

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE CHURCH AND SENIOR PASTOR'S ROLE IN  
PROVIDING MINISTRY TO MEET COMMUNITY NEED

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

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Madison, New Jersey  
May 2017

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## ABSTRACT

### SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE CHURCH AND SENIOR PASTOR'S ROLE IN PROVIDING MINISTRY TO MEET COMMUNITY NEED

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Christians and pastors have a distinct approach to ministry, different worldviews, and different expectations in terms of church/individual involvement, development and transformation. Often the approach is guided by scripture and/or an expressed or unexpressed spiritual, physical, cultural, financial or emotional need that exists both within the church community or secular community. So, I partnered with five Senior Pastors and their congregations to converse about how ministries live out the biblical charge found in Matthew 25:34-40. We explored the role of social justice in determining how the senior pastor and congregation provide ministry to meet community need.

The pastors engaged with me in three conversations and a site visit. The conversations guided the senior pastors in exploring their congregations, their church community, their larger community, their ministry plan and the challenges and opportunities in serving the larger community. The second conversation also invited group discussion and reflection, which led to post project collaboration.

Based on my bi-vocational experience I have seen a decline in involvement of the church and the senior pastor in addressing social justice issues and community needs and a rise in the secular nonprofit doing these things. This led me to question the role of the church and the senior pastor in relation to the biblical mandate of Matthew 25:34-40.

During the project, I discovered that all the senior pastors are engaged in addressing community need and care for social justice issues to some degree. What we see then through conversation is not the impossible task of addressing the multitude of needs. We see the opportunity to connect with God, the opportunity for the Senior pastor to focus the church on need, the opportunity to build on a history of ecclesiastical justice work, and an opportunity to be a culturally and socially influential ministry.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you, God, for this learning opportunity. Thank you to everyone involved who has created time and space to partner with me on this work. Thank you to everyone who has prayed with and for me and supported me throughout this educational journey.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE, A BEAUTIFUL TAPESTRY?**

There was a woman who made rag rugs. When she would make these rag rugs, the top side her rugs were beautiful tapestries. Yet from the back side all you could see were a maze of knots, unraveled edges, and loose strings. It was the same rug just viewed from the other side. I will tell you that that is how our lives are - God in His providence is creating a top view tapestry, but from our perspective all we see is the back side with all its loose ends, unraveled edges and knots.

This was an illustration I used to close a sermon highlighting God's ability and positive presence in our lives. The point of the illustration was to get the audience to consider that even if their lives were not marked with a litany of highs or absent of any negatives, God is able to bring forth positivity and productivity out of the bleakest looking situations and challenging realities.

This same perspective is the aim of this body of research work entitled, "Social Justice and the Church and Senior Pastor's Role in Providing Ministry to Meet Community Need." The challenging reality we face is the declining role the church plays in the lives of the believer and those who are in need. The challenging reality is the failure or lack luster effort on the part of the church to truly address human need and to

do so as the church of old did through social justice preaching, teaching and acts. The church of old did this with and because of the biblical mandate to care for the least of these, to demonstrate compassion and to extend grace. The measure of where the church falls short can be found in looking at how the secular nonprofit does not. The secular nonprofit has picked up the mantle of caring for the least of these, demonstrating compassion and extending grace and without the compulsion of faith. With that in mind, we are left to question how the church can reclaim what it has lost.

As we stand and survey our current contexts, our church, our world, the community, privilege, abundance and lack, how we got here and where we go from here the inclination can be to point our fingers, surrender responsibility, downplay our influence, take on too much, or even lay it all at the feet of our providential God. We might find that having a preferential perspective or creating an us versus them narrative is not what is in the best interest of all. Consequently, we are left to reflect on the impact and responsiveness of the church as we watch how the secular nonprofit lives out its mission to serve.

The underlining narrative that compels the good works of the church and the narrative that can have us singing the praises of those who produce results amidst the secular nonprofit landscape is found at the intersection where culture and community meet. And so, it is there that the two entities can discover and rediscover their symbiotic relationship. The relationship is rooted in the interdependent history of the church and the secular nonprofit. It is at the intersection of culture and community where we begin to resign what we see and find the potential that God can create, like in the illustration of the rag rugs.



The idea of the necessity and historic validity of a symbiotic relationship between the church and the secular nonprofit is not an insular thought. This notion is supported in works such as, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* by Peter J. Paris and *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People: A Path to African American Social Transformation* by Cheryl J. Sanders. Both bodies of work give weight to my idea that there is a historical interconnection that can serve to inform the work of the church and partnership between the church and the secular nonprofit today.

During the era of immediate post-slavery, reconstruction, and Civil Rights was a time of remarkable growth and self-reliance within the church, especially the black church. In fact, during that time, the black church was seen as the center and most valuable resource of the black community. The concern of the black church historically has been a concern for the realities of black lives. Meaning, there was a concern for the needs of black lives, the black church and the black community. This is not to exclude the white church or any other entity, however, it is important in this work to demonstrate the enduring historic link between the black church and the secular nonprofit and/or the community. At this current place of departure, we begin to see more clearly how the strength of that connection has been splintered and undervalued in present culture.<sup>1</sup>

Even C. Eric Lincoln believed that the relationship between the black church and black community were inextricably linked. So much so that there was no noticeable distinction as there is today between the sacred and the secular. C. Eric Lincoln is quoted as saying:

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<sup>1</sup> Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches*, Philadelphia, PA: The Fortress Press, 1985, pg. xii-2.

“Thus the multifarious functions of the black church justify the claim that they have been the institutional center of the black community; the basic source of religious and moral values; diligent in protecting the community from the many and varied abuses of racism by comforting the wounded, restoring dignity to the demoralized, hope to the despairing and redirection to those bent on harboring attitudes of bitterness and hatred as well as those disposed to acts of violence; prudent in devising and implementing forms of protest against racial injustices. Black churches have advocated the support of black businesses, established and maintained educational institutions, strengthened family life, provided a perspective for assessing the moral quality of the nation, and been closely allied with countless civil rights organizations and all other activities aimed at racial improvement. In short, they have a long and impressive history of institutional primacy in a racially segregated situation.”<sup>2</sup>

This historic picture adds fuel to the flame of this work that recognizes a change in church culture and activity when it comes to addressing community need.

I first saw the church and the nonprofit as two competing entities, which have through time created an us versus them narrative in terms of impact upon the community. The nonprofit seemed to be winning the accolades for being most impactful. This competitive narrative is the perspective with which I first approached this research project. The concept for my doctoral project emanates from my personal struggle with being a bi-vocational clergy person - educated and trained to serve the church, but working in the secular nonprofit community addressing the needs of the community. In that, it seems as if the secular nonprofit is shouldering more than its share of responsibility in addressing need. Meanwhile the church and church culture seems to have changed to the degree that the church community now has an ambiguous idea of where we stand. The church has lost the ability to see the opportunity that still exists to as Stanley Grenz says in *Created for Community*, “...connect Christian belief with

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pg.8-9.

Christian living.”<sup>3</sup> For me as I survey my worlds it seems as though the church has wondered off the path of purpose and impact in the community, while the nonprofit is blazing its own trail and leaving in its wake the remnants of positive change.

For the purposes of this work, the perspective is church versus the world, secular versus sacred, who is doing their job and mission of meeting community need and who is not. What I have found is that while each has its own individual narrative, there is a collective narrative, there is a historic narrative and there is a future narrative that is and can be responsive to the individual and collective needs of the community.

While this project was designed to be a dialogue and assessment of the church versus the secular nonprofit, the burden I imposed was on the church, as God calls the church, the pastor, disciples to a higher standard. “...the Spirit calls us out of the world so that we might be an ‘eschatological people’, a company who ‘pioneer’ in the present what the future will be like. Our task is to live according to the principles that characterize God’s future goal for creation. We are to point the way toward the future.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, unlike the church of yesterday, the present church is led by the culture as opposed to leading and shaping culture or a response to culture. Gone in today’s church is the anchoring of social teaching, family cohesiveness, civic engagement, relevant preaching prowess, compassion and care for the other, and a sense of being our brother and sister’s keeper.

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<sup>3</sup> Stanley Grenz, *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*, USA:VictorBooks/SP Publications, Inc., 1996, pg. 212.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 212.

Historically, much of the programming and services rendered to those in need has come from and through the church. It was not uncommon for churches to establish partnerships in which the church supported a number of organizations like the NAACP, the National Urban League and PUSH. Many of the organizations that the church supported were organizations that looked for an ideal and equal society that addressed the concerns of the people.<sup>5</sup>

I believe the church today has lost something that was present as we trace its history. The relationship that once existed between the church and the nonprofit seems to have been lost, but not lost forever. What I have found in this project are remnants of hope, clergy from across the country who still take up the banner and the burden to serve the other, the least of these and the lost and they do so not because they have something to gain, but because they believe Matthew 25:34-40 to be true.

As stated in the bible Jesus says:

“then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’”<sup>6</sup>

This passage speaks to our charge to address need – hunger, thirst, isolation, sickness.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pg. 102-103.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 25:35-40, NIV.

Our charge is to care enough that we act to address the need and as we do we serve others as if we are serving Jesus.

This passage of scripture leads us to both the narrative of concern and opportunity, as well as, serving as the biblical and theological foundation upon which God's tapestry can be made. While I mention this biblical text here we will explore this foundation more in chapter two.

I believe no one should feel a greater burden and sense of responsibility and accountability concerning this charge than the senior pastor. As such, this project was designed to engage 3-4 senior pastors to get them to reflect on their understanding of what I describe as Jesus' charge to all disciples. Throughout this project each participating pastor has journeyed with me in personal and professional reflection upon the charge outlined in Matthew 25:34-40. The pastors have gone further to assist in answering the questions – how many churches are equipped to provide and actively engage in this type of caring ministry and to exam whether this charge was being proclaimed from their pulpits and was reflective in the ministry offered by the church. Each has taken time out of their schedules to journey with me in rediscovering what is lost, helping to solve the narrative of concern that I have presented.

This method of engaging senior pastors and the degree of responsibility placed on the shoulders of the senior pastor is not new or novel. The prominence of African American churches “as institutions of prophetic engagement and communal empowerment is largely the fruit of efforts undertaken by African American ministers and their parishioners to extend the realm of ministry ‘beyond the four walls of the church’ to include response to the social problems of the people. The field of black

church studies has focused almost exclusively on the ministry of the black preacher as church and community leader.”<sup>7</sup> Through the leadership of the pastor as preacher and community leader there was some element of self-help evident and active in the work of the church. This is a point of empowerment that the church can reclaim, particularly if the prevailing inclination is that the secular nonprofit is better equipped or shares more responsibility in addressing need.

The church can still be an institution of self-help if pastors take seriously or buy into the positive role of empowerment. Ministry then becomes a vehicle capable of bringing about the mission of Christ. Theodore Walker, Jr. author of *Empower the People* “sees the struggle for comprehensive social empowerment as ‘essential to any quest for right relationship to God,’ and equates liberation and empowerment with ministry in an interesting formulation, where ‘service to the struggle for freedom and empowerment counts as service to God, and failure to serve this cause counts as failure to serve God.’”<sup>8</sup> Ultimately this journey is meant to not only call out a narrative of concern, but to point also to a narrative of opportunity, an opportunity to serve and to lead the charge in acting to address need. In the past, the community’s religious institutions upheld the ideals valued by the community. One way to trace the community’s values was to listen to what the official leaders expressed explicitly or implicitly in sermons, addresses, written works and actions. In every historical period save the current period, the church and its people have been stalwart change agents. It’s not a position or

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<sup>7</sup> Cheryl J. Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People: A Path to African American Social Transformation*, Minneapolis, MN: The Fortress Press, 1995, pg. 115.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, pg. 116-117.

approach that has been up to this point non-existent, it is a position or approach that has been lost.<sup>9</sup>

What the candidate and participating pastors found through this journey is that the solution to the church's state of being less than impactful lies in the principle of Sankofa which means reaching back in order to reclaim that which is lost in order to move forward. "The 'Sankofa' is a metaphorical symbol used by the Akan people of Ghana, generally depicted as a bird with its head turned backward taking an egg from its back. It expresses the importance of reaching back to knowledge gained in the past and bringing it into the present in order to make positive progress."<sup>10</sup> For the church and the senior pastor, the way to do this is to lean on God's desire for us in the world as expressed in Matthew 25:34-40, to engage history, to stand and honestly assess the present in order to create a culture of shared responsibility with the nonprofit.

This sense of cultural root shock, shifting church culture and loss of impact of the churches in comparison to the secular nonprofits is grounded in an understanding of culture. Author David Livermore defines culture in his book *Serving with Eyes Wide Open* as "the collective fundamental beliefs people hold about how things should be and how one should behave."<sup>11</sup> According to Livermore, culture "shapes our habits, beliefs, decision making, and the way we see the world. This programming is passed along from

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<sup>9</sup> Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches*, Philadelphia, PA: The Fortress Press, 1985, pg. xii-3.

<sup>10</sup> "Sankofa," accessed October 10, 2016, <http://www.sankofa.org>.

<sup>11</sup> David Livermore, *Serving With Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-term Missions With Cultural Intelligence*, Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Books, 2006, pg. 116.

generation to generation.”<sup>12</sup> The church therefore needs a self-assessment of its culture. The church needs to evaluate what shapes its beliefs and its habits and decision-making. The church needs to rediscover the cultural programming that has been passed down from the previous generation.

It is in this rediscovery that we can proudly hold claim to our individual and collective roles reaffirming our commitment to the charge that Jesus has given, but also to the community. The symbiotic relationship then becomes evident when instead of bashing one another for being a torn knot or unraveled edge or loose strings in the rugs of this world, we recognize our individual and collective roles in allowing God to create a beautiful tapestry out of what we might otherwise describe as two divergent and competing entities.

One of the responsibilities of both the church and the non-profit is to participate in community organizing. Community organizing is “assisting a group of people to recognize their common needs and helping them to meet those needs. It has to do with the process of like interests becoming common interests out of which associations develop.”<sup>13</sup> It is the community organizing process that serves as the tool in this project to help both entities, the church and secular nonprofit, to identify common ground and a common goal. Community organizing is “the process by which community groups are helped to identify common problems or goals, mobilize resources, develop and implement strategies for reaching the goals they collectively have set.”<sup>14</sup> The result is

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. pg. 116.

<sup>13</sup> Arthur Dunham and Earnest B. Harper, *Community Organization in Action: Basic Literature and Critical Comments*, Broadway: Association Press, 1959, pg.56.

<sup>14</sup> Meredith Minkler, *Community Organizing and Community Building for Health*, New



then community building “continuous, self-renewing efforts by residents and professionals to engage in collective action, aimed at problem solving and enrichment, that creates new or strengthened social networks, new capacities for group action and support, and new standards and expectations for the life of the community.”<sup>15</sup>

A complete reflection on community organizing and community building then serves to solve the narrative of concern and combats the “us versus them” narrative. It leaves us then to begin the hard work of identifying, mobilizing, problem solving, strengthening and goal setting. This project propels the senior pastor/the church to own its challenges in keeping the biblical charge of Matthew 25:34-40, to care enough that we act to address need, and serve others as if we are serving Jesus. It compels the audience to address the historical and cultural divide which keeps the present church from being as culturally and socially influential as in the past. It challenges the church to make social justice preaching and teaching a priority in the life of the church.

I’ll set forth a picture of black church beginnings. During slavery, the black church was engaged in the community and the prevailing problem of the time by serving as stops on the Underground Railroad. Church leaders during this time would organize ministry to address the particular and specific needs of the community and would often do so when others would not. The early church took the idea of being our brother and sister’s keepers from their African and Christian roots, which espoused the importance of community. The church in its golden years established schools, orphanages, hospitals, and senior homes. The church’s extreme care for those populations was evident. The

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Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006, pg.26.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., pg. 26.

church during this time could be classified as one of the most giving and serving institutions. The church was devoted to its people and its community.<sup>16</sup>

To clarify the narrative of concern and the narrative of opportunity the following sentiments by Mitchell are our call to action.

“The Black Church of the Reconstruction era was incredibly committed to and active in the life and welfare of its people and communities. No phase of need or challenge to action was overlooked. If the Black Church of the twenty-first century were to be half as energetic, sacrificial, and visionary, with all its unprecedented advantages, the condition of African Americans would be immeasurably improved.”<sup>17</sup>

While this reference highlights the advantages for African Americans, the same principle or advantage can be applied to anyone who is in need. There is benefit to all when the needs of the other are addressed and met. The collaboration and maintenance of a symbiotic relationship is what makes the beautiful tapestry out of the loose strings, unraveled edges and knots.

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<sup>16</sup> Henry H. Mitchell, *Black Church Beginnings: The Long-Hidden Realities of the First Years*, Grand Rapids, MI: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004, pg.131-167.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pg. 174.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE LOOSE STRINGS**

There are many different viewpoints that can be taken when looking at the interaction between the church and the community and the impact of the two upon each other. Even the narrative of concern presented in Chapter 1 points to the fact that depending upon who is doing the examining a multitude of needs and ways to address those needs can be identified. Some may argue that everyone has some need and addressing those needs is a shared responsibility. To look at the narrative of concern and opportunity I believe the overall lens needs to be that of relationship and the necessity of Christians to be at the forefront leading change and addressing need based on theological convictions.

Because this project emanates from my experience and worldview, the project has been built upon biblical and theological foundations that through time and experience have resonated with me. I believe these biblical and theological foundations serve to address the narrative of concern and make the most of the narrative of opportunity by helping the church in providing ministry to meet community need.

My understanding of the gospel is built upon the numerous examples of relationship and change illustrated in the bible. We must wrestle with the nature and basis of the relationship we are all invited to have with Christ. The basis for that relationship is grace and the product of grace received should thereby be grace extended.

No ministry or family can exist without some measure of grace.

Grace then becomes the starting point for change because positive or negative change can be dealt with when we recognize that we all serve and operate with Christ as the head of our lives and ultimate change maker. There, is no community need or no divide between the church and the community that is too huge and no relationship that cannot be mended or initiated so that the needs of all are addressed.

It is like Paul's sentiments in his letter to the Corinthians – "For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."<sup>1</sup> That God is an extender of grace is a principle that must be taught, preached and lived over and over again in the life of the church in order for relationships to be built and change to take place not only in the individual, but in any opportunity for ministry development and growth.

Discipleship to me is also about change. One biblical example for the purposes of this project is 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!" Christ was always calling the disciples to move, to go, to adapt to whatever the ministry need was. Go and make disciples, go and feed the multitude, go and visit the sick, take neither staff nor sandals, forget about burying your father, like the Son of Man do not count on having a place to lay your head.<sup>2</sup> These are all biblical teachings that settle us in the changing nature of ministry

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<sup>1</sup> I Corinthians 15:9-10, NIV.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

and identification with the many faces of need. I do think that if we follow these teachings and believe these sayings we would be a lot more comfortable not only with change, but with action. These scriptures and the scriptures outlined in Chapter 1 are a call to action. This project was designed to be a call to action, built upon these theological and biblical foundations.

If we study God, our theology should cause us to act. In particular, if we look at the scriptures presented above, God's Spirit is evident in action. "Men and women who genuinely care for others, religious communities that embrace diversity and welcome 'the stranger,' people who work actively for economic and social justice, ... families that model forgiveness and reconciliation - all illustrate the movement of the Spirit or the power of God in our individual and communal lives."<sup>3</sup>

For me the correlation between the theological/biblical thought here is this idea of spiritual power. Key to being able to see the fruit after wrestling with the narrative of concern and the narrative of opportunity is awaking the idea that the church has a unique gift. The church can act to make a positive difference through ministry and mission. This gift is a unique strength and asset of the church. This gift is more than a passing fad where it is just good to do good, but it speaks to a biblical mandate, which we as the church must adhere to.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, if we look at the church's group identity as chosen people there is an inherent communal interconnectedness based on our relationship to God. We are God's people and if God is our parent that makes the other our brother or sister. So, we live out

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<sup>3</sup> Stephen C. Razor and Christine D. Chapman, *Black Power From the Pew: Laity Connecting Congregations and Communities*, Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2007, pg.7.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pg.7-8.

our calling with God as we act and interact with our brother and sister, first with the internal church community and then with the secular community. Identity with God calls us also to act in a manner that would be consistent with the identity of God as God's children.<sup>5</sup>

In a 2005 survey of 400 congregations and 13,000 worshippers, the authors of *Black Power From the Pew* found that survey participants valued preaching, followed by bible study the most. Yet, on that same 12 category scale, survey participants valued care of one another, wider community care, social activities and adult education the least. These results illustrate the narrative of concern among the church and among Christians. We value the preached and taught word, but we do not value the application of that word demonstrated in care of one another or wider community care. Thus, why I contend that the church is missing the narrative of opportunity and the secular nonprofit is picking up the mantle.<sup>6</sup>

In his article entitled "*Social Justice Is a Christian Tradition – Not a Liberal Agenda*," Stephen Mattson captures this call to action in relation to biblical and theological thought perfectly. Mattson says:

"Many Christians are wary of participating in social justice because of a deep-rooted fear of being labeled 'liberal', 'progressive', or 'secular'. They do not want to be associated with 'secular' movements, and are uncomfortable delving into issues that go beyond their cultural comfort zones. But the Bible tells us that Jesus cared deeply about the social causes around him.

Even though Jesus loves everyone, even to the point of dying for their sins, he went out of his way to intentionally help specific groups of people – the alienated, mistreated, and those facing injustice.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pg.48-49.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, pg. 61.

Christians must recognize that our society is filled with numerous groups and communities facing systemic oppression, and we must act. We must be willing to admit and address the complex realities within our world that create such problems, and avoid the spiritual laziness that tempts us to rely on generic excuses and solutions.

Christians do a disservice to the gospel message by removing the cultural context from Jesus' ministry and watering down his message to one of religious platitudes. He intentionally, purposefully, and passionately addressed very specific causes. He radically addressed the diverse and complicated conflicts of the time and shattered the status quo.

Jesus wasn't just preaching a universal salvation message for the world, but he was also addressing specific political, social, and racial issues. He was helping those who were being abused, violated, and oppressed.

Involving ourselves within these issues – serving those who need justice – is an example of following Jesus that today's Christians must adhere to because throughout the world there are millions of people who are suffering. But many Christians remain simply apathetic, ignorant or refuse to admit any problems exist.

They're uncomfortable facing the complex and controversial issues surrounding race, ethnicity, history and culture. Participating in social justice is a Christian tradition inspired by Jesus, not liberal causes, populist agendas, media platforms, lawmakers or mainstream fads. It's a deeply spiritual practice.

Instead of being motivated by political affiliations, financial gain, power, pride, control, or our own secular motivations, we should be active participants for the sake of following Jesus – for the purpose of glorifying God through acts of justice, empowerment, and love.

It's not a matter of pitting social causes against the gospel message of Christ; it's a matter of realizing that these causes ARE actually an important part of that gospel message."<sup>7</sup>

I am not suggesting that effective ministry requires a complete overhaul of what

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<sup>7</sup> Stephen Mattson, "Social Justice Is a Christian Tradition – Not a Liberal Agenda", Sojourners, August 11, 2015, accessed October 23, 2016, <https://sojo.net/articles/social-justice-christian-tradition-not-liberal-agenda>.

was done in the past and introduction of something completely new and novel, but I am suggesting that as Charles Duhigg suggests in his book on habits, that sometimes we need a new routine. We need to be deliberate about those things we do as a habitual routine and begin to live more in moments of change. As we do this, this is how new people, new ministries, new processes are embraced in what should be interconnected ministry where we bear each other's burdens and strive together for the sake of Christ.<sup>8</sup>

My experience, however, is not the only voice in the consideration of this project focus and theological consideration. Ronald Allen in *Thinking Theologically* says "certain theological factors are much like background programs running in the preacher's approach to the sermon. The preacher's theology often prompts the preacher to see some things and be less aware of others."<sup>9</sup> Theological assumptions often come from social locations and historical changes and traditions impact what we do in ministry as ministry leaders and how we do what we do. So, open consideration needs to be given not only to what you preach, but why you preach what you preach. While Allen's focus was on preaching, I believe this consideration is what is needed throughout all levels of ministry, discipleship and relationship building. We all bring something to the work of ministry and from a leadership perspective we need to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to bring their unique set of skills so that we can reach a more diverse population.

For me, there was no more appropriate place to begin then with senior pastors, to determine if we shared similar biblical and theological foundations. My personal charge throughout this project was to engage the pastor not only with issues of social justice and

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<sup>8</sup> Charles Duhigg, *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do*. New York, NY: Random House, 2012, pg. 3-30.

<sup>9</sup> Ronald Allen, *Thinking Theologically*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008, pg.3.



community building, but to also engage pastors in the analysis and interpretation of scriptures. The hope then was that pastors would engage parishioners and parishioners would then engage the community.

There are two theological/biblical principles upon which this project was built, which are that we were created for community, which includes addressing the needs of the community and that God is the one that charges us to live out community. The scripture that highlights these two principles for me is Matthew 25:34-40. And because we are influenced by theological reflection, my hope through this project is that each senior pastor would be positively compelled to participate in social justice preaching and community engagement through theological reflection upon Matthew 25:34-40. In his book entitled *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*, Stanley Grenz says, “Whether consciously or unconsciously, each of us has a set of convictions about ultimate reality. We believe something about God, ourselves, and the purpose of life. And these foundational beliefs surface in what we say and how we live.”<sup>10</sup>

The search, therefore, is for how five pastors, with five different experiences, serving in five distinct regions believe and how that belief surfaces to address community need. My argument is that it is important to live believing that the least of these described in Matthew 25:34-40 are important. This project examines in detail the beliefs of the five pastors on social justice and community. I have drawn from Stanley Grenz’s three major divisions of theology as a foundation for this project. So, there is an examination of biblical theology as it pertains to the doctrine in 1 Corinthians 15:9-10; 2

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<sup>10</sup> Stanley Grenz, *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*. USA: Victor Books/SP Publications, Inc., 1996, pg. 13.

Corinthians 5:17; and Matthew 25:34-40. There is a cross comparison of historical theology (postmodernism and modernism). And to answer the project question and move beyond simple reflection, this work looks at practical theology and how doctrine can be applied to Christian living.<sup>11</sup>

There is no doubt that in 2016 there are many things that vie for our attention. There are incorrect doctrines and teachings which are not easily discernable, especially if we are not clear about what we believe. And our lives are the reflection of what we truly believe and sometimes what we say and how we live stand in contrast.<sup>12</sup> Theology then serves to get us back on track and to offer us direction that “motivates us to act continually in accordance with our commitment to Christ. Whenever our theological work stops short of this, we have failed to be obedient to our calling as thinking Christians. Indeed, our goal must always be to link Christian belief with Christian living”<sup>13</sup> This project highlights this failure as exemplified in the comparative impact of the secular nonprofit and the sacred church and issues a call to action that points us back to our commitment to Christ.

“The focus of community encapsulates the biblical message, it stands at the heart of the theological heritage of the church, and it speaks to the aspirations and the sensed needs of people in our world today. In short, as we realize that we are created for community, we are in a position to connect Christian belief with Christian living.”<sup>14</sup> I

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, pg. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, pg. 15-18.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, pg. 19.

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

argue that the changing of culture and competition of other gods should produce what Grenz calls a “new thirst for the divine.”<sup>15</sup>

I do not want to paint the picture that this narrative of concern is too difficult to address or that the whole of the church, the whole of senior pastors are a lost cause. Quite the contrary. I have developed this project because points of light and glimmers of hope can be identified. In the 2003 Black Church Leader Social and Public Policy Survey, sixty-eight percent of the 200 pastors and seminarians surveyed said that involvement in faith-based outreach ministries was a strong personal desire. In a follow-up survey to explore the types of social service ministries worshippers from 400 congregations would want to engage in the highest desired social service ministry was counseling/support groups at 41% and health-related programs/activities at 36%.<sup>16</sup>

Even more revealing, however, than these particular statistics is the fact that those surveys also showed that congregants generally ranked the congregational involvement in social outreach ministries lower than pastors did in their corresponding survey. This is a distinction worth exploration, but it also speaks to the need to assess and align the goals and mission of the church with pastor and parishioners working in concert towards God’s ideal for the world. It is building upon God’s biblical foundation and a firm theological understanding. In my opinion, Jesus’ statements in Matthew 25:34-40 clearly highlighted that action was evidence of faith and my firm belief as it relates to addressing need as the church is that action is evidence of faith. Our action to positively address need is how we as the church begin to tie up the loose strings that call into question our commitment to

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, pg. 33.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen C. Rasor, and Christine D. Chapman, *Black Power From the Pew: Laity Connecting Congregations and Communities*, Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2007, pg., 101-104.

God and to others. Again, this is how we identify social justice and the church and senior pastor's role in providing ministry to meet community need.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, pg.104.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE KNOTS**

This project was designed to help the senior pastor be deliberate about assessing his or her approach to preaching and ministry leadership. It helps the senior pastor to not work in denominational or regional isolation, but challenges the senior pastor to engage or re-engage deliberate partnership and outreach. With this aim and result in mind, my role in context has been to ask the so what question, to remind the pastors of the necessity to assess and reflect upon their roles within the church and the resulting impact upon the church community they have charge of and the larger communities in which their churches sit.

The elephant in the room with this project was:

- one, that today's church is not doing what God called us to do and
- two, social justice has become a lost art of the church

However, this project elicited the participation of five senior pastors who were willing to confront and acknowledge the problem in order that it might be addressed. The significance of this work is the potential reach of this kind of reprioritization and the positive impact that can be made in the lives of individuals across the country and even the globe.

This project does not engage the traditional single church context. This project was not implemented by the senior pastor within his or her church context. I am different; I am clergy called to serve in the church and nonprofit community. Many have asked when I am going to get a church or if I want to leave nonprofit work in order to go into ministry full-time. However, I view ministry from a different lens. It is not where I operate that governs my decisions, it is what I do where I am at and the positive difference that I am able to affect in the lives of others that keeps me on the crisscrossing path I am on. So, my aim was to work with God in creating a beautiful tapestry. So, with this project I enlisted the participation of five senior pastors and invited them to see their work through a similar lens and to embrace the difference they can make wherever they are at. In order to do this, they would each have to own their stories as loose strings, unraveled edges and knots.

Pastor Richard Chapple was the first recruit. Pastor Chapple is my former homiletics instructor. Now in his 50's, Pastor Chapple has been pastoring since he was 18. His ministry career not only stretches across the years; it spans across the country. He has pastored in Arkansas, Alabama, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, and now Harlem. His time in ministry is built upon the experience of being a generational preacher having had his step-father, grandfather and several other generations of relatives who assumed the role of senior pastor. His time in ministry has stretched from the civil rights era to the present era and he currently finds himself pastoring the oldest church in the state of New York and the oldest church in the denomination – Mother AME Zion.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Niele Anderson, "First AME Zion Welcomes New Pastor" Neighborhood Link, February 19, 2009, accessed July 22, 2016, <http://www.neighborhoodlink.com/ECCANDC/pages/62417>.

Mother Zion has a rich history that has lent itself to this project in viewing the social teaching of the senior pastor and the social engagement of the church and its members.

“Mother African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AME) Church, founded in 1796, is currently located in Harlem, New York. It is the oldest African American church in the state of New York and was established when black parishioners left John Street Methodist Church in that city. The group, under the leadership of Minister James Varick, had grown disillusioned with increasing segregationist practices within the Methodist church organization. Ministers James Varick, Christopher Rush, William Miller, and George Galbreath would become bishops and eventually be recognized as the founding members of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion denomination.

Originally given the name “African Chapel,” the church later settled on the name “Zion” because of its biblical resonance. The first services of Zion Church were held in a rental property in what is now downtown Manhattan. Within four years the congregation raised enough money to build their first building. Zion Church attracted many black parishioners, and served as the only African American church in New York City until Abyssinian Baptist Church was founded in 1808.

In 1820, Zion withdrew from the predominantly white Methodist Episcopal Church and formed the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Conference denomination. Introducing black religious expression while catering to a growing population of black abolitionists, affiliate Zion churches sprang up, prompting the original church to distinguish itself as being the “Mother” church. In 1848, Zion Church officially changed its name to Mother African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

Affectionately known as Mother Zion, the church was once considered the “Freedom Church,” having served as a station for the Underground Railroad. (Former slave Fredrick Douglass was assisted by Mother Zion in his escape to freedom; Sojourner Truth was a member of the church.) Social activism and collective responsibility espoused by Mother Zion’s pastoral leadership led to the church being a target of violence by anti-abolitionist groups in 1807 and 1827. Notwithstanding, after slavery was legally abolished in the state of New York in 1827, Mother Zion continued to be a strong vocal advocate for the abolition of slavery throughout the country.

During the latter 1930s Mother Zion was a haven for famous Harlemites drawn especially to the sermons of Reverend Dr. Benjamin C. Robeson who preached the gospel of civil rights activism. Notable celebrities who

frequently worshipped at Mother Zion included Langston Hughes, W.E.B. DuBois, Marian Anderson, Roland Hayes, Joe Louis, Madam C.J. Walker, and Rev. Robeson's younger brother, Paul Robeson.

Black migratory patterns within New York City prompted Mother Zion to relocate several times until the church moved to its present location at 140-6 West 137th St. in the Harlem community of Manhattan, NY. Church officials commissioned New Jersey architect George W. Foster, Jr., one of the first registered black architects in the country, to design the church. The neo-Gothic building, completed in 1925, is made from granite and features a large, multi-panel stained glass window, pinnacles, and seats 1,000 persons. Founding Bishop James Varick's tomb is located under the sanctuary. In 1993, Mother Zion was designated a historical landmark in the city of New York. The church operated the James Varick Community Center (est. 1972) to serve the educational, social, and health care needs of the surrounding community. Reverend Gregory Robeson Smith, grandson of Rev. Benjamin Robeson, is the 40th pastor of Mother Zion. He led Mother Zion since 1995.”<sup>2</sup>

Currently Richard Chapple serves as the senior pastor. With such a rich social history, it is hard to image that such social teachings and preaching would not still continue today.

The second recruit was Pastor Alexander Houston. Pastor Houston serves as the second pastor of the Christian Church of Philadelphia and independent church founded by his father, Gordon S. Houston, Sr. Prior to receiving the call to The Christian Church, Reverend Houston served as the 33<sup>rd</sup> Pastor of the historic 325-year-old Cohansey Baptist Church in New Jersey. As his bio states, Pastor Houston is a “veteran of community and economic development, Pastor Houston was successful in pioneering one of the first Green Jobs workforce development program in Philadelphia, providing job training and placement to over 100 Philadelphia area youth. Pastor Houston's dedication to civic and

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<sup>2</sup> Felicia Mack, “Mother African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church [Harlem](1796- )”, Blackpast.org , accessed July 22, 2016, <http://www.blackpast.org/aah/mother-african-methodist-episcopal-zion-church-1796#sthash.ItIumna0.dpuf> .



servant leadership extends to his local community. Currently, he sits on various boards throughout the Philadelphia region and holds membership in numerous organizations, including: The Philadelphia Baptist Association, The Baptist Ministers Conference of Philadelphia & Vicinity, the Colgate University Alumni of Color, the Palmer Alumni Task Force, and the Philadelphia Chapter of the NAACP. Additionally, he serves on the 59<sup>th</sup> Democratic Ward executive board as the committee person for the 21<sup>st</sup> division.”<sup>3</sup>

The Christian Church of Philadelphia is fairly young congregation in comparison to the other participating churches, but still has a rich history.

“The beginning of The Christian Church In Philadelphia took place on July 25, 1978 at The Goodwill Baptist Church, 4705 Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Reverend Dr. Elijah Thompson, Jr., Pastor, on a Tuesday evening around 7:30 o'clock. More than 200 persons were present at this meeting and all of these persons agreed unanimously that they wanted the Reverend Gordon S. Houston to be their pastor. After sharing with those present that he believed the Bible to be the Word of God, the law and teaching for the church, and that the teaching of the Bible must be the final authority in the church, with sound and theological interpretation, the Reverend Gordon S. Houston gave his whole-hearted consent to be their pastor until death or until the Lord directed him otherwise. Those present accepted. Thus, began The Christian Church In Philadelphia.

One hundred and eighty-three of the initial more than two hundred, according to signed statements, met on August 13, 1978 at The Calvary Church, Manheim Street and Pulaski Avenue, Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Father John F. Leser, Rector, for their first worship. After the Service, the Pastor met with the Church Clerk and told her that he would like the Church to be known as The Christian Church In Philadelphia. Father Leser was kind enough to allow the Church to worship at The Calvary Church on the next two Sundays, August 20 and 27, 1978. The Lord provided another place to worship: St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Wayne Avenue and Harvey Street, Father James A Forrest, Priest-in-Charge. With the blessed permission of Brother John M. Scruggs, Senior Warden, the Vestry and Father Forrest, Worship Services

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<sup>3</sup> “Our Pastor”, The Christian Church of Philadelphia, accessed May 22, 2016, <http://churchinphila.org/ourpastor.aspx>.

began at St Peter's on the first Sunday in September 1978. The First Holy Communion as The Christian Church In Philadelphia was received at St. Peter's Church. Between September, 1978 and September, 1979, about ninety persons decided not to be known as Christians only, others because they grew weary from having to worship at 2:00 P.M. Yet, the Lord continued to bless The Christian Church adding some and taking away others.

During this time some brothers of the Church were chosen, consecrated and appointed as Deacons, and some sisters were chosen, consecrated, and appointed as Deaconesses to care for the sick, to carry out the ministry of benevolence, and generally assist the Church in her ministry. In the meantime, brothers and sisters were faithful in giving the Lord His tithes and bringing offerings and sacrificial gifts to the Lord for use by His new assembly. A Church School was begun to train the people of God in the ways of Christ. A weekly Fellowship was instituted to train the people in the ministries of the Church, during the years 1979 and 1980. They have all been a great blessing to the Church. After much sacrifice and dedication, Articles of Incorporation were filed in the Department of State on the fourteenth day of March 1979. An Incorporation Certificate was issued on April 13, 1979. This was a great boost for the Lord's people, - as was evidenced by their visible expressions of joy. The young Church began to plan seriously toward the objective of buying a building in which to worship and carry forward the teachings of Holy Scriptures, in the year 1980. By the grace of God, through the sacrifice and commitment of his people giving \$36,500.00 and with a generous gift-loan from the late Reverend Dr. James Coleman, the Pastor of The Concord Baptist Church, Boston, Massachusetts, in the amount of \$12,000.00 the Church made settlement for the property at 1315 E. Washington Lane, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with \$48,500.00 on January 13, 1981. Even though the property cost a total of \$135,000.00, a few more than ninety souls moved forward with courage, faith and determination.

The first Worship Service was held in the new building on August 9, 1981. The burden and responsibility of preparing the building for worship were tremendous, and a few of the ninety souls who went to the new building did not remain. Yet, keeping the Word and remaining constant in prayer, seventy or more persons moved forward, with The Holy Spirit as their guide and the joy of their salvation as comfort, to do the work of the Lord. Between August 13, 1982 and June 20, 1983, the Church was granted a Sales and Use Tax Certificate of Exemption by the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, Real Estate Tax Exemption from the City of Philadelphia through the Board of Revision of Taxes, Federal Income Tax Exemption by the Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service, and the City of Philadelphia, Water Department, granted the Church Charity Rates. Since 1983, many improvements have been made on the

Church building, such as, the Heating system, the Air-conditioning system, Roofing, Carpeting, Pastor's Study, Church Office and Meeting rooms. A Baptismal Pool has been installed and a kitchen is now being installed.

In the year of 1996, we believe the Lord sent Rite Aid of Pennsylvania, Incorporated to offer to buy the supermarket that we had turned into our Church. After deliberation, the Advisory Council vis-à-vis Board of Directors of The Christian Church In Philadelphia voted unanimously to accept their offer of \$1,500,000.00 and settlement was held on July 15, 1996. We believed this to have been a blessing from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. However, to our sadness about 100 saints decided to no longer remain as members of The Christian Church In Philadelphia. Yet, the young Church had received enough money to pay off all her indebtedness to buy a couple of properties and move forward in faith. During the period from July 15, 1996 to July 1, 1998, the young Church worshipped at a place called Lakey's on Stenton Avenue and then in the Fellowship Hall of Zion Hill Church of God in Christ on Washington Lane with the blessing of her pastor, the Reverend Dr. Lafayette Gooding. It was on July 1, 1998 that the Lord again blessed us with our present Church at a cost of \$475,000.00. We had our first Worship Service in the new Church on Sunday, July 5, 1998. What a blessing! The people were happy and since being here the Lord has added to his Church a total of 191 souls with 94 of those coming to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Now the Church has a replacement value of approximately \$2,000,000.00 and some funds invested! Since being in our new Church, many have been blessed. Some have been healed from various maladies. A network of computers have been installed in our offices, new carpet has been installed in the sanctuary, nave, narthex, the nursery, the Sunday School room and our offices as well as other multipurpose rooms. Moreover, the Church has purchased and paid for a new piano, a new Hammond Organ and Leslie Speaker along with a new public address system and a cassette tape and CD recording system! All of these improvements have been accomplished without incurring any debt at a cost of over \$115,000.00. Weddings have taken place. Babies have been blessed and dedicated. And, the people just keep on rejoicing, because of what the Lord has done and is doing!"<sup>4</sup>

The third recruit was Pastor Rodney Lyde. Pastor Lyde is probably the most civically engaged pastor who participated. He has served congregations in Philadelphia,

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Brooklyn and currently serves Baptist Temple Baptist Church in Pittsburgh, PA. Pastor Lyde serves as the Chair of the Spiritual Leaders Caucus of the Pennsylvania Interfaith Impact Network (PIIN). PIIN is known for addressing social justice issues such as, living wages, fair and affordable housing, the prison pipeline and educational access.

## **BAPTIST TEMPLE CHURCH'S DISTINGUISHED HISTORY**

### **FROM A TENT TO A TEMPLE**

“Praises be to God, upon the 95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Baptist Temple Church, located in the Homewood- Brushton community of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. We have indeed come a long way, and we lift up praises to God who is the author and finisher of our faith.

### **THE BEGINNING:**

Our history begins on July 18, 1921, under the prayerful leadership of our founders. Of twenty-three who made an application for membership, we know of Rev. Calvin Bartlett, Julia Bartlett, Mildred Craighead, James B. Deans, Mildred Porter Hill, James Hunter, Hattie Johnson, James Johnson, Margaret Johnson, Pearl Ross Johnson, Samuel Johnson, Rev. William Johnson, Annie Ross Lewis, M. P. Mason, Hattie Ross Orr, Fannie Porter, Frank Porter, Roxie Hunter Porter, Nettie Washington and Mary Mason Washington. On that date, The Baptist Temple Church of Pittsburgh was officially organized at a Recognition Council meeting held in Smith Hall on Centre Avenue, in the Hill District. Many letters of transfer were not available from the members’ churches, but those initially admitted upon recognition with letters from their prior churches were Dr. William Johnson, who became the church's first Pastor, M.P. Mason, Anna Ross Lewis and Hattie Ross Orr. Early in 1922, the church purchased five lots on Collier Street at Frankstown Avenue, and erected a tent sanctuary.

The tent was made of cloth, and gave little protection from the elements. Nonetheless, praises to God for the mantle of grace and mercy that protected the young church and its small congregation. Soon the cloth tent gave way, however, and was consumed by fire. God’s will was that the church continue, and from the fire, new hope arose. Meanwhile, services were held in the parlor of Pearl R. Johnson. In March 1923, the congregation met to dedicate a new sanctuary made of galvanized metal.

For the early years of anointed leadership, we give thanks for the pastors

who labored to preserve the church through many difficult times: Rev. William Johnson, Rev. J. E. Guy, Rev. W. A. Banks and Rev. A. M. Howe. God's plan for the church continued under each of their pastorates, and the church not only survived, but grew.

**GROWTH AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ORGANIZED CHURCH- Rev. J. A. Williams:**

In March 1945, the Rev. James A. Williams of the Vermont Baptist Church, Creighton, Pennsylvania, accepted the call to serve as the new pastor. Under his anointed leadership, the church moved into the sanctuary in which the church now worships, at 7241 Race Street, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. During Rev. William's pastorate, the church added many new features of worship, including a Junior Church and an early morning and late evening worship service year round. During forty plus years of leadership, many of the service bodies, missionaries and choirs now in place were formed. For the first time, the influence of the church extended beyond the walls of the sanctuary through its involvement in religious and community organizations.

**CHANGE, OUTREACH AND REVITALIZATION- Rev. Doctor Toussaint King Hill:**

Rev. Williams departed this life on November 30, 1985. Although without a leader, the membership of the church remained constant and active. The prayers of the church were answered on January 18, 1989, when the Rev. Dr. Toussaint King Hill, Jr., Associate Pastor, of Second Baptist Church, of Detroit, Michigan, accepted the call extended to him by the church on December 30, 1988.

Under the pastorate of Rev. Hill, the church became poised for an active ministry in a modern age, as it transitioned from a long term pastor to new leadership. The church experienced a rebirth in its worship, ministry of music and praise services. Under Rev. Hill's pastorate, the church launched all ages' weekend retreats and formed ministries to carry out all of the activities and functions of an active church, such as the Prison Ministry, Food and Clothing Ministry, Tape Ministry, Transportation Ministry and the Mime Ministry. Other landmarks of Rev. Hill's pastorate were the incorporation of the BTC Center, Incorporated, a not for profit entity focusing on community outreach programs. We thank God for the anointed leadership of Rev. Hill, but, in May 2003, God called him to Ebenezer Baptist Church, of Atlanta, Georgia, to provide needed service. Later, Rev. Hill assumed the pastorate of West Hunter Street Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia. During a period of eighteen months without a pastor, the congregation remained steadfast and the works of the church continued.

### **STRENGTHENING AND PREPARING FOR GREATER OUTREACH- Rev. Doctor Vernard E. Hinton:**

The prayers of the church were answered on December 17, 2004, when Rev. Vernard E. Hinton, Associate Pastor, of Second Calvary Baptist Church, of Norfolk, Virginia, accepted the call extended to him by the church on December 13, 2004. Rev. Hinton assumed the pulpit on February 6, 2005. Looking to Romans 12: 4-5, Rev. Hinton rallied the church under the theme: "Pastor and People United for Kingdom Purpose". He challenged each member to commit to "Kingdom Purpose", reminding the church of the Great Commission. Rev. Hinton established and expanded new member orientation sessions, Bible Study, and leadership classes. A mark of Rev. Hinton's anointed leadership was his commitment to youth, resulting in a youth and young adult choir, the re-organization and expansion of the youth ministry and the church's first Youth Revival. Rev. Hinton strongly believed that the church must be strong in its faith and that its mission was to be the center of a faithful life, serving the people of God spiritually, socially, emotionally and physically. In 2006, Rev. Hinton was led by God to expand upon his beliefs and move to Texas to establish a new ministry and community outreach system. He now serves as the Senior Site Pastor of The Mount Charlotte.

### **FAITH IN ACTION AND COMMUNITY BUILDING- Rev. Rodney A. Lyde:**

On August 19, 2009, Rev. Rodney Adam Lyde was called to be the eighth pastor of the church and assumed the pulpit on August 30, 2009. His mission is based upon the Great Commission- "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you..." Matthew 28: 19, 20. This mission inspired Pastor Lyde to develop a vision for the church. Instead of an installation revival, Pastor Lyde led the church in a two day revival, leading to Vision 2020 (a clear mental picture of God's preferred future for the church), which was presented to the church in October of 2009. Vision 2020 calls for the church's purpose to be five-fold: Worship, Discipleship, Fellowship, Stewardship and Witness-ship. Vision 2020 positions the church for meaningful growth and relevant ministry, leading up to the year 2020. Vision 2020 truly means the church in action and an integral part of the community.

The readiness of the church to meet its Great Commission is important to realize Vision 2020. Therefore during 2015 and 2016 as part of The Listening Campaign, members were surveyed and input from leadership obtained to determine how the church could best be a meaningful part of the community in which it resides. The church hopes, thus, to expand its real estate footprint and gain the resources to launch the envisioned community programs and services. Under Pastor Lyde, the church has experienced membership growth and development, as new members are called to be essential members of the church and to assume leadership within the church. Bible Study, the New Members' Class and the re-launch of Daily Vacation Bible School have been key focal points. A Men's Ministry has reenergized the church.

Recognizing the legacy of the church in Homewood- Brushton and building upon it, Pastor Lyde and the church are proud to present annually the Rev. J. A. Williams Leadership Award to distinguished local community leaders. The award is given during a Community Day celebration held each August, where all are invited to worship at the church, and participate in games and recreation after the service along with delicious food. Another highlight of the church's active engagement in Homewood was the sponsorship of a 5K Prayer Walk, in which during the two walks, funds were raised for the Homewood YMCA and the Homewood Library. A highlight of the church was the 2015 Inaugural Gospel Vocal Quest, a multi-tiered competition among gospel singers and spoken word artists, in which the first winner (selected by a panel of distinguished local artists) was a Gospel Hip Hop Artist.

The presentation of a Live Nativity was a means for the community to come together during the holiday season and fellowship with the church. All ages had roles, the animals were live and the participants and guests enjoyed the novel presentation of the birth of Jesus! Each December, the Sunday School classes walk the neighborhoods of our community caroling and for three years straight the church has hosted a Toys for Tots give-away to help area families during the holiday season.

The church sponsored a Pizza Session with the local police and players, coaches and parents of the Homewood Football League to work towards better community relationships with the police. Pastor Lyde worked with the Community Intensive Supervision Program (CISP) as well as the Fund for the Advancement of Minorities through Education (FAME) for the church to host individual Youth Summits with young men of each organization to share their concerns and hopes for the future.

Pastor Lyde has a great affinity for youth, and has captured the attention of youth and young adults through his relevant and current messages based upon current events and culture. A hallmark of worship at the church has been many sermon series, in which a subject or message has been

explored over a period of Sundays. A recent series of sermons based upon Beyonce's Lemonade album illustrated how one's faith can take you through disappointments and failures (the Post Gazette featured one of the sermons that focused on the gun violence in our communities). Pastor Lyde's messages are such that they reach and benefit all ages, resulting in enthusiastic member worship experiences and an all member commitment to the Great Commission.

Other accomplishments of the church include the launch of a social media presence, the institution of electronic giving, improvement of the church's technological capacities, extensive renovations of the church's kitchen, bathrooms and lower auditorium and the tremendous growth of the Food Pantry, sponsored by the BTC, Incorporated, and housed at the church. It is the largest in the community and regularly commended for the services provided to the community's neediest and the efficiency in which it is run.

Pastor Lyde is a leader in the community as well, leading others to put their faith to work for the betterment of the community and the City of Pittsburgh. Faith in action is demonstrated by Pastor Lyde's position as President of the Pennsylvania Interfaith Impact Network (PIIN). PIIN is a network of congregations and organizations in Southwestern Pennsylvania committed to drawing together people of faith to act powerfully on local and regional issues of justice and fairness. A highlight in the church history was the church's hosting and participation in a convening of various religious and community organizations under the banner of "From Marches to Measurables", for a meeting with the City of Pittsburgh's Police Chief and other city leaders.

All members fondly know of the Pastor's creativity as the hash tag #TIMBER for the church is embraced each Sunday. As the Pastor leads us into the message, we know that "it's about to go down"! Under Pastor Lyde's anointed leadership, the church has become a vibrant, active and engaging place of worship. There are numerous newspaper articles and TV news reports featuring Baptist Temple Church and Pastor Lyde, raising the church's profile in the community and city for this generation.

We praise God who has brought us thus far, from a tent to a temple. With God as our light, we shall continue to serve God's people and meet their needs in the spirit of ministry."<sup>5</sup>

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The fourth recruit was Pastor Patrick Wrisley. Currently serving as Senior Pastor

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<sup>5</sup> Baptist Temple Church History. Permission for Use Given in October 20, 2016 email.



at First Presbyterian Church in DeLand, Florida, Pastor Wrisley's pastoral experience crosses the boundaries of established churches and new church plants, east coast to west coast, north to south. In addition to First Presbyterian, Pastor Wrisley has also pastored in Atlanta, GA, Celebration, FL, and University Place, WA. Pastor Wrisley's spiritual gifts are identified as preaching, teaching, evangelism, and administration and he has found in First Presbyterian a place to exercise these gifts.<sup>6</sup>

"First Presbyterian Church, DeLand had its beginning on July 2, 1882 when Rev. Gilbert Gordon met with 23 others in the home of Mr. W.W. Cleveland. Early on in DeLand, all denominations shared a community building on the corner of Indiana Ave and Woodland Blvd. As the churches grew, the Methodists and Baptists went off to their own buildings and the Presbyterians bought the interests in the community building. We eventually sold that building to the City and it became the Town Hall.

Our first pastor was Rev. James Shearer who served two years, followed by Rev. Henry Gelston who helped in purchasing the lot for our first building. As our sanctuary was being built, we alternated worship in the First Methodist on alternate Sundays. Our first church building, on the upper left, was dedicated on March 11, 1888. In June of 1909, Dr. C. Ferran became our pastor and our congregation grew. We needed more space and the building was remodeled to hold more than 200 people.

In 1924, Dr. John Abbot came to serve us for the next 16 years. He shared his ministry with us and took the gospel to the jails. Dr. John's ministry also marked our first support of a foreign missionary, Rev. E. Boyer, serving in Chunju, Korea in 1925.

Growing to a congregation of 900 was becoming a problem and we looked for a larger parcel of land. After 2 years of praying, we bought the land at 724 North Woodland Blvd in 1956. Groundbreaking occurred on April 21, 1957. The cornerstone was laid November 30, 1958.

Dr. Hugh Ash came to us on March 1, 1959 and developed the idea of a home for independent senior citizens. As a result, what is known as the Hugh Ash Manor came into being in 1971.

First Presbyterian Day School was established in 1960. The House Next

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<sup>6</sup> First Presbyterian Church of DeLand, accessed May 22, 2016, <http://www.fpcdeland.org/>.

Door was established in 1976 to help families develop and maintain healthy relationships. The Pierson Day Care Center (now Pierson Montessori Center) was established in 1985 to supply daycare and basic early education for migrant workers' families. West Volusia Habitat For Humanity was established in 1988 to build homes for underprivileged families.

We have been and are involved in numerous mission activities both local and global. Mission activities have been and continue to be an important aspect of how our church expresses itself as followers of Jesus Christ.”<sup>7</sup>

The final recruit served as a replacement for Pastor Wrisley. Pastor Chris Taylor is the Senior Pastor of Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church. Fox Chapel was a church I worked for briefly as the Administrative Assistant to the Family Ministries Department. Pastor Taylor has served congregations as Senior Pastor in Colorado, Ohio and Connecticut. Pastor Taylor has served his current congregation for over 11 years.<sup>8</sup>

“This is the history of Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church. In 1953 a group of families living in the Fox Chapel area began to worship together at Shadyside Academy. The Rev. Bickford Lang served as the first pastor. The congregation was officially organized in October 1953 with 339 charter members. The chapel was erected in December 1953 and worship services began to be held on the site of the present church. The church facility has grown to include the Christian Education building, the Fellowship Hall, and the Sanctuary, which was completed in 1964. In recent history the congregation engaged in a systematic program of mission support and extension of facilities, including the new Christian Education classrooms, the Atrium, the Memorial Garden and Columbarium.

Senior Pastors:

Bickford Lang 1953-1967

Christian W. Matthews 1968-1979

John T. Galloway, Jr. 1980-1993

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church, accessed July 29, 2016. <http://www.fcpc.us/>.

Robert B. Heppenstall III 1995-2002

Christopher Taylor 2005- present

The Rev. Lang wrote these words as a preface to the Purpose and Charter of the church:

‘Let us have a church that dares imitate the heroism of Jesus; seek inspiration as He sought it; act on the present like Him; pray as He prayed; work as He wrought; live as He lived.’

For more than fifty years, the members, leaders and pastors of Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church have continued in the tradition expressed by its first pastor. And those years have been good. Literally thousands of men, women, and children, past and present, have made up its family of faith; and the tradition of Christ-centered ministry in the Fox Chapel area has become an enduring legacy, handed down for others to enjoy and be inspired by.”<sup>9</sup>

It is with these varied experiences and differing church histories that we journeyed together in this project seeking what the church has lost, open to the opportunity for God to create a beautiful tapestry out of what we see with our human eyes as loose edges and knots. Evident in this process was the yearning to make a difference in the lives of those who make up the community, while at the same time rediscovering the symbiotic relationship between the church and the nonprofit. Through this project all involved have taken on the responsibility of providing ministry to meet community need.

*Narrative Research in Ministry: A Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities* has served as the framework from which I approached this project. Certainly, in conceptualization my approach to this project was very much modernistic in that what I felt I was observing in the church, the nonprofit and the community was simply cause and effect. Decline in social justice preaching and teaching has led to a less

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

impactful church with a universal effect where nonprofits were shouldering more than their share of the burden to care for the community. I felt that a survey and assessment of the various senior pastors and church contexts would yield a universal agreement with my stated narrative of concern, which would then spur the search for the appropriate fix that would redeem the church and help the community. However, upon discussing the project idea with my advisor, he helped center me on the idea of narrative research. This approach would help to bring various stories and notions to light, which would allow all involved to contribute to the beautiful tapestry of hope instead of lamenting the decline and loss of impact of the church.<sup>10</sup>

This project ended up being a shift away from modernistic viewpoints and a settling in the postmodern stories. Postmodernism as described by Savage and Presnell is an approach fueled by stories, stories that in turn shape the identity, reality and social experience of the individual or individuals. I had my own story and hypothesis about how culturally and socially influential the church ministry is in what I described as a culturally and civically responsible world. I assumed that any church and any pastor that would participate would also have their own story. I was biased in my approach at first thinking that my story was ultimately correct. And in the end, I can't say that my story was all together wrong. What I can say, however, is that both participating pastors and the candidate as representatives of the church benefited from a storied approach because "people and groups will often hold a portrait of their own self that cannot be sustained

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<sup>10</sup> Carl Savage and William Presnell. *Narrative Research in Ministry: A Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities*. Louisville, KY: Wayne E. Oates Institute, 2008. pg.29-30.

when viewed from other perspectives. Their notion of ‘what is’ can be based on false assumptions of the past and/or self-limited projections of the future.”<sup>11</sup>

The ultimate benefit of the postmodern approach and what was learned is that while the church may have lost its historic connection to social justice and community building through secularization, the reconnection comes through the recognition that we need both. So, both/and, not either/or. It is this linkage, these varied stories that make up this projects ancient/future methodological approach. The result then is the identification of the interconnectedness that sustains wholeness in community.<sup>12</sup>

So, with each senior pastor and each regional church context - stories were elicited via individual and group pastoral conversations with three different intents. With the first conversation, I intended to understand each pastor’s personal/professional story, their pastoral theology, their church and community narrative and their past, present, and future narrative. Each pastor was asked the following series of questions through phone conversation or Skype video:

1. What is your personal call story?
2. What is your pastoral charge?
3. Describe your pastoral history?
4. Describe the regional pastoral contexts (both the church and the city/state) which you have experienced.
5. Summarize the church history and impact upon the community.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, pg. 31.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, pg.31-38.

6. What community needs can your church address?
7. What are the strengths of your church/church members that would lend towards successfully addressing community needs?
8. What are the obstacles or challenges in addressing community need?
9. What is your preaching focus?
10. If you were to segment your time and responsibilities as pastor, what are those responsibilities and what percentage of time/effort is spent on which responsibilities?
11. Describe your church staffing or administrative structure.
12. How does your preaching and development of ministry goals reflect the needs of the people?
13. How do you/your church maintain relational connection to the larger community/world?
14. Do you believe the church is biblically impactful today?
15. Do you believe your church is biblically, culturally, and socially impactful or do you believe it needs to be?
16. What is the process and content of your sermonic presentation?
17. Where do you believe the church universal will be in the next 1, 5, 15, 25 years?
18. What can the church learn from the past and current historic trends in this civically responsible world?

Prior to convening the second conversation, my intent was to visit each Pastor in his ministry context to observe a Sunday worship experience. The goal of the site visit was to discern if my experience of worship, the sermon, and the people in context would

match the story the church and pastor told about themselves or if there would be other shadow scripts of their tradition that come to the surface.<sup>13</sup>

The intent of the second conversation was to create dialogue among the participating pastors with the goal of allowing an opportunity to examine similar and diverse perspectives and experiences that could then add to the sense of wholeness in the universal church community and the global community. The following questions were asked during the second conversation, which was a group conversation.

1. From individual conversations with the participating pastors I have found that some pastors are generational pastors and some weren't. Do you think that impacts a pastor's approach to social justice or ministry?
2. The social justice issues raised by participating pastors were: gentrification, sex trafficking, social justice versus charity, migrant workers and homelessness. Do any of these surprise you? Would you have a difficult time addressing any of these issues in your current context?
3. In each context, I have seen that each pastor is involved in some level of social justice work and trying to get the church to buy in and follow his lead. What do you think is the key to that shift?
4. Would you be interested in a more deliberate social justice connection between pastors you might not know or currently have connection with – across denomination, race, gender, etc.?
5. What do you see as a challenge to a more deliberate connection like this between

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid, pg.64.

not only pastors, but congregations?

6. Is there a difference in the work or what can be accomplished by a church planter versus those who are called to an established church?
7. What have you begun to think about or think more deeply about as you have engaged in participation in this project?
8. Can you describe the nonprofit/civic community in your current city?
9. As pastor in your current city, what social justice issue or issue in preaching do you think is the number one priority to address at a more macro level?

The third and final conversation was an individual conversation. The intent for the last conversation was to move both the candidate and the pastor from mere reflection to practicality. The question in the third conversation was meant to elicit a future plan of action. The question was as follows:

1. What do you think I could do or someone like me could do towards the goal of helping to create an impactful and aware church, as well as increasing partnerships between clergy and non-profits?

Intentional interviews as conversations were used as an approach to this project. It was felt the fruit of these interviews would give a self-reflective picture of each participating pastor/church and would allow the opportunity to examine where that picture fits in relation to the picture of Jesus we hold and the intentions Jesus has for us collectively. Like Savage and Presnell have said, the benefits of self-understanding within a religious community can also help in the “theological discernment within that body and also of providing direction for the generation of relevant and effective



ministries.”<sup>14</sup> So, while we may start with a narrative of concern that has a tinge of negativity what was learned through this project is that there is the opportunity to generate and articulate and live out what can be right within the church.

Larson and Osborne in *The Emerging Church* also help in the realization that there is no lack of problems within the church and facing the church. However, a conscious assessment of the problems is what allows self-discovery and brings forth hope. “Within a problem-centered ministry it is rare to find that worthwhile goals are being set and met. To put it bluntly, goal setting is something of a lost art in our churches, as in our families and even in our lives as individuals.”<sup>15</sup> According to Larson and Osborne, time is well spent determining “whether you are pursuing goals which are wrong, inadequate, or outmoded?”<sup>16</sup> The example given is that of most recent church history that has found success in building the church edifice, but within these beautiful church edifices nothing of permanent value happens to shift the quality of life beyond business as usual.<sup>17</sup> In other words, the people are not changing and neither are their needs, even as things change around them.

There is a positive perspective based on Larson and Osborne’s observations in that this pursuit of adequate and authentic goals can lead us to a place where it becomes

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid, pg.73.

<sup>15</sup> Bruce Larson and Ralph Osborne, *The Emerging Church*, Waco, TX.: Word Incorporated, 1970, pg.17.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, pg. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, pg. 23.

evident that hope exists and the church and pastor provide ministry to meet community need. “It is our goals, conscious or unconscious, which largely determine what direction our lives take, and whether we find freedom and fulfillment as individuals and as members of the human family. Even if we never think in terms of specific goals at all, within us is a whole constellation of ‘ought’s’ and ‘should’s’ that shapes our destiny by determining our behavior and reactions.”<sup>18</sup> The hope of this project in partnership with the participating factors is that through thorough assessment we uncover our authentic goals, whether they are problematic or beneficial and then we adjust according to the needs of the community.

If I agree with Savage and Presnell in that our research is influenced by “cultural contexts, education, social experience, theological outlook, faith tradition, and preferred ways to do and participate in ministry”<sup>19</sup>, then this research has a story that guides this work. I certainly am heavily influenced by the fact that I have been called by faith and by secular profession into helping professions. To help then, means to improve or to be able to measure progress. And so, my yearning in this project approach was to do just that. The introduction and invitation extended to each participating pastor highlighted the purpose of the project, but also my own personal story that has driven this body of research.

I consider myself to be bi-vocational. I am trained and educated in two worlds,

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid, pg. 27.

<sup>19</sup> Carl Savage and William Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry: A Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities*, Louisville, KY: Wayne E. Oates Institute, 2008. pg.74.

the sacred and the secular. I have earned a Master of Divinity and a Master of Social Work (Community Organizing and Social Administration Concentration). For many there has been a grave distinction with some believing that these two worlds should exist as completely separate and unique or others believing that they should operate and exist inextricably linked. I have worked in strictly sacred environments, (i.e., the church), in secular environments (i.e., the non-religiously based nonprofit) and in contexts where the lines were blurred and the nonprofit operated as faith-based in the community.

While I have worked, and served in positions or with organizations that operate according to the separate philosophy and those with a doctrine of interconnectedness, the end goal for each seems to be the same – to meet the needs of the people. And for me, there is no separating the two worlds. I act out of clergy identity and the call of scripture, even when I am in a nonprofit/secular environment. I act out of a civic identity even when I am in a sacred environment. The sacred side always calls me to seek to meet the needs of the people whether in the sacred or secular environment.

Given the sacred versus secular distinction that I am always faced with based on my bi-vocational training and occupation, I have a running narrative of concern and opportunity that exists in my life. I currently serve as an Associate Minister at a large mega-church in Pittsburgh, PA. I also serve as pulpit supply for various churches and denominations throughout the southwestern Pennsylvania region. However, my full-time position is as Program and Operations Manager for a local nonprofit. The mission of the nonprofit is to provide financial assistance for African American students to attend rigorous, private independent schools in the region. It is a mission that would not be accomplished, but for the effort of this particular nonprofit and the desire of a community

of individuals who identified a need for diversity in the independent school educational landscape and a need for financial access to these environments for African American students. I am asked all the time why our organization does not serve other minorities. The answer is because of racial makeup of Pittsburgh, which is primarily black and white, makes the African American the dominant minority population. Additionally, our organization is dedicated to educational equity for African American children, a historically disenfranchised group.

Often I can tangibly see the positive impact that my work in this particular nonprofit environment is having upon the end goal of meeting the needs of the people. Each year at my place of employment we are serving a greater number of African American students and awareness of the need is growing in the community. Out of this observation comes my narrative of concern and opportunity, because I often find myself focusing on these questions:

- Is this one need among many that even the church should be concerned about?
- Is this an area of service which disciples, saints, and church goers could engage? Not just to receive the scholarship dollars from the nonprofit for their child, but isn't this an issue of equality and need that should be championed and led by the church?
- Isn't the church supposed to influence the culture/world, not the other way around?
- What happened to the old church that was much more civically engaged through preaching, ministry and service? Is it that the culture of the

church has changed or that the influence of the church culture is no longer influential?

If we were to listen to the stories of this present age there are not a shortage of voices that condemn the church for its lack of involvement in the community, in addressing community issues and living up to its potential. It was stories like these that gave me cause beyond personal observation to consider this project topic a valid narrative of concern worthy of exploration. One such story was found in an article written by Michael Coard in his article published in the New Pittsburgh Courier, entitled “King’s letter from Birmingham jail exposes today’s black churches.”

In his article, Coard makes a parallel between the letter Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote from the Birmingham Jail blasting white church leaders for not supporting the nonviolent movement he was leading to address civil rights injustices faced by African Americans and the current day black church leaders’ failure to support the movements of 2016 (black lives matter, police brutality) that impact today’s African American community. While there are several questions that Coard raises in the article, the questions that lend their voice to the narrative of this project involve Coard’s blunt questioning of the pastor’s presence and voice in the midst of injustice, in the midst of a community under attack and Coard questions where that voice is given the charge of the bible, which he sees as the pastors’ marching guide.<sup>20</sup>

The following quote highlights my concern that there are a large majority of

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<sup>20</sup> Michael Coard, “King’s Letter from Birmingham Jail Exposes Today’s Black Churches,” New Pittsburgh Courier, July 20, 2016, accessed July 22, 2016, <http://newpittsburghcourieronline.com/2016/07/20/kings-letter-from-birmingham-jail-exposes-todays-black-churches/>.

churches and senior pastors who are not addressing the needs and concerns of people in 2016. It highlights the senior pastors' lack of involvement in pressing social justice matters that affect the church community and the larger community.

Coard is quoted as saying:

“Why haven’t the Black pastors (as well as the White pastors) of today’s top ten megachurches in the U.S. joined the protesters to publicly and loudly condemn the racist police murders of all unarmed Black people, including the 102 from just last year?”

Where are Joel Osteen of Lakewood, Ed Young of Second Baptist, Andy Stanley of North Point Community, Bill Hybels of Willow Creek Community, Craig Groeschel of Lifechurch.TV, Charles Blake of West Angeles Cathedral, Ed Young Jr. of Fellowship, Rick Warren of Saddleback, Bob Coy of Calvary Chapel, and T.D. Jakes of The Potter’s House and why aren’t they using their billions of dollars and vast political influence to publicly confront and expel racist police from the Black community for turning it into a den of murderers like Jesus did when he used his spiritual wealth and influence to publicly confront and expel the money changers from the temple for turning it into a den of thieves? And why hasn’t your local pastor in the Philadelphia region joined the protesters- if he or she hasn’t?

In paraphrasing Luke 12:36, I remind you, dear pastors of the megachurches, big churches, and medium-sized churches, that “To whom much is given, much is required.” Therefore, in the face of this current epidemic of white cops murdering unarmed Black folks, do what Dr. King would do. Even better, do what Jesus would do. Amen”<sup>21</sup>

Coard comes to light as one of the voices that provided motivation for this project, but the list could go on and on. No voice is more knowing than the internal voice. The motivation in ministry for this project involves my own experience in ministry and data trends that suggest the church is changing or has the ability to change/grow based on consideration of cultural dynamics. I am also motivated because I

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

recognize that the work of the church and preaching of the pastor can also be highly influenced by the region and the culture in various regions.

- Pittsburgh is a nonprofit heavy city.
- Racially, Pittsburgh is a very black and white city.
- Pittsburgh is a very Presbyterian and Baptist city.

I have noticed the difference because I am from Delaware, where the church culture, racial environment and nonprofit landscape is very different. Therefore, I contend that this makes a difference in how people serve secularly or sacredly. For example, the approach of my current senior pastor and my home church pastor is very different. My current pastor has developed a Counseling Ministry led by trained secular counseling experts. His method is to bring the secular counselor into the sacred environment. My home church pastor is a counselor for a secular nonprofit. So, he primarily addresses need in secular contexts. The question remains, how do ministries live out our biblical charge and influence the culture, when we do so in an environment where religiously unaffiliated individuals and organizations are championing the cause of addressing need as well.

Some may argue that everyone has a need or that it is a shared responsibility. Others may not even see a reason to address needs unique to the surrounding community. This project sought to determine where along that spectrum each participating pastor and church fell. The narrative of concern for the church is a “problem-saturated story (an existing negative state or condition that concerns them or a potential not yet realized)”<sup>22</sup>,

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, pg.75.

but the narrative of opportunity seen in a culturally and socially influential ministry is the “preferred, emerging story (a new state or condition that excites them and advances God’s ministry among them).”<sup>23</sup>

I would even go as far as to say that this project was designed to help us settle on a vision of an emerging church presented by Larson and Osborne in *The Emerging Church*. The book was authored in the 70’s and even at that time the church was characterized as changing, the outlooks upon its existence and relevance being a mix of hope and despair. Depending on who was telling the story, the perception of the church ranged from the church being at its worst, its best or in a state of mediocrity. What Larson and Osborne postulated then was a new approach for the 70’s that they believed would not be completely relevant for the 80’s or decades to come but that would highlight the importance of studying the emerging nature of the church in whatever time context the church might find itself.<sup>24</sup>

The benefit of this approach brings us back to the idea presented earlier that the church gave credence to a balanced consideration of past, present and future. “Whereas the heady polarities of our day seek to divide us into an either-or camp, the mark of the emerging Church will be its emphasis on both-and. For generations, we have divided ourselves into camps...The emerging Church will not choose up sides in such a fashion. Rather, it will affirm what is valuable in each emphasis, bringing together the most

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Bruce Larson, and Ralph Osborne. *The Emerging Church*. Waco: Word Inc., 1970, pg. 9-10.



helpful of the old and the best of the new, blending the dynamic of a personal Gospel with the compassion of social concern.”<sup>25</sup> Ultimately, I believe if the church is true to our call and function, we will never be fully emerged. But, in whatever temporal context we find ourselves, we will be found in the process of moving toward fulfilling the church’s calling.<sup>26</sup> And in moving toward fulfilling the church’s calling, we take our place in the beautiful tapestry that God intended for the church doing the things outlined in Matthew 25:34-35 and embracing the art of social justice again.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, pg.11.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE TATTERED PIECES**

It is one thing to have a picture of how things are supposed to go in your head and a completely different thing to be able to convey that picture to others in eliciting their participation in project work. As stated before, there are many who shy away from social justice work, work on any subject or topic that can make us or others uncomfortable. So, while I approached this project with a great deal of personal motivation, positive intentions and thorough structure, my challenge was to convince the participating pastors that the tattered pieces I presented as the basis for this project was worth their time and energy. More than just a rehearsal of the challenges in the world, this project sought to walk through concrete steps that would ultimately bring us to a place where the tattered pieces of our individual experiences would be mended into a beautiful collective tapestry.

There were successes and challenges with the project design and methodology. Most of what I set out to do in this project and the intended outcome occurred. However, there were some anticipated and unanticipated challenges, as well as, some anticipated and unanticipated successes. Reflection and evaluation served as the basis for learning, which we will explore in depth in Chapter 5, but first we must take a look at what occurred in implementing my project design and methodology.

It should first be noted that this project was not a solitary work and part of the project design and methodology was to form and engage a lay advisory committee to

assist me in critical evaluation and project design. In thinking about who I would recruit to participate as a lay advisory committee member my approach was again different from the traditional DMin project situated within the context of a church context and implemented by that church's senior pastor. Just as my project context would be different, I felt that my lay advisory committee should be different. If I was going to engage pastors from different regions, backgrounds, experiences, that same difference needed to be reflected in my lay advisory committee as well. I felt this variety would lend itself well to the desired outcome and would help in adding validity to the scope of the project.

In the initial stages of prospectus and project design, I solicited the help of four individuals to serve as Lay Advisory Committee Members. The Chairperson of the committee was Rev. April Roebuck. Rev. Roebuck was selected because she too is a bi-vocational preacher. Rev. Roebuck holds a full-time position as a program analyst, but is also a preacher and founder/Executive Director of a small nonprofit call the World Hope Initiative. Her experience as a bi-vocational minister and nonprofit work would add to the scope of the conversation I intended for the project.

Rev. Roebuck founded the World Hope Initiative because of the lack of attention given by the traditional church to the needs of the community.

“At World Hope Initiative we are a faith based nonprofit concerned with human flourishing for all people. Located in the Pittsburgh, PA area, we seek ways to give and/or restore hope in areas where hope has been lost or distorted both locally and abroad. We hope to make a difference in the world one person at a time. It is our hope that individuals will see themselves as more than conquerors through the various initiatives we provide.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> World Hope Initiative, accessed, February 10, 2016, <http://worldhopeinitiative.org>.

Also participating on the Lay Advisory Committee was Deacon Madelyn Toliver. Deacon Toliver was recruited because of her leadership role within a local congregation, background growing up during the civil rights movement era and general compassion for others. I felt that Deacon Toliver would add an alternative leadership perspective to the project work, outside that of the senior pastor.

The third Lay Advisory Committee person selected was LaShanda Lemmon-Mangham. LaShanda was chosen because of her life experience having experienced church and church culture both in Pittsburgh and in Philadelphia. Mrs. Lemmon-Mangham was able to help me to shape concrete ideas about regional differences and distinctions, as well as differences and distinctions across denomination. Mrs. Lemmon-Mangham also has experience in working with groups who are often marginalized or forgotten (different cultural groups and youth) which gave perspective to those classified in this project as in need.

The final Lay Advisory Committee person selected was Amber Morton. Mrs. Morton was chosen because she fits within a group classified as millennial, the age group who at this moment in history are highly civically engaged. Mrs. Morton is also a lower school teacher who experiences first hand some of the systematic issues that face our communities. These issues include poverty, educational equity and access, and crime to name a few. Mrs. Morton has also lived and experienced church and church culture in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Delaware. I felt all of these experiences would add depth to this project and project design.

I engaged each of the Lay Advisory Committee members through phone call or email. Each committee member received Drew University's model for the lay advisory

committee and the roles were further explained upon meeting and in individual conversations. The Lay Advisory Committee met several times: February 10, 2016, April 25, 2016, May 11, 2016, July 20, 2016 and September 25, 2016. Throughout the project the lay advisory committee offered project feedback and helped with problem solving based on challenges that arose. Committee members also read my prospectus and completed a survey on their own thoughts regarding the project subject focus. The committee was an essential sounding board and resource for this project.

Once I had the support and feedback of the Lay Advisory Committee I was then able to recruit and engage the senior pastors. Each was chosen because of personal connection to the candidate and regional experiences as a senior pastor. In recruiting, I emailed all the pastors, outlining the goals of the project and requesting the pastoral commitment and participation. I followed that initial email with a conversation to ensure the pastors understood the goals of the project. Next, I provided guiding questions for the conversations in advance of the meetings. These questions were shared in Chapter Three. Finally, the conversations with each pastor were arranged individually for conversations one and three and collectively for conversation two. Each conversation was intended to range from thirty minutes to an hour in length. Each of the pastors were given guiding questions, but were also free to share additional information.

There are several challenges that are worth mentioning in relation to what happened when I implemented my project design and methodology. The responsibilities of ministry for the pastors led to rescheduled conversations dates, but the interviews were completed according to the timeline presented in the prospectus. Rescheduling impacted the second conversation most. Only two of the participating pastors were able to be

participate in the conversation together. This meant that the other conversations had to be done individually, as opposed to collectively as originally designed. While the same questions were asked when questioned individually, it still would have been more beneficial to have all of the pastors on the call for the second conversation.

Also, one of the Pastors completed the first conversation and the site visit, but did not respond for completion of the project in entirety. As a result, that participant had to be replaced. To do so I elicited the help of the Lay Advisory Committee and was able to secure a final participant. However, recruiting the replacement pastor was a challenge simply because that meant the conversations with the fourth pastor would not follow the timeline outlined in the prospectus.

I was pleased that ultimately, the sample group of pastoral participants was representative of different regions from east to west coast, north to south, different age groups and different denominations. I was, however, disappointed that there were difficulties in recruiting female pastors to participate, which would have allowed for an even more diverse study. The difficulty lay in the inability to find female senior pastors who have pastored more than one church and in more than one region.

The female pastors who were approached about participation were concerned about participating in the project because their congregations were conservative and it seemed as though the mention of social justice brought out a sense of fear or reluctance to be involved. This encounter alone gave validity to the project thesis. Simply in the process of participant recruitment I was able to highlight how some pastors do not want to be involved in social justice or community work for whatever reason.

I continued with project implementation and was able to complete all the first conversations with all of the original pastors by the end of April. This allowed me then to arrange a site visit during the month of May for all the original participating pastors. The replacement pastor's conversations and site visit took place in June and July. For some of the site visits I was formally acknowledged, for some I simply blended in as any other visitor. For some of the site visits I was also shown around the city and introduced to congregants or residents. For some site visits I explored the city and engaged individuals as I chose. While none of the sermons during the site visits seemed explicitly tailored toward social justice because of my presence, they all seemed to be tinged with some element of social justice, which seemed more natural to each pastor's style and intent.

The second and third conversations took place in May, June and July. The timing for these again was slightly later than originally designed because of the rescheduling and the need to replace one of the participants. At the conclusion of the project I met again with the Lay Advisory committee and discussed project successes and challenges.

Ultimately the project spurred deliberate reflection among the pastors and each has begun to plan with social justice and community need in mind. The project was also an encouragement to many of the pastors, particularly those who are heavily engaged in social justice ministry. They expressed the need for the research and project work. The project was important in its impact on the pastors who participated. It challenged pastors to consider the purpose and effectiveness of its ministry.

For instance, the questions asked as a part of the project caused one pastor to reflect. Upon reflection, he realized that he engaged in social justice ministry as an

obligation, but realized that this was not his passion. Another pastor realized that one of his ministry goals were to help his congregation recognize the difference between social justice work and outreach. The project has also had a positive impact on me in that I could determine the extent to which social justice work was valued in different regions by different ministerial leaders. Consequently, I was better able to take steps toward making a plan that helps the pastors bridge the gap between social justice action and the church.

Throughout the project, from pre-project implementation to post-project implementation, all of the project participants noted the necessity of the work of social justice and the pastors' role in that. Some highlighted a specific plan to get their congregation involved. Some participants offered suggestions on how I could facilitate a long-term relationship and larger impact, for example, by convening a regular meeting of pastors across regions and denominations.

With each conversation during the project, with the participating pastors and lay advisory committee, another tattered piece of the tapestry was reframed and added to the rag rug. The thread that begins to bring the tattered pieces of project design, methodology and results together into a beautiful tapestry is what was learned as a result of the conversations and site visits.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE UNRAVELED EDGES

The project question was: **Given the biblical charge of Matthew 25:34-40 how many churches are equipped to provide and actively engage in social justice ministry that identifies and serves the needs of the people and is social justice a responsibility still proclaimed from the pulpits? Is ministry being designed as if this is the primary concern of Jesus?** What I have learned then is that culturally and socially influential ministry is not a relic of the past or a figment of some future reality, but it is an ever emerging goal and responsibility of the church individually, pastorally, and collectively.

In the ministry contexts, there were several running themes among the participating pastors when looking at what serves as the basis of interpretation for the narrative of concern. Those themes include: ownership of the responsibility of social justice participation by the congregation; the business of the pastor and the parishioners and the need for partnership. According to the collective voice and response of the participating pastors, all of these things were major determining factors of the extent of their ministry context's social and cultural influence.

Each of the congregations and pastors had a dominant discourse (a preferred story), which was neatly packaged in the pastoral bios and church histories that were

shared earlier, but through the conversations and site visits, each also had a shadow script. “Shadow scripts are those alternative internal (though not unconscious) plans that do not square with the dominant script, and are opposite from it.”<sup>1</sup>

For Baptist Temple, the dominant discourse was that the church has a history of doing charity ministry and championing the senior pastor who is involved in social justice work. The shadow script, however, was that while the church did well at charity ministry they have not fully invested in taking up the mantle of social justice ministry leaving that task solely to the senior pastor.

The distinction between charity ministry and social justice ministry was described by Pastor Lyde. He indicated that charity work is to be described as the reaction to issues and symptoms. For instance, when someone is hungry there is a food pantry. When someone is homeless the church gives benevolence. Justice on the other hand, according to Pastor Lyde, is when we ask what caused the hunger and homelessness and we try to fix the systemic issues. For over 50 years Lyde says Baptist Temple Church has done charity – benevolence to members and non-members, block parties, clothing drives, food drives. Baptist Temple had been used to charity. What he has brought through his leadership is this idea and emphasis on social justice work. So, while Baptist Temple Church sees itself as seasoned and experienced in the work of the community, it is better described as their pastor describes as being seasoned in charity and growing in social justice work.

What I learned through conversation with Pastor Lyde about this particular

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Savage and William Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry: A Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities*. Louisville, KY: Wayne E. Oates Institute, 2008. pg.79.

congregation and possibly others, is that many churches are very involved and forward in their charity work. Charity work in most cases produces an immediate or demonstrative result that makes people feel good. Charity work is the thing that makes for a good shadow script. However, Pastor Lyde pointed out that you do not get the same feeling or immediate result when you do justice work.

Justice work can produce a lot of flak, which perhaps is why in the case of Baptist Temple Church and I suspect, many others, congregants love their pastors being champions of certain causes and doing social justice work. This delineation between charity and social justice is an idea echoed by Dorian O. Burton and Brian C.B. Barnes in an article entitled *Shifting Philanthropy from Charity to Justice*. The trouble with promoting charity over justice is “charity might relieve guilt and help some people sleep better, but it produces no reflection on either the genesis or perpetuation of inequality.”<sup>2</sup> Lyde, however, emphasized that you do not tackle issues of justice just having the pastor as sole champion; it requires bodies and the people of Baptist Temple Church being involved in these issues to facilitate justice work.

Pastor Lyde was the most forward pastor in owning the responsibility of social justice work and clearly integrating the work in both his preaching, the ministry of the church and in the community. Pastor Lyde’s analysis of the church and the role in social justice ministry gave validity to this work. I found a common voice of agreement that being culturally and socially relevant is still very much needed in the church. Pastor Lyde felt that it is our role (pastors and people) to analyze the work and approach of the

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<sup>2</sup> Dorian O. Burton and Brian C.B. Barnes, “Shifting Philanthropy from Charity to Justice,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, January 3, 2017, accessed January 5, 2017, [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/shifting\\_philanthropy\\_from\\_charity\\_to\\_justice#bio-footer](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/shifting_philanthropy_from_charity_to_justice#bio-footer).

church on the level of social justice. Without doing so, Pastor Lyde said we run the risk of being “poverty pimps” who make our name and money from doing charity work.

Pastor Lyde believes decline in the pews in organized religion is due to what is our perception of our lack of relevance in the justice world and people perceive the church as only concerned with its own institutional survival.

So, to answer the project question, Baptist Temple Church is poised in this moment in history and under the current leadership to address social justice issues. Baptist Temple Church under the direction of Pastor Lyde has taken on sermon and bible study foci that seeks to shift the congregation from mere charity work to social justice work. Each sermon is developed in collaboration with a small group of pastors. Every sermon has a directional component – always helping the church to turn in their understanding or pivot in their understanding. This is what Pastor Lyde says is needed in justice work, mobilizing the congregation.

So, he takes his time in helping the whole church understand his focus. He then preaches in a series because sometimes the church may not grasp the focus after just one sermon. Within the last year he has even shifted his sermon approach so that now in every sermon Pastor Lyde tries to address some level of distinction between charity and justice. This means that application of the sermon and theological thought and application of the exegesis becomes critical. So, the planning and development of a sermon series is critical to think through how it works in real time.

I have learned through the participation of Baptist Temple Church that social justice is still being preached. What’s more, I have found that with this particular church social justice preaching, teaching and action is indeed key to the church reclaiming its

history and embracing its present and future of being a culturally and socially influential ministry in a culturally and civically responsible world. Baptist Temple then begins to change its shadow script from social justice merely being embodied by only by the senior pastor. The church as a whole begins to embody the work of social justice, the church grows in that area, the community benefits from that growth and the church local and universal is one step closer to ownership of the biblical mandate to care for the least of these.

Pastor Lyde is a self-described social justice pastor. It was clear through conversation and the site visit that social justice and the community were a top priority for Pastor Lyde. As suspected, I learned that this description or role is one that the pastor and/or church must own. When it comes to social justice work there are clear parameters set by the pastor about how involved in social justice work they will be.

Pastor Lyde began to make the distinction and shift after a member at one of his pastorates set up a meeting with him. This meeting according to Lyde was odd because the parishioner only came to church once every quarter. The parishioner expressed that on his job he was being reprimanded for trying to start a union. The parishioner was on the verge of being fired and he was there seeking Pastor Lyde's help. At the time, all Pastor Lyde could do was pray for the parishioner. Because his help did not seem quite tangible, Pastor Lyde was led to begin to think differently about how he should pastor and how he should help people have power.

It was based on Pastor's Lyde's sermons that the parishioner was inspired to stand up to the powers that be at his job. The parishioner felt it was God's call not to be quiet. This convicted Pastor Lyde because in his meeting Pastor Lyde suggested the parishioner

back down. Pastor Lyde concluded that if this man could risk his job for a need in the community, then it was his role as a pastor and someone whose salary is not impacted by a secular entity to speak truth to power. Through this experience, Pastor Lyde shifted to a social justice pastor.

His pastoral charge first and foremost is to lead the church in accomplishing the mission of the church, which is the great commission: to make disciples. Pastor Lyde further makes his aim clear by delineating his chief responsibilities: preaching, teaching, marrying, burying, visiting the sick and shut-in/members, prayer and doing social justice work. Key to this project and discussion is that for Pastor Lyde social justice work is not omitted as a responsibility of the pastor or the focus of the church. So, there are churches and pastors that are still upholding the mantle of historic involvement in the community and look to continue that responsibility.

For Mother Zion, the dominate discourse was that the church is historically grounded in the work of famous abolitionist and civil rights leaders, however, the shadow script is that such notable ministry work and connections do not reach much beyond the civil rights era. In fact, what the church has been noted for most recently is clash between church members and visiting tourist. A trend has long been occurring where the congregation on any given Sunday at Mother Zion are the hundreds of foreign visitors who through the tourist groups have come in search of the gospel experience. The problem and shadow script highlighted by an Ebony magazine article, however, is that often there is unfair monetary gain for the tourist groups. Furthermore, it is argued that the foreign visitors are disrespectful, leaving the service during the sermon and not following the direction of the ushers. This has created a shadow script of hostility and

highlighted the potential to cultivate and address the needs of a more global community at Mother Zion.<sup>3</sup> Mother Zion's shadow script was much less illustrious than the picture they paint in the written history.

Thus, the challenge of current senior pastoral leadership is to help the congregation recognize its current dominant discourse and to help them create a dominant discourse that more closely aligns with the opportunity that is currently before the congregation. And I learned in this context that this can be done even when the senior pastor does not personally hold social justice work as his primary passion and desired focus.

What I learned from Pastor Chapple and Mother Zion is that just because social justice work and meeting community need is a personal passion and life's work, it does not necessarily mean that social justice must be that for others. I found with Pastor Chapple that there may be other skills and passions that are just as biblically valid to the health of the church and community. Pastor Chapple pointed out to me that while he recognizes community need, often social justice work and community need can be the all-consuming project of the church. Social justice work and ministry often becomes the default ministry of the pastor and/or church because the needs of the people and community are so ever-present and pressing and urgent, that the work becomes a necessity for the pastor, but may not be a passion. For Pastor Chapple, he engages in social justice work and preaching because he must, but his passion and desired focus is on developing preachers and pastors. In this I learned that we may all share similar

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<sup>3</sup> Teamebony, "Harlem Church is Tourist Attraction: The Clash Between Tourists and Members Plays Out Every Sunday," *Ebony Magazine*, March 9, 2016, accessed July 20, 2016. <http://www.ebony.com/news-views/harlem-church-is-a-tourist-attraction#axzz4NwOEifJR>.

concerns, but not every senior pastor, not every church will carry the same level of concern or involvement with the community.

The conversations with Pastor Chapple highlighted the necessity of living in an accurate dominant discourse because while Mother Zion is a historic church, with historic civil rights ties, key to the future of the church is identifying what the church has accomplished recently. Is there anything since Harriett Tubman or Fredrick Douglass, that has been impactful in the church or larger community? The church is flooded Sunday after Sunday by the diverse visitors from all over the world and while this could be a new and unique opportunity for ministry it has not been fully embraced as such. For Mother Zion then, defining community and measuring impact is important in analyzing the relevance of the congregation as compared to the secular nonprofit. Perhaps it is taboo to think of the church and its ministry in such quantitative and qualitative terms, but I have learned with Mother Zion that this might be the key to this church understanding its current role and capacity in social justice work.

I also learned from Mother Zion that denomination and church structure can also impact how involved the pastor or congregation is social justice work and how relevant the congregation perceives itself as. Pastor Chapple described Mother Zion as ultra-traditional in its worship. The church has had a great legacy of community involvement and social political advocacy, but in recent history the outreach has been minimal. It has been more like cameo outreach. For instance, if Al Sharpton had a political breakfast, then the church would send the pastor to attend, but there is no involvement from the congregation.

This is similar to the idea presented by Pastor Lyde that churches like the pastor



to be the figure head. According to this example, typically there would be no indicators in the community or to community that Mother Zion was engaged in the political breakfast or valued such community work. So, like my observation of the dominant discourse and shadow script there is some level of disconnect between Mother Zion and its surrounding community of Harlem and larger New York. The denominational structure of the church further feeds this disconnect and the shadow script because while the congregation can't say there is direct outreach or direct initiative by the church, the larger church structure supports political causes, collects money for global initiatives. In this I see an easy way for the local church structure to absent itself from the local community or direct initiatives.

While it may not be happening now, Pastor Chapple was keen in identifying needs that the church could address. The needs named by Pastor Chapple include: the need for children to have a place of refuge - Mother Zion sold its community center and bought a brownstone to address this need on a smaller scale. According to Chapple there was also a need for advocacy for homeowners and renters in the borough of Manhattan because Harlem is being gentrified. Landlords are trying to force people out of their apartments and brownstones so that they can improve the brownstones and attract new people that will pay more. This was validated by several articles on gentrification in Harlem that I came across in doing a separate community study. Finally, Pastor Chapple felt Harlem is in need of space where educational projects could be pursued, such as, tutoring and teaching English. So, while the approach and level of engagement is very much different if I were to compare Pastor Lyde and Baptist Temple to Pastor Chapple and Mother Zion, there is not a lack of understanding of community need by the senior

pastors.

Pastor Chapple echoed my idea that Sankofa is key to the cultural and socially relevant church. Pastor Chapple through conversation has said that at Mother Zion there is a need to reclaim what the church has done historically. Mother Zion is an old congregation with most of its members being over the age of 60. So, many according to Pastor Chapple, want to rest on their legacy. However, he has tried to create transformation through preaching. Preaching sermons that speak to the fact that churches are about outreach, involvement and touching the lives of people wherever we find their lives to be. I have learned with Mother Zion that although the road may seem a little longer for this congregation when it comes to social justice work, there is a willingness of the congregation to move in that direction. But in order for transformation to take place, Mother Zion will have to take ownership and pride in their legacy.

As a result of not having a second and third conversation with Pastor Wrisley, I have less to share regarding First Presbyterian Church. However, First Presbyterian Church is a fairly affluent church, nestled in a poor community. The church is civically engaged, however, there is a blending of culture and church. At the same time the church values global mission over local mission. The shadow script for this congregation is while it is known for being engaged and connected to the community that connection comes with a tinge of an inward, consumer focus that could be explained by a blending of church and culture. For the church, it can be hard to be culturally and socially influential when your aim and perhaps unconscious action seeks to blend with culture in a chameleon type fashion.

First Presbyterian, according to its pastor, has a good reputation in the

community. The church is known for its financial support of some local missions. What I have learned with this congregation is that there are times when in order to be truly impactful and distinctive in the larger community, you must first live out community within the church. This church had a reputation for being siloed and cliquish. With First Presbyterian, it isn't so much the lack of community fostered or identified outside of the church, it is what goes on within the walls of the church that speak more poignantly to the need to address community need and for First Presbyterian that community need begins with the congregation.

Pastor Wrisley pointed out that the church wanted to continue clear distinctions and descriptors of the First Presbyterian Church community. So, there was pressure on the senior pastor for clear stands on issues like homosexuality, ordination, gay marriage. First Presbyterian Church also has served the homeless, but Pastor Wrisley pointed out that whether it is within the church or outside of the church, this church needs to understand the benefit of sweat equity and being with each other and for each other beyond disagreement and beyond throwing money at the problems that exist.

Pastor Wrisley shares a common issue with Pastor Chapple. Given the older age of his congregation he has not been able to elicit a great deal of energy from them and many feel that they have done their time. Pastor Wrisley highlighted also that there is not a lot of partnership between churches, particularly across racial lines. In DeLand many of the black and white churches stay to themselves. And Pastor Wrisley has found that the church now competes not with other churches or denominations for the time and energy of the parishioner, but the competition is the YMCA or Sunday sports. This speaks to my belief that other entities are seen as more relevant and more responsive to

perceived need and here we see that that is the case whether the need is physical, emotional or social. This is something that the church needs to be intentional about. I do not believe the church needs to become the next social or emotional outlet, but the church/the senior pastor needs to be aware of the kinds of needs the community seeks to have addressed.

Often, when there is a discussion about social justice or how the church can help to address the needs of the community, the assumption is that the black church is addressing the needs of the black community or the white church is addressing the needs of minority communities. What I have witnessed are suburban churches trying to address urban needs, even though I contend those same needs exist manifested in a different way in suburban and rural communities as well.

I make mention of this distinction because The Christian Church of Philadelphia provided another lens to my reality. The Christian Church of Philadelphia is a predominately African American church in Philadelphia, but is distinct in that the church is located in an affluent part of the city, Chestnut Hill. The Christian Church of Philadelphia can be seen as a family church meaning many of the members are related or have grown over time to consider each other as family. What is unique about this congregation is that the current pastor, Alexander Houston is the son of the former pastor and founder who still attends the church.

This bit of history presents an interesting shadow script. The church had a dominant story under the founding pastor that highlighted community within the church. People would give of their time, talent, and resources to do charity, to ensure a debt free church house, to care for the sick and shut-in. There was and is no denying that there is a

dominant story of community for The Christian Church of Philadelphia. However, the shadow script is a little more subtle and is beginning to show itself now that the church is under the direction of the younger Houston.

The church has gone through a lot of attrition with the deaths of older members and also younger members relocating for various reasons. The parishioners see acquiring more members as the solution to this issue. So, the dominant story is that the Christian Church of Philadelphia is a church in a thriving community and with a thriving membership. The shadow script is that the church is at a point in history where they need to revisit what it means to be a community, both internally and externally.

What does it mean to be a community if there is attrition through death, but young people are not taking on leadership roles within the church? That speaks to the perceived necessity and value in that. What does it mean if traditionally many of the members drive or bus in, but rarely does someone from the surrounding, affluent neighborhood engage the church? This speaks to a perception either that the neighbors of the church do not see The Christian Church of Philadelphia as a community that is open and welcoming to them or there is a lack of desire.

Pastor Houston has identified this shadow script and I have learned that his approach is to rebuild and strengthen the church community. He believes when the church is a safe, life giving space, people will want to be there and you won't have to use a bunch of gimmicks to get people to attend church. His focus, therefore, is on love, forgiveness and community. He has introduced more service opportunities so that the church can become more mission minded and less numbers focused. The church has thus been involved in more community service efforts like adopting a homeless shelter,

mentoring, and feeding the homeless.

Pastor Houston has also focused his efforts on the environment: how is the Christian Church of Philadelphia loving and supporting one another. The result over the last six months has been the growth that the parishioners reminisced about and desired, but was not initially a part of their dominant story.

To many looking from the outside in, Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church would probably be described as an affluent, white suburban congregation which uses its financial resources to reach the community, but remains removed from the messiness and concerns of others outside of that community. This certainly was my impression as a Baptist minister who attended a Presbyterian Seminary, lived in the urban areas of Pittsburgh and rarely traveled to this neighboring suburban area.

This perception changed for me when I took a position at Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church after seminary. It was only then that I got to know the people and the ministry of the church. So, I was happy to engage Pastor Chris Taylor for this project. With Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church the dominant story depends on who you ask and how close you are to the congregation. The shadow script for this congregation is that community perception can have an impact on how a church is able to serve the community.

Even after working for Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church, I didn't fully understand how mission minded this particular church has been. While Fox Chapel does some of the charity work described by Pastor Lyde, many of the issues that they have gone on to address through ministry have had a statewide and even national impact. And it is this type of systemic change that speaks to the essence of social justice and measurable

impact on the community.

What I have learned about this ministry context is that they helped to create the CHIP Program, providing health insurance for uninsured children and that model became a model for the state and national program. This ministry need was identified only after talking to steel workers who had been laid off and were in need of health care coverage for their children. Through partnerships with school counselors they began to identify children who were not eating and so they started a backpack program. The church fills backpacks with food for children in need and the counselors help to distribute that food. This ministry initiative began in the elementary schools in the area and has since expanded to the high schools.

In the last 10 years Fox Chapel, has also focused on developing a palliative care organization, which recognizes and addresses the lack of palliative/hospice care for children and this effort has become a statewide organization. In addition to this, Pastor Taylor says that many of the parishioners are involved with local nonprofits like the women's shelter, Big Brother Big Sister. This supports the idea that there is a very high value on missions' work at Fox Chapel. Through this experience I learned that sometimes the shadow script can be imposed by the community and the true dominant story can be overshadowed by personal perception.

There is a role for those in the community to identify their needs, but part of addressing those needs is creating a safe environment where those needs can be shared and addressed. The church should also empower the other and not create the type of unhealthy dependence that just giving money creates.

What I learned through conversation with Pastor Taylor is that for him it is

relationship with Christ and it is Christ who changes lives. Christ gives us a love or desire for the other. And so, for Pastor Taylor sometimes social justice foci can replace this biblical focus, but the positive, even in this, is that lives are being touched and people are being cared for. In other words, it's that symbiotic relationship where we all have something positive to add to the community.

It was refreshing to hear from Pastor Taylor that what the church can learn from the past and current historic trends in this civically responsible world is that the church is capable of getting it wrong – the church got it wrong on issues of slavery, the role of women, and on race. But key in those situations was that there were always voices in the church speaking up. So, the church, the senior pastor, even in this time can speak up. Pastor Taylor feels there will always be different understandings of what God intends, but ultimately God invites us to learn what it means to love one another even if we conflict with one another. Pastor Taylor said it, and I concur, those voices that challenge us we need to listen to them, that is what history has taught us, i.e., abolitionists movements, etc. Through this project and work, I wanted to be a voice that challenges the church and the senior pastor.

I have learned through this project that perhaps the greatest indication of how impactful the church is on the larger community is just how impactful the church is in its own church community. *Steve and Cheri Saccone in Protégé: Developing Your Next Generation of Church Leaders* introduce this idea that salvation and conversion is not just an individual conversion, but that an individual is converted and embraced within a community. Salvation then becomes a communal way of existing and living out the discipleship process. It is then the community that helps to shape our ways of being.



This is why it was important for the senior pastors to describe their church communities and for me to look closely at the shadow scripts because the church environment for better or worse shapes people's ways of being. If there is a shadow script in the churches' ways of being I am sure there is a shadow script in the ways in which the community, then engages the larger community. Perhaps the church has even learned over time that blending with culture or being completely separated and unattached from the community's needs is a proper way of being.

Each church had a dominant discourse and a shadow script and each pastor embraced the painful realities of these shadow scripts allowing the opportunity for the emerging of a new dominant discourse. This project was designed to look at the stories that are told of the church, of the pastor and of the community and to do so allowing dominant discourse and shadow scripts to rise naturally to the surface. It is with this approach that we acknowledge our individual roles/stories as unraveled edges in what we want to be included in God's beautiful tapestry.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE THREAD THAT RUNS THROUGH

Merriam-Webster’s dictionary provides two definitions of a thread as “a group of filaments twisted together, or a filamentous length formed by spinning and twisting short textile fibers into a continuous strand”<sup>1</sup>. The alternative definition offered by the Merriam-Webster’s dictionary – “a line of reasoning or train of thought that connects the parts in a sequence;”<sup>2</sup> this project encompasses both. The project question presented earlier, the proposed prospectus, the pastoral conversations, site visits, and subsequent reflection and evaluation, all work together towards creating a beautiful tapestry of what it looks like to meet community need. The thread that runs through then takes what I have learned and helps the reader to see what I see. The thread that runs through gives us eyes to see how the ideas and findings of this project apply to the general practice of ministry to the benefit to all.

The thread in this project according to both definitions is the interconnectedness that ties every pastor, every congregation, and every region in this project. The connection in experiencing some social justice issue; the connection in recognizing the need for partnership within the church, church community and larger community is the

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<sup>1</sup> “Thread,” Merriam Webster, accessed January 8, 2017, [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/thread](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/thread).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

twisted filament defined by the dictionary. The train of thought that rose from each conversation indicating there is still vitality in the church, there is still an eye and heart for the social justice work and meeting the needs of the people according to biblical mandate is the continuous train of thought as defined by the dictionary. These are the threads of which I speak in this project. Not only through this project have I found indeed that community (church community and larger community) matters for the sample of senior pastors, I have been in conversation with and congregations I have engaged, but I have also found that each has engaged in a plan to execute the ministry work that yet needs to be done.

I believe that insights from this project can apply to ministry in general and across the breadth and length of this country and even the world. It gives us insight into how similar methods would be beneficial and applicable to those who practice and lead ministry on a pastoral level, on a regional level for those who are searching for comparatives by region and ecclesiastically for those who simply seek to strengthen the work of the church and partnership with the secular nonprofit.

At the outset of this project, I suspected that the project aim and focus could have been dismissed and discounted. There could have been a complete failure when it came to getting the buy in of the participating pastors/congregations. Certainly, there is that ongoing desire to keep church and state (which in this case, I am considering the secular nonprofit) separate. There are the ongoing arguments that the church is antiquated and irrelevant. All of these are mitigating factors as to whether we can say that this project has been successful or has wider implications for those who might read and replicate the work presented here.

The findings of this project answers the project questions in the affirmative and finds its cohesion in the work of James Fowler and his faith development theory.

“Fowler addresses concerns that are central and abiding in religious education and pastoral care and in our own lives of faith. In order to carry out the fundamental tasks of care and education in communities of faith, and even to understand our lives, we require some overall conception of the life of faith. We need to have some clarity about what the qualities and characteristics of living in faith are. Our conception of the life of faith provides basic clues for what we can and are called to hope for ourselves and for one another. It helps us to articulate who we think we are, what we think we are doing, and where we think we are going. It helps us to see both where we have been and where we are heading as well as where others may be along the way. We all know that human beings grow and change and become what they were not. So a conception of the life of faith invariably includes some markings of its major turning points and transitions, mapping out the contours of the journey.”<sup>3</sup>

Throughout this project I have hypothesized that Matthew 25:34-40 is a worthy biblical and faith basis and guiding thread that can be used by the church universal, the church local and the individual towards the care of the other and the larger community. While at this time we are at a place in history where there are those who do not use faith as a basis for determining their care for the other and the community, this could also mark a time when the church becomes revitalized by the call of faith, the history of the church and the opportunity for a symbiotic partnership with the secular nonprofit.

Our conception of faith as a result of this project has the potential to mark another major turning point and transition in history where the church and

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<sup>3</sup> Craig Dykstra, and Sharon Parks, *Faith Development and Fowler*, Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1986, pg.2.

ministry, again and anew, becomes culturally and socially influential. This newness comes about to the degree that community building takes place. Community building is – “continuous, self-renewing efforts by residents and professionals to engage in collective action, aimed at problem solving and enrichment, that creates new or strengthened social networks, new capabilities for group action and support, and new standards and expectations for the life of the community.”<sup>4</sup> This newness takes place, also as social action, which is – “an enabling process through which individuals or communities take control over their lives and their environment.”<sup>5</sup>

To answer the question directly, what I have learned finds application to the general practice of ministry on the pastoral level through suggestions offered by several of the pastors in conversation number 2. Pastor Chapple suggests that the role of the pastor in leading the congregation to address needs require pastors to assess their pastoral charge, pastoral approach and perceived level of pastoral authority. All of the participating pastors expressed that this project was a welcome interruption to the normal routine and steady demand of ministry work. For many, this project offered an opportunity to reflect and align pastoral charge, vision and ministry. So, it points to the need for pastoral leaders to not only take time to plan sermons and plan the church calendar, but to plan designated times of personal assessment and recalibration.

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<sup>4</sup> Minkler, Meredith. *Community Organizing and Community Building for Health*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006, pg. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pg. 26.

Generally speaking, pastors have the opportunity to direct and focus the lens of the congregation as a whole, as well as, being able to direct the involvement of individuals. Where the pastor focuses the lens can change how people see the needs of the community. So, if the pastor does not have a focus for the needs of the community, then it can be concluded that the congregation will not have a focus for the community. The alternative outcome is a divided focus within the church where the parishioners value community outreach as a means to exercise their faith and energy, while the pastors do not see the value.

Pastor Chapple illustrates the necessity of awareness in the following example. He highlighted in conversation 2 that Mother Zion Church is a pastor center congregation, whether for good or naught. He uses his pastoral authority and awareness of the pastoral centered dynamic to have the congregation focus on a matrix of activities. When it comes to social justice issues in the Harlem community, he has the entire congregation work with social justice organizations in the community and then he assigns congregants and clergy to address social justice issues in those areas. This is the way he, as pastor, moves the congregation from merely reminiscing about their underground railroad history to being engaged again in social justice ministry.

While I sited a very specific example here, it is an example and an approach on the pastoral level that can help the church universal. When I began the project, and began recruiting pastors, there were some pastors who decided not to participate because they felt their churches were too conservative, they didn't preach explicitly about social justice and social justice was equated with

urban, which some of their congregations weren't. My attempt to engage the pastors who decided not to participate is the counter example to the participating pastors who freely embraced an evaluation and engagement of their pastoral authority, pastoral approach and pastoral charge.

I believe social justice issues, being culturally and socially influential ministries are concerns of the church as a whole, not just those led by African-Americans and not just those who pastor the economically disadvantaged or those in urban centers. This is a discussion and a ministry responsibility for all pastors, demonstrating the distinction between how different pastors embrace and accept that responsibility highlights the potential benefit and opportunity for others.

Pastor Lyde has echoed my sentiments that the barriers to the church being engaged in social justice work is when pastors do not see the value, do not view social justice work as fundamental to pastoral work as preaching, teaching and visiting, and when pastors are not well-versed in the theology and scriptural underpinnings of social justice work. This project is a clarion call to the pastor and the church regardless of region that this is not just a simple suggestion for church programming, rather, it is a demand of faith and scripture.

On the ecclesiastical level, based on pastoral leadership and direction, the parishioners are then equipped and engaged to do the work that demonstrates the church's care for the community and care for the neighbor. For Pastor Houston, the key to getting the Christian Church of Philadelphia involved in social justice work was to shift the model of pastor only as the social justice champion. His message to the congregation was that the pastor cannot do everything. Pastor

Houston began by helping the church to identify like-minded organizations to partner with and supporting the parishioners in the work of ministry with these partners.

It has been said that the church is irrelevant, that the church does not do anything. The church does not address real, systemic need. Mobilization of parishioners, equipping parishioners to do the work, motivating the parishioners through the Word is a way to change this. It is one way to broaden the impact of the church in general and that is what this project has highlighted. Pastor Lyde and Pastor Taylor pointed out several pieces of advice for both the pastor seeking to operate according to pastoral charge and the parishioners who live out Matthew 25:34-40.

Pastor Lyde believes the key to social justice involvement is organizing, which requires sustained effort over a long haul. Organizing requires relationship building, leadership development, education, building power and the planning of actions and activities for people to get engaged. Pastor Taylor believes if pastors are involved and hope to impact the congregation, then two big pieces to being effective are trust and time. The result then is parishioners get involved and that momentum builds. Or in my words, the church begins to serve the community like it has in the past or like it needs to for the future.

The message we hear that is of particular benefit to the practice of ministry in general, as a result of this project is that - while the task of addressing the multitude of systemically created needs of the community can seem like an insurmountable task for the church, it is not. The way it becomes a surmountable



task is when both pastor and people are engaged and operating according to faith, or in other words, when we see faith in action.

The project design was very intentional because I wanted to demonstrate to the reader that social justice issues exist beyond regional boundaries, across decades, denomination and race. The pastoral participants' experiences all over this country and their subsequent recounting of those experiences for this project demonstrates that. Two of the pastors who participated in this project pastor here in Pittsburgh. Their paths do not cross often; they serve in two different denominations and serve very different parishioners. Yet, there assessment of the nonprofit community in Pittsburgh had some common themes.

For Pastor Lyde, Pittsburgh is a development minded, civic community with a progressive agenda set by the Mayor. That agenda is focused on developing a kind of international city. This includes building a broader economy inclusive of and shared by all Pittsburghers. Lyde feels the region is struggling with managing this growth and development, but not leaving other populations behind. Pittsburgh has been addressing issues like affordable housing amid development, structural changes with regards to policing and fighting for a living wage for all workers. Pastor Taylor describes the Pittsburgh nonprofit community as a patchwork quilt. He has experienced a city with all kinds of different efforts done by local nonprofits, local foundations, individuals and the church.

The region benefits when pastors understand and are involved in what is going on in their own communities and individuals they can use as allies in the fight to address need. Pastor Taylor feels there is no one dominant entity, but

many different types of entities engaged in this work and a lot is being accomplished. Understanding regional dynamics and needs has helped me to shape ministry and in most cases, it has done the same for participating pastors.

Just as preachers are taught to exegete the text, the people, and the context, the same approach applies to this social justice work and the church. The general practice of ministry and its effectiveness is strengthened when we apply insights on a pastoral, ecclesiastical and regional level. There is a thread that moves us beyond reflection to action, beyond what is merely good for the individual to what is good for the community and beyond what is good for the community to what is good for the church. There is a thread that runs through that makes its contribution to the beautiful tapestry.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **THE BEAUTIFUL TAPESTRY: THE BEAUTIFUL TRANSFORMATION**

The fruit of most of God's work can be seen in the change and transformation of those things and people touched by God. Think about Saul and Paul, the woman with the issue of blood, Joseph in the pit and Joseph in the palace, Jeremiah the reluctant prophet, David the little shepherd boy and David the King, Lazarus raised from the dead, Mary virgin yet divine mother. The list could go on and on. The point is, all were touched by God. They all were changed by God. They all had a place and purpose in the divine story that was the intent of God. No matter how messy, how challenging, how daunting, how unnecessary or how persistent their issues, dispositions and circumstances were, God still chose them to be part of the beautiful tapestry that is to be considered God's creation. Even during a time filled with competing stories, false prophets and competing messiahs, Christ came that the world might experience a living savior that is yet in the world today. A savior that is able to give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, wholeness to the broken, hope to those in despair, forgiveness to the repentant, shelter to the homeless, food to the hungry and water to the thirsty. Christ came that we might be witnesses to Christ changing work in the world and active disciples in continuing to carry out the same work.

Dr. Duncan helped me to see that each of the biblical examples/descriptors given above were instances where Jesus offered an opportunity for the individuals involved to connect with God. It was always an invitation for that interconnectedness. Their

limitation was an opportunity for God's intervention and ultimately a demonstration of the power and potential for change when God is involved in our lives. When we view community need through this lens it helps us to focus on the opportunity and not the challenge. The church has a tremendous opportunity to reconnect people with God.

This project has the potential to impact how the work of ministry is done across the globe. The change that we await for tomorrow, starts by efforts the participating pastors have devoted to this work, as well as to the work of the kingdom. Each, through this project, has identified the number one social justice issue that serves as the basis for their ministry work. And in putting their faith and pastoral charge into action I see change and transformation in these ministry contexts. I see not just the loose strings, knots, unraveled edges, and thread. I also see the beautiful tapestry and this means that when it comes to social justice, the church can be impactful again.

Pastor Houston has chosen to focus much of his ministry work on the redistribution of wealth. Based on the idea of macro level change, Pastor Houston would love to see an increase of wealth in the African American community and education on how to better manage the money/purchasing power in the African American community to benefit and address the needs in the African American community. More specifically, Pastor Houston is involved with an organization for power – pushing for increase in minimum wage, he is involved in youth build and local government. Essentially, he is involved in creating change because he is of the belief that if people have another option then people would take the other option.

Pastor Chapple, much like the articles referenced in my personal community studies, has identified gentrification as the social justice issue that he must address in his

region. Gentrification impacts housing and for Pastor Chapple and Mother Zion this is not a far-removed issue, it is an issue on the very block where the church is located. Mother Zion had for a long time owned a community center in the neighborhood. Recently because of mounting debt and decreased use, the community center was sold. There was some talk that selling the property would allow for luxury housing. However, the purchasers decided to build a homeless shelter without input for the community. Some in the community took issue because there are a reduced number of housing options for tax paying citizens. This was a circumstance where some members wanted Pastor Chapple to fight against the homeless shelter, but true to the essence of this project, transformation is viewed correctly when we embrace the opportunities for ministry. This occurrence for Pastor Chapple was an opportunity for him to cause the people of Mother Zion to think about the kind of presence the church would have in the community. The homeless shelter may not have met the objectors need, but it does meet someone's need. It is this type of care for the other, at times at the expense of our own needs, that shows us the reflection of the beautiful tapestry and the heart of Christ.

For Pastor Lyde the number one social justice issue he seeks to address is dismantling structural racism and economic inequity. If we transform the structures with the intent to make systems that are equitable and just regardless of race and economic class we can live out the ideals of this American experiment. That is dismantling structural racism and economic inequity in all the structures in the criminal justice system, the educational system, the economic system, etc. This work is one that he takes on personally and one that he is more than willing to introduce to the church as well. The transformation has begun with Pastor Lyde's systematic approach to change the structure

and fruit of the church from a focus on charity to a focus on social justice.

The social justice issue that Pastor Taylor feels most strongly about is providing opportunity for children and youth. That, he feels, is our biggest chance to have a real impact. Taking hold of that means they need to be nourished, to have food, to have a place of stability, support in their home. There has to be hope that if they make education a priority then there is somewhere to go with that, hope of change and being able to continue on within a quality education system.

Overall what has changed and transformed in the pastors and the ministry contexts that were a part of this project is a renewed sense of purpose and focus and resolve. Pastor Taylor and Fox Chapel Presbyterian Church have just created a new position for an associate whose focus is on mission. So, the conversations of this project have blended with that addition and affirmed that addition, as well as, helped Pastor Taylor to think more about preaching and what more he should be doing as pastor to bring social justice into his preaching. Pastor Lyde points out that there is a depth and complexity and commitment required to develop people. Social justice work and ministry is a life's work and the degree to which we are successful in doing what God would require in our moment of history is the degree to which the church will have a succession plan for continued work.

As I move beyond what was done in this project to what can be on a larger scale, I hope to move beyond reflection to action. The following were practical steps that the participating pastors identified as things I or someone like me could do towards the goal of helping to create an impactful and aware church, as well as increase partnerships between clergy and non-profits:

- I could resource congregations and help them connect with opportunities in the community. To connect needs and make a difference.
- Many pastors are overwhelmed, so I could help pastors to connect with each other.
- What is going to capture each congregation is going to be unique to each congregation. So, resource for the work would be to have someone who is able to get to know each congregation and tailor something specific for each congregation and for multiple congregations.
- The work should be replicated on the Master of Divinity level because there is so little work in the social justice area when those pursuing theological education are preparing for pastoral ministry.
- There is an increased need for women as pastors which will help in creating social change.
- Helping others to understand the interpersonal biases and structural inequity, an understanding that people should realize is learned when engaged in it. It takes a context to help pastor and people to sift through and apply what we learn in books.

Not only is there community need, but I believe like Pastor Lyde, that this project is timely. This project is also cyclical. The project is timely and cyclical in the sense that it addresses a present need, social justice, just as the church of history may have had to address issues like integration of women or racial groups. Essentially, the church of the future may not be faced with the same issue, but there will be some cyclical issue that the church of the future can apply the model

of this project to.

Doing social justice work is the way the church is going to be purged and will gain more roots into the community. This project model should cause the church to look at what the community is asking for. There is value to giving critical thought in real time and understanding, as was done in this project, because it is a form of discipleship and a way to develop leaders because people, church people, have passions that they want to act out in the world, but do not have a vehicle to put that work into action. Historically, that vehicle has been the church and the church can be that vehicle again.

The church can be a part of that beautiful tapestry that can confidently answer when Christ asks, when did you visit me, when did you give me something to eat, something to drink, when was I a stranger and you invited me in or was naked and you clothed me, was sick and you look after me? We the church, can partner with the secular nonprofit, but we do not have to shift the burden completely to the nonprofit. The beautiful tapestry is complete when the church can say we are providing ministry to meet community need.



## APPENDIX A

### LAY ADVISORY COMMITTEE SURVEY

#### **Social Justice and the Church and Senior Pastor's Role in Providing Ministry to Meet Community Need**

##### **Lay Advisory Committee Survey**

1. On a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest or representing extremely well) how civically engaged is your church in the community and in addressing systemic issues?
2. How engaged are you as an individual in addressing community need through volunteering and why do you volunteer?
3. Is preaching an effective means of communication in establishing firm connection between the church and the larger secular community?
4. What do you see as some opportunities and challenges to the church being as effective as secular nonprofits and social service organizations?
5. What community needs can the church address?
6. How often do you interact with individuals who are not a part of your church or affiliated with your church when volunteering? Circle One.

Always  
Very Often  
Sometimes  
Rarely  
Never

7. What do you believe to be the best way that churches and secular nonprofits or social services agencies can partner?
8. Does your pastor preach or teach on civic engagement as a responsibility of the disciple?
9. Do you think the church is as engaged in the community as it has been in the past/historically?
10. Based on your experience of churches in different regions, what are some distinctions you have seen based on the region?

**APPENDIX B**  
**SAMPLE EMAIL INVITATION**

Hi Pastor X,

I received my IRB approval and am prepared to move forward with my DMin project. I wanted to send you the basics to review to see if you are able to participate and then I emailed your secretary to schedule a phone conversation.

I have attached my research determination form, which outlines in the most succinct format what I am trying to do. Essentially, I want to observe and talk with Pastors in various regions about how they shape ministry and how that approach is different from the approach and impact of secular nonprofits in meeting community need. The project springs from my experience in two worlds, ministry and my nonprofit work experience. I believe you will add a different perspective given your experience in the church and community and the church in City X, City Y and City Z. I am also recruiting pastors from City X, City Y, and City Z. The time commitment would be a month and a half and here is the breakdown:

-Virtual/Phone Conversation with individual pastors in the beginning of May - Candidate will send guiding questions in advance of the conversation.

- Group Virtual/Phone Conversation with group of participating pastors at the end of May
- Candidate will send final list of participating pastors and the group will determine the best date/time. Candidate will send guiding questions in advance of the conversation.
  
- Onsite Observation - Candidate will travel to the Pastor's ministry context and observe them preach in their ministry context on a Sunday in the month of May.
  
- Final Virtual/Phone Conversation with individual pastors in the beginning of June - Candidate will send guiding questions in advance of the conversation.

If you would consider my request and let me know if you would be willing to participate by Monday, April 18th. We can also have a phone conversation if you have any questions. Thanks for considering.

Nichelle

## **APPENDIX C**

### **GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR PASTORAL CONVERSATION #1**

1. What is your personal call story?
2. What is your pastoral charge?
3. Describe your pastoral history.
4. Describe the regional pastoral contexts (both the church and the city/state) which you have experienced.
5. Summarize the church history and impact upon the community.
6. What community needs can your church address?
7. What are the strengths of your church/church members that would lend towards successfully addressing community needs?
8. What are the obstacles or challenges in addressing community need?
9. What is your preaching focus?
10. If you were to segment your time and responsibilities as pastor, what are those responsibilities and what percentage of time/effort is spent on which responsibilities?
11. Describe your church staffing or administrative structure.
12. How does your preaching and development of ministry goals reflect the needs of the people?
13. How do you/your church maintain a relational connection to the larger community/world?
14. Do you believe the church is biblically impactful today?
15. Do you believe your church is biblically, culturally and socially impactful or do you believe it needs to be?
16. What is the process and content of your sermonic presentation?
17. Where do you believe the church universal will be in the next 1, 5, 15, 25 years?
18. What can the church learn from the past and current historic trends in this civically responsible world?

## **APPENDIX D**

### **GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR PASTORAL CONVERSATION #2**

1. From individual conversations with the participating pastors I have found that some pastors are generational pastors and some weren't. Do you think that impacts a pastor's approach to social justice or ministry?
2. The social justice issues raised by participating pastors were: gentrification, sex trafficking, social justice versus charity, migrant workers and homelessness. Do any of these surprise you? Would you have a difficult time addressing any of these issues in your current context?
3. In each context, I have seen that each pastor is involved in some level of social justice work and trying to get the church to buy in and follow his lead. What do you think is the key to that shift?
4. Would you be interested in a more deliberate social justice connection between pastors you might not know or currently have connection with - across denomination, race, gender, etc.?
5. What do you see as a challenge to a more deliberate connection like this between not only pastors, but congregations?
6. Is there a difference in the work or what can be accomplished by a church planter versus those who are called to an established church?
7. What have you begun to think about or think more deeply about as you have engaged in participation in this project?
8. Can you describe the nonprofit/civic community in your current city?
9. As pastor in your current city, what social justice issue or issue in preaching to you think is the #1 priority to address at a more macro level?

## **APPENDIX E**

### **GUIDING QUESTION FOR PASTORAL CONVERSATION #3**

1. What do you think I could do or someone like me could do towards the goal of helping to create an impactful and aware church, as well as increasing partnerships between clergy and non-profits?

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