mind:

Loss = [laws, loss]⁹ noun

1. The state of being deprived of or of being without something that one has had: the loss of old friends.
2. Death, or the fact of being dead, to mourn the loss of t.

Ministry = [min-uh-stree] noun, plural min•is•tries.

1. The service, functions, or profession of a minister of religion.
2. The body or class of ministers of religion; clergy.

Servant = [sur-vuhnt]¹⁰ noun

1. A person in the service of another.

Service = sur-vis]¹¹] noun

1. An act of helpful activity; help; aid: to do someone a service.
2. The incorporeal part of humans: present in spirit though absent in body.
3. A supernatural, incorporeal being, especially one inhabiting a place, object, etc.

⁷ Dictionary.com, "active," in Online Etymology Dictionary. Source location: Douglas Harper, Historian. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/active>. Available: <http://dictionary.reference.com>. Accessed: January 21, 2014

⁸ Dictionary.com, "active," in Online Etymology Dictionary. Source location: Douglas Harper, Historian. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/active>. Available: <http://dictionary.reference.com>. Accessed: January 21, 2014

⁹ Dictionary.com, "active," in Online Etymology Dictionary. Source location: Douglas Harper, Historian. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/active>. Available: <http://dictionary.reference.com>. Accessed: January 21, 2014

¹⁰ Dictionary.com, "active," in Online Etymology Dictionary. Source location: Douglas Harper, Historian. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/active>. Available: <http://dictionary.reference.com>. Accessed: January 21, 2014

¹¹ Dictionary.com, "active," in Online Etymology Dictionary. Source location: Douglas Harper, Historian. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/active>. Available: <http://dictionary.reference.com>. Accessed: January 21, 2014

Talent [tal-uhnt] ¹²noun

1. A special natural ability or aptitude:
2. Special ability:

Teknotropheo= Original Word: τεκνοτροφέω¹³ (Verb) Transliteration: teknotropheó

1. Bring up children
2. Rear young.

Thlibo= Original Word qlivbw,¹⁴ Thlibo (Verb)

1. To press (as grapes), press hard upon
2. A compressed way a. narrow straitened, contracted
3. Metaph. to trouble, afflict, distress

Widow = [wid-oh] ¹⁵noun

1. A woman who has lost her husband by death and has not remarried.
2. To deprive of anything cherished or needed:

Widowhood = [wid-oh-hood]¹⁶ noun

1. The state or a period of being a widowX 12

¹² Dictionary.com, "active," in Online Etymology Dictionary. Source location: Douglas Harper, Historian. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/active>. Available: <http://dictionary.reference.com>. Accessed: January 21, 2014

¹³ © 1987, 2011 by Helps Ministries, Inc., HelpsBible.com

¹⁴ © 1987, 2011 by Helps Ministries, Inc., HelpsBible.com

¹⁵ Dictionary.com, "active," in Online Etymology Dictionary. Source location: Douglas Harper, Historian. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/active>. Available: <http://dictionary.reference.com>. Accessed: January 21, 2014

¹⁶ Dictionary.com, "active," in Online Etymology Dictionary. Source location: Douglas Harper, Historian. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/active>. Available: <http://dictionary.reference.com>. Accessed: January 21, 2014

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