

The Elephant in the Room: Analyzing and Restructuring
Congregational and Clergy Anger

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

Advisors: Dr. Daniel Kroger, D.Min.

Dr. Kathryn Stoner-Lasala, D.Min

Herbert LaVal Jenkins Sr.

Drew University
Madison, New Jersey

May 2017

Copyright © 2017 by Herbert LaVal Jenkins

All rights reserved

ABSTRACT

The Elephant in the Room: Analyzing and Restructuring

Congregational and Clergy Anger

Herbert LaVal Jenkins

St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church

Kingstree, South Carolina

Anger is a complex root that grows from the seed of the African American Christian experience. Our ancestors were brought to this country as slaves, forced to do the work of vicious masters. Beyond the social, psychological and physical abuses, slaves' duties were almost always imposed until their deaths. Some might say that the only part of slaves' lives that were left all their own would be that of their spiritual connections to God. Once Abraham Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation, many slaves were set free and brought into a new bondage: Jim Crow. African Americans struggled to integrate into the lesser known concept of freedom. Throughout the development of American society, the African American Christian struggled and perhaps still struggles with painful duality: the freedom one finds in Jesus, and the struggle of the societally imposed bondage of America.

Though today we African Americans have many freedoms, emotional bondage still remains a part of our earthly journey. Though slavery is abolished, the American-made fear of angry black men and angry black women leaves little room for us to be free to express ourselves. Some have described the *Black Lives Matter* movement that stands for freedom and the equal treatment of all people in the United States as a group of

bullies. Jeremiah Wright was blacklisted for preaching a sermon entitled *A More Perfect Union* in which he angrily expressed the ills of African Americans in the United States. In many ways, African Americans living in the U.S. are free to be happy, sad, excited, forgiving, loving and nurturing; however, we are not allowed to be angry. Centuries of repressed anger impacts the way we African Americans maneuver in our society. The way we work, study, socialize and even WORSHIP is affected by our inability to safely express the full breadth of our feelings.

St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal (henceforth AME) church in Kingstree is a humble church. Yet, deep within its walls can be found anger in many forms but of one substance: ignored anger. The membership comprises many families who have lived in Kingstree most of their lives. They are connected by many stories and experiences, yet many chapters in these stories still remain unheard. This research and paper gives us an opportunity to engage the untold story of anger in our congregations. It is my hope that this process will create greater opportunity for growth and not just physically, but spiritually, and relationally.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....

Chapter

1	CAN WE TALK?	1
2	ANALYZING THE ELEPHANT	21
3	ANALYZING THE ROOM	46
4	THE ELEPHANT ENGAGED	63
	TIMELINE	69
	EVALUATION	71
5	FACING THE ELEPHANT	76
	MOTHER EMANUEL INTERVIEWS.....	101
6	CONCLUSION.....	111

Appendices

A	LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENT CARDS	121
B	ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE.....	122
C	INVITATION LETTER FOR PASTORS	124
D	INVITATION LETTER FOR ST. PAUL AME MEMBERS	125
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	126

CHAPTER 1

CAN WE TALK?

“Pastor, can we talk? I’m just so angry right now!”. As a pastor, these are words that I do not hear much, nor are these words that I often express. When people come to my office for assistance or advice, or when family members and friends contact me, they rarely ever lead off with this statement; neither is there an admission of anger until the conversation has reached a fever pitch of emotional tension. Synonymously, when church members come to me needing assistance or approach me with a desire to talk about their feelings, many are unwilling to admit their anger or how it affects their daily routines. In short, though it is hardly ever admitted or talked about, all Churches regardless of denomination have members who are angry about something, but refuse to accept the reality of their emotional state. Many Christians are unwilling to share in their emotional vulnerability and are uncomfortable talking about their anger and the things that trigger this quite common emotion. Anger in many ways has always been the elephant in the room for American society, and most especially our Churches¹. Often, the meaning and impact that anger has on our lives is ignored deliberately. It has been the flashpoint of riots, protests, and violence in America, but has yet to be explored explicitly from a theological sense.

¹ *The elephant in the room* is an idiomatic expression defining a major problem or controversial issue that is obviously present yet avoided as a topic of discussion or conversation because it is more comfortable to do so.

Certainly, all of us get angry. There are situations that irritate or infuriate us, and they can happen anywhere. Even our churches, our places of religious practice and spiritual development, are not exempt from the potential dangers of negatively expressed emotions. There are countless motivations for our anger, but my experiences dictate that there has been little effort made on a ministerial level to help ourselves and others to investigate these feelings more deeply and thus reach a place of spiritual and emotional peace. There are countless books regarding the many facets of theology, ministry, blessings, God's promises, and much more, but there is limited literature on anger and spirituality, anger and God, or anger and ministry. The irony of anger is that although it is a common emotion, it is rarely addressed from a theological perspective. If anger is such a prevalent emotional expression in our lives, why does it seem that it is hardly ever talked about or accepted for what it is? Why is it okay to talk about our grief, our joy, and our pain in church, but not our anger? Why does it seem that those in ministry, most especially pastors, are not allowed to be angry, nor given a safe space to accept and discuss their own anger?

Perhaps part of the answer to these questions resides in the fact that anger is a long time victim of stereotype. From my own religious perspective, anger is often viewed and described as a bad feeling, though anger is just like any other emotion: it is what we make of it. Emotions such as sadness, joy, and fear seem to be acceptable emotions in church settings. For example, it is acceptable for church members to express happiness because of wonderful news from a doctor's visit, it is acceptable for us to cry as we give painful testimonies regarding our trials, and it is certainly the norm for people to express

their fears of the future and the unknown while petitioning for prayer from the congregation.

However, when someone is angry, we often treat the emotion like a ticking time bomb that must be diffused immediately. Church members who are angry are not given the time or space to discuss how they feel. In most church settings, anger is stereotyped as unnecessary, inappropriate, and unacceptable. I believe differently with regards to anger. Due to my personal experiences, I believe that anger has a necessary place in our hearts and in this world. Anger is healthy in most cases and a normal part of our lives. It is not our anger that is a problem, but rather how we handle our anger that can complicate our relationships and experiences. Anger is important to understand and it is my hope that after reading this work, readers will begin to look at the many facets of anger and begin to renegotiate the many assumptions we have made regarding this emotion and its effect on our society, theology, and ministry.

Before I can discuss anything further regarding my research on anger, I must look at my own context and religious upbringing. First of all, I am a black man who grew up in the southern United States, South Carolina to be specific. I realize that refusing to approach this topic from my own context and ethnicity would be disingenuous to this body of work, because my ethnicity and experiences make me who I am and formulate a great deal of what I believe about American society and the world. I have been African Methodist Episcopalian, or AME, all my life. I grew up in an AME church, I joined it when I was thirteen, and accepted my call to ministry from this denomination. I preached my initial sermon in the church where I grew up, and all that I have become and believe has deep roots that stem from the AME church.

In order to become a pastor in my denomination, I had to earn my Masters of Divinity. I attended seminary at Erskine for a semester and eventually moved to Atlanta to finish my degree through the *Interdenominational Theological Center at Turner Theological Seminary*. My matriculation at *Turner* challenged my theological and biblical understanding and in many ways, I was challenged to look at the scriptures and listen to sermons critically. Almost every instructor evaluated me on almost everything I said, preached, or wrote. Through much scrutinizing, I developed a more open minded approach to ministry, biblical and theological assumptions, and my understanding of my own experiences. Seminary became a safe space for me to question my anger and various other emotions. In my youth, I was taught to fear the consequences of being angry at God and questioning God was most certainly out of the question. However, after my experiences in seminary and chaplaincy, I learned that God is not offended by my anger, my doubts, and my fears. Even so, through all this I failed to learn how to navigate anger in ministry. Looking back at my life I now realize that I have had many low points where I not only blamed God for those situations but was also angry with God. Not only this, but I found myself unwilling to accept my feelings for what they were. I, like so many others, was oblivious to my true feelings, too afraid of the consequences of my own anger, too ashamed to recognize and acknowledge the elephant in the room with me.

Needless to say, the AME church is the foundation of my theological learning, spiritual development, and scriptural understanding. In order to properly reveal the potential of this project, it is necessary to know the history of both the church and the society wherein we gathered this research. Synonymously, to know the AME church is to know the history of slavery and racism that pervades the history of the United States as

these factors and others led to the formation of my denomination. As well, to circumnavigate the facets of anger and various stereotypes that stem from slavery, and understanding the current state of our society, we must also look at American society and how anger has evolved or perhaps devolved. This research is not meant to deride the United States, nor is it a diatribe to ridicule, judge, or oppress others. Simply stated, the information provided is just exactly that: information. It is my hope that this information will add further relevance to the research and results presented in this work, and will provide avenues for ministers and lay members alike to evolve, grow, and meet the needs of our parishes.

Slavery in the United States was a brutal and unforgiving institution. It differed from all other forms of slavery around the world especially along the lines of its violence and systemic psychological damage. Perhaps the most horrific difference was the forced deconstruction of the African family.¹ Slaves were not considered people and therefore white slave owners considered marriage between slaves to be invalid. In addition, white slave owners also considered the concerns, feelings, and all other expressions of slaves to be moot. Stereotypes of slaves became prevalent such as the “angry black man” (or, rather, angry slave) and many others. Slaves who expressed anger, especially males, were often brutalized or killed simply for speaking their minds. In short, it was, and still is, commonplace for American culture to demonize the expressions of anger from black men and women. Our emotions and emotional states have been deemed invalid, and our feelings have been considered a danger to the wellbeing of this country. Jim Crow laws

¹ Tera Hunter, “Putting an Antebellum Myth to Rest,” *New York Times*, August 1, 2011, accessed July 9, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/02/opinion/putting-an-antebellum-myth-about-slave-families-to-rest.html?_r=2.

further inhibited black freedom of expression.² For example, these laws forbade African Americans from speaking with one another in groups of three or more, further deconstructed the rights of all black men and women, and perpetuated a theory and theology of black inferiority and anti-black sympathies.³ These oppressive laws were enacted because of fear of black culture and black freedom; they were created to keep black consciousness and voices silent. In this sense, the desire was to keep blacks oppressed and silent while they lived in a society that abused those who had already known too much abuse and oppression.

I believe this paradigm of culturally accepted silence plays a major part in the emotional silence of African Americans. Growing up during the era of Jim Crow Laws, African Americans still had few freedoms, no equality, and no voice to safely express their concerns. Blacks would be lynched for almost any reason, from looking at a white woman to their tone of voice when speaking.

In modern American culture, there have been several cases, and especially most recently, where white police officers have taken the lives of black men due to the inherent assumptions that our culture has long produced. Black men like Trayvon Martin, Freddy Gray, Alton Sterling, Walter Scott, and Philando Castille – to name a few – have lost their lives because of cultural assumptions about violent and dangerous angry black men

² Jim Crow was an oppressive caste system used to further oppress and segregate recently freed slaves. These laws were enforced locally and statewide, but primarily remained prevalent in southern Confederate states. Jim Crow laws segregated bathrooms, restaurants, schools, transportation, and many other important institutions. Of course, blacks' resources were woefully inferior to those of whites. These laws were enforced around 1877 and lasted until the mid 1960's. The term Jim Crow originated from an actor, Thomas D. Rice who dressed in blackface and sang a song entitled "Jump Jim Crow" which satirized blacks through various stereotypes: ignorance, laziness, and superstition. Jim Crow became synonymous with blacks due to the popularity of Rice's performances, and the laws regarding segregation were named as such.

³ David Pilgrim, *Jim Crow Museum: Origins of Jim Crow*, in the Ferris State University Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, accessed July 9, 2016, <http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/what.htm>.

and fear of black retaliation. Also, research has shown that black men have been killed at a far greater rate and consistency than our white counterparts.⁴ These terrifying facts depict a society that still thrives on fear, assumption, and presumption. For centuries the black church has always been one of few places where black men and women could freely express their emotions through praise and worship, and emotional release, but even today, violence has found its way into our places of worship, and this violence comes from a desire to once again to silence the voice and progress of African Americans.⁵

I will discuss the bulk of historical data regarding slavery and the history of African Americans in the third chapter. However, I introduce this information now to connect historical, physical and emotional oppression of African Americans with contemporary oppression regarding emotional expression in African American Christian churches and homes. Due to the treatment of African Americans in this country, the stereotypes from America's bloody past still find staying power to this day. The stereotypical concept of the angry, black, and therefore violent black man and woman lives on and resurfaced as a major topic of debate after the election of Barack Obama as the first black president of the United States.

⁴ Ryan Gabrielson, Ryann Gorchowski Jones, and Eric Sagara, "Deadly Force, in Black and White," *Pro Publica: Journalism in the Public Interest*, October 10, 2014, accessed July 9, 2016, <https://www.propublica.org/article/deadly-force-in-black-and-white>.

⁵ Jason Horowitz, Nick Corasaniti, and Ashley Southall, "Nine Killed in Shooting at Black Church in Charleston," *New York Times*, June 17, 2015, accessed July 9, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/18/us/church-attacked-in-charleston-south-carolina.html? r=0>.

CNN published an article related to the outrage many Americans expressed about President Obama's lack of anger regarding the Gulf of Mexico Oil disaster.⁶ Many believed he was not angry enough and went to social media to express their feelings. This opened an avenue for conversation regarding the backlash he would have experienced based on the stereotype of the angry black man. Regardless of one's particular stance on anger, it is typical to scrutinize African Americans' anger a great deal more than the anger of other ethnicities. It is this fact that leads me to believe that in many of our black churches, anger is an emotion that has become ignored, avoided, or considered moot. This may stem not so much from fear of expressing the emotion freely; rather, it may be due to a cultural undergirding that has affected the African American emotional state and structure.

A Brief Formation History of the AME Church

The AME church is a truly unique religious institution. It was the first church formed due to discrimination and injustice, as opposed to religious differences. It was developed during antebellum slavery, and was one of the many catalysts for equality in the United States. This denomination is naturally the home to many of America's freedom fighters: Christians who used the word of God to inspire hope and also to fight for freedom. The Right Reverend Richard Allen who founded the AME church purchased his own freedom but continued to experience a lack of freedom to worship God. Eventually, Reverend Allen led an exodus from *St. George Methodist Episcopal Church* in Philadelphia to form the first congregation in a new denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal church. Denmark Vesey, who, having already won his freedom,

⁶ John Blake, "Even Discussing 'angry Black Man' Stereotype Provokes Anger," CNN.COM, June 16, 2010, accessed July 12, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2010/POLITICS/06/16/angry.black.man.obama/>.

organized a slave revolt here in Charleston, was a prominent member of the AME Church. Henry McNeal Turner, another AME member, was the first African American Chaplain and the first black army officer who fought for freedom during the Civil War under Abraham Lincoln.⁷

South Carolina in its entirety makes up the Seventh Episcopal District of the AME Church.⁸ The district is broken up into six conferences that, taken together, span the entire state. I hail from the Palmetto Conference which is broken up into three major presiding elder districts: Mount Pleasant, Georgetown, and Kingstree. Though we work in ministry in different parts of these three major cities, we all work together for the sake of servanthood and our divine callings. I am a member of the Mount Pleasant District and have been since my childhood; I was appointed to the Kingstree District as the pastor of *St. Paul AME* church in Kingstree, South Carolina.

Kingstree is a rural setting with a great deal of its rural nature still intact. Right beside the church is a massive corn field that belongs to a family friend of the church. On the other side is a volunteer fire fighters' unit that acts as a second responder. In my three years as pastor here, I have had at least three warnings of bear sightings, witnessed wild hogs running through open fields, and have seen a great many deer grazing on the side of the road. The Kingstree district is full of vibrant, loving people who have deep spiritual connections. The city itself has many signs up on the side of businesses and billboards stating "only Jesus saves" and many other Christo-centric sayings. This rural

⁷ Stephen Ward Angell, ed., *New Georgia Encyclopedia* (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 2002), s.v. "Henry McNeal Turner (1834-1915)," accessed July 10, 2016, <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/henry-mcneal-turner-1834-1915>.

⁸ Johnny Barbour Jr., ed., *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 2012* (Nashville: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2014), 219.

setting of the AME church is where I begin my research and my dialogue with others regarding congregational and clergy anger. Here is where my work begins, and I am grateful for the willingness of my members to share in so many ways..

In the AME church there are many who contribute to the fight for freedom and resist the oppressive, violent nature of our society. In the past, there have been men and women who preached, fought, taught, and rallied against oppressive forces in order to give us an opportunity to be free today. In the footsteps of my ancestors, I work, research, and write with the same desired result: to give all men and women an opportunity to be free to express their anger in healthy and beneficial ways and to learn how to better navigate the avenues of anger that exist within us. What better way to navigate the avenues of anger than first to navigate the narratives of my personal experiences that mold my understanding of anger today?

My Narrative of Concern

To grasp the reasons behind this work in greater detail requires a more in depth look at the moments in my life that ultimately led me to this particular research topic. My story is expressed through the many narratives that have shaped my life so far. In this body of work, I will share three narratives that have shaped my theology and my understanding of anger and the ability to cope with it. Two of these narratives led me to question how I understand anger and one powerfully influential narrative moved me beyond simply questioning my own anger, to consider the anger that pastors and lay members encounter in ministry and various religious settings. In particular, this third and final narrative became what Post Modern instructors of narrative research Carl Savage and William Presnell describe as a *Narrative of Concern* that propelled me into Doctoral

studies and provides me with reason to resist the resistance of anger in ministry, society, and the entire world.

In the book *Narrative Research and Ministry* Savage and Presnell provide a detailed description of the importance of the postmodern research approach by expressing the various nuances that make the narrative of concern an ongoing motivator for one's research. They state:

In our judgment, research in ministry is the most productive when it is carefully and modestly designed. A promising beginning for such research is identifying the point of intersection of the multiple narratives that surface around a story, or narrative of concern, or opportunity that arisen the community's awareness or experience. Each of these intersecting narratives is likely to provide a particular slant on the concern or opportunity. Listening to and reflecting on each of these stories brings the researcher closer to an informed awareness and working understanding of the concern of opportunity. Each of the narratives "thickens" in depth and insight the description of the concern or opportunity and of any preferred, emerging, alternative story that will become the impetus and guide for future action.⁹

The importance of this work is not found in hard data, but rather in the stories of myself and others, influential stories that create various connecting points in my life and the lives of countless others. The third story I will share expresses one such narrative: one that created awareness in the Charleston community, the nation, and the world, and still generates powerful and transformative conversations to this day. However, before I can share the focal narrative of my life so far, I first share two previous experiences that began my personal, intentional dialogue regarding anger and the African American community.

⁹ Dr. Carl Savage and Dr. William Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry: a Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities* (Louisville: Wayne E. Oates Institute, 2008), 78.

After graduating from seminary, I signed up for Clinical Pastoral Education courses in Charleston. I have many stories that I could tell somewhat unclearly, but the narratives involving my own anger or the anger of others towards me are the some of the strongest and most vivid moments in my mind and are therefore quite simple to retell. I recall a particular day as I was working as a Chaplain at *Roper Hospital*. I was out on the hospital floor making my usual rounds and visiting patients. I knocked on a gentleman's door and he invited me in. I walked in and greeted him, but when I stated that I was the chaplain on the floor, immediately his smile turned into a fuming scowl. He screamed at me, telling me to get out of his room because he refuses to talk to any Christians. He made sure to emphasize his point by saying the word "Christian" even louder and more viciously. I immediately apologized to him if I offended him and asked if he wanted me to close the door like it was before and he cut me off from asking the question and reminded me where the door was. I apologized again and left. That was the first visit I had made that day, and it made me very angry! I could not believe that someone would be so mad at me just because of my faith base! He and I were total strangers and I was judged simply because of what I believe and who I believe in. I attempted to make the best of my day by visiting others and continuing my work. I still had to walk past his room several times, so I simply refused to pay him visits as he clearly preferred. Still, I never said anything to him, and he said nothing to me. I wonder sometimes why I allowed myself to stay so mad at him. I wondered why I apologized so many times to him as well; after all, the only thing I was guilty of was introducing myself. It was his personal experiences and his own anger that made him treat me the way that he did. Over the next couple of days, I also wondered what had happened in his life to make him

dislike Christians so passionately. After three or four days of walking past his room and being witness to his continued scowls, which made me even angrier, I made a decision that would change my perspective on anger: I decided that I would talk to someone about it. I went to my supervisor, Dr. Bob Morris, and he gave me some good advice. He told me that whatever makes him angry is on him, and whatever makes me angry is on me: in other words, we are responsible for our own anger and the actions that follow. He told me that it was up to me to not just pray about my feelings, but *acknowledge* them, engage them, to dig deeper. I chose this experience as my verbatim topic for the week and I told the group of fellow chaplains what happened. I talked about the situation and surprisingly, I received a great deal of support and insight. It was then that I learned that talking about my anger with those who are open minded to the subject will benefit me and my healing process.

I found that my verbatim group was not only sympathetic, but they also challenged my way of thinking. They encouraged me to look back and ask myself what it was that really made me upset that day. Was it his words, was it his tone of voice, or was it my displeasure of being judged? Did the way he treated me remind me of a moment in my own past that has affected me more than I anticipated? Instead of pushing my anger outward, I learned to look at the bigger picture of my feelings. It was not so much the way he spoke to me, or the looks he gave me as I did my rounds that day; rather, it was the fact that I was dismissed and judged so harshly. As an African American living in the South, I have experienced much discrimination and have been the victim of negative assumptions just because of who I am and what I look like. This moment in my life helped me realize just how passionately I feel about equity, equality, and fairness. Even

in conversation with others, my desire to be treated fairly without assumption of morality or character is vastly important to me. In short, acknowledging and exploring the source of my anger helped me to push through the emotions swelling inside me, and look at my personal flaws and strengths holistically. This experience taught me to value my emotions and consider the impact that they have on my spiritual growth and development.

Even after this event, I can still remember a day that filled me with intense anger, this time stemming from racism. After chaplaincy, I joined the workforce as an information specialist at the *Medical University of South Carolina*. My job was to work the front desk of the main hospital and generate name badges for visitors, work alongside security to ensure that patients were safe from harm, and help patients get to their appointments on time. While working the desk one day, a significantly older Caucasian man approached me and said, "I must be at the zoo because I see a monkey behind the desk". Needless to say, I was livid! I was absolutely beside myself from the hate speak I had experienced. He simply smiled and continued on to his appointment. It took every part of me to not say anything back to him. I was so angry I knew that if I did not get away from that desk even for a few minutes, I was going to lose control of myself. I couldn't stand sitting behind the desk. I felt like I was trapped with just me and my anger. The security officer behind me came up and asked if I was alright. I realized I was so angry that I did not even realize someone was with me the entire time. He called the head of security and they looked for the gentleman, but could not find him. They filled out an incident report and labelled it as workplace violence. They told me if he ever returned

and said anything like that to me again, he would be banned from the hospital. Of course, he never returned to the desk, and I never saw him again.

After the incident, I called my manager and told her what happened and as I talked to her I choked up. I was so angry at his racist expression, that I became intensely angry at the state of the world that I live in, the world that my children will grow up in. I hung up on her, left the desk, and burst into tears in the breakroom. I was so upset that I took a walk and when I called my supervisor back she told me to take all the time I needed. I never got the closure I would have liked with that person, but what would that closure really look like? I knew I could not expect anyone who would say such a thing to someone to apologize or retract their statement. Regardless, I took time to myself, had a long walk, and talked out my feelings to myself. I then met with my supervisor to debrief and talk about my feelings and what happened. Once again, I was blessed to talk about my feelings while someone else facilitated the conversation, much like my verbatim as a hospital chaplain.

I realized after the conversation that no matter what we do or where we are, anger is something that will always be a part of our human design, and therefore will be a part of what we will experience from time to time. However, it does not have to be viewed as a negative component in our lives. I learned a lot about the importance of facing my anger head on and the blessing of talking about it to someone else. For the second time, I was given a safe place to express my emotions without judgement, guilt, or condemnation. I was free to speak my mind and had no fear of retaliation. Most importantly, I gained the closure I needed to heal and move on with my life. Still, beyond all I have ever been through or witnessed, there is one narrative in particular that has the

strongest emotional weight in my life thus far, and it occurred only one year ago. It was and still is the catalyst that drives my desire to learn more about anger and the theology behind it. It is the driving force of my studies and research and motivates me to include lessons and sermons on anger more intentionally in my ministry. It is this next narrative that moved me through my anger and motivated me to do this project and to write this paper.

June 17th, 2015 is a night in history that I and many others across the world will never forget. The shooting at *Emanuel AME* was a tragedy that polarized this nation and the world. This was an act of hatred and violence orchestrated by someone who grew up under long-held racist American assumptions and beliefs. This was someone who desired to silence the voice and freedom of African Americans in Charleston and hoped it would incite further violence across the United States. Because of Antebellum-bred beliefs, nine of my friends and colleagues were brutally murdered after a Bible study lesson, and during a moment of prayer. After the shooting took place, just one hour after the massacre, our Bishop at that time, Bishop Richard Norris, called all local pastors to meet at the nearest hotel, which was less than a block away from *Emanuel*. We and over one hundred AME members were able to use a ballroom where we waited to hear news from Mayor Joe Riley. As pastors, we went around the room. We passed out water and tissues, we helped give out food, we prayed with those who desired it, and we ministered in any way that was beneficial to others. As you could imagine, the emotions in the room were diverse and intense. There was no laughter; there were no smiles, only tears, the occasional scream of hopelessness, and much anger. I remember walking around the room helping whomever I could. At one point I approached three women who were

gathered together. Two of them were crying, but one was immensely angry. I could see the scowl on her face, and I knew she felt just like how I really felt, except, she chose to express those feelings. I approached them with tissue and they thanked me. She looked at me and said, "I am just so angry right now! This only happened because we are black! If we weren't black, we wouldn't have to deal with anything like this". This was the first time that someone openly admitted their anger to me. The first words out of her mouth expressed her true feelings about the matter. To be honest, she felt exactly how I felt, but she was willing to walk in her anger. I felt that there was very little I could do to "help" her with her anger. So I did what I thought was most beneficial: I gave her a hug and said to her, "I understand how you feel, but right now, we can't give in to our anger; we have to trust in God and move beyond those feelings. If we don't forgive, we will not be able to let go, and if we can't let go, then the anger becomes poison inside of us". She nodded her head silently and I walked away.

After things had died down and I was able to go home, I began to question myself; why did I tell her not to be angry? Why did I ignore how she was feeling? Why did I try to get her to forgive and just let things go? I thought about how angry I was that night and I realized that even though I validated my own anger, I did not validate hers. I was in no position to forgive the killer for what he had done, so why should I expect anyone else to forgive? Why was I so concerned about her staying angry? Why couldn't I let her be where she was and minister to her from a place of anger? It was then I realized something: I have very little ministerial experience dealing with someone who is angry. I also realized that there are few resources to better assist me when ministering to those who are angry, or ministering while I am angry. There are many books regarding anger

management, but few books focusing on anger from a ministry context, much less an African American minister's experience. I spent many sleepless nights trying to deal with my anger. I could not find much coping or help in that process. There were some nights that I was so angry all I could do was cry myself to sleep. I realized that I was deeply moved by the tragedy that befell my people, but I also knew that not only should I pray for help, but I should seek out a way to deal with what I was feeling.

A few months later, we as a denomination had our annual planning session which includes various seminars related to whatever topic or scriptural theme we are focusing on that year. In this particular case, our theme switched from discipleship to that of grief. We had meetings and sessions with counselors who talked to us about the stages of grief as expressed by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, and various resources we can use to help us move through our emotional states. Our presenter, a psychologist, utilized a power-point highlighting the stages of grief. Each stage had detailed information for us to internalize and utilize, except for the stage of anger. When we first reached this slide, he asked everyone who was angry to raise their hands. I and two or three other people did so. I found this odd because first of all, I was the *only* clergy member with my hand raised. I thought that out of the over one hundred-fifty ministers in the room, someone else would be angry other than me, also, out of a room of a combined number over five hundred people, only three were claiming their anger. Either something was wrong with the three of us, or we were in a room filled with people who did not want to admit they were angry about the shooting deaths of our nine family members and colleagues, or anything else for that matter. To make matters worse, the presenter merely told us that it is okay to be angry and then simply moved on to the next subject. At this point, I knew that I was not

going to find any help or results on this particular topic unless I did some searching on my own.

Kubler-Ross in her book *On Grief and Grieving* describes anger as a necessary emotion directly related to our emotional healing process that we often use as a means to cover up how we truly feel. She writes:

Anger is a necessary stage of the healing process. Be willing to feel your anger, even though it may seem endless. The more you truly feel it, the more it will begin to dissipate and the more you will heal. There are many other emotions under the anger and you will get to them in time, but anger is the emotion we are most used to managing. We often choose it to avoid the feelings underneath until we are ready to face them. It may feel all-consuming, but as long as it doesn't consume you for a long period of time, it is part of your emotional management. It is a useful emotion until you've moved past the first waves of it. Then you will be ready to go deeper. In the process of grief and grieving, you will have many subsequent visits with anger in its many forms.¹⁰

Kubler-Ross shows us that anger is a part of our natural process. It stands as a primary emotion. One that stands in front of other, more deeply rooted emotions we feel. Contrary to conventional wisdom, anger is healthy and necessary. Ignoring this feeling only makes matters worse for us because as we overlook our anger, we overlook all of the other feelings we have building up inside of us. She reminds us that anger is an emotion that deserves our attention so that we may learn to cope with our experiences in a healthy way. From the perspective of grief, anger can be understood as a tool for emotional management, one that is mandatory for healing; however, anger is healthy until it goes unchecked. This is a unique emotion: one with both the power to heal and to hurt, one that opens avenues to contemplate our emotional state, yet also may block off doorways to development and recovery. Anger is the elephant in the room. It is the

¹⁰ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss*, Reprint ed. (New York: Scribner, 2014), 12.

lumbering beast that lays before us, completely present in our daily lives, yet ignored, overlooked, and ultimately misunderstood. It trumpets its horn and stomps around our emotional selves while we do everything in our power to ignore the strength that anger has in our lives and our situations.

Society has missed the benefits of exploring our anger, and so have our Churches. This work is intended to provide a healthy perspective regarding anger and how it can be handled from a place of ministry and theology; dispel the stereotypes of anger and resist the inherent desires of others to remain silent which I will call “resisting the resistance”. In many ways, we naturally resist our anger: we resist talking about it, admitting it, and we resist engaging it and healing from our anger-inducing experiences. It is my hope that this project, by acknowledging the elephant in the room and providing opportunity to talk about feelings in a safe space, will meet the readers where they stand with anger and help them move to a place of healing and restoration,. So, with regard to our anger, “Can we talk”?

CHAPTER 2

ANALYZING THE ELEPHANT

My father in his younger years was an avid hunter. He loved hunting small game and most especially, deer. He used to go on many fishing trips with his brothers and bring back all sorts of amazing meats and stories about their experiences. Though I was never able to go on a trip with him, he always taught us the importance of a hunter knowing his or her prey. Understanding their habits, habitat, and daily routines greatly increase the hunters' probability of a successful hunt. As we continue to hunt down anger, the elephant in the room, we must better prepare ourselves for success by first analyzing anger in its many forms and how it impacts our lives both positively and negatively. As we embark on this journey, I believe we are best suited for the hunt if we are properly equipped for this complex and ever shifting terrain. We all have personal stories of anger that impact us in some way, shape, or form: the times we have been angry or experienced someone else's intense anger still stand out in our minds. Perhaps we don't attempt to make as much sense of those events as we should. Perhaps we attempt to put them in the deepest recesses of our minds. Still, these moments must be packed and taken with us on the hunt. We must equip ourselves with our experiences so that we will be better protected from the elements around us, and even so, from the prey itself. My hope is that

we all will no longer treat anger as a predator to be feared, but rather as prey to be analyzed and understood.

The many issues we struggle with on a daily basis can seem overwhelming. These moments of struggle create emotional responses and generate various questions to be answered. For many Christians, the Bible remains the primary terrain for finding answers to those questions and concerns. It stands to reason that for Christians, the best way to start this discussion is to highlight some of the most common Biblical stories related to anger and the consequences that follow. These stories will not be in any particular order, but I do want to uplift the story of Cain and Abel first, because that many people look at these scriptures as telling the stories of the first murder and the first outpouring of anger and jealousy. The story of Cain and Abel is common and well known:

4 Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have produced^[a] a man with the help of the LORD."² Next she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground.³ In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground,⁴ and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering,⁵ but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell.⁶ The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen?⁷ If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

⁸ Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let us go out to the field."^[b] And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him.⁹ Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?"¹⁰ And the LORD said, "What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground!¹¹ And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand.¹² When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth."¹

¹ Michael D. Coogan et al., eds., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha, Third Edition, New Revised Standard Version*, College ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 16.

Cain and Abel give their offerings to God. Abel has flocks, and Cain has crops. God approves Abel's offering over Cain's. At this point, Cain becomes angry. God asks Cain why he is angry and then speaks to him. God reminds Cain that if he does right, his offering will be accepted, but if he does wrong, sin will attempt to take control of him and he must rule over himself, or in other words, exercise self-control. Cain invites Abel to the field where he kills him out of anger, a fit of rage if you will.

Many question why God did not accept Cain's offering. The Bible depicts a difference between the offerings of these two brothers: Cain gave of his crops over time, while Abel gave of the *first* of his flocks. Perhaps not giving the first of his fruits was the reason that Cain's offering was seen as unacceptable. Regardless, it was God's rejection of Cain's offering and acceptance of his brother Abel's offering that spurred Cain's jealousy and anger. This story weaves a bleak yarn for those who may be angry, but it leaves much to understand about this intense emotion.

First of all, this narrative teaches us that anger that goes unattended can have disastrous effects. In these scriptures we see that as Cain is clearly angry. God attempts to dialogue with Cain, asking why he is angry. In doing so, God is helping Cain to consider reasonably why he feels the way he feels. Even though God speaks to him about his feelings, Scripture shows us that Cain does not respond; rather, he simply goes out and kills his brother. Cain is unwilling to converse with God about his feelings and chooses instead to act on his emotions. Perhaps the writer is attempting to show us that when we are unwilling to analyze and consider our own emotional state, ultimately we allow our

emotions to rule over our better judgment. Likewise, in the text, God informs Cain that he must have self-control and master his desires.

Perhaps these narratives depict anger not necessarily as an act of varying emotional states, but rather as a conversation that requires two or more participants to resolve. Perhaps anger is best resolved through fellowship and communication with others. In this sense, anger transcends common emotional rhetoric and emerges as a necessary drawing between individuals that might pull us together in ways that, initially, we could not imagine or prepare for.

Secondly, these scriptures potentially teach us that anger, like any other emotion, cannot be ignored or left unchecked. Rather, it is an emotion that must be addressed and confronted. We see that as Cain ignores his feelings, and refuses to think those feelings through, he follows through with his desires to kill his brother. If we allow ourselves to be possessed by our anger we could decide to take actions out of desperation or hate.

As anger goes unchecked and unprocessed, with no meaningful conversation to quell its stoked flames, it can very often lead to more harm than good. Our scriptures show us that God does not want us to avoid anger. Rather, God desires for us to *consider* our anger; God wants us to face our anger realistically and learn from this emotion as we have learned from so many other feelings. Asking ourselves why we feel angry is a healthy start to facing our feelings and dealing with those emotions in a positive manner. In this sense, when we ask why we feel the way we do, we are accepting the fact that we are actually angry about something in the first place. God's first reaction to Cain's emotions is to talk to him, to urge him to question why he feels the way he does and why he desires to kill his brother. As Cain chooses to leave his emotions unconsidered, his

inaction became the major contributing factor to his act of violence against Abel. The fourth chapter of Genesis reminds us that anger has been a part of the human experience since the inception of mankind, and still remains an intense emotion that must spark meaningful conversation in order to be dealt with.

In Ephesians chapter four, Paul sends an all call to the Christian community of Ephesus. He instructs believers to let go of their former selves, resist corruptive activities, and become more like Christ. He makes statements related to the importance of honesty, and then speaks poignantly about anger:

²⁵ So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. ²⁶ Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and do not make room for the devil. ²⁸ Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. ²⁹ Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, ^[b] as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. ³¹ Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, ³² and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.²

Paul writes that in our anger we should not sin and he goes on to say that we should not let the sun go down on our anger. Paul even states that we should not give the devil an opportunity, or a foothold in us. In these brief scriptures, we are told that when we are in the particular state of anger, we should not sin. In that sense, anger is once again depicted as an acceptable and unavoidable emotion. However, the concern remains that anger, like other emotions, can lead to sinful activity if left unchecked. Perhaps this

² Ibid., 325.

is why Paul follows this statement by saying that we should not let the sun go down on our anger. I do not see this as a literal expression of time, but rather a warning that we should not allow our anger to dwell unchecked for long periods of time. Paul expresses a concern for the emotional vulnerability that comes with remaining in an unhealthy state of anger; he then reminds us that our emotions not only lead to dangerous actions, but can also lead to dangerous and hurtful words.

Paul teaches that we must put away all forms of anger: bitterness, wrath, and malice. He closes these verses by writing that we should be kind and forgiving. When we are angry in an unhealthy capacity, we run the risk of being manipulated by outside forces, or perhaps even forces within us. It is not always the devil that tries to control us. Others may try to make us angry in efforts to control the way we think and act, let us not forget that we can be our own worst enemies at times.

The fourth chapter of Ephesians shows us that it is not anger itself that we should be concerned about, but rather, the *words* and *actions* that come with untamed anger. Paul, in his own way, expresses why it is important for us to have self-control. One interpretation of Paul's teaching in this pericope is to define upright Christians as those who not only turn from their old ways, but also resist corruption by attending to and resisting anger in its many forms. In other words, true Christians have self-control and operate under a conscious awareness of their emotions and emotional state. This is not a statement of human perfection, but rather a statement of hope: hope that although we cannot completely resist sin, we can resist the tempting emotions that lead to sin: emotions such as anger and jealousy.

Paul emphasizes the importance of self-control when dealing with our intense emotional states. In the fifth chapter of Galatians, Paul expresses the destructive nature of the works of the flesh versus the liberty in Christ we find through living as one guided by the Spirit:

¹⁹ Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envy, ^[a] drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

²² By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.³

In these scriptures, Paul expresses a deep concern regarding the actions of humankind. He warns that those who live under the works of the flesh such as anger and jealousy will not inherit the kingdom of God. These bold words serve as a warning to those who allow their emotions to rule over them: if you commit the acts of the flesh, you will not find solace in this life or the next. To contrast this, he lists the fruit of the spirit, one of which is self-control, to emphasize the importance of having control over our emotions.

Though Paul demonizes anger, he also shows us that anger cannot be eliminated from our human condition. It is, however, something that can be monitored carefully so that we can be guided by the Spirit, and not the flesh. Paul does not treat anger as an emotion to fear or avoid, but instead as a gateway to sinful natures and behaviors. The fruit of the spirit is an expression of the capacity Christians have to resist the temptations of the flesh. It is in this sense, evidence of freedom in Christ. Paul shows us that all

³Ibid., 318.

emotions lead to one action or another. Whether those actions manifest themselves for the Spirit or for the flesh is related to our ability to recognize those emotions and gain control over them, which in this sense, affords us greater control over ourselves.

The final verses of Ephesians four express a concern that I have had about anger. I have often wondered if we can forgive those who have wronged us and still be angry. I have pondered just how connected forgiveness is to our passions. Honestly, I believe that because anger and other emotions are a part of our very being, we can never truly divorce ourselves from our anger. I believe we can forgive others for their wrongdoings towards us and our loved ones, but still have anger within us. Simply put, if we are truly able to forgive, then we must also have a hold on our anger and other emotions. Further, self-control is an important factor of our lives, which affords us the capacity to forgive earnestly. Because anger is a part of us, because it is an emotion just as important and necessary as any other emotion, I believe that anger is not a necessity when forgiveness is successfully paired with self-control.

I realize, however, that one cannot forgive without first dwelling in a healthy emotional state. For example, the families of those murdered at Emanuel AME forgave the shooter willingly. They were not prompted by the AME church to do so; they were not coerced in any form or fashion by outside influences. They forgave because they chose to do so. This does not mean that they were not still angry, sad, or frustrated. Those family members that forgave him admitted willingly that they were still angry. Ultimately this means to me that they were in a healthy enough emotional state to forgive him for his

atrocious crimes. They forgave willingly because they understand the importance of accepting love and turning away from hate.⁴

Anger resides within us and still remains a necessary contribution to our conversations. It has a rightful place within us, yet still it must not be allowed to envelop us. In this fact resides the importance of self-control: it allows us to reside in our anger and other emotions without acting on them. Instead, self-control helps us remain socially and spiritually aware of how we feel and where we stand.

Our emotions resurface from time to time. This is a natural state of events for us.. Our emotions keep us tethered to those with whom we interact; whether these emotions impact us positively or negatively, they still remain the driving force between us and other individuals. I believe understanding our emotions affords us the capacity to find forgiveness. At the end of the fourth chapter of Ephesians, Paul states that we must get rid of anger, rage, and all forms of malice. We must be compassionate to one another and forgive, as Christ has also forgiven us. In this sense, Paul shows us that it is neither anger nor joy that is required to forgive someone; rather, it is *compassion*. In our various emotional states, we can still find compassion, but only when we have understood our feelings in a greater capacity than a mere surface understanding. Even in our anger, we can find enough compassion to make a difference in our ability to forgive.

At one point during Bible study at Mother Emanuel, Dylann Roof came to a point where he began to reconsider what he was about to do. He reconsidered his initial plot because of their kindness and compassion towards him, a visitor in their place of

⁴Harriet McLeod, Alana Wise, and Luciana Lopez, "Families of South Carolina Church Massacre Victims Offer Forgiveness," *Reuters*, June 19, 2015, accessed August 22, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-shooting-south-carolina-idUSKBN0OY06A20150619>.

worship.⁵ Compassion is a powerful emotion. It is through compassion that we may find the strength and capacity to forgive. When we give our situation to God through forgiveness, we do not have to be in a perfect emotional state. To abide by Paul's admonition, we need only to be in a state of mind and emotion that allows us to consider the importance of forgiveness, the reasons for our anger, and how the two are interconnected.

Exodus 32 provides another example of expressed anger. These scriptures describe Moses' meeting with God on Mt. Sinai, and the Israelites' impatience that leads to the creation of the golden calf. As Moses convenes with God, the Israelites grow impatient and insist that Aaron create a golden calf for them to worship. God then explains to Moses what is happening and how his anger will be brought down on the Israelite people:

⁷ The LORD said to Moses, "Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely;⁸ they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!'"⁹ The LORD said to Moses, "I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are.¹⁰ Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation."

¹¹ But Moses implored the LORD his God, and said, "O LORD, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand?¹² Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that he brought them out to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your fierce wrath; change your mind and do not bring disaster on your people.¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, 'I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have

⁵ Kim Bellware, "Dylann Roof Reportedly Almost Didn't Go through with Church Shooting Because 'everyone Was so Nice to Him'," *Huffington Post*, June 19, 2015, accessed August 22, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/19/dylann-roof-almost-didnt-shoot_n_7621602.html.

promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.”¹⁴ And the LORD changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.⁶

When the people began worshipping the golden calf, God exclaimed his anger and decided to destroy them. Even in their freedom, they still desired to worship as they had during their captivity in Egypt. It was Moses who questioned God, asking why God should extend his anger to the people. It was Moses’ who conversed with God, explaining how other nations who do not know God would view God if God followed through with his anger and destroyed the Israelites. Then the narrative explains that God changes His mind and decided not to bring horrible disaster upon the Israelites.

This text serves as a reminder that talking about our own anger is a healthy practice. As well, the narrative views our anger as something innate and natural within us. Anger is not a foreign or unexplainable emotion and it is not unusual or unheard of for God to become angry. Through these scriptures, we learn that even God can become angry and if God can become angry, then we are not exempt from the pull of this or any other emotion. Once again, scripture teaches us that anger is a part of who we are because it is part of the structure of the divine. This is not a statement of negativity. As expressed in many ways so far, anger is a natural part of our experience and existence. Anger plays an integral part in our growth and development and allows us to focus on our problems and better handle the challenges we face from day to day.⁷

As stated earlier, when Moses spoke to God about the consequences that would come with his actions; he wanted God to see that neighboring peoples, such as the

⁶ Michael D. Coogan et al., eds., 129.

⁷ D'arcy Lyness, “The Power of Positive Emotions,” Kids Health, December, 2013, accessed September 3, 2016, <http://kidshealth.org/en/teens/power-positive.html#>.

Egyptians, would view him as a cruel God because he destroyed those he set free, those whom God had considered His chosen people. This conversation was enough to change the fate of the Israelites. Scripture states that God *changed God's own mind* about the entire ordeal. If God considers God's own actions and faces the negative effects of anger from a rational and realistic perspective, then I am completely certain that we as God's people may fall victim to our anger and express our anger in harmful, destructive ways if we allow our emotions to run rampant. On the other hand, we may also grasp the greater meaning behind our anger and the consequences of actions that are fueled by such emotions. Simultaneously, we have the power and ability to change our minds about the acts we would commit. In short, if God can reconsider acts birthed from anger through healthy conversation, we can be willing to do the same for the sake of ourselves and others.

Ironically, after Moses spoke to God and explained the danger of acting on anger-fueled impulses, he became a victim to his own anger when he saw the people reveling and worshipping the golden calf:

¹⁵ Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain, carrying the two tablets of the covenant^[b] in his hands, tablets that were written on both sides, written on the front and on the back. ¹⁶ The tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, engraved upon the tablets.

¹⁷ When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, "There is a noise of war in the camp." ¹⁸ But he said,

"It is not the sound made by victors,
or the sound made by losers;
it is the sound of revelers that I hear."

¹⁹ As soon as he came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, Moses' anger burned hot, and he threw the tablets from his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. ²⁰ He took the calf that they had made, burned it with fire, ground it to powder, scattered it on the water, and made the Israelites drink it.

²¹ Moses said to Aaron, “What did this people do to you that you have brought so great a sin upon them?” ²² And Aaron said, “Do not let the anger of my lord burn hot; you know the people, that they are bent on evil. ²³ They said to me, ‘Make us gods, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ ²⁴ So I said to them, ‘Whoever has gold, take it off’; so they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf!”

²⁵ When Moses saw that the people were running wild (for Aaron had let them run wild, to the derision of their enemies), ²⁶ then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, “Who is on the LORD’s side? Come to me!” And all the sons of Levi gathered around him. ²⁷ He said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘Put your sword on your side, each of you! Go back and forth from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill your brother, your friend, and your neighbor.’” ²⁸ The sons of Levi did as Moses commanded, and about three thousand of the people fell on that day. ²⁹ Moses said, “Today you have ordained yourselves^[c] for the service of the LORD, each one at the cost of a son or a brother, and so have brought a blessing on yourselves this day.”

³⁰ On the next day Moses said to the people, “You have sinned a great sin. But now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.” ³¹ So Moses returned to the LORD and said, “Alas, this people has sinned a great sin; they have made for themselves gods of gold. ³² But now, if you will only forgive their sin—but if not, blot me out of the book that you have written.” ³³ But the LORD said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book. ³⁴ But now go, lead the people to the place about which I have spoken to you; see, my angel shall go in front of you. Nevertheless, when the day comes for punishment, I will punish them for their sin.” ³⁵ Then the LORD sent a plague on the people, because they made the calf—the one that Aaron made.⁸

These scriptures teach us that anger in many cases leads to some form of action.

Whether good or bad, the action itself can be the byproduct of this intense emotion. The actions we express are what we as humans connect negatively to anger. In other words; anger is not necessarily negative, but because the actions in response to anger many times are, we naturally connect negativity with anger as opposed to connecting it to actions

⁸ Michael D. Coogan et al., eds., 129.

themselves. After Moses witnessed the people worshipping the Golden calf, Aaron attempted to diffuse his anger. Still, it was not enough to stay Moses' emotional state. There is a major difference between the conversation between God and Moses, and that between Moses and Aaron: Moses dialogued in a manner that challenged God to consider the consequences of God's actions, while Aaron simply told Moses not to be angry. In other words, Aaron did not challenge Moses to evaluate his anger and consider why he felt the way he did; in short Aaron invalidated Moses' anger. To make matters worse, Aaron made excuses for the people instead of facing the fact that Moses had a reason to be angry: Moses did not want their enemies to see God's people as a laughing stock or a joke. Such a public show of weakness could perhaps motivate their enemies to raid their camps and attempt to either enslave them or destroy them.

I have been angry many times in my life, and I can clearly remember people saying to me: "Don't be mad Herbert, you know how it goes". I have made similar statements to others, which was not beneficial to their healing or emotional process. This and many other disingenuous statements do little if anything to help people deal with their anger. Telling people not to be angry is not enough to help them think critically and openly about their particular feelings, nor does it validate them or the importance of their emotions. Blanket statements such as these can lead to intensified feelings of anger and frustration, which can potentially lead to irrational behavior and unpleasant consequences or conclusions.

When Moses spoke to God, he expressed what the outcome would be if God decided to destroy everyone. When Aaron spoke to Moses, he did not speak towards Moses' emotional state. Rather, he avoided dialogue that would stimulate conversation

and consideration of his intense feelings. These scriptures prove to me that anger need not be seen necessarily as an issue of negativity; rather, *the actions* that go unattended and unanswered are what can be truly negative. If God can be angry, then we, being created in God's image, can be angry as well. However, it is our *actions* based on that anger that can be morally destructive and emotionally damaging.

As we read scripture, it becomes clear that even the prophets, those called by God to do God's work, get angry sometimes. The prophet Jonah is a perfect example of this inference. Jonah was called by God to warn the people of Nineveh that because of their wicked ways destruction would befall their city if they did not repent. Instead of following those commands, Jonah ran away. He tried to escape his call, by boat, but a storm raged and the sailors called to their own gods for help. They drew straws and found Jonah to be the culprit. He admitted his guilt and they threw him overboard. He was swallowed by a fish and remained there for three days. After he prayed to God, he was put back on dry land. He spoke with God again and this time he listened. Ironically, when he spoke to the people, they gave up their wicked ways, and even the king decreed that everyone would wear sackcloth and fast. The city was saved.

The irony of this story is that we don't find out why Jonah ran away from his call until the fourth chapter. He first became angry at God because he knew that God would be compassionate to the people of Nineveh.⁹ Jonah decided to run from his duty because he believed that if he stayed away long enough, God would destroy the people of the city. He wanted to see these people perish and felt that if they heard God's word and obeyed, they would be forgiven. This was an outcome he did not want! God asked him if he was

⁹Ibid., 1324.

in the right to be so angry, and Jonah did not respond. Instead, he went to sit in the heat of the desert nearby Nineveh. God sent some shade to Jonah while he sat in the blistering heat but the next day, God sent a worm to eat the shade plant. Jonah became angry over the loss of the plant and wished he would die. So God asked him if he is right to be angry at the plant. Jonah believed his anger was justified. God then turned this moment of anger into a teaching moment, explaining that Jonah was concerned for the plant even though he had nothing to do with it. God stated that God should be just as concerned for the thousands of people in Nineveh as Jonah was concerned for one single plant.

These scriptures depict another kind of anger, a type of anger often followed by fear and repentance: anger towards God. Jonah wanted to see the people of Nineveh perish and believed that if he ran from his calling, destruction of the city would follow. Although he eventually did what was asked of him, he was intensely angry at God because of God's love and forgiveness.

However, in our scriptures, we do not see a God of wrath and destruction, or a God of violence. Rather, we see a God who is described by Jonah as being slow to anger. We see a God who takes one's emotional and physical torments and uses them for edification. Here, God is not angered by Jonah's attempts to thwart the city, nor is he angered that Jonah is angry at God. Rather, we see that God expresses forgiveness and redemption to those who are willing to follow. These scriptures teach us that God accepts every part of us, including our emotions. We see that God understands our feelings, and accepts our anger for what it is. God even forgives when our anger is directed toward God. Our feelings are a part of who we are, and God understands this. Through the story of Jonah, we have Biblical proof that our anger is warranted in many situations, and, even

if there is no one with whom to discuss our anger, God is with us and ready to discuss those feelings with us, even when God is the subject of our anger.

In my context, I grew up being taught never to do two things: never *question* God and never *get angry* with God. The concern was that we would be punished for ever doubting God (thereby questioning Him), and that we would be punished for ever disrespecting God (thereby becoming angry with Him). As I lived and experienced more of what life has to offer and teach, I saw many people who witnessed great emotional situations and intensely emotionally driven responses to their plight. Personally, I have experienced many of these painful and powerful moments as well. I have found a great freedom in speaking to God honestly and openly about my feelings regarding various situations in my life. I have learned the importance of admitting the truth about the things we go through and how it may affect our feelings towards God, and others.

Some believers have no desire to discover their own emotional distresses or why their feelings are prevalent in their lives. Many Christians to this day still desire to deal with their emotionally driven situations on their own. In this sense, there are many who do not want to be honest about their feelings, talk to God about their problems or desire to seek help from professionals. Similarly, there are many who do not want to tell God why they are angry or perhaps even why they are angry with God. It has been my experience that many people who begin to suffer emotionally when they refuse to ask God why things happen or to tell God honestly how they feel about certain situations. Their emotional trauma then pours out into the important elements of their lives: their worship, their jobs, their education, and even their families. Withholding our emotions and refusing to seek answers to our questions leads to frustrations that may not easily be dealt

with. These under-attended feelings can damage our relationships; even the relationship we share with God, if we allow them to remain a destructive device in our lives.

Eventually, I accepted my call to ministry and went to seminary. Here, my thinking was challenged on every front. I learned about the power of asking meaningful and thought provoking questions of God, and I learned the importance of being open and honest with God. After all, any relationship worth having is one worth being open and honest about. When I came home from seminary and received my Deacon's orders, the first Bible study lesson I taught revolved around the importance of asking God questions, listening for answers, and conversing honestly about our emotions. I taught that questions of theodicy, or why bad things happen to good people, are acceptable to God. I used the book of Jonah to teach the importance of facing our feelings and admitting those feelings to God. Not only did some feel liberated and therefore free to ask God those questions that they deem important, but it also created a dialogue about the role that anger plays in our lives, and the importance of having a healthy relationship with each of our emotional states.

Anger takes on many forms and can be stirred because of other emotions dwelling within us. Often, other emotional factors such as jealousy, greed, fear, and conceit can lead to anger. In first Samuel eighteen, Saul has appointed David as a military leader because of all his success on the battle field against his enemies. On one occasion, as he returned home with the army, the women came into the streets and danced, singing their praise of David in comparison of Saul, which naturally stirred Saul's anger. The Bible states:

⁵ David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him; as a result, Saul set him over the army. And all the people, even the servants of Saul, approved.

⁶ As they were coming home, when David returned from killing the Philistine, the women came out of all the towns of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments.^[b] ⁷ And the women sang to one another as they made merry,

“Saul has killed his thousands,
and David his ten thousands.”

⁸ Saul was very angry, for this saying displeased him. He said, “They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands; what more can he have but the kingdom?”⁹ So Saul eyed David from that day on.¹⁰

Scripture shows the reader that Saul became very angry. He was concerned that the people loved David so much that they would make him king. In short, he was jealous of David’s popularity, feared the possibility that he would take over as king, and ultimately angry at David’s success. Saul’s solution: to keep David close in order to keep a close eye on him. Keeping David close led to many close encounters with death for him, because an evil or harmful spirit of the Lord came into Saul and he tried to pin David to the wall with his spear. This happened not just once, but twice. Saul attempted to kill him in both chapters eighteen and nineteen of First Samuel. Scriptures depict Saul’s attempts to kill David because of his jealousy fueled anger. At first, Saul was content having David winning his battles for him. He initially sees no concern for David’s success until he hears what the people are saying about the two of them. It was Saul’s *jealousy* of David’s growing popularity, and his *fear* of losing the throne that led to his anger. These scriptures prove that anger is a multi-faceted emotion that remains

¹⁰Ibid., 428.

connected to a plethora of other emotions. Anger is not an emotional island in and of itself without connections or redirections to other emotions. We can feel anger as well as other powerful emotions simultaneously working within us. This fact can make analyzing and restructuring anger somewhat difficult. Merely because of the many feelings that are connected to anger, there are many factors to work through when attempting to make sense of why we feel the way we do from time to time. Saul was angry with the statement that was being made in comparison to David, but it was his jealousy of David and fear of losing his kingship that led to his decision to keep David close so that he ensure the throne would remain in his control.

Perhaps these scriptures are designed to show us that not only is anger an emotion that is prevalent within our lives, but it is also intertwined with other emotions. Almost all of our emotions are intricately connected to one another in some way or form. I believe that these complex feelings of ours would be better served if we admit the reality of our complex emotional nature. In some ways, we see anger as a singular and powerful emotion, but perhaps this is a disingenuous definition of anger. I believe anger is a compartmentalized emotion intricately connected with many emotions. If we were to view anger in this way, perhaps we could consider the notion that our feelings are all connected and that one is not more dominant or less damaging than another.

With these many expressions of anger and even more unconsidered stories in the Bible, the question comes to mind; was Jesus ever angry? The answer is: most definitely! In Mark 10:13-16 a particular story of his anger can be found. Many children were brought to Jesus in hopes that he would bless them. The disciples attempt to send them

away for some unstated reason. Jesus then becomes “indignant” and tells them to bring the children to him.

¹³ People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. ¹⁴ But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁵ Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” ¹⁶ And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.¹¹

The word “indignant” means anger when injustice is being witnessed: a righteous anger. Here we see that Jesus is not only angry, but justified in his anger at the mistreatment of the children through the use of this word. Then again, perhaps this word is used as a means to cover up the fact that Jesus was simply angry. Perhaps the writers felt a need to protect Jesus from human emotion in this sense, as an act of protecting His divinity. I looked up these scriptures in various other versions of the Bible and found that the common word used in place of the word *angry* was the word *indignant*. However, in the *Common English Bible*, the word *angry* is found. Though it took some digging, scriptures reveal to us now that Jesus was indeed angry. Whether it was righteous or not, whether it was good or bad, the fact remains that Jesus can and does become angry. Still, when we consider the use of the word *indignant* we see that there is a kind of anger that is considered acceptable. The very definition of indignation infers that someone can be angry for the *right* reasons. Though other than injustices being done, I am unsure of what else would ever be acceptable to most people as anger for the *right* reasons; one can surmise here that anger has a place in our societies and in our very lives. The scriptures show us that even Jesus must lay claim to his feelings. Personally, I believe that we must

¹¹Ibid., 76.

hold ourselves accountable for our anger and the actions that may follow. In His anger, Jesus elevated the importance of children and their needs. He did not call for plagues or suffering, he did not destroy the land or punish his disciples; he simply spoke on the importance of coming to God as a child. Even in his anger, he met the needs of the children, the disciples, and those who followed Him. Perhaps the scriptures here are meant to teach us that when anger is channeled and focused properly, it can be used for the greater good of others.

The anger of Jesus did not hurt others in this case; rather, it benefitted those nearby. Perhaps if we take our anger and focus it properly, we too can possibly find our anger to be more of a help than a detriment. Jesus used his anger as a teaching moment for those following Him. Perhaps the focus we gain from our anger can be used as a teaching moment for others and ourselves instead of a destructive force thrust upon those around us. The theologian James Cone attended the *Samuel Dewitt Proctor* conference in Louisiana in 2008, and said that his book, *Black Theology and Black Power* was written after the assassination of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. because he was *angry* with the state of events that led to such tragedy. It is my belief that focusing our anger in constructive ways would benefit us and those around us much like the effects of Jesus' anger or indignation. For example: after the shooting death of Walter Scott in North Charleston, I attended a special town hall session hosted by Joe Madison, the XM radio host. Many people expressed their anger at the entire situation and how poorly it had been handled. It was Mr. Madison that told us instead of simply being angry, we should focus our anger and use it to propel our desire for change through the act of voting. If we don't like the politicians who create and enforce certain rules, or overlook certain rules like

enforcing police to wear body cameras, then we should vote into office those who believe what we believe. He said we should be angry enough at what is going on to be willing to vote not only for the president of the United States, but to also vote at local elections and change the legal shape of our cities and states. This idea of focused anger has stuck with me since then. Anger can be used constructively if we choose to be constructive about it. However, when we choose to let our anger run roughshod over our thinking and actions, we run the risk of unnecessary pain and suffering towards ourselves and others. Once again, scripture teaches us that anger has a place in our lives, but it is not about the anger we have, it is about how we *use* that anger.

As you may know by now, it is my belief that anger has been mostly misunderstood. Many Christians attempt to thwart any feelings of anger without first working through those feelings. Oftentimes, instead of facing our feelings and validating the importance of our emotions, we attempt to bury it as deeply as possible, and as quickly as we can. Not only do congregants do this, but ministers and pastors as well. In a sense, we are expected to uphold the example of joy and happiness, yet, the anger of clergy is often viewed as a bad thing, and in many cases, it is demonized.¹² In this sense, our burying of anger often leads to unnecessary and unexpected resurfacing of this emotion through actions and words that can be potentially destructive and hurtful. One thing I realized during the events surrounding *Emanuel AME Church* was that even though I found myself crying many nights and praying by myself, I was actually facing my anger. I realize now that I had accepted where I was and that I had to be vigilant in

¹²David Graham, "Jeremiah Wright Is Still Angry at Barack Obama," *The Atlantic*, September 26, 2015, 1, accessed September 3, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/what-ever-happened-to-jeremiah-wright/406522/>.

dealing with my emotions. This work has become a conversation between God, American Society, and me. It is the first major step in a positive direction regarding my anger and the analyzing and restructuring of it in my own life and experience.

Much like any other emotion connected to grieving a loss, I have learned that anger is cyclical. There will be days even years to come where I may feel angrily about these events, or I may become indignant in regards to certain injustices in our society, still, facing my anger and allowing it to work its course instead of resorting to violence or destructive conversation was a huge benefit to my spiritual growth and my own understanding of God. My experiences as a chaplain and as a pastor have taught me that talking about anger instead of holding it to oneself can profoundly affect the manipulative factors of anger. I believe that anger, like all other emotions, could potentially serve us all better once we accept it as a part of our being and deeply intertwined with other emotions, instead of something foreign and unnatural to our nature.

These scriptures I have presented are just a few biblical examples of how anger can be used in both negative and positive fashion. Scripture has taught us that validating our anger is the first step to maintaining healthy emotional levels. Anger is not an emotion that we can get rid of, nor should we desire it to be so. Instead, anger is an emotion with many layers and connections to other emotions; it is an integral part of our lives and our experiences. Anger can be handled healthily, which leads to greater understanding of its importance in our lives; or it can be mishandled, pushed aside, and ignored, which can lead to disastrously destructive actions and words, many of which can lead to permanent damage to ourselves and others. Our scriptures remind us that anger is not something to be ignored or rushed; it is an emotion that must be nurtured and dealt

with through honesty and conversation. In doing so, we can break through the stereotypes of anger and its effects, and find ways to use anger to contribute to societal growth and development positively.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYZING THE ROOM

Some the most important information to gather when hunting is not necessarily related to the beast's physical features or abilities, but rather its habitat, its place of dwelling, learning, and development provide even greater detail about the particular subject's behavior. The environment of any living thing is just as important, if not more so, than the subject itself. Time and again, we witness as environmental changes create behaviors and patterns that reflect a particular change. Animals have instinctive behaviors that occur without any need for learning or developing. For example: a roach will instinctively abscond to dark spaces when lights are turned on. However, there are also lessons to be learned from experience, or imprinting. For instance, baby animals learn which foods are preferable based on the foods they are fed. In truth, as important as our genetics are in attempting to understand who we are and how we behave, learn, and develop, so too is our environment and therefore, our experiences, a major factor in defining one's self.

We African Americans have a past and present marred in controversy. Our history is riddled with violence, oppressive servitude, and struggle. This is not to say that other ethnicities have not had similar experiences, but that is not the point of this writing. Rather, African Americans have been removed from our previous niche, and forced into a new environment with different rules of engagement. Both Slavery and the era of Jim

Crow created environments of unrealistic and oppressive laws, freedom to maim, rape, and destroy black lives, and a presumed inferiority of blacks. As well, this created a false sense of superiority in whites, and the creation of a false and destructive interpretation of the Bible used to further impress inferiority and servitude on the black psyche. In his book, *America's Longest Siege Charleston, Slavery, and the Slow March Toward Civil War*, historian Joseph Kelly writes in detail pertaining to this particular issue of English and African psyche as related to slavery and its destructive effects in America. He states:

Even so, religion was never the final indicator of slave status. The English saw savagery in ‘other cultural qualities-the strangeness of the Africans’ language, gestures, eating habits, and so on’. Skin color was the only one marker of difference and degradation, and hardly the crucial one. But within a few years, the terrible conditions under which the slaves lived was bound to degrade the black men and women who suffered it; in the eyes of the English it became all too easy to think of Africans as *racially* degraded. By a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy, ‘the cycle of degradation was fully under way... once the engine of oppression was in full operation’. Right around the time that Carolina began cultivating rice and importing Africans in great numbers, the laws begin referring not to ‘heathens’ and ‘Christians’ but to ‘blacks’ and ‘whites’. Dark complexion became an independent rationale for enslavement.¹

As slavery spread across the colonies, the narrative regarding slaves and whites began to change. Treating slaves as property instead of human beings enforced the developing assumptions that whites made regarding blacks. In this sense it changed the perception and reality of slavery in such a way that slavery became an acceptable regimen for industrialists, farmers, blacksmiths, and almost any other profession at that time. Dehumanization of Africans became a major contributing factor to the oppressive and violent nature of slavery in the developing colonies. Kelly describes a common practice in America during the era of slavery called *paternalism*. This is the concept that

¹ Joseph Kelly, *America's Longest Siege Charleston, Slavery, and the Slow March Toward Civil War* (New York: The Overlook Press, 2013), 28-29.

the slave is part of the family, but the lowest family of course, that needs the fatherly help, teaching, support, and chastisement of the slave master. Kelly states:

But more powerful is the humanity naturally inherent in most people and we have also seen how much harder it is to be cruel to those one knows intimately, and perhaps, more important, how hard it is to be cruel in front of one's neighbors. If paternalism was a lie that whites told themselves to justify their dominion over blacks-and of course being based on a philosophy of racial superiority it *was* a lie-it also tended to magnify humanity the way capitalism magnifies inhumanity. ²

As stated before, our emotions have been held in captivity just as much as our ancestor's physical bodies. The cruelty and inhumanity our ancestors experienced not only affected their own understanding of self, but also affected the lives of their children to this very day. Laws were stringent towards blacks, even in religious practice and worship. It was common for whites to sit in with blacks to monitor their worship services. Teaching about freedom, save for freedom in heaven, was prohibited. Kelly reminds us of the distrustful nature of slave owners and lawmakers in Charleston in the early 1800's. One particular incident comes to mind regarding the AME church and the lack of the simple freedom to worship God. He writes:

Whites routinely sat in the rear pews during Morris Brown's formal sermons so as one might surmise, the black minister walked a fine line between inspiring his congregation and appeasing the authorities. He avoided anything we might call liberation theology. Nevertheless, controversy found the church in its second year, when Richard Allen came to visit Charleston along with five other black bishops and ministers. They preached at one of the African churches, which so disturbed the city authorities that they sent in the city guard to break up the meeting. One hundred and forty black congregants spent the night in jail, and the following morning a paternalistic magistrate lectured them on the law. African Americans could attend church only during daylight hours, he reminded them, and only if they constituted a minority of the congregation; the city was willing to wave the second stipulation so long as at least one white person observed the church proceedings, but under no

²Ibid., 138.

circumstances were blacks to gather, even for church, without a white person present.³

Even black worship was prohibited to a degree. Having a white man present during worship services was commonplace. Preaching regarding freedom and equality was not allowed. This enforcement creates a social acceptance of black silence. Emotions and emotional expression was and is repressed for hundreds of years all across America. Anger being the most oppressed emotion of all. Because of this, American society has yet to learn how to accept black anger, and African American society has yet to learn how to embrace that anger.

Assumptions of inferiority of blacks both slave and free, was a necessary undertaking for whites in America. Seeing slaves and even freed blacks as less-than made subjugation of black lives an easier undertaking. Also, those assumptions and stereotypes eventually began to embed themselves into the assumptions and presumptions of black social life and African American culture. In many ways, blacks sought to set themselves apart from those that seemed to live up to the home-grown stereotypes of American society. American historian Mark Smith describes the effects of these stereotypes after generations of servitude during the era of segregation and the visual influence stereotypes had on perceptions of morality. He explains:

While the racial imperatives of segregation tended to hide class differences within the black community, 'in situations of emotional stress individuals from any of the classes were apt to express antagonisms toward other classes.' For example: 'Upper-class colored persons, when angered by the behavior of lower-class individuals, accused them of being black,' by which they meant 'boisterous, murderous, stupid, or sexually promiscuous.' Middle-class blacks were especially critical and cast lower-class blacks as smelly, dirty, noisy, and lazy. How one looked echoed how one sounded, African American 'women of higher social status

³Ibid.,143.

deliberately avoid bright colors and are offended if clerks in the stores assume that they want something ‘loud.’” Thus ‘the upper-class Negro who dresses with quiet good taste is not only demonstrating that he possesses this attribute of breeding’ but also divorcing himself from ‘the inferior type of Negro.’⁴

Most stereotypically negative expressions were connected to blacks, creating an unrealistic and degrading assumption of black lives. The American psyche created a detachment of black life from human life. In its own way, these thoughts created perceptions of inferiority simply through whites gathering information about blacks with their God-given senses. Skin color, clothing choice, dialect, accent, and many other factors were measuring tools of the morality and importance of who someone was.

Perhaps one of the strongest demoralizers in the antebellum south and beyond was the infamous lynching of blacks. White anger at perhaps its most heightened culmination resulted in the mutilation of black bodies all for the sake of visual and auditory reminders of the power of white citizens and the lack of voice or freedom of blacks. Smith writes of the sense of touch and how lynching blacks derived from this sensory expression whether on purpose or accident, once again, Mark Smith:

Lynching stressed the inviolability of white space, skin, and bodies through violent, physical contact. It seemed that the only fitting punishment of a black man who touched a white woman was for white men to up the ante, to show, as if there was any doubt, who held ultimate authority in this society. The more than 2,500 lynchings recorded in the south from 1885 to 1903 showed that white men had the power to strip the black body, literally of its senses, to possess it in parts. In April 1899, near Newman, Georgia, two thousand whites witnessed the lynching of Sam Hose for supposedly killing a white man. Their eyes saw the literal deconstruction of a black body: Hose’s ears, fingers, and genitals were cut off; his face was skinned and pieces of his skin and bone were sold as gruesome souvenirs. Legacies of other lynchings were olfactory, carried by whites long after the event.⁵

⁴ Mark Smith, *How Race Is Made Slavery, Segregation, and the Senses* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 97.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 60.

The era of Jim Crow created laws specifically designed to create greater barriers between blacks and whites. Segregation enforced inferiority and oppression of blacks by educational, social, and spiritual deprivation. Blacks were not allowed to speak to whites as if they were equals. Nor was public gathering allowed other than worship. This era had its own hardships for African Americans and it further imprinted docility and a lack of emotional expression for them. Black mothers constantly warned their children not to get angry, look at white people with angry expressions, or do anything that could get them hurt or killed. In many ways it was ingrained in black society that silence was a necessary survival tactic.

The book *Remembering Jim Crow* compiles various stories and events narrated by the men and women who lived out the experiences of racism, hate, and segregation. These stories depict the damaging effects segregation had on the black mind, social structure, and family. When discussing segregated schools and the social climate of the era, an excerpt dictated by Charles Graham, an engineer from Alabama who lived during Jim Crow, explains the mental programming and effect Jim Crow had on blacks during this particular era in time he states:

I don't know if I ever just specifically came out and asked that question [of why things were the way they were], but it was one of those things where you had been programmed all along, ever since you got old enough to know right from wrong. To challenge white people just was the wrong thing to do. You just automatically grow up inferior, and you had the feeling that white people were better than you. It just really wasn't any question asked then about why. I mean, that was white people things. That was a white people school, and I just didn't feel that I had any right to go there. It basically never entered my mind.⁶

⁶ William H. Chafe, Raymond Gavins, and Robert Korstad, eds., *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell About Life in the Segregated South*, Revised ed. (New York: The New Press, 2014), 8.

Though African Americans eventually experienced freedom after slavery, it was a highly modified form that could only laughably be considered freedom at all. Blacks in the United States struggled to receive below basic education, healthcare, homeownership, equal pay for work, and simple necessities such as food. To make matters worse, the power struggle continued with white exclusivism. The concept of whites only was used as a programming method to remind blacks that in America, there were things they could not do and could not have. It was more than just water fountains that blacks were restricted from using. The book *Race and Resistance* provides a brief summary of white exclusivity and the benefits that followed:

White only is like having a set-aside program for white people. Certain jobs, certain things were set aside and only white people could benefit from them. So therefore there's a question of power, of rewards. Consequently, it pays to be white because it translates into the fact that white people are the first to be hired and the last to be fired. Black people are the last to be hired and the first to be fired. So there is a benefit, a material benefit. Does that benefit accrue to all white people equally? It certainly does not, because there's a class dimension within capitalist society. Those white people near the top benefit more. But it still, relatively speaking, pays to be white vis-à-vis being Black in American society.⁷

Once again, blacks were deprived of their rights, stripped of their dignity, and the doors and windows of opportunity were closed. It was almost natural for blacks to feel inferior to whites due to the many advantages whites have in the United States. Having all the advantages left white society with a sense of superiority and freedom that blacks would never experience equally. Due to lynchings and other violent public spectacles,

⁷ Herb Boyd, ed., *Race and Resistance: African-Americans in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2002), 8.

blacks knew that their opinions and feelings could not be expressed, at least not publicly. Regardless of our anger or frustrations, silence was the order of the day in most cases. Though American society has evolved in many ways, the repressed anger of minorities in this country has yet to be fully explored or accepted. This being the case, then black anger has yet to be truly understood.

Often, I consider the current state of our country pertaining to ethnicity and diversity in relation to America's recent past. How many African Americans today feel that our opinions are perceived as unimportant or undervalued by the American majority? Continuing with that same thought, if our emotions are not valued, if our opinions serve little meaning to others, then do our *lives* matter? Does the American majority find meaning in our very existence or our struggle? I find myself constantly facing this very same question: *do black lives matter?* All across America, African Americans have been victimized, targeted, discriminated against, and overlooked, and not just recently, but for centuries we have fought to preserve ourselves and our way of life within a society that shuns our cries in more ways than one. As the lynchings, killings, and abuses of our past depicts, violence and hatred towards us seems permissible. Silencing our voices, our anger, our praise to God, has occurred countless times during the eras of slavery, Jim Crow, segregation and even today.

After the shooting death of an unarmed Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman, and the subsequent acquittal of the murder charge in July of 2014, a necessary conversation with regards to social justice and minorities in America began. The findings of the Department of Justice which stated evidence was not comprehensive enough to pursue murder charges by the Federal Government created further unrest and

controversy.⁸ Not soon after, a movement started in America regarding the treatment of African Americans in the United States, as related to the lack of legal action against those who have violently killed our people and the questionable rights that seem to support the violent actions of law enforcement against minorities in the United States: *Black Lives Matter*.⁹ This movement was one that started as a hashtag on social media; however, this statement evolved from mere words in cyberspace to a platform for discussion, a cross-cultural and cross-gender unifying agent for change, and an expression of the long silent frustrations African Americans and many other minorities have harbored for centuries. This is a movement not only supporting the validity of black men and women in America, but it also stands as a beacon of hope for African Americans who are transgendered, queer, undocumented, incarcerated and formerly incarcerated. In short, all black lives, stories, and experiences.¹⁰

Racism holds firmly in many institutions in the United States, even those places created for higher learning. The University of Missouri has recently made news due to protests by many African American students¹¹. The school has a history of racism that has been ignored for so long that one student went on a hunger strike, and the black football team members refused to practice or play, until the University's president,

⁸ Lizette Alvarez, *U.S. Won't File Charges in Trayvon Martin Killing*, *New York Times*: February 24th, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/25/us/justice-dept-wont-charge-george-zimmerman-in-trayvon-martin-killing.html?_r=0 (accessed September 13th, 2016).

⁹ Trayvon Martin was a seventeen year old African American male who was murdered in Sanford Florida by George Zimmerman, a neighborhood watch volunteer. Zimmerman was acquitted due to the Stand Your Ground law in Florida. His acquittal sparked controversy and conversation regarding the importance of black lives in America.

¹⁰ *Black Lives Matter*, <http://blacklivesmatter.com> (accessed November 8, 2015).

¹¹ Brent Staples, *A History of Racism at the University of Missouri*, *New York Times*. November 10th, 2015, <http://Newyorktimes.com> (accessed on November 10th, 2015).

Timothy Wolfe, resigned. These protests occurred because the president refused to address the numerous issues of racism that have plagued the campus: white students screaming hate speech to blacks on multiple occasions. Some white students covered the campus lawn with cotton balls during black history month as a further statement of racism. To make matters worse, a swastika drawn in fecal matter in a dorm bathroom served as an expression of hatred of black students from some of the white students. Wolfe refused to comment on any of these incidents, and ignored emails and conversations surrounding these clear acts of racism. The voice of African American students was ignored and objectively silenced. Eventually, Wolfe resigned. Many note that, in this case, black lives did not matter. Wolfe did not resign because of the hunger strike, nor did he resign because of a burning desire to stand with those students who protest, but rather, he resigned only after the football team refused to play. As a result of the team's refusal to play, fines were assessed for the University of Missouri in upwards of a million dollars per game. Sadly, a million dollars in penalties and fines per game mattered, but not the safety of black students.

Beyond the institutional underpinnings of racism that plague America, the social climax of violence has become a visible blemish with regards to law enforcement in the United States. Within the last year, many African Americans have been killed by police officers. Not only so, but the shootings have been in either questionable situations or the Federal government chose not to get involved, such as the killing of Michael Brown by Ferguson officer Darren Wilson.¹² After the not guilty verdict by the Department of Justice, a series of riots, pillaging, and burning occurred causing increased social unrest

¹² John Swaine, *Darren Wilson Will Not Face Federal Charges in Michael Brown Shooting*, *The Guardian*. March 4th, 2015. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/mar/04/darren-wilson-federal-criminal-charges-michael-brown-shooting> (Accessed on September 14th, 2016).

and immense property damage. Though the evidence presented claimed the innocence of Officer Wilson, the emotional and social climate of African Americans was the same as it had always been in this country: our voices do not matter, and can be silenced while our institutions for justice will find no grounds to protect us or fight for us. Ironically, in order for this case to be pursued by the Federal Government, there would need to be sufficient evidence to prove that Officer Wilson made the decision to use lethal force because of his race. The court system could find none.

If these situations were isolated incidents, then perhaps a conversation on race relations would not be as necessary or meaningful. However, the increasingly violent altercations between law enforcement and African Americans continue to emerge across the United States. Not only so, but the methods of the officers have come into question on more than one occasion. For example, Eric Garner died as a result of a deadly chokehold by Officer Daniel Pantaleo. Multiple officers approached Garner because he was selling unlicensed cigarettes. Garner had been arrested on multiple occasions for this crime and was irate. He was visibly angry, but was not violent. He was choked and taken to the ground. He continuously stated that he could not breathe and his pleas were ignored. Forensics reports proved that the cause of death was due to the choke hold. Still, Pantaleo was not indicted in Garner's death. Once again, the voice of a black man was ignored. His struggles to breathe went unheard and subsequently, he died. Even in the presence of emergency medical teams, oxygen was not administered. Beyond all of the protests and marches, Pantaleo is reported to have received a raise and therefore made significantly

more money after being placed in an office position.¹³ Some would struggle to find the relevance in this fact, however, the fact still remains that African Americans in our society are treated as if we are all violent sociopaths. The verdicts in these cases further stymie legal processes against those who violently oppress us, and convey the message that it is permissible to lynch and murder African Americans today without worry of reprisal from the law; and in many cases today law enforcement officers are committing these modern day lynchings. This is not the story for every court case, certainly officers across the United States are not all prone to violence against African Americans; but because so many of these cases have ended with the officers being set free while the victim's families are left picking up the pieces of their broken relationships, we must strongly consider the state of our society and how it views African Americans, our value in this society, and our invalidated emotional states. We all have a duty to pay attention to the value that black lives and black voices seem to lack.

Synonymously, Alton Sterling was killed under similar pretenses. He was selling CD's outside a local shop in Baton Rouge Louisiana. A call came to the local police that Sterling had threatened him with a gun. The two officers arrive to arrest him, put him over the hood of their car. One officer tackles him to the ground and pins him down. Video recording shows that Sterling is pinned to the ground by an officer with the second standing over him. One of them shouts that he has a gun and Sterling is shot at point blank range. The video reveals that Sterling was not moving his hands or reaching for anything. He was lying still and was gunned down. It is only after the shooting that the

¹³ Caroline Bankoff. Cop who Choked Eric Garner Has Been Doing Pretty Well for Himself. The New York Times. September 12th, 2016. <http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2016/09/cop-who-choked-garner-earning-more-money-than-ever.html> (Accessed on September 14th, 2016).

officers reach into his pockets and find a gun of any kind.¹⁴ Garner died selling cigarettes, Sterling died selling CD's. Even though Sterling was armed, he showed no efforts towards reaching for his weapon. The video which was recorded by a witness shows how biased officers are towards people of color in the United States. There is a growing concern with law enforcement's willingness to take lethal force, even when there is very little threat to their safety. Ironically, the officers' body camera became dislodged and failed to record the incident. In most of these cases, had it not been for the video provided by witnesses, the sheer unnecessary violence towards blacks would not be accounted for, or readily viewable to the public. The Department of Justice has found cause enough to investigate this atrocity as his rights were clearly violated and the actions taken against him were due to his ethnicity.

Here in South Carolina, Walter Scott, a black man, was shot five times in the back by a white police officer: Michael Slager. Scott was initially pulled over for a broken tail light. Upon review of his record he had fallen behind on child support payments and was to be arrested. Scott ran from him and Slager fired his weapon eight times. Slager's report stated that Scott was attempting to attack him, and he feared for his life. The Department supported him until a witness' video of the shooting was released to the media. Slager's narrative was deemed false.¹⁵ This case led to conversation regarding police reporting after incidents where shots are fired. Since Walter Scott's murder, there has been

¹⁴ Richard Fausset, Richard Pena, and Campbell Robertson, "Alton Sterling Shooting in Baton Rouge Prompts Justice Dept. Investigation," *New York Times*, July 6, 2016, accessed September 23, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/06/us/alton-sterling-baton-rouge-shooting.html>.

¹⁵ Andrew Knapp, "Citing 'false Narrative' of Walter Scott Shooting, Defense Seeks Expanded Juror Questioning," *Post and Courier*, August 1, 2016, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.postandcourier.com/20160801/160809915/citing-false-narrative-of-walter-scott-shooting-defense-seeks-expanded-juror-questioning>.

discussion and debate regarding the possibility of police being trained to say familiar key statements to validate the use of lethal force. Statements such as *I feared for my safety and my life*. It could be surmised that the stereotypes of black anger and violence has propagated in the United State so much so that the police force, Departments of Justice, and society as a majority can easily believe we are capable of intense violence and therefore, officers are deemed justified in using lethal force.

Even as I write, a black man is murdered without any true probable cause. Just a few days ago, Terrence Crutcher, a forty year old black man, was shot and killed by Officer Betty Shelby in Tulsa Oklahoma. Video shows that Crutcher had his hands up in the air and his back turned to police. As he walked towards his car, he was hit with a Taser by another officer, then Officer Shelby fires a single shot from her weapon.¹⁶ What were the offences? What did Crutcher and other men do to spurn such a violent and murderous response? Terrence Crutcher was having engine trouble with his vehicle; Walter Scott had a broken tail light, as did Philando Castille. All three men ended up dead upon interaction with their respective local police forces. The recording shows that the officer in the helicopter describes Crutcher as a big bad dude. Once again, we see the stereotype of angry and therefore dangerous black men systemically enforced by the officers who are sworn to serve and protect all citizens. Upon searching his vehicle, no weapon was found. It is believed that Crutcher was on a hallucinogenic drug; however, Officer Shelby is a certified drug recognition expert. Even in this case, having been trained to recognize when someone is under outside influences, his death could have been

¹⁶ Tim Stelloh, "Terrence Crutcher Shooting: 'disturbing' Helicopter Footage Shows Tulsa Police Kill Unarmed Man," nbcnews.com, September 20, 2016, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/disturbing-helicopter-footage-shows-oklahoma-police-kill-unarmed-man-n650866>.

avoided. She fired on him because he was not responding to her commands, but this is still no reason to fire her weapon and kill as she did. Crutcher was a man who needed help, but he was treated like someone who was violent and dangerous. Shelby was initially on leave with pay pending further investigation. Currently she is being charged with manslaughter as opposed to murder.¹⁷ Manslaughter is chosen because prosecution believes they would not win the case if they charged her with murder. Once again we see no immediate reprisal for her actions, and when something is done, when a decision is made, the fullest extent of the law cannot be implemented.

The list of violent shooting of black men continues on, creating a narrative of pain, loss, and anger. Many of these shootings are a result of officers making a judgment call that is clearly overly violent and unnecessary. The call comes from the ingrained stereotypes and prejudices that Americans have regarding African Americans. Philando Castille was murdered in the passenger seat of his car with his girlfriend and daughter in the vehicle with him. He was shot four times by officer Jeronimo Yanez after Castille himself told him he had a license to carry. Castille's girlfriend, Diamond Reynolds, recorded the incident and uploaded it to Facebook. She calmly explained to Yanez that Castille was doing as he was asked: to present his license and registration. The officer is clearly very angry while Reynolds calmly explains to the viewers what had occurred.

¹⁷ Daniella Silva, "Terence Crutcher Shooting: Tulsa County District Attorney Charges Officer Shelby with Manslaughter," NBCNews.com, September 23, 2016, accessed September 23, 2016, <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/terence-crutcher-shooting-tulsa-county-district-attorney-charges-officer-shelby-n652856>.

They were pulled over because of a broken tail light.¹⁸ Once again, a black life was taken, a voice silenced. Fear of retaliation and violence spurns officers to take extreme measures for their own safety when in many of these cases, the precaution is not necessary.

In this country, we still see that criminals who are not black and are dangerously violent still live to have a day in court. Dylann Roof, who murdered nine worshippers of a black church, Mother Emanuel AME, in Charleston South Carolina was armed and dangerous. Yet when he was found, he was arrested with little effort. The officers even stopped by a Burger King to get him something to eat on his way to prison. During his time in prison, he wrote a manifesto regarding race in America, in which he expressed his belief that the white race is superior to all other races, especially the black race, and that black people must be dealt with violently in order to reestablish the white race's rule over society.¹⁹ His vitriolic writings and the violent murders he committed are proof of his desire to kill others, yet he lives.

Of course, I am not condoning wanton destruction and rioting, nor do I promote violence or looting for the sake of proving a point; however, I understand that the mindset of the citizens who take to the streets; we are people who are angry and want what all oppressed people want: justice, equity, and quality of life for ourselves and our families. How many more black men and women will be killed in our society, wrongfully murdered by law enforcement or violent racists before real conversation begins about the

¹⁸ Elliott McLaughlin, "Woman Streams Aftermath of Fatal Officer-Involved Shooting," *cnn.com*, July 08, 2016, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/07/07/us/falcon-heights-shooting-minnesota/>.

¹⁹ Andrew Buncombe, "Dylann Roof 'wrote Second Racist Manifesto' While Awaiting Trial for Charleston Church Shooting," *Independent*, August 23, 2016, accessed September 20, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/dylann-roof-wrote-second-racist-manifesto-text-note-white-supremacist-while-awaiting-trial-for-a7205351.html>.

state of black lives and freedoms in America? The fact remains that our voices have been silenced for so long; assumptions about our anger have been demonized to the point that this country can no longer ignore the damage that is being done to black life, family structure, and our history.

Since our forced arrival in America, our culture has been suppressed, our language and beliefs have been modified or altogether erased, and families have been split and sent all across this country. Violence has always been a common response to our presence, and assumptions about our capacity to learn and think critically have created a systemic programming of black minds to feel inferior to that of white minds. Jobs and educational opportunities have been limited to blacks for centuries, and exclusivism for whites has continued to hinder true economic, social, spiritual, and emotional freedom and prosperity. With all that we have been through, and all that we go through now, it is nearly impossible to ignore the room the elephant, anger, lives in. Generations of struggle and conflict for equity created an environment of anger, frustration, and of course, resistance. The environment of violence, and hate that we have grown and developed in has created an anger that has never been allowed to be expressed in a positive manner. The riots and property damage come from centuries of oppression and mistreatment and remains a reminder that only for some do black lives matter. Today, minorities in the United States stand and express their anger as a way to resist the resistance that has become our reality. However the fact remains that now as our anger is allowed to be expressed in some ways, we have yet to fully grasp the gravity of our anger and what it means to the African American experience.

CHAPTER 4

THE ELEPHANT ENGAGED

Once the elephant has been researched and studied, when its typical habitat, behaviors both natural and learned make a deeper connection with the hunter, there is but one thing left to do: engage it. Striving to dissect, analyze, and restructure anger in the pursuit of learning is a daunting task. The truth is anger is the most ignored emotion in the Christian experience. Theologies of anger are hard to come by, if at all, and we see that religious leaders who express anger are often ignored or demonized. The previous chapter expressed many truths about America's treatment of African Americans and slaves, and how anger has become a repressed expression; one that usually comes about when someone's feelings have been neglected to the point of boiling over. Though there can be many arguments made regarding African Americans and our repressed anger, my desire has been and will be to analyze the structure of anger in my particular ethno-religious culture and find ways to restructure my particular church setting in an attempt to create a unique place for true freedom of emotional expression: a place where anger is accepted and welcomed because it is recognized and understood.

How can this happen? How can we as African Americans begin to look at our anger after centuries of emotional oppression? How can we find ways to circumnavigate our feelings all while intertwining this revelatory information with our worship, church

families, and our culture? Since the beginning of our time in America, we African Americans have seen much resistance: American society resisted our freedom to live, work, and socialize; Jim Crow resisted our freedom to love, learn and become equally successful as white Americans; segregation enforced resistance to fair and equal quality education, jobs, and food. The list goes on indefinitely.

I believe that we can achieve successful emotional evaluation and expression by first *resisting the resistance*. In other words: moving beyond our now culturally taught, innate desire to repress our anger by openly speaking out about our anger in healthy ways. By making emotional honesty our practice, I believe we can and will liberate ourselves of the oppressive chains American society has placed on us and our ancestors. To do this, I propose creating a *safe space* for lay and clergy members of the AME church to truly discuss their feelings through fostering trust and relationships together. Nurturing these emotionally honest relationships will hopefully not only allow us to talk freely about our anger, but it might teach us to accept anger as a healthy part of our lives. As well, I believe this safe space might grant us the true freedom we have always desired: the freedom to be heard, understood, and respected regardless of agreeance. Creating this safe space will not be an easy undertaking; however, I firmly believe that the most important steps to true transformation begin with self-knowledge and trust. My Local Advisory Committee and I planned to work together to create this safe space at St. Paul AME in order to solidify greater unity between AME lay members and clergy alike.

In order to begin this research, I first put together a team of like-minded individuals who are looking to analyze anger and find ways to restructure it both in their worship and in their personal lives. I believe that utilizing two research groups, pastors

and lay members in the African Methodist Episcopal church, would provide the best amount of feedback and responses for this project. Due to the sensitive nature of this research, I believe it would be best to work alongside those I am most familiar with and those who are most familiar with me. Because I planned to interview pastors and lay members alike, so too should my Local Advisory Committee emulate the same breakdown. I believed that an LAC of three AME clergy and three AME lay members will enhance our opportunities to gather pertinent information and increase the willingness of others to share more openly. I chose one certified counselor for each group: one was an AME clergyperson who is pastoring, and the other an AME lay member. I did this because I believe it is imperative to have counselors on standby that will be able to assist clergy and lay people with managing their emotions should they intensify during our various conversations and group meetings. As well, they may also serve the same purpose for the members of my Local Advisory Committee and me.

My Local Advisory Committee and I designed this project around the Kingstree area of South Carolina; a rural section of Williamsburg County. We attempted to study two groups: Clergy and Lay members from the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Clergy consisted of ordained ministers who pastor in the Kingstree District. Lay members would hopefully come from my current parish: *St. Paul AME* in Kingstree South Carolina. In order to introduce and present repressed anger to my congregation systemically, I hoped that the combination of a month-long sermon series on anger combined with a *lecture lab* would be beneficial.

In Church researcher George Barna's book, *Growing True Disciples*, he expresses Five Models of Discipleship: *Competencies Model*, *Missional Model*, *Neighborhood*

Model, Worldview Model, and Lecture Lab Model. The *Lecture Lab Model* focuses on sermonic content that is further developed through small group study. This study is designed to emphasize application of the sermonic content. He writes:

This model focuses on delivering content through sermons (that is, lecture) and using small groups as the means of exploring the content further to follow through on applications (that is, the laboratory). The Lecture-Lab Model's bottom line is gleaning knowledge and building faith-based relationships that lead to godly character and Christian service. In this approach, the purpose of biblical knowledge is not to pass tests but to motivate people to live obedient lives, bear spiritual fruit, and persevere through the trials and tests of life.¹

I realize that in most cases, the sermonic moment is hardly ever open for discussion. Most members who have questions may ask them after the service is over, or may not ask them at all. Sermons are often times used as a catalyst to inspire change, but not necessarily to inspire conversation. Therefore, during four specifically chosen and consecutive Sunday services, the Lay members of the LAC would be present to write down notes or comments the congregants may share regarding the sermon: the feelings that were evoked, the questions that may arise, and any stories that may have developed in whole or in part by the sermon series. As well, the LAC would record contact information from members who may wish to share their thoughts and feelings with me directly but not necessarily face to face. Each sermon would be designed around the topic of anger and its many expressions found throughout the bible.

The LAC members would follow the same protocols during the *lecture labs* that will be held prior to the Sunday worship service experiences. The labs themselves will hopefully occur weekly on Wednesday evening and will replace bible study for a month.

¹ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2001), 151-152.

It will also be used to introduce the upcoming Sunday sermon; providing members with the opportunity to ask questions, share stories, and express themselves in an honest way. I believe that by providing lecture labs and opportunities to leave takeaways from the sermonic moment itself, the LAC and I will be able to create a safe space that allows those participating to find freedom to talk about their anger and other emotions and struggles they may have.

It is my belief that lay and clergy might develop new understandings of anger by attending a focus retreat weekend consisting of a Friday evening and Saturday. This retreat would engage the subject of anger beginning with a Friday evening of personal introductions, dinner, and introductory statements about why we have gathered. Saturday would consist of group meetings, presentations, and conversations. Separately, clergy and lay members will hopefully form small groups for seminars discussing anger as well as three one hour long verbatim sessions to share stories about anger, assumptions, and beliefs. Near the end of the retreat, clergy and lay members will gather together for the third and final session to share their experience. This final combining of clergy and lay should allow time and opportunity to discuss feelings on anger in context with relevant biblical references. In order to promote a healthy learning environment, there will be regular meals served, as well as activities designed to help participants release tensions and stress through physical outlets such as breathing exercises, meditation, and walking. There is a place called *Short Stay* in Moncks Corner South Carolina that has a very large and beautiful lake, campsite, and walking trail. These aesthetically pleasing places would give the participants an opportunity to walk, share, and relax. Out of the thirty-five pastors that make up the Kingstree District, I believe that twenty-five willing participants

will impact this research effectively. Also, I believe that this number is an adequate goal for lay participants as well. Altogether, I hope we might engage fifty people: twenty-five lay and twenty-five clergy. I have caterers on standby that can handle the dining needs of that number of people easily. As well, light refreshments can be provided between meals during the group sessions to help alleviate any undue stress and increase comfort levels.

I realize that this particular theme of anger is one that many people avoid. In order to have a more effective, participant-driven retreat, I plan to generate interest in this theme beforehand. Preaching and Bible study are effective teaching and introductory methods for lay members; however, these sermons and sessions will most likely only benefit lay members. Pastors have their own Bible studies to teach, and sermons to preach, therefore, it stands to reason that they would more than likely not be in attendance. In order to generate interest in the topic of anger for *clergy*, a luncheon devoted to the theme could potentially spark a great deal of interest in the topic matter. It may also peak their interests enough to motivate their attendance at the retreat. As well, this luncheon would give the Local Advisory Committee an opportunity to introduce stories of anger in the Bible, and also anger's relevance and prevalence in our lives, our ministries, and our congregations. Upon concluding this project, I may be able to create a *debriefing protocol* that may help ministers to both minister to and cope with anger, not only the anger of congregants, but their own anger as well.

The *Postmodern Narrative Approach* as explained by Drs. Savage and Presnell provides a reasonable and meaningful starting point for research; this method involves taking an empty (*kenotic*) approach to the narratives being shared, while understanding

that the researcher's stories and experiences are just as significant as, and connected with, the narratives of those who are being studied.²

As opposed to taking surveys or other quantitative methods to calculate significant change, understanding, or growth, members of the Local Advisory Committee will meet with participants individually and ask them evocative questions to provide us with a deeper understanding of the congregants' stories, backgrounds, and experiences. As stated earlier, the Lay members of the LAC will wait near exits to take down pertinent information, comments, or questions that people may have. We hope this gathering of additional information during the *lecture labs*, sermons, luncheon, and retreat might provide opportunity to generate more narratives and conversation. I created a timeline designed to keep the LAC and me on task, and fortify our opportunities to meet and process gathered data:

Timeline

October-December: LAC Training on Structuralist approach to evaluation, Kenotic Listening, note taking, biblical themes and theological concepts of anger and emotion, and evocative questions

November 5- LAC Introductions and discussion of overall project

November 19- Budget proposed for Luncheon/catering for retreat and housing for retreat. Training on Structuralist approach, Kenotic listening, note taking, and biblical themes/theological concepts of anger and emotion.

November 30- December-20 Send out project participation invitations for Kingstree district Clergy and St. Paul Lay members.

² Carl Savage and William Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry: a Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities* (Louisville: Wayne E.Oates Institute, 2008), 110.

December 28-January 19- Begin capturing narratives of participants and combine captured notes with LAC. These narratives will be captured at St. Paul AME Wednesday evenings from 7-9 pm. The LAC lay members will be on site to collect stories about anger and their reactions to anger. These narratives will be collected separately and each participant will be interviewed privately. As well, participants will be given a number to represent them in the project instead of their name.

January 20 - February 10- Preaching/*Lecture Lab* Theme on anger and Christianity. The labs will begin on January 20, and the following Sunday those scriptures become the focal point of the sermonic moment in each worship service.

Weds January 20, 2016: Matthew 27: 19-30 Topic: “Mob Mentality” This *Lecture Lab* will look at anger and its effect on crowds. (Preached January 24)

Weds. January 27, 2016: Jonah 4:1-11 “Anger in Ministry” We will look at the story of Jonah and how his anger affected his brief ministry (Preached January 3¹)

Weds. Feb. 3 2016: Exodus 32:1-14 “God’s Anger” We will discuss the implications of God’s anger and correlate our own connection to this emotion (Preached February 7)

Weds Feb. 10, 2016: Mark 10:13-16 “Righteous Anger”. We will discuss anger vs. the concept of indignation. Also, we will talk about righteous anger and if it applies to humans, or only God. (Preached February 14.)

January 30: Luncheon on Anger for Clergy at Bethel AME Church Kingstree SC. 1pm.

Order of Service:

Welcome, prayer, purpose, scripture: Exodus 32, John 2:13-16, Presentation: God and anger: Exodus 32(Rev. Brian Williams Presenter) Lunch, Presentation: Jesus and

Indignation John 2:13-16 (Rev. Hope Coleman, Presenter). After the luncheon, lay members of the LAC will be waiting at the exits to take down any additional stories, questions, or comments related to the luncheon's theme. These stories will be marked for evaluation and further discussion the Thursday following the Luncheon (February 4, 2016).

March 11-12 - Retreat on Anger at Short Stay in Moncks Corner SC:

7-8am Breakfast and introductions/Icebreaker

8-9am: breakout sessions (separately)

9-10am: Debrief: Breathing Exercise (Lead by Rev. Herbert L. Jenkins)

10-11: Break

11-12 breakout sessions (separately)

12-1: Debrief: Nature Walk (Lead by Erica Vanderhorst and Rev. Brian Williams)

1-2: LUNCH

2-3:30pm: Combined session CLERGY AND LAY

3:30-4:30: Debrief: Zumba Session (Lead by: Hope Coleman)

4:45-5:45: Dinner

5:45-6:30 Closing Remarks and Departure

April 10: Results of the project and evaluations collected and evaluated

April-Site evaluation

April-May: combine all notes and evaluative information.

Evaluation

Evaluation of this project can only begin once we express the goals of evaluation and after the project period has concluded. Without knowing the purpose for evaluation, the project would in itself serve little purpose. Thus we turn to Savage and Presnell to explain the key components to evaluation:

We see a form of evaluation that consists of two distinct parts. One part is observing change. This first part is fairly straight forward; you compare the state of the context prior to new ministry intervention and afterward. In a sense, this part of evaluation is only a measurement process. Has there been change in activity, habits, stories told, etc.? The second part is discerning transformation. The definition of transformation is “a marked change, as in appearance or character, usually for the better.” The latter part of this definition is critical in this understanding of the purpose of evaluation— discerning transformation toward a preferred future.³

Going further in their book, I believe that the *Structuralist* approach could serve as a valuable resource for evaluation of this project. This approach looks for patterns that are not necessarily seen, yet are deeply embedded in the stories of those being studied. Savage and Presnell explain in greater detail :

The Structuralist approach looks for unconscious patterns that may shape the context. This may have remained unobserved during the development phase of the project, when narratives were being listened to and a project was being proposed, only to come to the fore as resistive elements to the changing of the story of the future of the context, team or researcher⁴.

Through the collection of narratives throughout the duration of the project, *lecture labs*, luncheon, and most importantly, the retreat, I believe we may be able to follow the clues left by resistive elements to sketch our unconscious patterns surrounding the topic of anger. Looking for cues that change during the project’s conversations about anger may provide pertinent information regarding our comfort levels when discussing anger,

³ Carl Savage and William Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry: a Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities* (Louisville: Wayne E.Oates Institute, 2008), 124.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 129.

or they may not, in which case we shall be resolved to simply experience whatever results occur. We shall be looking for opportunities and experiences in the various sessions that may open up possibilities for participants to *resist the resistance*, also perhaps this may mean we could become *resistance fighters*, to coin another phrase by scripture scholar Walter Wink.⁵ After all the very definition of Structuralist evaluation, rendered above, seeks to uncover resistive elements! Also, narratives surrounding exit counseling at the end of the retreat may allow us to further gauge changes to unconscious patterns concerning anger that have occurred since the introduction of this project. Having said that, it will also be interesting to note whether those experiences of change (in attitude, approach) might lead to transformation in practice (from now on I might...).

Becoming an empty or *kenotic* listener might provide a place of comfort and safety for participants, and will most likely inspire them to share from their particular context.⁶ Utilizing this method may provide us with narrative opportunities that would not be readily available with other methods of evaluation and research. Being open to listening to stories, and allowing others to share their stories, should provide a safe space to discuss anger in greater detail.

Observing change is a far simpler task than discerning transformation, but discernment is not impossible. African Americans have faced a unique challenge in our society. For example, we face the societal demands of being so-called politically correct when talking about our feelings and our anger in particular. For centuries, it is our silence

⁵ Wink's writings on nonviolent resistance specifically in the book *Engaging the Powers* details biblical reference to resisting oppression without compromising one's own anger. His writings suggest that the concept of redemptive violence is a myth and that Jesus does not condone violent responses to oppression. His writings depict a nonviolent approach to resisting oppressors aptly coined: "resisting the resistance".

⁶ *Ibid.*, 108-109.

and our forgiveness that has been desired, but I am convinced our voices must be heard now more than ever. I believe that transformation may be found in this entangled narrative of silent voices being heard. By creating a space for free narrative exchange, it is my belief that tensions may become high, participants might express varying emotions, and through this process, change may occur. The lecture labs and retreat may open the door for God-given permission to express our anger and other emotions.

Though my theory has been expressed, perhaps it is now helpful to express my full purpose. In this purpose statement, I briefly explain the areas in which I believe the project might bear fruit for transformation:

I believe this project might provide my denomination and perhaps other denominations with an outlet for discussing anger, breaking down the various stereotypes that surround anger, and hopefully, help us understand the implications of anger and its meaning as presented in the Bible. It is my hope that this culturally shocking transformation will meaningfully impact worship at St. Paul AME church. Not just on Sundays, but every day the doors of the church are opened, and in the hearts and minds of each member.

Discerning transformation throughout this project, then, will involve searching within these three areas of inquiry: *exploring anger*, breaking down *stereotypes* surrounding this emotion, and engaging *scriptural and theological expressions* of anger. Conversations in which participants express a new and positive correlation between their own lives and anger would be a starting point for determining transformation. For example, if participants find expressing their anger to be a safe and liberating practice, they may say something like, “I never knew talking about how angry I am would make me feel this good, I’m going to go home and make things right with my brother”. If their *exploration of anger* leads to a desire to reach out for conflict resolution, then they may have experienced transformation. Conversations about participants’ eagerness to help

others envision anger in a healthy and not stereotypical way might point toward transformation. For example, if a clergy participant decides to preach a sermon series on anger applying what she or he has now realized, or if a lay member desires to take what he or she has learned and apply it to a Church School lesson, then these narratives may play a role in discerning genuine transformation.

Perhaps, once we understand that God allows us room to be emotional beings, and to be angry sometimes, then transformation may be seen in the entangling of our *theological* and *scriptural* language with our daily dialogue. In other words, if we are able to move beyond simply describing our feelings of anger and begin to correlate God's love and grace comfortably into our normal narratives, we may find ourselves as Laurie Green might observe, moving to a *new experience*: freedom of speech, freedom of emotion. This freedom may be a new form of resistance; expressing the fact that black lives matter, black voices matter, and black anger matters.

CHAPTER 5: FACING THE ELEPHANT

What learning would there be in studying a particular creature, its habitat, niche, behavior, and history, and never go out on the hunt? What would you truly gain from an information-driven understanding without actually *experiencing* the habitat, behavior, and niche for yourself? Like any good hunt, risks are involved. Self-injury is highly possible. Injuring members of your hunting party is a possibility. And if you desire to hunt and bring the subject in alive, you risk doing damage to it as well. In essence, accidents due to the unpredictable are all highly possible. No one can truly prepare for environmental dangers, or things hidden underneath the underneath. This project has put us on the hunt. The terrain we are treading can be quite dangerous and is, for the most part, unknown. This project must be handled cautiously, yet must also be approached somewhat aggressively. This chapter discusses the information gathered throughout the project and what transformation, change or learning, if any, developed from this body of research. Into the wilderness we go.

There is little research available discussing the breadth and scope of black anger and how it specifically relates to our worship, theology, and faith. This project, thesis, and work are all connected by way of uniqueness and difficulty. The church I pastor, St. Paul AME in Kingstree, has members with many experiences; the Local Advisory Committee and I

worked tirelessly to commit ourselves to gathering the ethnographic data necessary to make connective correlations to anger and black church life. Anger still remains a filtered emotion in the black church, this simply means that the expressions of anger that project themselves from members and clergy are all processed in some way before they are expressed.

It has become habitual for our churches to teach and preach the negativity of anger and the dangers it may bring without first allowing that emotion in its raw form to flesh itself out. For example, if a member is angry at a comment the pastor made, instead of reaching out to that pastor personally, they may simply stop attending worship. Synonymously, if pastors are angry at members, sometimes they may make their experience a part of their sermon the next Sunday. Instead of taking time to face anger in all its forms and expressing ourselves honestly, clergy and lay members vent our anger passive aggressively in an attempt to diffuse our emotions. I believe that in many ways, filtering our anger has proven unhelpful and dangerous to church life and growth. Spiritual growth is under developed when we use our anger to fight, rather than better, ourselves.

In many ways, this research and project involve taking risks. The greatest risk comes from gathering ethnographic data as opposed to empirical data. Because ethnographic research is structured around the story of others, the potential for emotional backlash is increased. The fact is, sharing one's stories, especially stories of anger, generates emotional expressions that may cause physical, psychological, emotional, and perhaps even spiritual harm. This project is similar to the exploits that Indiana Jones would partake in: there are dangers hidden behind the walls and floors, and those hidden

dangers and traps may trigger if the room is not explored carefully. In her book: *Ethnography as Pastoral Practice* Mary Clark Moschella writes regarding the importance of considering the risks and gains that come from ethnographically based research projects and how to engage those concerned with those risks:

Even if you think there are no possible risks to participants, try to imagine some possible contingencies that might cause harm or emotional distress. Indicate your plans to try to prevent or mitigate this possible harm. Similarly, elaborate on all the potential benefits of the research. Review boards weigh risks and benefits. Explain the potential contribution to knowledge or practice that the research will make, along with any potential benefits to the participants for which you can make a good case.¹

So where do we begin? At the beginning, so to speak; in order to allow opportunity for the sharing of intense stories between church members and clergy, they must first become somewhat comfortable discussing their personal experiences with myself and the Local Advisory Committee. As I have expressed before, my thesis states that those whose narratives I entangle myself with will most likely resist the opportunity to share in their sensitive experiences regarding anger. However, providing experiences of attentive listening to those narratives, together with care-filled and safe conversation, may allow both laity and clergy a revelation or perhaps revolution in freedom to express anger safely.

Lay members of *St Paul AME* church were interested in the topic of anger and faith, yet many were reluctant to participate in the research itself. In order to build a safe space for members to talk about their anger, I created a survey that motivated ethnographic responses to moments of anger. These surveys were not given to the members, but rather, the LAC and I used the questions in the survey to gather pertinent

¹ Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: an Introduction* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, The, 2008), 113.

data regarding members, their experiences, and how they responded in those particular situations. We met one on one with those members who, more than agreeing to the research, also attended their personalized, scheduled appointments willingly. Many stories were intriguing: stories of shame and guilt that led to each member's understanding of faith and anger. These moments ended with grateful thanks from members who expressed their joy in having moments to release themselves of the emotional baggage they were carrying. Many members opened up regarding their experiences with past pastors, family members, bosses, and even their experiences with God. Also, many of them discussed their understanding of faith as it relates to their experiences with God and others.

Specifically, of all the lay persons I invited to take part in the project, six decided to participate. Three of the six all live in the same household, and two others were related to these three. This dynamic is predictable because *St. Paul* is a family church, meaning most members are also related to one another in some fashion. Each lay member was designated the letter L as well as a number. This number is generated based on the order of letter of acceptance. It still serves its purpose: to provide anonymity between lay and clergy that participated in the project. L1-L6 all participated in some way, shape, or form, however, only L1-L3 were able to attend their introductory interviews. L4 did attend the retreat along with L1, L2, and L3. However, L5 and L6 fell away from the project due to death in the family and illness.

L1 was a sixty-three year old female who worked with the post office. Her manager was a pastor who often ridiculed her in the beginning for making simple mistakes. He constantly replied to her mistakes, "Stupidity doesn't count". This was a

hurtful experience for her and made her intensely angry because this man was both a pastor and manager of the post office, yet he showed no compassion or concern for her ability to learn and thrive on the job. Not only this, but these experiences at work also molded her understanding of pastors as well. She began to see clergy as untrustworthy. She began to exercise great caution with ministers. To make matters worse, her own church experience added to her anger: she worked as part of the steward board (the board that handles financial affairs in the church). At one point the church had several thousand dollars on hand for building emergencies. She noticed that the fund was slowly dissipating without any explanation. When she questioned the accounts, the pastor had her removed from the board. She was hurt but explained that she had been so angry and hurt because of the pastor of her church and the pastor at her job that she became numb. She decided to just live with the unfairness. Oddly enough, L1 was unable to describe a time in which she witnessed God's anger, or experienced God's anger with her personally. She said she could not find a moment to express these thoughts.

Understanding God's anger towards herself was something she feels she had not yet experienced. On the other hand, she found moments in her life where she felt her anger was justified; most especially related to her children who are now adults. She believed that each time they did wrong she was right to chastise them. Interestingly enough, she could not locate the chastisement of the Lord in her own life. During our lecture lab series, she expressed very little concern regarding the topic matter. In most cases, she mentioned that she agreed with the information expressed regarding mob mentality, anger in ministry, anger in action, and righteous anger. She especially resonated with the latter of the four topics, thoroughly expressing her agreement with the idea that just like Jesus,

there are times when we have a right to be angry and indignation is allowable, but it has to be for the right reasons, especially when raising one's children.

In the first lecture lab *Mob Mentality*, the discussion revolved around groups in the church that collectively express their anger regarding a particular person or issue. L1 responded and mentioned that part of her died in the church because of mob mentality. People came together to deliberately have her removed from her position on the Steward board. She was ostracized because she spoke out regarding her concerns with church money and polity. She believes that cliques and gossipers exist in all churches and she had to come to the realization that they are only people and prone to make hurtful mistakes. She decided to accept the situation as it was and learned to love them regardless of the circumstances. She admits she is still hurt from all that transpired. To my surprise, she was willing to speak about this with the lecture lab group unashamedly.

The second Lecture Lab focused on the book of Jonah, specifically discussing the topic of *anger in ministry*. When asked about a moment in ministry and worship that angered her, she explained that people express themselves wrongly in the church because they are part of a particular clique. If you do not know what someone is expressing, then you are not a part of that clique, and in most cases, your opinion is invalid. She explained that even in board meetings, people can be cut off if enough board members are part of the same clique.

The third Lecture Lab discussed *God's anger* as seen the story of Moses and the Golden calf. The question was asked, "Is God angry with the world as it is today"? Her answer is yes. She believes that the flood and the drastic weather changes are all signs that God is angry with us. She believes the way presidential candidates have been treating

each other with their overly critical statements of one another are just some of the reasons that God is angry. She also believes the rumors of war are even more signs of a bleak future for humankind, all because we have forgotten God. She believes that the mistreatment of children across the world with child trafficking, child abuse, and violence towards children is the greatest reason why God is angry with the world. She believes that no matter what we do in this world, children are meant to remain innocent and unharmed. She feels deep pain for the children caught up in wars, drugs, and prostitution across this world. She also believes that the children of *St. Paul* are suffering because parents refuse to bring them to church. She is concerned because they can only come if they are brought and at first they came all the time, but now the parents do not bring them to worship, choir practice, or any other activities unless they can get free food. She is clearly hurt by all that has transpired with the children both locally and globally.

The fourth Lecture Lab revolved around the topic of *righteous anger*, or, indignation. Indignation can be described as anger towards something that is wrong or unjust. Unfortunately, she was unable to attend this session in particular.

At the final retreat, she finally opened up and expressed her feelings openly without fear of reprisal. The question was asked: “Why do you believe so few people have come to this retreat”? Her response was perhaps the most honest I had heard from her. She exclaimed that pastors of *St. Paul* in the past have offered opportunities for members to open up to them; afterward, they would use members’ personal pain and stories as the topics of their sermons. She exclaimed that this was the first time she had felt truly safe enough to discuss her issues. She felt free to share her feelings including anger and expressed her gratitude.

This was an edifying moment for me personally. L1 helped me paint a greater picture and read deeply into the narrative of hurt and frustration that has existed within the church walls for decades. At first, I believed that members did not truly open up to me because they did not trust me. After three years of leadership here, only a few members had opened up to discuss their major personal concerns. I spent much time trying to figure out why so few people trusted me. After this information was disclosed by L1, I realized that it was not a distrust of me, but rather a distrust of previous pastors of *St. Paul*. This knowledge allowed me an opportunity to remove my personal feelings regarding the lack of trust that I had experienced.

At the end of it all, I can say that I have seen growth and transformation in a few ways. L1 works directly with the Christian Education department, and teaches lessons in Sunday school. She has increased her resolve to motivate members to bring their children to Sunday school and Bible study. She has created and submitted announcements to remind people of the importance of church school especially regarding children. She spoke to church members fearlessly, reminding parents that their children's spiritual growth is dependent upon their own participation in the church and church school. As well, during church school, she has implemented questions regarding people's emotional connections to the topic matter at hand. She has openly thanked me and in her exit interview, she declared that the project has allowed her an opportunity to speak out against what she disagrees with regardless of the cliques or small groups that may come against her. Her greater resolve for increased child participation has benefitted our church and has motivated a few parents to bring their children to church school, and to worship.

L2 is a fifty-four year old female who has been a member of *St. Paul* for thirty-seven years. She worked for the school bus system where she and a few others were good drivers and well qualified. However, she and her colleagues were replaced with less qualified drivers who would work for lower wages. She was angry at the injustice of losing her job even though she was well qualified for the work. Her church experience was also particularly negative. L2 volunteers a great deal to help with church work and was approached by a few members who questioned why she worked so hard. They accused her of thinking she was better than them. She handled this situation similarly to the bus driver incident: she decided to accept it for what it was and try to move on with her life. It was clear throughout the interview that she was still deeply connected to her hurt. It was my hope that the process would allow her to find some healing through open expression of anger and other emotions.

L2 was the first participant to respond quite openly regarding God's anger. In 2015, there was a flood in Kingstree which caused a great deal of damage to homes, farms, businesses, and essentially, families. She believed that this flood, called the One Thousand Year Flood, was a sign of God's anger. Because Kingstree suffered greatly compared to many other cities in South Carolina, she believed that God expressed His anger towards elected officials in Kingstree who specifically have ignored and misled citizens in order to earn votes and keep their high paying jobs. She expressed her anger regarding Kingstree politicians who have ignored the cries of the poor and needy. Specifically, the streets and buildings need major repairs and the elected officials are only concerned with raises. Once the flood destroyed much of the already dilapidated roads, those officials had no choice but to spend the budget on much needed repairs.

Interestingly, L2 does not feel she has seen God's anger directed towards her specifically as she believes that we all fall short and have been chastised by the Lord in some way, shape, or form. Her greatest moments of anger come from the unfair treatment of others: for instance, her old job with the school bus system eventually called her back because they needed her assistance. She wanted to decline the job, but she thought of her children and decided to take her job back. Though she was able to work there and retire from the system, she still remains angry to this day regarding how she was treated. As well, she still feels anger regarding her mistreatment at the hands of church members. This has led her to become silent regarding many issues going on in the church. Throughout the majority of the project experience, she remained silent. When asked how she was feeling, she mainly said she was fine and was just taking it all in.

During the first Lecture Lab, L2 spent the evening getting a better feeling for the project through observation. She did not make comments; rather, she spent her time listening to what everyone else had to say. She told us that we should not be uncomfortable with her silence because she simply wanted to observe the process. This reaction to the Lecture Lab lends itself to my theory: people are overly cautious about expressing anger in church families because of a fear of reprisal or retaliation.

L2 was absent for Lecture Lab two. Her comments during Lecture Lab three complimented her comments during her preliminary interview in relation to God's anger and its evidence in our lives. When asked if God were angry with the world she responded with a resounding yes. She believes that the negative way Americans treat one another generates a response from the Lord: specifically floods in South Carolina and fires in California remain positive proof that currently, God is very angry. She continues

to believe that when God is angry, natural things happen across the world: Tsunamis, hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes are a few examples she mentioned. A great concern for her revolves around the children of America. She believes that state law taking prayer out of school has been one of the worst things to ever happen. She believes God is angry because we are now neglecting God in our schools, and she fears that the children's spiritual foundation has been damaged in Kingstree especially because of this.

During Lecture Lab four, I learned more about L2's understanding of indignation. She believes that we have a right to be angry when we see injustice being done. When L2's thoughts turned towards the church, she described an additional event that clearly happened in the past. She said that when certain people count money in the finance room, those in a particular clique will accuse them of stealing money even though the accusers actually watched the accused persons count. I encouraged L2 to thicken her narrative by asking if she had experienced this personally. She responded that even though she is one of the regular counters, members of the clique have still accused her of stealing even when sitting next to her as she counted!

During the final Lecture Lab, she began to express her anger to some extent. It appears that she had an experience similar to L1's betrayal by a former pastor. L2 attended a counseling session with the previous pastor, and the sermon the next day was her story exactly as she told him in confidence. Her husband looked over at her and asked if she had been talking to the pastor because that was the exact issue she was dealing with. From then on, she remained silent and learned to cope on her own. During the project period, L2 began to show some growth in her willingness to talk about things that angered her personally, something she resisted in the beginning of this project. However,

it is unclear what benefit the project had on her. The silver lining in this project for her is gaining the insight that she has learned to cope with her anger by putting the concerns of her family in front of her anger. Though this may not help her resist the resistance of oppression that leads to repressed anger, it is a starting point for her to begin the healing process. It is my hope that she will continue moving forward and resolve her fears regarding speaking to her true feelings. To this day, she continues to support the church and has not faltered in carrying out her responsibilities.

L3 is a thirty year old male who works as a high school math teacher. He has been a member of *St. Paul AME* his entire life. He is the son of two of the project participants. He, like his father, is a math teacher. His parents have high aspirations for him, especially as he has recently accepted his call to ministry and works as a licentiate, or one who has a license to preach in the AME church. He claims his greatest moment of anger stems from a parent who met with him just two days before Christmas to try to convince him to change her son's grade from failing to passing. The student spent the entire school year making jokes, ignoring homework, failing tests, and deliberately ignoring all extra credit opportunities. The student lied to his mother and said he did everything he was asked. During the meeting, L3 showed his mother every extra credit sheet he turned in blank, every test he turned in blank, and every homework assignment he did not complete. The mother did not care and angrily told L3 it was his job to help the students. Of course, the student failed and had to repeat the course the next semester.

As a church member, he has a great deal of anger stemming from the board meetings and programs. He states that board members are only concerned with raising money to pay the budget, and they argue about things over which they have no control.

He believes that if the board members would be concerned with the souls of the people in the community, then money would not be an issue. He desires to see the church change focus from paying the budget to bringing the lost to Christ. Interestingly, he believes he has not seen evidence of God's anger today, nor has he experienced God's anger towards him personally. He states that whenever he is angry, he is not sure if it can actually be called anger because he is not angry for very long.

During the first Lecture Lab, L3 discussed his feelings regarding mob mentality in the church. He believes that some church members operate in anger due to differences in opinion, or the witness of injustice being done to a church member (indignation). He believes that the church suffers from mob mentality. He states that members refuse to work together to solve problems in the church or the community. He believes that much like the Pharisees and Sadducees that Jesus dealt with, today we as church members are quick to impose judgement on others and expecting others to follow our lead in triangulating. He believes that God has given us free will, but we have taken that free will and corrupted it with our own desires and will.

During Lecture Lab two, L3 correlated the anger of Jonah with the anger of the prodigal son's brother. In essence both Jonah and the brother were angry that those who did wrong were forgiven, allowed to reconnect with society and were sustained in God's good graces. He did not explain this further. L3 believes that some traditions in our church stifle the church's ability to grow physically and spiritually. He explains to us that Jesus was crucified because he did not follow the traditional norms of society and worship such as the prohibitions against healing on the Sabbath.

During Lecture Lab three, L3 spoke about God's anger towards the world as revealed by the presidential race. He believes that God allows things to happen so that we can see what needs to be fixed. Donald Trump is doing well compared to the other Republican nominees and his comments and concerns have revealed the various hate groups that have been hiding in plain sight in our American Society. L3 believes that God never wanted us to be divided by our hate, and the rise of these hate groups has been proof of God's anger: revealing who the hateful people are so that society can do something about their hate. He closed by telling us that as a teacher, he attempts to give his students ample time before he expresses his anger or retaliates in the way the students deserve; for example, not offering extra credit due to the particular rudeness of the students. To further connect this to God's anger, he believes that there will come a time when the Lord will retaliate against those who God is angry with.

During Lecture Lab four, L3 expressed a belief that all people have the right to be angry at witnessing injustice. He stated that his indignation comes from his experience with the AME church and its mandatory week long conferences. These conferences fall during the first week of teaching which is mandatory for him as well. He believes that it is unfair that the Conference process does not fully accept his unavailability. Both are mandatory and occur at the same time, and he believes the church should be more understanding regarding the stories of those in ministry. As well, his indignation stems from his experience as a teacher: his district has a high failure rate, and many students are unwilling to give their best. He offers as many opportunities as he can to give them ways to improve their grades, but they are unwilling to do the work. On the other hand, the principals and others blame the teachers for the failure rate, and the parents expect the

teachers to pass their students. He is overwhelmed by all of that pressure, and believes that at some point students must be held accountable for their work. He does not agree that teachers deserve to be blamed for everything the students refuse to do.

The final retreat revolved around perceived black anger and black lives in America. When asked if black lives matter, he responded that he believes black lives matter, but mostly to black people. He believes that black people are angry because we are not being heard and our concerns are not being addressed. The senseless deaths of many black men at the hands of police officers have created a great deal of hurt and anger in our neighborhoods. We want to see justice done, and for these reasons, we are finally expressing our anger through the black lives matter movement, through protests, and through the work of our churches. He expressed an experience of discrimination during his student teaching course work: the school he worked in loved his work and he was told by the principal that he outshone others in his ability to reach and teach students. At one point after he finished student teaching, the school was hiring. He was encouraged by his mentor to apply and schedule an interview. Regardless of the recommendations made by other teachers who saw his work first hand, the school picked another student teacher who was often late or absent from his student teaching requirements. The principal hired him and said nothing to L3 regarding the hiring of one less interested or qualified. He believes that the other student teacher, who was white, was hired because the principal practiced racial discrimination when filling this high-paying position. He said he was upset until he finally found a job teaching elsewhere. He believes that if he were able to teach at the school where he did his student teaching, he would have had a better experience in his first year of teaching.

He expressed his concern about the 2015 Academy Awards where there were no black nominees or winners for any awards. He said when people complained on social media, others responded that those who won were the ones best qualified because of their work and Academy Awards selection had nothing to do with the color of the actors' skin. To L3, this was just another example of how equity and equality are not within the grasp of minorities. He feels that people do not take us seriously and have little concern for our concerns. He also believes that because the privileged in America do not strive to seek equality for others, they will never truly understand what black people or any other oppressed minority go through in this country.

On the other hand, he believes that many black people do not care about our own people. He understands that most crimes are committed within communities of the perpetrators' own ethnicity. However, L3 he believes that black people are not in a place of cultural growth and nurture that would allow us to move beyond our shortcomings to be successful and healthy people. He believes that *St. Paul AME* was once a place that had everything the citizens of Kingstree needed. But now, this church and the black church as a whole has lost a great deal of its influence in communities. Now more than ever, the church needs to become once more a beacon of safety and strength for the black community.

I believe that L3 has gained a greater understanding and respect for anger. He has shown an increased willingness to discuss his personal narratives of anger. He openly discusses his personal feelings regarding certain situations, and has found a specific comfort level discussing his issues balancing church, ministry, and his occupation. He has expressed gratitude for the project as it has given him a sounding board to express his

emotions. The most transformation I have witnessed directly correlates to his preaching. Since the end of this project, he has found greater freedom to preach regarding situations that make him angry. His sermonic expressions have been well received by the *St. Paul* Church family.

L4 is a sixty-five year old male who has been a member of *St. Paul AME* for over fifty-five years. He is a math teacher. He was interested in the project; however he was unable to make either his original or rescheduled interview. He was also unavailable for the retreat; however, he did attend the second lecture lab *Anger in Ministry*. The topic of church meetings came up and we discussed the various levels of anger that come up when people disagree. He said he does not agree with everything said or done in the church but ultimately does not feel that it is connected to anger. He feels everyone's opinions and views are important and should be heard. He expressed dissatisfaction regarding certain things that go on in the church as opposed to dissatisfaction with the meetings. When asked to elaborate he did not. I believe he is still holding onto a great deal of anger and hurt regarding the church, and has yet to find enough trust in the safe space to offer his true feelings. This was the only lecture lab he attended, and the only statement he made throughout the entire project phase of my research. Though he still remains mostly silent to this day, it is my hope that he will seek out opportunities to cautiously and healthily express his anger without harm or risk.

L5 is a forty-nine year old female who has been a member of the AME church for her entire life. She is the secretary for a school superintendent. She was unable to attend her initial or rescheduled interview. She left no narratives or comments regarding the preaching series that she attended.

L5 was in attendance for Lecture Lab 4: *Righteous Anger*. When asked if people ever had a right to be angry or if one could be angry at the right things, she expressed her opinion. On her job, she has witnessed favoritism for Caucasian workers. She has experienced the result of this favoritism first hand. She has been fully qualified for positions, applied for those positions and has been overlooked for applicants who were underqualified but white. Also, she said that people look at her in shock and surprise when they find out that the superintendent's secretary is black. She gathers this from the looks she receives when they arrive for meetings. As well, some have questioned her asking what position she held in the office. When she responds with her position, they exclaim surprise via their looks and further comments. She believes she has a right to be angry on her job because of her mistreatment and the assumptions of inferiority that have been placed on her. For the remainder of the project she was unavailable because her father became very sick and her focus fell on his health and well-being.

L6 is a sixty-nine year old female who has been a member of the AME church for fifty years. She was unable to attend the lecture labs or the retreat and left no remarks or narratives regarding anger during the preaching series. Her interest in participating dwindled when her husband became very ill.

L4, L5, and L6 were unable to participate for various reasons; for one of them, no reason was given when they were asked questions regarding their attendance. In many ways, life becomes a way to distract ourselves from things we may have reluctance about experiencing. I am not stating that sickness was an excuse for their absence; however, I do understand that this risky material may cause uneasiness and unwillingness to participate.

The other half of the participants represented the clergy. I invited twenty-five clergy to participate in this project; using phone calls, email, and one on one meetings to add value to this particular research. In order to capture as many interested pastors as I could find in my district, I contacted thirty-five of the thirty-six pastors currently pastoring in Kingstree. One pastor in particular was chosen to participate as part of my Local Advisory Committee. In this sense, all pastors would have an opportunity to participate in the research if they had any interest in the topic matter.

I assumed that I would meet some resistance to this project. My theory: that clergy and lay persons would be unwilling to participate in conversations regarding anger, was proven once again. I believed the resistance is due to the lack of attention and nurture of anger due to an oppressive society that desires the silence of black voices especially when those voices are angry. About thirty-three of the pastors I called, emailed, or attempted to meet simply avoided my calls. They refused to answer the phone, respond to voicemails or emails, and overall ignored every avenue of communication I implemented. One pastor in particular asked for the dates of my retreat and introductory sessions. After I gave the information, she said, "I don't plan anything a month in advance, so just call me later about it" and hung up without another word. Another pastor said they had a head cold when I called them. A month later, they had a head cold, and two months later guess what they had when I contacted them? That's right; a head cold. Perhaps this pastor had not realized they had a head cold for three months? Or perhaps he did not realize he gave me the same excuse three times in a row. Regardless, he had no interest in the project and would have done better to simply tell me he had no interest. I knew he was making excuses because he was in attendance at every

single Kingstree district meeting we had during those three months. Perhaps the most frustrating point came from the fact that these pastors did not want to participate and would not be honest with me regarding their feelings. Their reactions were proof positive that even clergy do not want to talk about their anger, whether due to the oppressive nature of American society or the fear of being vulnerable in front of fellow clergy and lay people.

C1 is a fifty-eight year old male who has been a member of the AME Church his entire lifetime. He has pastored for over thirty years. His greatest moments of anger have come from church experiences. One of his associate ministers has deliberately turned against him for some reason. She boycotts Bible study, telling members not to attend, because she believes herself to be the expert on Biblical subject matter. His anger in these cases comes from the fact that he is the pastor and he expects her to be a support system for him. Yet, she continues to stand against him in most situations. This local minister has even criticized sermons because the message was not one that began on a positive note. To make matters worse, she has no real training: no Masters of Divinity, Doctorate of Ministry, not even an associate's or bachelor's degree pertaining to ministry of any kind. He states adamantly that clergy who act the way she does makes him immensely angry.

C1 believes that he has seen God's anger in his lifetime. When he was younger in ministry, he was more focused on the attention that women gave him. During these moments in ministry he felt empty when he preached. The sermons were not well received and he realized that God was displeased with his actions and lack of focus. He felt spiritually depleted until he refocused his ministry on Christ. When he made this change, he could see a difference in his ministry, energy, and work.

C1 feels that people are justified in their anger when they are being mistreated by others. For him specifically, he feels that his angry tone towards his associate minister when she turned against him was valid because of her deceptive demeanor and willingness to split up church members because of her own opinion of him. He believes indignation is a way to show others that certain harmful and unruly behavior will not be tolerated and that God has expressed indignation in many instances especially in the Old Testament.

C1 was unable to attend the final retreat; however, he did send me a text telling me that the research I am doing is necessary and impacting. He stated that during church school a female member talked about anger and said that we need to be aware of our anger and embrace it in ways to make positive change in our society. The church members responded to her coldly saying that because God has forgiven us, we have no reason to be angry at anyone or anything. After watching this conversation unfold, C1 contacted me that evening and stated that the information I gather throughout my project will be detrimental to our denomination. He explained what happened during church school and also said we as Christians need to learn to encounter anger in a safe and meaningful way, and he now believes all people deserve an opportunity to express their anger without being judged. He concluded by informing me that he was able to defend this church member because of his participation in this research project. In this willingness to stand up and defend the narrative of anger, I believe that C1 has experienced transformation. In the short time spent together, he found comfort in accepting the narratives of anger in his life. He has come to a point of understanding and accepting his own anger and is now willing to stand up for anger and its expression in

positive ways. It is my hope that he will continue to embrace a deeper meaning and understanding of anger in order to release himself from the strain of keeping anger sedated and hidden.

C2 is sixty-two years old and has been a member of the AME church his entire life. Initially, he was interested in the topic matter, but was highly resistant to discussing his experiences with anger. He answered just one question during his initial interview: *describe an experience in church which you became angry.* He shared a time in 2012 when he arrived at a new church for the first time. In particular, the members met him outside with the church doors locked. He encouraged the members to worship with him and trust that God sent him there to work, not to cause any trouble. He stayed at this church for ten years. After a few successful moves, eventually he was sent back to the same church and the members locked him out for the second time. He used his anger to express his feelings and told them that the church did not belong to them, but to God. He exclaimed that he was sent to help them heal from their past hurts and that God was going to be with those who stopped working against him. The members eventually unlocked the doors and let him in to lead worship.

After he answered those questions, he received a call from his wife and said he had to leave. He never returned my calls regarding a follow up to finish his interview. As well, he was unavailable for the final retreat. Due to the lack of participation, and his unwillingness to return my calls, I am unable to decipher any change or transformation. His reluctance and avoidance have only proven that clergy and lay members are not prepared to discuss their own particular narratives of anger; as well, they are not interested in learning ways to cope with their repressed emotions.

C4 is a sixty-five year old male and has been a member of the AME church his entire life. He was one of the first African American basketball players for a prominent college here in South Carolina. He was unable to attend the luncheon, or final retreat; however, he remained in contact with me and met with me for lunch to answer the preliminary interview questions. Much of his anger in the past has stemmed from racism that he experienced as a young man in college. He recalls an experience of great anger: he and the college basketball team were traveling to an away game and were heading through Orangeburg. Just recently the city had suffered from the Orangeburg Massacre: in which African American students from *South Carolina State University* protested a bowling alley that refused to desegregate. The authorities fought them, killing three of them and injuring several others. There was a great deal of racial tension in Orangeburg due to the violence witnessed at the bowling alley. As the basketball team was heading through Orangeburg, C4 saw some African Americans in a car beside them and crossed his wrists, which was a form type of informal greeting at that time. The people in the car drove off. Moments later, a police officer pulled the basketball team over and questioned the coach as to what they were doing with a nigger in the back of their car. He questioned where they were going, what they were doing, and when they were heading home. The officer then told the coach who was driving that, because of the recent massacre, Orangeburg wanted no more trouble. He told them he didn't care what they did to the nigger in the back, as long as they did not do anything to him here. This moment made him incredibly angry. To hear an officer of the law express such heartless words to the white members riding in the car reminded him that life is short and unkind. The most infuriating part of this is that there was nothing he could say or do, no one to report it to,

and no one to reprimand this officer of the law. With his voice forced into silence, he truly felt the sting of racism and the threat of racial violence. And then, in short, he had nowhere to go to process his emotions.

During his adult life, C4 found moments of anger stemming from his Church experience, especially as a pastor. When he took his pastoral appointment, he went to a church where the members made a great many decisions without the instruction of their previous pastor. A particular leader in the church told him that regardless of the promised salary, they were going to pay him significantly less than the previous administration. This angered him because he had not had a chance to prove himself to the members, and the church salary was already public knowledge. He realized that only a few people in this board meeting wanted to cut his salary. He explained to them that no one takes a promotion to make less than what they were already making. He took a lunch break and instructed them to negotiate a reasonable salary: the same as the previous pastor or more. When he returned, they decided to pay him what the previous pastor made.

C4 has seen God's anger made manifest throughout his pastoral career and in particular with the same church leader that fought him since day one of his appointment. After a few years, C4 became sick. The church leader got people together and convinced them to stop paying him for pastoring. At the board meeting, he made the proposal and C4 of course shot this proposal down. This particular church leader began screaming at him in the middle of the meeting. Accusing him of being a dictator and that C4 was out of order. A few days after the meeting, the church leader went fishing, fell in the lake, and drowned. After the funeral, the members began to talk to one another of their experiences with him. They realized that he was a manipulative person; soon after, the

atmosphere of the church members began to change. They began to follow and support C4's decisions and they supported the mission of the church. C4 believes that this could have been a coincidence, but after dealing with his hatred for over eight years, he feels that God was tired of the way he manipulated others and fought against the will of the church.

C4 also believes that he has seen God's anger kindled towards himself. When he was a younger man, he refused to accept his call to ministry. God's anger was exacted in three ways: first, as he was cutting his hedges with an electronic hedge clipper, he accidentally cut his thumb to the point that it was hanging by a thread of skin on his hand. His wife came to help him and by the grace of God, his hand was completely restored with much surgery and support from his family. Secondly, after church one day, he returned home and parked his car in the garage. As soon as he entered the house, his car caught on fire and burned up in his garage. Thirdly, while pumping gas in his rental car, he stepped away to pay and a dump truck destroyed the car, striking it right where he was standing not five seconds earlier. He believes to this day that God sent him three near death warnings through blood, fire, and destruction all to warn him that his call to ministry is more important than anything else in his life. Ever since he accepted this call to ministry, there have been no more near death experiences. Once again, he does not believe in coincidence, and understands these events to be the work of God in his life. Though God was angry, God showed him mercy and saved him.

C4 has also had church experiences in which he believes his anger was justified. He once had to remove his chairman pro-tem from his position because of the deceitful things he said against the pastor to others. C4 admits that he made the chairman pro tem

step down because C4 was angry with him, and knows that the man he replaced him with was a better fit for the church. C4 understands that his anger was a part of his decision making, but it was also a decision that ended up as a benefit for the church members. It was only two years ago that the second, acceptable, pro-tem stepped down from his position, because of his old age. He held the position for over fifteen years with little to no problems or opposition. Though his appointment was fueled by anger, it was the right decision for the church.

Overall, C4 is a clergyman who is quite comfortable with his anger. He has seen much racism stemming from societal oppression, and he has seen much anger in his pastoral experience. I am unsure if this project has changed him in any way; however, I do believe that he is one that has already come to grips with his own anger and realizes it is a part of who he is in many ways. This pastor is the first one to actively pursue me for this interview. I believe this is so because he already has a foothold on his anger and in some ways feels that anger is ignored instead of understood. His understanding of anger and the self is more advanced than most of those I interviewed or taught.

MOTHER EMANUEL INTERVIEWS

The devastation caused at *Mother Emanuel* left a lasting impact on the Charleston community and its surrounding neighborhoods. Lives were broken, churches were harmed, God was and is questioned, and the conversation about safe space and sanctuary was forever changed. The following two interviews were not designed to foster change or transformation. Rather, this interview script was designed to investigate the change or transformation that has occurred at *Mother Emanuel* since the tragedy that occurred. It is not my goal or intention to cause change within these fellow AME members. Instead, I

looked for the change in habitat, behavior, or niche. In a place such as this, one must ask: how has anger played a part in the expression of worship? How have the preaching, singing, praying, and overall atmosphere of this church been affected, if at all?

I embark on this journey with much reluctance and anticipation. In the midst of my studies and research, I was able to catch up to the newly appointed pastor of *Emanuel AME* church, aptly described as C3. C3 has been a member of the AME church for over forty years. C3 has pastored for over 30 years and has lead a total of eight churches. This pastor was humbled by the opportunity to talk to me about anger, yet I feel C3 was reluctant to express feelings. Perhaps, this interview came too soon after the events that occurred in June, perhaps C3 was too new to this unique brand of ministry, or perhaps C3 was immensely busy. Regardless of the reasons, the answers to my questions were rushed and abbreviated. Even when asked to elaborate, C3 simply repeated the original answer.

When I entered the room, I thanked C3 for taking an hour out of a busy schedule to meet with me. C3 responded with the hope that the interview would take far less time than that. I asked: How do you handle discussions of God's anger? C3 responded in this way:

Most members believe being angry is not a sin, it is a natural process; however, I know the black church does not fully deal deeply with the topic of God's anger. We always ask God if God is angry with us or why is God angry, but we never ask why I am angry. What about this situation truly made me angry? In a sense, when it comes to God's anger, we deal with the weeds and not the roots. We do not dig deep enough within ourselves to accept the things that we do to make God angry with us either individually or collectively.

During Bible study sessions, anger comes out occasionally, and C3 attempts to lead members into finding the source of their anger. Anger has many complicated layers

and therefore must be searched meticulously in order to reach an appropriate response to anger.

I asked C3 to describe the spiritual and emotional tone of worship in the church. C3 said any answer given would be a premature answer because the emotional expression in worship has not settled as of yet. I continued: how does the church as a whole understand forgiveness? How do you understand it? C3 believes the congregation understands that forgiveness is not simply limited to Dylann Roof; instead, the focus is finding forgiveness in the light of dealing with tomorrow and making it through today. Forgiveness is more for oneself than for others. This is so because hate is too much of a burden to carry. Members are learning to relinquish their hate and offer forgiveness today despite the very recent past. C3 states that choosing to forgive releases them from the bondage of the sin of being unforgiving. For C3 personally, forgiveness is the release valve for the pressure and frustration that is locked within. It allows us to exist burden free. For C3, forgiveness is an expression and a reminder of God's grace and mercy which is freely given to us though we are undeserving.

I then asked, C3: what does the healing process look like in worship or any other church experience? C3 states much of the healing is too early to actually articulate or process. It is far too soon to gather any signs of healing this early on. However, C3 believes that healing has been articulated in some ways. For example, for a member to mention the name of the killer and not cry or swallow sadness has been a sign of progression for some church members. As well, they state that healing looks like the redemption we find in Christ. Healing comes through worship, and though is it not always seen visibly, it flows forth regardless through members and visitors alike.

This next interview was held with a member of Emanuel who worships as part of the music team. M1 has been a member of the AME church for over forty-five years. M1 works diligently with the rest of the music team and has done so for many years

I asked M1: How do you understand God's anger and how do you discuss it with others? He stated his beliefs: that God is angry with us when we stray from His will: when we fall to temptation and sin. Our disobedience disappoints Him. Yet still, God is our hedge of protection, should we choose to stay near God and resist sin. M1 further stated that when we leave God, we are vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy and we go through certain hard times in our lives because of our disobedience. Specifically at Emanuel, some members believe there is a curse against the church. Some think and have thought that they do not worship God enough or in the way God desires. Some members believe that the events occurred because God is angry with them; however, only a handful of members believe this. Most members, including M1, believe that Dylann Roof tried to destroy black life in Charleston, and that God turned it around and used it to fight racism and hate.

I then asked: what members have done to cope with anger. He stated that some members stay away from the church, and that others have gone to receive counseling. The majority, however, have returned to support one another through praise and worship of God. The church has had several prayer services strictly designed for members only. This way, they are able to express their feelings without fear of news cameras, interviews, and unnecessary questioning. This has been a help to the members because of the mass of visitors that now attend worship regularly. They have been looking for ways to have private worship and prayer, and have found a way to do that as a church body.

I continued, asking: how you do and the congregation understand anger in light of these events? The congregation itself ultimately believes in forgiveness. It is what we are taught. Most do not mention the killer at all. No one ever says his name aloud. Those who are still struggling to forgive simply do not attend until they are ready to do so.

Personally, M1 says he does not think of the killer at all. He deliberately avoids articles and news reports involving him. Personally, he has not forgiven the killer yet. He wants him to get the death penalty and nothing more. The killer wants to live but he never gave this option to the family members he killed; therefore, he should not get options either. M1 understands anger to be wasted energy. He believes you can be angry with someone and still forgive them. To no longer be angry takes time, and often it takes more time to get over our anger than it does to get over ourselves and forgive someone. Every time he enters the church he becomes angry, however, he copes through music. Music has been a factor of healing for the entire church body. Since the murders, music has transformed into something greater.

To sum up how he copes with anger, M1 told me a story: he was married to a woman that not only cheated on him, but she tried to pull their seven year old son into the emotional mess. At one point he felt he truly hated her. He divorced her and after a few years, met someone else and married her. His second wife noticed his hatred towards his previous wife and told him that the people who anger you control you. From that moment on, he strove to forgive her and move on with his life. He feels the same way about the killer: you will not control me because you will not anger me. M1 uses his anger to express healing and loving music that helps mend the wounds of all who listen. He uses that energy to play deeper chords and express deeper love for life.

Through it all, M1 still misses Reverend Senator Pinckney. He recalls their many worship experiences together fondly. The Sunday before the massacre Rev. Pinckney preached a sermon expressing the world as a giant family and Sunday was a family reunion. In this sermon, he said that one day soon, people will come together regardless of skin color and love God together. Those words have stuck with M1 because he believes truly that this has happened. Because of the lives lost that Wednesday night, people of all walks of life, all colors and creeds have come together to follow in God's loving care.

I then asked M1: what is the emotional tune of the church? He responded that the church is currently on the mend emotionally. They are learning from their new pastor and in a sense, the church is turning a corner towards greater healing. The first Sunday after the shooting, the worship was very emotional. People were still in disbelief and hurting, but they knew they could not shut down or the enemy would get what they wanted. They knew they had to worship God in a way that showed they were not defeated by hate. Now, worship is still emotional, but it is very praise driven. They have received twenty new members who mostly joined at Bible study which is unheard of. The Bible study in itself has become a beacon of praise and power for Charleston. Music has been added to the Bible study, in this portion of the study worship songs are sung with excitement, and the pastor believes that the Bible study will cause greater transformation and growth for Emanuel than any other form of worship.

All in all, each representation here has expressed a greater appreciation for anger because they have a greater understanding of anger. Not everyone who participated expressed transformation, but many found a new understanding to help them along this

black Christian journey. Though some have been changed, I believe all have been changed for the better in some way. This is due to their willingness to take risks regarding their anger and the anger of others. Those who were few in number still have gained greater insight to their personal growth and it is my hope that they will continue to pursue greater knowledge regarding their emotional states.

Personal Transformation:

Personally, I have been transformed from this process. Interviewing members gave me greater insight to their past and present, and have helped paint a lush picture of the lives of the members of St. Paul. Listening to their narratives has given me a greater glimpse into some of the many dynamics that are at play in this church. As well, I have been able to peer into a lens that most pastors do not get to see through unless they are the subject of a person's anger. Creating the safe space was a benefit for members and me. I am grateful for the willingness of each clergy and lay member that shared in this project.

So how have I changed? The first change occurred when dealing with my own anger. In the beginning, I had great ambition for this project. I invited over fifty people to participate, and six people to participate in the Local Advisory Committee. My LAC fell apart almost immediately. Two of the three clergy were unable to attend any training sessions. One quit, and the other simply did not participate. These clergy agreed to help, but never responded to emails, texts, or calls. I was grateful for the one clergyperson that stayed, yet the other two created within me anxiety about the success of this project. Only one of my lay LAC was able to participate, so I had to call in assistance from my wife since she would be at the church every Sunday with me anyway. One of my LAC

members had to drop out because of emotional struggles with diagnosed depression, and another, who was too busy with her own academic career to assist me, ended up moving out of the state. During this time, I became angry: not so much with them, but with the fact that so many people were unable to assist me. I felt that I would not be able to get the work done, or gather enough data to make a difference. To make matters worse, of the fifty members and pastors I called, only a few participated, and even less respected my time enough to tell me they were unavailable. I began to think about why I was being ignored. Yes of course, people were afraid to participate because of the vulnerability involved in this research. Also, I began to ponder another reason: because I am pastoring a small church and I am relatively new to the district, pastors most likely considered me to be unimportant or low on the totem pole if you will. These thoughts did more than hurt me, they haunted me daily. I felt unimportant, uncared for, as if I were a nobody. Regardless of how important this work seems to me, others couldn't care less regarding my position and research.

Still, the hunt must go on, and so it did. To my surprise, those few who came to my workshop, Lecture Labs and worship services were slowly opening up to me. The members began sharing stories I never knew existed. We formed new relationships formed, we generated safe space, and I realized that true, safe space was the key to our research. I grew in trust with the participants and they grew in trust with me. I was amazed at the stories that were shared, and so were the LAC members that willingly participated.

After the research was over, and the project concluded, I noticed a change in my worship of God. I took the idea of safe space and applied it to my sermons. I took my

moments of anger regarding the many black lives taken by careless police officers and fueled my sermons with words of affirmation of black life and the Christian experience. My anger became my coal, my oil, my solar power. The moment I made *St. Paul* a safe space to preach about my anger, I found greater strength in my sermonic presentation. I found myself preaching about the political climate of this country, the importance of unity and love, and the power of harnessing anger into a force for good. For example, my anger towards the laziness of those who refuse to vote motivated our church to use our personal vehicles to take community members to the polls to vote on Election Day.

I soon gave myself permission to speak about the climate of our church itself: members who fought with each other were convicted when I preached about the power of forgiveness and the opportunity forgiveness gives us to live right and no longer be chastised by God. I preached and taught about God's anger on many occasions, reminding the church that we are sinners in the hands of an angry God. I have truly found freedom to express myself in regards to the way I feel about things, and I know this honesty could only come from accepting my anger as a natural part of my emotional process, harnessing it to do good instead of harm as so many before me have done. Learning how to embrace my anger has helped me to embrace my other emotions during worship. I have cried, laughed, and screamed all because of the feelings I learned to recognize and accept. Bible study now has become a place of emotional freedom, a safe space for worshippers to ask questions, share stories and be personal and deliberate about their concerns and questions of the Bible.

Even at home and work, I have created safe space. At home, I speak more candidly regarding my disappointments and failures. I have found greater conversation

with my wife because I have learned when to speak and also when to listen. I have embraced the anger of others in my household and have used that understanding to better resolve conflict.

Creating safe spaces has become a part of my training at work, and I have been asked by my Presiding Elder to take what I have learned and train class leaders for the entire Kingstree District, all thirty-six churches! I begin next fall, and I look forward to the challenge. This project has changed the perceptions many have regarding anger, but for me, it has transformed my worship, preaching, singing, bible study, and greatly impacted my abilities as a father and husband. I am truly grateful for my experiences and I look forward to the changes that lie ahead!

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Truly this project has changed my life. I see the value in my anger, the anger of others and God's anger. The horrific events of June 17, 2015 have impacted my life in many ways; yet, I have found a coping mechanism in the research and data I gathered throughout this project. Though I have seen little transformation between clergy and lay individually, I can happily say that I have seen transformation throughout my church as a whole.

One church member in particular has shown transformation though he did not participate in the project, other than being present during the worship services where each specific theme of anger was preached. This member has had moments of great contention between him and the entire church body. He argued in church meetings, accusing members of being liars and thieves. He donated money to have the bathrooms repaired, yet grew angry when he found out he could not tell the church what contractors to use, what color to make the floor, the number of stalls in each bathroom, the type of sink, etc. and so forth. He grew angry because he wanted to have full control of how the new bathrooms should look. Occasionally, he would write a check for the church and demanded that the church cash it for him. He felt privileged because of his financial success and desired to do as he wished with the church because of his generous donation. After the sermonic expression of God's anger he approached one of my LAC members

and said that he felt convicted by his actions. He admitted that he often became angry with the way the church was being run and often found himself arguing with members and damaging relationships with them. The sermon about God's anger helped him realize that his arguments with church members and the various other conflicts were things that would not make the Lord happy. He decided the best way to get rid of his anger was to start by giving up his anger-fueled arguments for the duration of the Lenten season with hopes that this sacrifice would be enough to cause a lifestyle change in him. Throughout the next few months, I watched as this member truly transformed. He no longer instigated arguments and he chose his conversations carefully. Since his revelation during this project, he has become supportive of the mission of the church, has stopped asking for checks cashed on Sundays, and has not returned to my office to complain and accuse members of doing assumedly underhanded things. He has become compassionate and cooperative, and his conversations with me and members are consistently pleasant. On the other hand, I have received no more complaints about his behavior. Members would once express their dislike of him and the way he treats them. I spent time after church talking with angry members regarding his demeanor. Now, no one comes to complain about him.

The safe space that now exists at *St. Paul* gives members greater opportunity to speak their minds in an honest way without creating arguments or infighting. This opportunity presents itself the most during Bible study. Since the establishing of our safe space, I led a two month study session regarding the book *Autopsy of a Deceased Church* by Thom Rainer. This book makes several points regarding the life of a church and the many reasons why membership is shrinking, and why the church may end up closing its

doors. To be honest, the members would not be receptive to this book had they not had opportunity to share and listen to those who may state things that other members would prefer not be said. In other words, this project has created a safe space for members to discuss their true feelings regarding difficult topics of discussion. Those opportunities still give *St. Paul* various moments of clarity. They inspire us as a church to be more community focused instead of being membership-focused.

Since the completion of this project, our membership has changed drastically. Initially, *St. Paul's* had thirty five active members. Now at least twice a month, our numbers in worship have doubled. Almost seventy people attend services twice monthly. This has become a drastic change and a point of excitement for members and me. Initially, about five people attended my bible study sessions regularly. Since this project's completion, there are averages of ten to fifteen members in attendance. Our studies have become engaging and members have opened up regarding their feelings about the presidential election, lack of voter interest, life as a Christian, and life as African Americans.

The election of president elect Donald Trump has created an emotionally charged safe space. Members express their frustrations not only with the election of this president, but also the increase in racism and hate that has increased drastically in the United States.¹ The increase in hate group activity along with the boldness of their hateful and dangerous actions has been a place of great contention within our church. Members angrily discuss the unfairness of our treatment and the seeming allowance of this violence

¹ Katie Reilly, "Racist Incidents Are up Since Donald Trump's Election. These Are Just a Few of Them," *Time*, November 13 2016, 1, accessed December 19, 2016, <http://time.com/4569129/racist-anti-semitic-incidents-donald-trump/>.

to be perpetrated against our people. To make matters worse, the racist actions committed to historically black churches has made us intensely angry. Before his election, these actions were already on the rise, which gave us reason to discuss our anger regarding the hate we deal with in this country for simply being who we are.²

Both Bible study and worship have transformed significantly. Members are excited about the returning members, and we have two members that joined us and are actively engaged in our worship on Sundays. These changes are reason for excitement, and I admit that had it not been for this particular project, I can honestly say that this growth and transformation would not have occurred. The safe space that now exists at *St. Paul AME* has directly impacted the flow of emotional freedom in worship as well as the boldness of members in theological conversation during Bible study. Members are less fearful of asking controversial questions and many have gained greater trust in my ability to lead.

As I interviewed pastors and lay members, I noticed one major difference between the two groups: fewer clergy involved themselves in the project, but they were far more willing to give personal information regarding their ministry and the moments that made them angry. In many ways, pastors are more accustomed to vocalizing their stories. Perhaps this is why those who participated seemed to have no trouble discussing very personal experiences. The lay members needed significant time to grow into the exercise of telling their stories and giving their opinions regarding anger. I believe this is

² Campbell Robertson and Richard Fausset, "Black Church Burned in Mississippi, with 'vote Trump' Scrawled On Side," *The New York Times*, November 2, 2016, 1, accessed December 19, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/03/us/black-church-burned-in-mississippi-with-vote-trump-scrawled-on-side.html?_r=0.

due to the fact that *St. Paul* is a family church and therefore, many shared stories may not be as confidential as expected. Others in the room may know the other characters in their story and how they all interrelate. These statements are mainly speculative, yet they provide us with some sense of why sharing for some was complicated and why sharing for others seemed simpler.

During the close of this project, the trial of Michael Slager, the officer who shot and killed Walter Scott went to trial. Sadly, at this time, the family has not seen justice done: the jury could not come to a verdict and the judge declared a mistrial. To make matters worse, it seems that based on who president elect Donald Trump chooses for office, they may not be able to reach a federal appeal regarding Walter Scott's civil rights. Members of *St. Paul* who attend Bible study have expressed their anger and deep concern for the future of this country, especially for minorities. With such an increase in violence towards minorities in this country, and the rise of many hate groups, we as African American Christians have much to discuss and much to be concerned about. Throughout these frustrating ordeals, I am pleased to say that the safe space provided during Bible study continues to be a place of inspiration for myself and others. Members and I talk candidly regarding our feelings about this country; as well, we openly discuss how we believe God to be moving in the midst of the racism, inequality, and violence.

This project has been an agent of transformation for *St. Paul AME* church and me. There is not much left of the elephant in the room of our church; especially for those who participated in this project. Collectively, we have learned there is a great benefit to speaking our minds regarding our anger. Though in many ways, we still struggle to deal with our anger, we still find moments to resist the resistance of silence. Our members

have found a place to express their concerns without fear of repercussion or aggressive reaction. Here, we have learned to embrace our true feelings and navigate through what those feelings truly mean for us and those we love. Studying the habitat that our anger developed here in the United States has given us a greater opportunity to understand and recognize anger as it comes around. Though anger is inevitable, it is now a feasible endeavor for us to find greater care and support.

As membership size fluctuates, changes are bound to occur. My role and responsibilities in many ways have begun to shift into a more active role, and a role of presence. According to the *Enrichment Journal by the Assemblies of God*, the size of the church determines a great deal of the personality of said church, the responsibilities of the pastor and leadership, and the evolving expectations of the members. Church theorist Roy Oswald explains the phenomenon of *church growth theory*. He writes extensively regarding the experiences connected to churches with fifty active members or less. This type of church is aptly named the Family Church. He writes:

This small church can also be called a Family Church because it functions like a family with appropriate parental figures. It is the patriarchs and matriarchs who control the church's leadership needs. What Family Churches want from clergy is pastoral care, period. For clergy to assume that they are also the chief executive officer and the resident religious authority is to make a serious blunder. The key role of the patriarch or matriarch is to see to it that clergy do not take the congregation off on a new direction of ministry. Clergy are to serve as the chaplain of this small family. When clergy don't understand this, they are likely to head into a direct confrontation with the parental figure. It is generally suicide for clergy to get caught in a showdown with the patriarchs and matriarchs within the first five years of their ministry in that place. Clergy should not assume, however, that they have no role beyond pastoral care. In addition to providing quality worship and home/hospital visitation, clergy can play an important role as consultants to these patriarchs or matriarchs, befriending these parent figures and working alongside them, yet

recognizing that when these parent figures decide against an idea, it's finished.³

My experience as pastor of *St. Paul* as a family church has been quite similar to this description. Though I lead the church in much of its decision making, I know I have been successful because the matriarch of this church, who is ninety-two years old has supported me wholeheartedly from day one. In many ways, I have played a chaplain-like role, worship being perhaps the most important place of leadership for me. Members have shown great appreciation for the worship style they experience. When most members talk about me to their friends and family, my preaching ability has been the main topic of discussion, other than my young age. Visitation in this role is limited. When sick members are offered visitations or communion, many decline, or ask that I simply call to check in with them. Leading worship and preaching sermons that invigorate and excite members was the forefront of my ministry during the first three years.

As membership is stimulated and increases so to do those members' expectations. Oswald discusses the main focus of churches whose membership is above and between fifty and one hundred fifty. He calls this the *Pastoral Church*. As expected, this paradigm shift creates new roles, expectations and duties of leadership and members alike. He writes:

A key feature of a Pastoral Church is that lay persons experience having their spiritual needs met through their personal relationship with a seminary trained person. In a Pastoral Church it would be rare for a Bible study or a prayer group to meet without the pastor. The pastor is also readily available in times of personal need and crisis. If a parishioner called the pastor and indicated that she needed some personal attention,

³ Roy Oswald, "How to Minister Effectively in Family, Pastoral, Program, and Corporate-Sized Churches," *Assemblies of God Enrichment Journal*, accessed December 15, 2016, http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200702/200702_000_various_size.cfm.

the pastor would drop over to see her, probably that afternoon but certainly within the week-a qualitatively different experience from being told that the first available appointment to see the pastor in her office is two weeks from now. The time demands upon the pastor of a Pastoral Church can become oppressive. However, most members will respond with loyalty to a reasonable level of attention and guidance from this central figure.⁴

Many members have shifted from chaplain-like expectations to one of meaningful relationship development. To my surprise this year alone, I have been invited into the homes of at least three different families; one of which invited me over for dinner with my family and invited other church members to attend and share the meal with us. Today, members call the church asking for visitations and for communion. I have created a routine for these visits because so many now ask for the elements regularly. Members who had at one time declined visits now request my presence so that we may share our stories and pray with one another. Members are fostering personal relationships with me, and nurture it with much love and support. In some ways I am overwhelmed: not by the work itself, but by the traveling. To reach my church, I travel seventy five miles one way. It takes an hour and a half to reach the church. Each time I go, I am on the road for at least three hours. Sometimes, I have to travel to Florence which is even further out, and my travel becomes four hours instead of three. The long drives late at night can become exhausting, yet I am grateful for the relationships fostered and the love expressed. Before the membership spike, members would meet every so often, but not much. Now, it is

⁴ Roy Oswald, "How to Minister Effectively in Family, Pastoral, Program, and Corporate-Sized Churches," *Assemblies of God Enrichment Journal*, accessed December 15, 2016, http://enrichmentjournal.ag.org/200702/200702_000_various_size.cfm.

highly unheard of for members to meet without me. The only group that does is the newly formed benevolence committee which works to support the surrounding community with support during hard times and holidays. They meet, add me to via phone conference, and email me the notes regarding each meeting. The changes that have happened are quite remarkable; the love and support I receive from members and vice versa are both genuine and meaningful. I must say that throughout all we have endured during this project: the massacre, the floods, hurricane Matthew, increased and emboldened hate groups, and the growing mistreatment of minorities, remarkably our faith has grown. Also our love and support of one another has strengthened. During the Christmas holiday, the Benevolence committee gave crates of supplies to our senior citizen members. As well, we gave an orphaned child a tablet for Christmas via the Department of Social Services.

Anger is now a prevalent topic in our church. I believe that transformation has come for some, yet its course is not completed. It will be years before I can truly determine the full scope of transformation that has occurred; however, I can say that *St. Paul* and I will never be the same again. Our willingness to discuss controversial topics and our growing desire to speak openly regarding our individual emotional states gives us a deeper perspective about life, and a greater impact in our praise and worship of God. I truly believe that the number of dedicated and community-invested members will continue to grow and strengthen, allowing us to transform emotionally and theologically; thereby allowing us a greater opportunity to connect with our community, and share in the gospel that has molded our lives and experiences. To conclude: we have finally addressed the elephant in the room. In many ways, anger has been researched and

dissected. The gathered data benefits the membership of St. Paul and me. We have reviewed the habitat and niche of anger in African Americans and the impact society has had on our learning, engaging, and even our worship of God. Better understanding our historical background has created a personal desire to create more safe space for us so we may find greater relational connection to each other and those around us. Though the elephant is researched, hunted, and in some ways, captured, I believe that we have only touched the surface regarding the impact anger has on African American Christians, other minorities in the United States, and even the majority of inhabitants of America. Anger is mostly still an elusive topic, yet I believe that this research marks the end of suppressing our silence, and the beginning of resisting the resistance of an oppressive society through meaningful dialogue and faith based discourse.

**APPENDIX I
LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE COMMENT CARDS**



Name: _____

Name:

—

Phone Number:

—

Email:

—

Additional Comment(s):

Name:

Phone Number:

Email:

Additional Comment(s):

APPENDIX II

Ethnographic Questions

1. Recall a time when you were intensely angry.

2. Tell me or describe an experience in church in which you became angry.

3. Share a time in which you believe you have seen God's anger.

4. Recall an experience when you believe God was angry with you.

5. Tell me of an experience when in which you believe that your anger was justified.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to write their answer to the question above.

APPENDIX III

INVITATION LETTER FOR PASTORS

Ref: “Analyzing and Restructuring Congregational and Clergy Anger”

Greetings Pastor,

You have been selected to participate in an ethnographic study dissecting congregational and clergy anger. Ethnographic research involves gathering information through the sharing of ones stories. We invite you to share openly and honestly about your experiences and feelings dealing with anger.

The first part of the study will include a brief presentation on anger and the Bible. This session will be held at **St. Paul AME church in Kingtree SC at 1 pm on Saturday January 30th, 2016**. Lunch will be served. At that time, personal stories and experiences will be collected in preparation for the final research segment: A retreat focusing on anger wherein 25 pastors of the Kingtree District will be invited to share alongside lay members of St. Paul AME church. This retreat will be held on **Saturday March 12, 2016**. The Location is TBA, and more information will be forth coming soon.

You must know that participating in this research project is completely voluntary. However, if you are interested in participating, please contact **Rev. Herbert L. Jenkins Sr.** by **Thursday January 28th 2016**. The contact information is listed below.

We look forward to your participation and for a successful study

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Blessings,

Rev. Herbert L. Jenkins Sr.

Jenkins.herbert@gmail.com (843)906-6745

Doctor of Ministry Candidate

Drew University

APPENDIX IV
INVITATION LETTER FOR ST PAUL AME MEMBERS

Ref: “Analyzing and Restructuring Congregational and Clergy Anger”

Greetings In the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

You have been selected to participate in an ethnographic study dissecting congregational and clergy anger. Ethnographic research involves gathering information through the sharing of ones stories. We invite you to share openly and honestly about your experiences and feelings dealing with anger.

The first part of the study will include a brief interview process. This interview will be held at **St. Paul AME church in Kingtree SC at 1 pm on Sunday January 10th, 2016.** The interview is designed to gather personal stories and experiences. Bible study sessions each Wednesday from January 20th through February 10th will be replaced with lecture labs discussing anger in various forms and expressions. The final research segment will include a retreat focusing on anger wherein 25 pastors of the Kingtree District will be invited to share alongside lay members of St. Paul AME church. This retreat will be held on **Saturday March 12, 2016.** The Location is TBA, and more information will be forth coming soon.

You must know that participating in this research project is completely voluntary. If you are interested in participating, please contact **Rev. Herbert L. Jenkins Sr.** by **Thursday January 28th 2016.** The contact information is listed below.

We look forward to your participation and for a successful study

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Blessings,

Rev. Herbert L. Jenkins Sr.

Jenkins.herbert@gmail.com (843)906-6745

Doctor of Ministry Candidate

Drew University

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alvarez, Lazette. "U.S. Won't File Charges in Trayvon Martin Killing". *The New York Times*. February 24, 2015. Accessed January 2, 2017.
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/25/us/justice-dept-wont-charge-george-zimmerman-in-trayvon-martin-killing.html?_r=1.
- Barbour, Johnny. *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church 2012*. Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2014.
- Barna, George. *Growing True Disciples: New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ*. Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2001.
- Boyd, Herb, ed. *Race and Resistance: African-Americans in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2002.
- Chafe, William H., Raymond Gavins, and Robert Korstad, eds. *Remembering Jim Crow: African Americans Tell About Life in the Segregated South*. Revised ed. New York, NY: The New Press, 2014.
- Coogan, Michael D., Marc Z. Brettler, and Carol Newsom, eds. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version*. 4 ed. Minneapolis, MN: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Gabrielson, Ryan, Ryann Grochowski-Jones, and Eric Sagara. "Deadly Force in Black and White." *ProPublica*, October 10, 2014. Accessed January 3, 2017.
<https://www.propublica.org/article/deadly-force-in-black-and-white>.
- Horowitz, Jason, Nick Corasaniti, and Ashley Southall. "Nine Killed in Shooting at Black Church in Charleston." *The New York Times*, June 17, 2015. Accessed January 3, 2017. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/18/us/church-attacked-in-charleston-south-carolina.html?_r=1.
- Hunter, Tera. "Putting an Antebellum Myth About Slave Families to Rest." *The New York Times*, August 1, 2011. Accessed January 3, 2017.
http://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/02/opinion/putting-an-antebellum-myth-about-slave-families-to-rest.html?_r=0.
- Kelly, Joseph. *America's Longest Siege: Charleston, Slavery, and the Slow March Toward Civil War*. New York NY: The Overlook Press, 2013.

- Kübler-Ross, Elisabeth, and David Kessler. *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief through the Five Stages of Loss*. Reprint ed. New York: Scribner, 2014.
- McLeod, Harriet, Alana Wise, and Luciana Lopez. "Families of South Carolina Church Massacre Victims Offer Forgiveness." *Reuters*, June 19, 2015. Accessed January 4, 2017. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-shooting-south-carolina-idUSKBN0OY06A20150619>.
- Moschella, Mary Clark. *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: an Introduction*. Minneapolis: Pilgrim Press, The, 2008.
- Savage, Dr. Carl, and Dr. William Presnell. *Narrative Research in Ministry: a Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities*. Louisville: Wayne E.Oates Institute, 2008.
- Smith, Mark M. *How Race Is Made: Slavery, Segregation, and the Senses*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008.
- Wink, Walter. *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.