

DREW UNIVERSITY

THE MAÑANA PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

**TO UTILIZE THE THEMES OF INCARNATION AND ESCHATOLOGY
AS THE BASIS FOR THE CREATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE MAÑANA PROJECT
FOR DOCUMENTED AND UNDOCUMENTED HOMELESS LATINO IMMIGRANTS
AT THE HANDS ACROSS LONG ISLAND-COMMUNITY WELLNESS AND
RECOVERY CENTER IN CENTRAL ISLIP, NY**

BY

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The purpose of this project is to consider creating a model of incarnational theology coupled with a concrete understanding of what a ministry of presence looks like. Combined with pastoral care strategies, narratology, transactional analysis, and mindfulness approaches, my goal is to foment a sense of self-esteem within the undocumented homeless population and raise the social conscience of both the First United Methodist Church and the Hands Across Long Island-Community Wellness and Recovery Center of what a collaborative effort such as this can accomplish in a community ravished by a politics of exclusion.

This project will be a catalyst for raising awareness of First United Methodist Church's role as God's agent of hope by connecting with community-based programs such as Hands Across Long Island Community-Wellness and Recovery Center that seek to discover and develop the assets of its participants for personal and communal transformation. I believe that if authentic and sustainable community is to take place, a sense of faith transformed into hope – that accepts the paradoxical reality that surrounds us, thus shunning utopianism – along with the understanding that God's kin-dom has invaded human history – the 'already' as we await the 'not

yet' – and that a reversal of fortunes is now taking place, a radical message of hope and liberation must be pursued. My hope is that the participants not only will connect with the church community in ways that will provide an environment for radical incarnational-eschatological hospitality, but that the Hands Across Long Island-Community Wellness and Recovery Center will strive to be more culturally informed to meet the needs of the Latino community.

DEDICATION



To my wife, Yvonne, who for forty years has stood by me
and provided constant encouragement.
You have filled the void created by so much loss.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is dedicated in memory of my parents Águeda Vasquez and Cándido Perez Rivera. My mother was instrumental in bringing me to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. For more than sixty years, she dedicated her life to living out the gospel. Her prayer life, incredible resiliency in the midst of so many losses, and her pursuit of social justice are character traits that I readily model in my own life. For years, she was my conversation partner, walking with me through treacherous theological waters as we spent hours discussing issues around God, the not-god, and the world. Not even Alzheimer's could quench her gentle spirit and ardent faith. I still miss her terribly. My father was a testimony to God's transforming grace. During the last days of his life, he suffered immensely after a third and final leg amputation. And yet, he never complained but held fast to the psalmist's words: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want."

This thesis is also written in memory of my mother-in-law Nélide Colón who was taken from us before her time by a drunk driver. Since her passing, the family has never been the same. I dedicate this work as well to my wife's grandparents, Carmen and Benito Colón. I considered them both my second parents. They are still greatly missed.

I also dedicate this paper to the memory of my brothers Eliseo, Robert, Ruben, and Heriberto. Eliseo passed away at the young age of 31, Robert at 33, Ruben at 58, and Heriberto at 55. I carry them in my heart daily and my work in the area of social justice is fueled by their suffering. I wish to acknowledge my sisters Elizabeth and Ada, who not only cared for my mother and father during their last days, but who suffered most of the brunt of my brothers' deaths. You are not alone!

I want to also dedicate this project to my grandchildren Gabriel, Abigail, and Mathieu, my constant joy and hope. You are the future! May the wind of God always blow at your backs.

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INTRODUCTION: Why This Project?

Richard Sennett, in his work *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization*, observes that “Western civilization has had the persistent trouble in honoring the dignity of the body and diversity of human bodies...”¹ This project has as its objective to honor the bodies of Latino documented and undocumented homeless men and women, who make their abode in the streets and the scant homeless shelters in the city of Central Islip, NY. But more importantly, the project will also attempt to connect this community with the ministry of First United Methodist Church that is located at the heart of this crisis.²

The community of Central Islip is a diverse one.³ For example, the city is composed of Latinos (60%), Pacific Islander/American Indian (30%), Caucasian (27%), Asian (10%), and Black/African American (10%). In terms of socioeconomic status, the levels of income range from poor to middle and upper class. Additionally, the influx of Central Americans to the area has created concerns in the area of poverty, un/underemployment, crime, drugs, HIV/AIDS, homelessness, and gang activity. The majority of residents live either slightly above or under the poverty level. In neighborhoods where two or more Central American families reside, homes are sometimes occupied by two or more families, and most of these residents are undocumented aliens. Consequently, such populations are the people that readily receive food stuffs from our church’s pantry ministry, which is sustained by donations from church members, community residents, and anonymous donors. Because of the requirements posed by state and government agencies (e.g. photo ID, Social Security number, etc.) the church prefers to distribute food

¹ Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 15.

² An overview of First United Methodist Church will be presented in Chapter 1.

³ "Missioninsite: Community Engagement Specialists for Faith and Non-Profit Groups," accessed September 22, 2017. <http://missioninsite.com/>. <http://missioninsite.com/>.

without state and federal support for fear that it will no longer be able to provide for these undocumented families.

Further adding to the community's deficit is the fact that Central Islip does not have a central hospital. There are two hospitals that community residents' use for emergencies and for in and outpatient services: Good Samaritan, St. Catherine's and South Side/Northwell Health Hospitals, which are located in Bayshore, NY. Another option for some residents is Stoney Brook Medical Center, but because of its distance and higher medical costs, few lower-class residents opt for this alternative.⁴ The community has a few Urgent Care Clinics, and Dental practices. But most residents to whom I have spoken to prefer clinics or urgent care facilities in other surrounding towns, possibly due to the presence of undocumented aliens in the area.⁵ There are a small number of small law firms, and two funeral homes; however, I am not aware of any law firms or funeral homes in Central Islip that provide services specifically for Latino residents.

I know of only one community organization that provides much-needed social services to the community. Hands Across Long Island-Community Wellness and Recovery Center, is a community-based organization that offers services for adult participants. Three years ago, I attended H.A.L.I.'s Christmas dinner celebration, and I was able to see firsthand the results of their efforts. During the celebration, a time was set aside for participants to offer testimonials in order to explain how the program has helped them turn their lives around. Without a doubt, the results have been astonishing for these individuals. From former drug and alcohol dependent

⁴ Another reason residents shy away from Stoney Brook is because it is a University hospital that houses many student residents. The majority of people prefer a seasoned MD rather than a student doctor.

⁵ Because of the bad reputation attributed to Central Islip, a number of residents like to identify themselves with the surrounding areas, such as Islandia and East Islip. Of course, this all depends on whether or not their locality is near these zones.

participants, to people struggling with psychiatric conditions, all have, in one way or another achieved their program goals and objectives beyond their projected expectations.⁶

Central Islip is rich in religious traditions with worshiping communities that include Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Evangelical-Fundamentalist, Pentecostal, and Jehovah's Witnesses. One non-denominational church that has made strides in the community is Faith Alive. Founded in 1992, the church is home to a considerable number of Latino residents. The community's youth are attracted to the church's contemporary worship service and programs. In terms of other non-Christian groups, the construction of a Sikh temple is underway, and is scheduled to see completion soon.

However, the 2016 presidential elections have brought drastic changes to the field of social services, not to mention changes in attitudes toward undocumented Latino immigrants. Some believe this monumental political change poses a real threat to the idea of community, both in its local and global forms, and the reasons for this are obvious. Racist ideas regarding various ethnic groups who as a result, are now under intense scrutiny; attacks on the Muslim community that included labeling them as terror threats, the prospects of a wall between Mexico and the United States, sexist rhetoric and ambivalence towards speaking against the sexual assault of women, and the belittling of people with physical and mental deficiencies, serve only to dissolve community and establish enclaves of cultural and ethnic exclusion.

Latino residents who make up 60% of the population of Central Islip, NY, are already expressing their fears of being deported. The Hispanic pastor of a small congregation that meets regularly in our church building, shared with me the grave concerns his parishioners are voicing. Ever since the Presidential elections, the pastor has taken time from his Sunday sermons to address the issues that this vulnerable community may face in the near future. And add to that the

⁶ In Chapter 2, I will say more about the Hands Across Long Island-Community Wellness and Recovery Center.

concerns of the heightened gang activity that may come because of the attacks made against Latino communities here in Long Island.

While there are some parishioners, mostly of Caribbean and Hispanic descent, who are concerned, they are hesitant in voicing their objections. However, this is slowly but surely changing.⁷ Two years ago, while speaking at a Latino Church in the Bronx, I shared my own fears and concerns with those in attendance. Afterwards, I was approached by several parents who were terrified at the prospects of immigration reform under the new administration and the racial unrest his rhetoric has created. One mother approached me, beating her chest, and crying, “I wish I could hide my son safely in my heart. He is big, black, and lovely, and I fear that because of his size, they may mistake him for a hoodlum and kill him.”

Many of the Hispanic religious communities are turning to the spiritual disciplines such as prayer, fasting, and meditation, in an effort to curtail the tide of bigotry, misogyny, and micro and macro aggression. While this is rightly seen as a form of resistance, it is not enough in the face of our present crisis. Social resistance is always accompanied by action.

Indeed, shadows of a new “royal consciousness” in the guise of political conservatism and religious fundamentalism are threatening the very fabric of community as we know it. Walter Brueggemann argues that when confronting the royal consciousness, the confrontational model, which he describes as an “Old Testament notion of prophet versus king,” has no real social effect. He writes, “prophetic imagination requires more than the old liberal confrontation if the point is not posturing but effecting change in social perspective and social policy.”⁸

To be sure, the ultimate quest of all human beings is to experience the grace of God within the places they live and move. Unfortunately, Christendom has not lived up to such task.

⁷ The outcries on the part of the parishioners are now readily expressed during the worship service, particularly, during the Pastoral Prayer segment of the service.

⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), xii.

Even today, there are many groups who have been relegated to the underside of history, and it is from that vantage point that they must struggle to be heard and seen. The centers of religious power resist the idea that God is able to reveal God-self amidst the unfamiliar and unrecognized places of the world. Roberto S. Goizueta notes, “we must remember that the Galilee, into which Jesus was born, was very much a borderland, a distant part of Palestine bordering on the non-Jewish populations of Syria, Philippi, and the Decapolis.”⁹ For Goizueta, a new Galilean theology is needed to identify with the most vulnerable of our communities:

Jesus identifies himself with the so-called outcasts, and pagans, the religious others, who claim to have seen the light even while we, influenced by post-enlightenment thought, deny its very reality and transforming power. If the Jewish center of power in Jerusalem could not conceive that God’s word could be revealed in such a region as Galilee, it is precisely in the midst of our multicultural [and multi-faith] reality that, in the person of Jesus Christ, God’s love and power are made manifest.¹⁰

Therefore, this project will attempt to develop a “Galilean” vision of theological practice, and as such be a catalyst for raising awareness of First United Methodist Church’s role as God’s agent of hope by connecting with community-based programs such as the Hands Across Long Island-Community Recovery and Wellness Center that seek both to discover and develop the assets of its participants for personal and communal transformation. Furthermore, I find that the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) theory provides an excellent foundation for such an undertaking.

Asset-Based Community Development theory offers methods and strategies that can be used to exploit the assets available for community development.¹¹ In addition, Sue Annis Hammond’s appreciative approach (AI) concentrates on the positive traits and assets human

⁹ Linda Martin Alcoff and Eduardo Mendieta, eds., *Thinking from the Underside of History: Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 191.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹¹ John P. Kretzmann and John L. Mcknight, *Building Communities from the inside Out: A Path toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (Chicago: Acta Publications, 1993).

beings can bring to the table in order for transformative change to take place. The remarkable thing about the appreciative method is that its practical flexibility and its simplicity seems to cater to multiple situations. Hammond provides a case in which the appreciative model was applied to the problem of bullying:

When the appreciative approach is applied to a topic like stopping bullying or harassment, participants explore the circumstances where bullying and harassment were not present. Instead they explore examples of what it feels like to be treated with dignity, kindness, respect, and inclusiveness. Participants determine the circumstances that make these possible and articulate statements to express the common themes. Instead of taking away a list of don'ts and a policing mentality, participants leave inspired to re-create those circumstances in as many situations as possible.¹²

Many communities feel bullied and harassed by political and even religious power brokers whose sole purpose is to control what can and cannot take place in a neighborhood in order to benefit their pockets. In other cases, communities on the brink of death are ignored simply because they are not worth the fuss. This project will therefore attempt to use ABCD and AI strategies to demonstrate once and for all that a bright future is still very much a real possibility in Central Islip. As Hammonds argues:

Creating provocative propositions is a key step of transformation. We take what we know and we talk about what could be. We stretch what we are at present to help us become more than what we have already been successful at. We envision a future that is a collage of the Bests. Because we have derived the future from reality, we know it can happen.¹³

ABCD and AI are simple concepts that carry profound and transformative alternatives for community renewal. To be sure, the philosophical underpinnings of both approaches provides the necessary tools and skills to stimulate, develop, and sustain transformative change because they emphasize, engage and encourage the positive assets of any community. My hope is that the participants will connect with the church community in ways that will provide an environment

¹² Sue Annis Hammond, *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry* (Bend, OR: Thin Book Publishing Company, 2013), 90.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 411.

for radical incarnational-eschatological hospitality and that the Hands Across Long Island-Community Recovery and Wellness Center will become more attuned to the cultural and social needs of the community-at-large.

I believe the results of this project could lead both to research hypotheses in the future and inform social policy. For example, the condition of the undocumented Latino homeless men and women in Central Islip have reached critical levels. Among other things, there are few homeless shelters to house them, and many of the community-based programs have lost their funding, forcing them to provide wellness initiatives that do little to provide mental health and other vital services, such as housing and employment. In addition, lack of harm reduction services has led many of these homeless men and women to resort to drugs and alcohol in order to deal with their precarious situation. This has resulted in alienation from family and friends, criminal activity, low self-esteem, depression, and suicidal ideation, to name a few. This project will show, at least in preliminary fashion, that in providing a safe place these participants will have the opportunity to express their anger and fear, and with the help of pastoral care strategies they can begin the long process of improving their self-esteem. In addition, it will show what can be accomplished when community-based programs, like the Hands Across Long Island-Community Recovery and Wellness Center and congregations like FUMC, come together to address the challenge. Finally, the project may capture the attention of community and political leaders to reinstate many of the funds that would help alleviate the situation.

Chapter 1

First United Methodist Church

Between July 2010 and June 2013, the leadership at First United Methodist Church was literally at a standstill. The lead pastor who was serving during those years did not believe in giving the laity opportunities to do ministry because he felt that only he was capable of leading the congregation. As a result there was a loss of interest amongst the existing leadership, an exodus of families from the church, and a constant state of tension between the pastor and the congregation.

When I was appointed to the church in July 2013, what was left of the church leadership beseeched me to give the laity an opportunity to put their gifts and talents to work. I wholeheartedly agreed with their request, mostly because (1) Methodist history demonstrates that it was the laity who made possible the establishment and growth of early Methodism a reality, and (2) I was already planning (after reading the minutes of the 2013 Charge Conference) to meet with the Church Council and to begin the process of developing a lay leadership base, and (3) as a pastor, I believe wholeheartedly in the ministry of the laity.

Within the first year of my appointment, the families that had left the church returned, and many of them are actively engaged in some form of church ministry. The church has a significant number of parishioners from a vast array of professional backgrounds:

- Elementary and High School Teachers
- College Professors
- Business Owners
- Medical Doctors
- Nurses
- A former School District Superintendent
- IT Technicians
- Community Organizers

Our church also has a significant number of well-qualified blue collar workers. While the capacities of the church's leadership is immense, I feel they have not fully understood or embraced the importance of social justice ministries. I have addressed this issue both from the pulpit, in Bible study groups, and committee meetings, and almost always have been met with resistance, from seasoned parishioners or members of a conservative persuasion. To be sure, there are a number of obstacles that still need to be addressed if we as a church are to see any movement forward:

- Religious Individualism
- Racial and Economic Discrimination
- Cultural Incompetency
- Biblical Illiteracy
- Homophobia

In addition, with demographic changes occurring in leaps and bounds, the needs of the church, as I see it, are as follows:

1. Recognition that ethnic diversity is a reality that, rather than be resisted, should be embraced and celebrated.
2. Gender roles must be understood from a social justice perspective in order to reveal the oppressive behaviors and practices of a way of life fueled by patriarchal ideology.
3. Sexual orientation should be seen as a God-given gift and a revelation of the multiform and multivalent nature of God's creation.
4. A religion that fosters alliances with oppressive powers that serve the rich while marginalizing the poor should be resisted.
5. The triune God is a social God; the church is thus called to live out a ministry of sociality that espouses a Trinitarian world and life-view.
6. Biblical literacy refers less to a banking knowledge of scripture and more on the importance of context.

Of the six points of needs mentioned above, only number 1 has received some attention while the other five have been all but rejected as being too liberal. To get a better sense of what church leaders thought about these and other areas of concern, I decided to interview a number of them, not only to find out where they stood on such issues, but also because I felt they could contribute to the church's social justice incentives and overall mission.

Dr. Levi McIntyre

Dr. Levi McIntyre was the Longwood District School Superintendent and is a member of First UMC as well as being a well-known and respected member of the community. After retirement, Dr. McIntyre was approached by members of the Longwood School District and offered the position of Superintendent. Because of his long track record in restoring failing schools, he was asked to take on the task of saving the district's corrupt school system. Additionally, as an educator, Dr. McIntyre has established a number of important political, educational, and business relationships within the community. He is quite familiar with programs such as Adelante, the Hands Across Long Island-Community Wellness and Recovery Center, and the Central Islip Public Library, not to mention, the Police Department, and many churches in the area. As a result of the turmoil his district was under because of MS-13 activity and threats, Dr. McIntyre resigned from his position due to concerns for his and his wife's safety.

During his interview, Dr. McIntyre shared the challenges he faced as the new Longwood District Superintendent. One of his goals was to establish a coalition composed of educators and community residents to voice the concerns of the community; however, the coalition disbanded some years ago, and since then relations between the schools and the community have waned.

Dr. McIntyre sought to strengthen the communities between Central Islip and Brentwood, an adjacent city, because both sectors suffer from poor graduation rates, absenteeism, and lack of parental participation (mostly Latino parents). In addition, other problems have contributed to the city's struggles: lack of affordable housing, absentee landlords, immigration reform, gang activity, and zombie homes.¹⁴

¹⁴ "Zombie" homes are homes that are abandoned and boarded up by the local banks, due to the owner's inability to pay the mortgage. Central Islip's landscape is full of such homes.

In terms of the church, Dr. McIntyre observes that a number of clergy are involved in the community, but even this is not enough. He worries that not enough information regarding the schools and other community issues is reaching residents and is calling for more involvement from the churches and clergy.¹⁵

Mr. Vinicio Gil

Mr. Gil is the owner of Metal Manufacturing Plant in Farmingdale, N.Y. and has been an active member of First United Methodist Church for more than 25 years. Since becoming pastor of this church, he has been in constant conversation with me concerning the church and community's development. His wife Mariana is an educator and a doctoral candidate. She was once very active in the church but after the presidential elections, she rarely attends church anymore.

Vinicio began working in the manufacturing industry more than 20 years ago, gradually working his way up through the ranks. During such time, he learned everything he needed to know about metal work. The amazing thing about Vinicio is that even though he only has a high school diploma, he did not let that stop him from getting to where he is at today. Three years ago, the local bank helped Vinicio finance the purchase of a building and after years of paying high rent, he finally owns his own building and his business is expanding in leaps and bounds.

During his interview, one of the questions I asked Vinicio was whether community residents were working together to develop their community and his response was interesting, to say the least. In his estimation, many community residents are more concerned about their own interests, particularly their housing issues. Vinicio feels that until Latinos are assured help in this

¹⁵ Dr. McIntyre has expressed concerns regarding the LGBTQI community and the undocumented Latino immigrants, pointing out that the local church must do more to open its doors to these populations. However, I felt that for Dr. McIntyre the role of the church is more of a reservoir of information rather than a transformed and transforming community.

area of need they will not feel compelled to participate in any form of community renewal. Vinicio has also observed that community residents, specifically Latino families, do not take advantage of educational opportunities because they are unaware that such possibilities exist. He strongly believes that if given the chance, these struggling families can change their lives and their communities as well. As an example, he points to the Latino workers he now employs, many of whom first came to him unemployed, homeless, and struggling with immigration issues. Today, they have steady work, own or rent their own homes, and have resolved their immigration problems.

Before the interview came to an end, I asked Vinicio, how are people praying? His response is one of deep concern. Vinicio believes people are praying both in and outside the church; however, for him, prayer is not a noun; rather it is a verb, and a powerful one at that. He makes a distinction between *passive* prayer and *proactive* prayer; the former is reclusive, exclusive, and static, while the latter is sociable, inclusive, and dynamic. For him, prayer is action.¹⁶

Ms. Michele Harriett

Ms. Harriett is a school board member in the Central Islip High School. She has been a member of First United Methodist Church for many years, having raised three children in the process. A wife and a mother, she is actively involved and well respected in the community, and has many political contacts that can help the church's missional endeavors.

Ms. Harriett believes Central Islip's greatest strength is its diversity. However, diversity is not new to the area; according to her, Central Islip has always celebrated its multiculturalism.

¹⁶ Vinicio has demonstrated time and time again this view of prayer. He is also aware that action is mightier than words. Three years ago, he organized a basketball clinic for participants ages 6-12. The project has had very little resistance because the church wants to see community children and teens active in social and recreational activities that, among other things, will keep them busy throughout the summer.

Unfortunately, with diversity comes complex challenges that if not dealt with creatively and realistically will have lasting effects on the future of the city. This is the main reason she ran for the position she now holds in the school district.

For Ms. Harriett, the greatest need of the community is the challenge of dismantling the myth that Central Islip is a violent place. Parents are afraid to walk the streets with their children or take their children to a community park. To be sure, most children are not permitted to ride their bicycles outside and are thus readily confined to their homes. She observes that these fears come as a result of past criminal activity and really have nothing to do with the current state of affairs. For example, parents seem reluctant to let their children play in front of their homes over concerns of a shooting that took place more than seven years ago.

In terms of what the school is doing to alleviate parental fears, Ms. Harriett's response was somewhat ambiguous. The Central Islip High School spends over \$15,000.00 per student annually, making it one of the highest educational expenditures in Long Island. However, a good portion of the money is used to curtail student behavior problems, counseling services, and remedial programs. In addition, with all of the monetary support that is received by the school, only 68% of high school seniors actually graduate. She thinks that the only way to remedy the problem is to target the parents who, according to her, are ambivalent as to their roles as student advocates. And yet, she failed to mention if anything could be done to enhance teacher learning and cultural competency issues.

When I mentioned the cultural issues that may contribute to student belligerency, she acknowledged the insight, but said little as to how culture clashes affect student learning. During our conversation, Ms. Harriett compared her own children's success with those of the high school, arguing that a stable home is the answer to the problem. According to Ms. Harriett,

however, the school is trying to address these and other issues. For example, school administrators have created more flexible class schedules for students who work by offering them afternoon, evening, and weekend classes. However, despite such efforts, at-risk students continue to drop out, while others have vanished from the community map altogether.

Mr. Claude Byer

According to Claude, the community of Central Islip has experienced huge demographic changes in the last 25 years. For example, most of the White families have left the area for various reasons: retirement, financial constraints, and changing neighborhoods. As a result, Hispanics make up the largest ethnic group that has moved into the area. Central Islip has attracted both good and troublesome people. However, one of its assets can be seen in its creation of a community watch program, which is working closely with the police department.¹⁷ The project has created safe neighborhoods throughout and one of the results is that many of the houses that were vacant, and in danger of being vandalized (a serious problem in many parts of Long Island) have been sold to working families.

For Claude, education continues to be the greatest need in the community. He feels that the community must find ways to convince Hispanic residents that learning English, among other things, may afford them employment opportunities, economic advancement, and social mobility. However, Claude feels this is easier said than done. He recalls that, 25 years ago, while working as a math teacher in Amityville, NY, the percentage of White to Black and Latino students was 60/40, respectively. Because the majority were white, interest for student education was a priority.

¹⁷ One of the few exceptions in police-community relations.

Today, however, Black and Latino students have eclipsed White learners as expected, but the drive to create better learning opportunities for these students has greatly diminished. In order to turn the tide, Claude introduced new textbooks that were much more amenable to students who were having difficulties with math. He also created after school programs for struggling minority students and provided mentors and tutors for them as well. The results of this effort were so impressive that other teachers followed his lead.

According to Claude, the community is changing for the best. This is evident, especially through the work of organizations like Coalition of Good Neighbors (COGN). Through this program, the community has seen the development of the Carlton Avenue Park Complex. A former slum area, the complex now provides affordable housing for eligible residents. Community efforts, spearheaded by COGN, pressured political leaders in providing the community with a court complex. Their efforts also included the opening of Home Depot™, Carrabba's™, and Subways™. On Suffolk Avenue, construction of a new shopping outlet has attracted businesses such as Seven Eleven™, and various restaurants. CVS/Pharmacy™, once located in an area out of the reach of most residents, moved to the corner of Suffolk and Wheeler Road, with more space, accessibility, and a large parking lot.

But one of the most significant projects spearheaded by COGN was the development of a children's playground, an effort that took 20 years to complete. The coalition got support from organizations like KaBOOM, a "national non-profit dedicated to bringing balanced and active play into the daily lives of all kids, particularly those growing up in poverty in America,"¹⁸ ABC News, and Disney World™.

The playground equipment was donated by various charities and community organizations. Home Depot™ and Loews™ donated the cement and lumber for building the

¹⁸ For more information see <http://kaboom.org/>.

foundations for each piece of equipment. Organizers went into the community to recruit volunteers to prepare food and refreshments for workers and other helpers. The workers were in charge of assembling the equipment, while volunteers helped unload the equipment from the tractor-trailer. The effort involved both young and old, as the entire community mobilized to complete the project. An elementary school asked the children to vote on a name for the playground, and came up with "Central Islip Community Park." The playground provides recreation for children, ages 2-5. Lying adjacent to the playground are two soccer fields that are in the process of being completed. All in all, the coalition sought input from the community before going ahead with the project. The playground had brought the community together up until the murder of four teenagers committed by the notorious MS-13 gang, which took place across the street from the playground, prompting parents to keep their children away.

The impressions I got from these interviews lead me to suspect a client-server model of ministry in the community of First United Methodist Church. Such an understanding, while providing some engagement with the community, falls grossly short of a ministry of incarnational practice because it fails to recognize the urgency of allowing the community to be a part of the church. More disturbing still was the fact that the plight of undocumented homeless Latino immigrants was evaded altogether, and this is the main reason I decided to do a project such as is described in this paper. Client-server models of ministry usually preclude vulnerable communities from full participation in the church. My goal is to connect the faith community with this population in order to create opportunities for reciprocal transformation. My involvement in the Hands Across Long Island-Community Wellness and Recovery Center is a step in that direction.

Chapter 2

The Hands Across Long Island-Community Wellness and Recovery Center



When Betty and her male partner walked into FUMC they were in dire need of food, clothing, shelter, and medical attention. Both were living in a car and had been for some time. I suggested she go to a local emergency shelter but she refused to do so. She needed money, but I resisted giving her monetary assistance because they me gave the impression of people struggling with addiction. She and her friend showed signs of years of addiction and it was taking a toll on them both. As she informed me of her troubles, she broke down in tears, saying she did not know what else to do. I suggested she visit The Hands Across Long Island-Community Wellness and Recovery Center (H.A.L.I.) and ask for my wife, Yvonne. I was certain Yvonne would be able to connect her and her friend with the services they desperately needed. A few days later, she arrived at H.A.L.I., asked for Yvonne, and was immediately received into the program. She participated for only a short period of time, however, only to never return. Or so it seemed.

A few months after, Yvonne told me a woman who introduced herself as Betty approached her. Yvonne stared at her, wondering who she was. “You don’t remember me?” the

women asked. “No, I’m sorry, I don’t know who you are,” Yvonne responded. “Remember the woman who came to the church with a friend, and was referred to your program by the pastor?” “Yes; now I remember.” The woman continued, “I just want to thank you and the pastor for all your help, and for being so patient with me. Since you last saw me I have been in a rehab program. I am back with my son, I have my own apartment, and more importantly, I’ve remained sober for the past two months.” Yvonne was amazed. The reason she did not recognize Betty was because her entire physical appearance had changed. Her countenance was bright; she had a smile; and she seemed relieved that things were looking up. And yet, I must confess that when I first met Betty and her friend, I came to the conclusion that there was no hope for them. In other words, I considered them bad soil.

Since 1988, the Hands Across Long Island-Community Wellness and Recovery Center¹⁹ functioned as a Mental Health Community-based program pioneered by mental health peers that served the residents of Central Islip. H.A.L.I. is considered the largest and most successful peer-run, multi-service agency in New York State, helping over 3,500 participants each year.¹⁹ Their services include:

- Supportive Counseling
- Peer Support
- Nutritional Services
- Advocacy Assistance
- Housing Services
- Employment Services

Before the 2016 presidential elections, H.A.L.I. provided mental health services to the community. These services included psychiatric rehabilitation therapies, medication

¹⁹ "Hands Across Long Island," accessed 01/04/2017, 2017. <http://www.hali88.org/>.

management, and clinical counseling, while providing participants with referrals to community resources. H.A.L.I.'s model of work used before 2016 was known as Personalized Recovery Oriented Services (PROS), "a comprehensive model that integrates rehabilitation, treatment, and support services for people with serious mental illness."²⁰ A growing number of participants also struggle with co-occurring disorders such as substance abuse, forensic-related issues, and physical illnesses. Among other things, PROS provides guidance to participants in achieving certain life goals, such as independent living, building natural supports, job search, reaching higher levels of education, housing assistance, and improved medication management.²¹

The new administration in Washington prompted H.A.L.I. to change its focus from a program providing assistance to people with mental health issues to a wellness and recovery center. Of course, such reversals in programming and structure brings with it changes in staff resulting in a high rollover rate. The clinical team – composed of psychiatrists, nurses, social workers, and clerical staff – has either found other employment or have been let go because of lack of funds

The changes also affected the participants in profound ways. For example, before 2016, H.A.L.I. was a center thriving with community residents who attended the program, not just seeking clinical services, but also for social interchange and camaraderie. Many of the participants had consolidated lasting friendships that helped them get through rough times. H.A.L.I.'s Christmas dinners, among other things, were used as a forum for participant testimonials. Civic leaders, clergy, and H.A.L.I. Board Members who attended these functions got a first-hand look of how the program was transforming the lives of its participants. From former drug and alcohol dependent participants, to people struggling with psychiatric conditions,

²⁰ Office of Mental Health. "Personalized Recovery Oriented Services." New York State. <http://www.ny.gov/>. <https://www.omh.ny.gov/omhweb/pros/> (accessed January 2, 2018).

²¹ Ibid. Also see Appendix I for sample curriculums used in PROS.

all had, in one way or another, achieved their program objectives and personal recovery goals beyond their projected expectations. More importantly still the transformation was beginning to make inroads at First United Methodist Church as well.

With the changes in social policy and its effects on H.A.L.I.'s mission to provide much needed services to the mentally ill population, the program had to revamp its goals and administrative structure. What came out of this radical change was the Hands Across Long Island-Community Wellness and Recovery Center or CWRC,²² a program that "seeks to assist all Suffolk County residents to develop, maintain and improve their health and wellness." H.A.L.I. offers "classes, presentations, activities, and special events that promote health and personal wellness."²³ The CWRC focuses on developing what is known as the Eight Dimensions of Wellness. Taking wellness from this context means,

being in good physical and mental health. Because mental health and physical health are linked, problems in one area can impact the other. At the same time, improving... physical health can also benefit [one's] mental health, and vice versa. It is important to make healthy choices for both [one's] physical and mental well-being... [W]ellness is not the absence of illness or stress. [One] can still strive for wellness even if [one is] experiencing these challenges in... life.²⁴

The eight dimensions or areas of human-holistic development and growth are delineated below:²⁵

- **Physical:** Recognizing the need for physical activity, healthy foods, and sleep.
- **Emotional:** Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships.
- **Social:** Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system.
- **Intellectual:** Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills.
- **Financial:** Satisfaction with current and future financial situations.
- **Spiritual:** Expanding a sense of purpose and meaning in life.
- **Vocational:** Personal satisfaction and enrichment from one's work.

²² See Appendix II for an example of the survey used to recruit prospective participants.

²³ *Hands across Long Island* (BREA, CA: PennySaver USA Publisher, LLC, 2017).

²⁴ "Samhsa: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration," accessed 01/04/2017, 2017. <https://www.samhsa.gov/about-us>.

²⁵ *Ibid.* See Appendix III.

- **Environmental:** Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being.

One aspect of H.A.L.I.'s Community Wellness and Recovery program that has made great inroads in the community is its H.A.L.I. on Wheels Shower Unit that enables participants who are unsheltered to enjoy a shower and a change of clothing. The unit is parked right outside the agency, but the services are not limited to the Central Islip community alone. H.A.L.I. on Wheels also makes stops throughout Suffolk County in Babylon, Islip, Smithtown, and Brookhaven townships. Participants can also be linked to advocacy services to help make their transition into the community a successful one. CWRC services also include a café and soup kitchen that offers free coffee and snacks throughout the day. Free Wi-Fi is also provided. Participants are also provided with housing services through H.A.L.I.'s Supported Housing Program. Advocacy staff and Housing Case Managers assist program participants with a number of activities from daily living skills to employment to the acquisition of benefits. Other program services include peer networking; assisting individuals who are entering or reentering the Suffolk County Mental Health system; assistance to individuals released from incarceration with re-entry into their communities; and H.A.L.I.'s self-help, a program that offers "emotional support and practical help with an experience, challenge, or concern that is common to all members."²⁶

There are various philosophical underpinnings that I have been able to discern in working with the staff and participants at H.A.L.I. First, H.A.L.I. is serious about diversity. In general, and according to what I have observed, H.A.L.I. promotes racial, ethnic, sexual, social, economic, cultural, gender, religious, and political diversity among its participants and at all levels of programming. The LGBTQ+ community feels at home at H.A.L.I. In addition, diversity among the staff is also evident. Of course, such inclusion puts pressure on the staff to come up

²⁶ *Hands Across Long Island* (BREA, CA: PennySaver USA Publisher, LLC, 2017).

with a curriculum that can meet all of the participant's needs. However, the H.A.L.I. staff and participants continue to work together to create an environment where learning has become a staple of this transformative community. Lutheran pastor, Nadia Bolz-Weber, describes this kind of community beautifully, and although her description takes place in a religious space, the basic components of such communal displays are also evident in a place such as H.A.L.I.:

I saw John and Maria, a quirky hipster couple, holding hands; they met at HFASS, and a year earlier I'd performed their wedding and now it was their new baby being passed around. I saw Aaron the tall, geeky engineer laughing with Jamie the cantor. I saw Rick Strandlof putting away chairs and making everyone laugh. I saw Krista the six-foot-tall, redheaded daughter of a Lutheran bishop embracing Stuart the drag queen, and it dawned on me then that none of these people would have known each other were it not for the church I started out of my living room and my own desire to be a part of a community.²⁷

Second, H.A.L.I. is a staunch supporter of the undocumented immigrants of Hispanic origin. Although funding for services for these and other vulnerable communities are non-existent, H.A.L.I.'s Deputy Director and CEO and her staff work tirelessly, and at times have done the impossible to provide for these men, women, and their families. Undocumented Latino immigrants find in H.A.L.I. a safe sanctuary where they can benefit from the services offered and interact with staff and peers without fear of reprisals.

Third, H.A.L.I. takes seriously the importance of education and professional development. In a culture where irrationalism and anti-intellectualism are rearing their ugly heads, it is refreshing to see an agency emphasize the importance of human development, both in the arts and sciences. Lastly, there is a profound sense of hope for the future at H.A.L.I. Such hope, however, should not be confused with wishful thinking. There are participants in H.A.L.I. – in particular, Latino homeless people – who sense there is something wrong in the way the public, who are sometimes driven by homophobic, xenophobic, and nationalistic tendencies,

²⁷ Nadia Bolz-Weber (2013-09-10). *Pastrix: The Cranky, Beautiful Faith of a Sinner & Saint* (p. 202). FaithWords. Kindle Edition.

envision the America's future. Even with their limited understanding, they are keenly aware of a public imagination that reeks with bigotry. The mere thought of what the future holds for them is threatening to say the least. But there is hope.

According to Catherine Keller, however, “the very thought of the imagination as public suggests unforeseen passageways to the future... Suddenly the tedious shadowplay of optimism and pessimism is interrupted; real potentiality for a viable earth future winks at us.”²⁸ The idea that the future is “winking” back at the participants at H.A.L.I. is an indication of the “not yet” within the “already,” the eschatological realities of hope this entire project hinges on. The retreat to anger and frustration is tempered by the question that “Since many of us remain unmotivated by going prescriptions for pure praxis, why not yield experimentally to the temptation to imagine publically, and to imagine a public?”²⁹

Keller further argues that “the prophetic hope is conditioned on the public practice of justice: ‘love justice, practice kindness, walk humbly with your God.’ Not just among ‘the people’ but, recursively: ‘love the foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt.’”³⁰ I never realized that retreating into a form of theological malaise – what I believe Kierkegaard called the “sickness unto death” – would forfeit any possibility for the forging of a prophetic message that serves to create the foundations for the practice of love – love of self, love of the other, love of opponent. Recently, when an evangelical pastor expressed God's approval for an attack on Korea – a horrible example of “just war theory” - my spirit cringed, not only because of the use of bad hermeneutics, but at the possibility that by retreating, such hermeneutics of war would be left unchallenged here at Central Islip.

²⁸ Catherine Keller, "Public Imagination as Prophetic Legacy," *Public Imagination* 10, 36 (May 30, 2017).

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

At the end of her article, Keller reminds us, “In the current shock and outrage at what has happened and what is happening, there is the chance—just a chance—that catastrophe becomes catalyst.”³¹ As a pastor, the challenge seems insurmountable, and yet Keller’s words echo deeply the promise of God’s “not yet” penetrating the “already” of a catastrophic existence we currently see and live in. I am reminded by Dr. Otis Moss to “keep the story alive before the people. Someone will eventually catch on.”³² My hope is that this project will not only provide a catalyst for hope – for “a new public” – through the sharing of stories or the “telling of troubles,” but more importantly, it will open God’s future to a community like H.A.L.I. – and a desperate pastor – who are both anxious to see God wink at them.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Rev. Dr. Otis Moss, interview by Tavis Smiley, Los Angeles, CA, 2017, PBS Thirteen.

Chapter 3
Theological Perspective and Analysis:
Incarnation and Eschatology in John 1:14

“The Word became flesh and blood,
and moved into the neighborhood.
We saw the glory with our own eyes,
the one-of-a-kind glory,
like Father, like Son,
Generous inside and out,
true from start to finish.” (The Message)

When we think of the incarnation³³ that moment in history when the Word, “who was, who was with God, and was God,” became human, we have the tendency of thinking of it as an event that took place more than two thousand years ago in some remote, god-forsaken village in ancient Palestine. We seem to understand the manifestation of God in the flesh as something that happened “out there,” “over there,” or “back then,” but never as something that can happen here and now, something that can take place within our own neighborhoods.

But the incarnation should not be understood as a once-and-for-all event that happened a long time ago, for John seems to say the incarnation is a continuous occurrence. “The true light,”

³³ I realize I am treading here on shaky ground in attempting to talk about the doctrine of the Incarnation. However, my concerns have nothing to do with “divine mystery” or the risk of encountering paradoxes. My issue is that I have doubts regarding the doctrine in general and the particular arguments that state that (1) the incarnation was an historical event, (2) it is exclusive to Christianity alone, and (3) it is a mystery, and thus resists logical analysis. It seems that the history of the doctrine of the incarnation is based more on evolutionary and psychological processes than on revelation, a dogma I question vehemently. I owe this observation to writer Reza Azlan, “God: A Human History,” Medium, accessed 01/05/2017, 2017. <https://medium.com/@rezaaslan/god-a-human-history-ba5e62e401e1>.” In it, he argues, “It turns out that this compulsion to humanize the divine is hardwired in our brains, which is why it has become a central feature in almost every religious tradition the world has known. The very process through which the concept of God arose in human evolution compels us, consciously or not, to fashion God in our own image. In fact, the entire history of human spirituality can be viewed as one long, interconnected, ever-evolving, and remarkably cohesive effort to make sense of the divine by giving it our emotions and our personalities, by ascribing to it our traits and our desires, by providing it with our strengths and our weaknesses, even our own bodies—in short, by making God us. What I mean to say is that, more often than not, whether we are aware of it or not, and regardless of whether we’re believers or not, what the vast majority of us think about when we think about God is a divine version of ourselves: a human being but with superhuman powers.” In this paper, I have substituted the doctrine of the incarnation, as taught in Christian creedal formulas for Derrida’s philosophical ethics and its implications for human subjectivity “God: A Human History,” Medium, accessed 01/05/2017, 2017. <https://medium.com/@rezaaslan/god-a-human-history-ba5e62e401e1>.

he writes, “which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.”³⁴ The verb “to come” used in verse nine is in the present tense, and speaks of “continuous action.” A literal translation would read something like this: “The true light which enlightens everyone, was coming and continuous to come into the world.”³⁵ Thus, the revelation of the Word, the true light, is not something that occurred in the past only, but continues to reveal itself in the present in transformative ways. As J. Todd Billings rightly observes, “God's love is not love from a distance, but love up close, love made manifest in a culturally particular, person-to-person way. The Incarnation is the ultimate revelation of this character in the love of God.”³⁶

When I use the phrase “the Word” I’m referring to Jesus. For John, Jesus is the expression of God’s intentions for the world. If you want to know what God thinks about the world, what God thinks about us humans, or how God feels about the outcasts, about the injustice in the world today, then we need to look to Jesus to get a good idea of who God is. Moreover, “Word” also speaks about relationships for Jesus can reveal God because of the unique relationship he has with God. As the word of God, Jesus reveals the possibilities God has in store for the world. From restoring broken lives to transforming shattered communities, God’s grace offers hope in the midst of shattered dreams and expectations.

Rev. Jacqui Lewis, Pastor of the Middle Collegiate Church in New York City’s Lower East Side, commenting on John 1:14, writes, “I believe, *The Word* is God’s dream, articulated in a particular life. The last will be first. Women matter. Those on the margins matter. Those with broken hearts will be blessed and healed. Those blind to God will have their eyes open. People

³⁴ John 1:9 (NRSV).

³⁵ This is my own rendering.

³⁶ J. Todd Billings, “Incarnational Ministry and Christology: A Reappropriation of the Way of Lowliness,” *Missiology* 32, no. 2 (2004), 188.

will have enough; captives will be released.”³⁷ But if this dream is to become a reality, I believe God has to move into the neighborhood, incarnation must take place, at every level of human life and the church must be its catalyst. When a church opens its doors without recriminations, it is an indication that God has moved into the neighborhood. When a food pantry provides sustenance for needy families, and invites them to join the faith community, God has moved into the neighborhood. When community-based programs provide services for mentally ill individuals, struggling families, or undocumented immigrants, God has moved into the neighborhood. When we stand against hate and bigotry, God has moved into the neighborhood. When we refuse to condone sexual assault against women and children by so-called “upstanding politicians,” we can say that God has moved into the neighborhood. When we welcome a family into the community, who would otherwise not be allowed to do so, either because of ethnic, or religious reasons, we tear down color barriers and declare that God has moved into the neighborhood.

This past summer my wife and I were invited to attend a Fourth of July BBQ in Bayshore, NY where her colleague, Ray, lives. As he gave me a tour of his home and property, we came to a tall fence. He told me that the moment his neighbor found out he was Venezuelan, he immediately built a fence to keep Ray and his family out. In my opinion, such action has caused the neighbor to miss out on a wonderful opportunity to be acquainted with such a loving family. He’s also missed out on some delicious barbecued steaks and ribs, arroz con gandules, and other Latino delicacies. When God moves in, hate and bigotry are defeated by the light of life.

³⁷ Lewis, Jaqueline J. “The Dream Made Flesh.” Middle Notes, Dec. 2017, 1. Emphasis in the original.

According to James Barr, the condition of human beings as “flesh,” contrasted with an infinite God unbound by fleshly categories, “called forth a Christian message in terms of incarnation.” He writes,

The contrast between ‘immortality of the soul’ and ‘resurrection of the body’ is the most vivid illustration of the tendency of such thought. Mankind in contrast to God, on the other hand, as many Old Testament passages indicate, would be ‘flesh’ as contrasted to Spirit.’ The world of man is the world of flesh. The impact of personality on the world of man will necessarily be clothed in fleshly action and manifestation.³⁸

“Real participation” as revealed in Romans 8:3, is what I think Paul means when he says that God sent Jesus “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” For Barr, “The presence of the word *ομοίωμα* [translated likeness, form] ... indicates that the Son was more than his form and that the assumption of the form did not involve full submission to the domination of sin.”³⁹ Thus, Jesus’ identification with sin – although limited – makes God’s manifestation in human flesh what I call “real incarnation.” Remarkably, Barr does not cite 2 Cor. 5:21, where Paul makes a striking statement regarding Jesus’ participation in sin, a fact most translators hide by adding the verb “to be”: “For our sake God made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”⁴⁰ Thus, Jesus seems to have identified fully with sinful humans.

All in all, while Barr’s analysis highlights what real participation – as opposed to the manifestations of the deity as revealed in, for example, Greek mythology – looks like, his argument seems to be less concrete than expected. That is, in the incarnation, Jesus’ participation in human sin reveals a deity in action, but only in general terms. Furthermore, Jesus’ identification with sin points to Paul’s theology of the cross. However, the cross is seen as the fulfillment of the law’s declaration against sin, as Paul himself affirms, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who

³⁸ James Barr, “Word Became Flesh,” *Interpretation* 10, no. 1 (1956), 17.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁴⁰ NRSV.

hangs on a tree.”⁴¹ And yet, the death of Christ with all of its implications is never carried any further than this, but seems only to have spiritual implications. Thus, while Barr seems to reinforce the historicity of the incarnation, its significance remains dependent on Old Testament realities:

If the Word became flesh, its becoming must have a kind of fleshly history, even if perceptible only in hints and indications. The stories themselves lean heavily on Old Testament material. From the nature of their subject, they are pushed beyond what is ‘normal history,’ in the same way as the Ascension story is, but do not become non-historical myth, for the historical involvement of the narratives is inescapable. They carry the meaning of the Incarnation as far as it can be carried in narrative form.⁴²

Hence, while Barr is aware of the anthropological implications of the incarnation, in my view, it falls short of more radical considerations. That is, he fails to connect the universal with the particular in concrete terms. Darrell Whiteman, in his article “Anthropology and Mission: The Incarnational Connection,” extends anthropological analysis to cross-cultural ministry, and thus concretizes the incarnation with socio-economic and political realities:

The Incarnation is our model for cross-cultural ministry and the biblical reason why anthropology needs to inform mission. As a theological concept, the Incarnation is about God becoming human, but God did not become a generic human being. God became Jesus the Jew, shaped and molded by first-century, Roman-dominated, Palestinian Jewish culture. This meant that Jesus spoke Aramaic with the low-prestige accent used around Galilee. He avoided eating pork and other foods prohibited by the Torah, and he assumed that the earth was flat and the center of the universe, with the sun revolving around it. Jesus did not know that disease was caused by germs, as Pasteur discovered centuries later (in 1865). In other words, Jesus was thoroughly shaped by his Jewish culture. The God of the universe was manifest through Jesus, who was embedded in this particular culture.⁴³

This cultural embeddedness is, in my opinion, what Barr resists, as do many Evangelical scholars today. Barr’s view seems to be based on certain assumptions – Eurocentrism, for example – that take into account his own social context only while denying other interpretive

⁴¹ Galatians 3:13 (NRSV).

⁴² Barr, “Word Became Flesh,” 23.

⁴³ Darrell L. Whiteman, “Anthropology and Mission: The Incarnational Connection,” *Missiology* 31, no. 4 (2003), 407.

possibilities. I believe John 1:14 can be understood more fully when interpreted from Jesus' social location, opening the hermeneutical door to other interpretive schemes. For example, using narrative criticism as his methodology, Francisco Lozada argues that "The Gospel of John is a journey narrative," emphasizing as such, the plight of the migrant. He writes,

Jesus, the Logos, departs from the world above at the beginning of the plot, travels throughout the world below, and returns to the world above at the end of the narrative. Some, like myself, might even call it a migration journey. Jesus, an outsider, is not of this world but of another world – the world above. He crosses all sorts of borders, encounters various characters – some friendly and some not so welcoming – experiences death, and is vindicated at the end with a new sense of home through the community of disciples. This is the basic sequencing of the narrative of John: a narrative of unsettlement (1:1-18), and a narrative of return (18:1-21-25).⁴⁴

It is this unsettlement that the Mañana project will attempt to address, not only among the Latino immigrant homeless population, but more importantly, the unsettledness I wish to trigger within the hearts and minds of community residents, particularly the church, who as the people of God are called to practice a non-compromising, non-partisan, non-judgmental ministry of incarnational presence. I argue that if this is to be a reality, hospitality – radical hospitality – must be at the heart of any practice of incarnational ministry. And yet, such incarnational practice must take into account the offensive nature of the incarnation. As Daniel Groody argues,

Although the incarnation saves, Barth notes that it also "offends." It offends precisely because it brings into question the disordered values of a society that has lost its sense of *imago Dei*. It challenges especially those who exclude on the basis of superficial notions of private property, legal status, and personal or even national rights without any social, moral, or divine reference point, or any regard for the exigencies of distributive, contributive, and restorative justice that flow as a natural consequence from divine gratuity. The incarnation moves people beyond a narrow, self-serving identity into a greater identification with those considered "other" in society, particularly those like migrants and refugees who are poor and regarded as insignificant.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Jr. Lozada, Francisco, "The Narrative Identities in the Gospel of John," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, ed. Danna Nolan Fewell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 341.

⁴⁵ Daniel G. Groody, "Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees," *Theological Studies* 70, no. 3 (2009), 652.

Andrew Shepherd begins the introduction to his book *The Gift of the Other: Levinas, Derrida, and a Theology of Hospitality*, in an inquisitive manner. His question, “A World for All?” speaks volumes concerning the “stranger’s” plight in our world today. He writes,

We live in an intriguing period of human history. The last century had seen the exponential growth of the human population – from 1.5 billion in 1900 to 2.5 billion in 1950, to over 7 billion today. Yet, with the burgeoning growth in human population, there is also perhaps a greater awareness than any stage in human history of our essential interconnectivity and inter-relatedness. The collapse of both ideological and physical barriers erected during the Cold War, and the technological and economic “developments” of the last two decades mean that, notwithstanding the differences and diversity of “human civilizations” spread across the globe, there is a growing realization of our existence as inhabitants of a single “global village.”⁴⁶

And yet it seems that we have not taken advantage of the developments mentioned in order to create a global village that fosters openness, acceptance, and a spirit of hospitality. Rather, we are witnessing a change in perspective on a global scale that has many leaders, including the men and women on the streets disturbed. I myself am wondering where all this is going to take us.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres recently issued a “red alert” for the international community in a message saying that in “fundamental ways the world has gone in reverse” since his January 2017 appeal for peace. “Conflicts have deepened and new dangers have emerged,” he warned, adding “global anxieties about nuclear weapons are the highest since the Cold War.” The Secretary-General also cited as concerns the rising danger of climate change, a growth in inequalities, horrific violations of human rights and increased nationalism, or the belief that there are “perceived differences between people, emphasizing an individual’s identification with their own nation... an idea that is potentially oppressive because it submerges individual identity within a national whole, and gives elites or political leaders potential

⁴⁶ Andrew Shepherd, *The Gift of the Other: Levinas, Derrida, and a Theology of Hospitality*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 1.

opportunities to manipulate or control the masses). There is also increased xenophobia, or the fear of the stranger, the other.”⁴⁷

In ancient times the “stranger” was seen as worthy of hospitality because, as the letter to the Hebrews reminds us, “some have extended hospitality to angels without ever knowing it!”⁴⁸ But today, the image of the stranger is becoming more and more a synonym for suspicion. Guterres stressed that unity is the only answer to solving the world's problems and urged leaders “everywhere to make this New Year's resolution: narrow the gaps. Bridge the divides. Rebuild trust by bringing people together around common goals.”⁴⁹

When taken from an eschatological perspective that relies mainly on a literalist interpretation of scripture, the world crisis described above, rather than create an opportunity for “bridging divides,” promotes division at all levels of life. I believe that a misunderstanding of the function of language, the nature of texts, and its interpretive validity, has led many to introduce unsupported views concerning the so-called end times. From the Branch Davidians, to the Heaven’s Gate Cult, to Harold Camping’s 2011 rapture predictions, to Tim Lahaye’s *Left Behind* movies and books, the adherence to biblical literalism, also referred to as “naïve Biblicism,” leads to a rejection of exegetical and hermeneutical safeguards that rely on the understanding of language, semiotics, and culture as interpretative referents (contexts) for theological understanding and practice.

Born and raised in the Pentecostal tradition, the Bible was central, not only for ethical living, but it also became a sort of road map for the future. The coming of Jesus, or the rapture, was a central eschatological doctrine that became the foundation for all theological inquiry. In

⁴⁷ Brian Freeman, “Guterres Issues Red Alert for World,” Newsmax, December 31, 2017. Accessed 01/06/2017, <https://www.newsmax.com/newsfront/antonio-guterres-United-nations-international-dangers/2017/12/31/id/834486/>.

⁴⁸ Hebrews 13:2 (*The Message*).

⁴⁹ Brian Freeman, “Guterres Issues Red Alert for World,” *Newsmax* 2017.

later years, I turned to the writings of such eschatologists of the likes of Dwight Pentecost, John Walvoord, and *C.I. Scofield's Annotated Bible*, all three former teachers at Dallas Theological Seminary. Up to the early 1990s, the rapture was part and parcel of my doctrinal heritage, that is until certain world events made me abandon the teaching altogether.⁵⁰

But rapture theology is more sinister and dangerous than one is led to believe. In his article the *Radical Ideology of Rapture*, Nathaniel P. Grimes observes that rapture theology is a catalyst and harbinger for White Supremacist ideology. Grimes traces the development of rapture thinking from The Civil War to the flourishing of Dispensationalism. With the rise of liberalism, fundamentalists rallied their forces against the progressive attack through John Darby's Dispensational ideology. According to Grimes:

This system was one around which evangelicals from different denominations could coalesce to fight against the corrupting forces of liberalism. Dispensationalists continually tried to carve out their place in the broader evangelical tradition. They published a list of supposed premillennialists that included Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, and the Wesley brothers.⁵¹

Scofield's reference Bible flooded fundamentalist circles with his dispensationalist teaching, particularly Old Testament scriptures understood prophetically, which, among other things, helped galvanize White supremacist ideology:

In his preaching, the white identity that had been under fire since the Civil War found a welcome sense of security. Scofield's 1917 reference Bible has the events of Genesis 9 ending in a 'prophetic declaration ... that from Ham will descend an inferior and servile posterity.' In the event of the rapture, they [that is, the descendants of Ham – African Americans] would be among those left behind. The "white elites" of Dallas, who had feared "a revolt of poor and working-class whites allied with African Americans," readily

⁵⁰ In an interview recorded on WWDJ 97AM, then a Christian radio station, Walvoord was asked if the Iraqi war (1990) was really the war of Armageddon. He responded in the affirmative and added that the conflict would end in the rapture of the church. As expected, Walvoord's predictions never materialized, forcing him to go into seclusion. His name never came up again except to announce that he had passed away. It was then that I came to the conclusion that rapture theology was a hoax. Shortly after, I also broke away from dispensationalism.

⁵¹ Nathaniel P. Grimes, "The Racial Ideology of Rapture," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 43, no. 3 (2016), 214-215.

accepted this view. Some in the audience had hoped that “the negroes” would go away – when they would not, escape by way of rapture became a viable alternative.⁵²

Today, rapture ideology continues to influence most White evangelicals into believing that it is the coming of Christ for his church that will put an end to the world in catastrophic fashion. The dogma, however, has developed into the belief that God through the United States will bring an end to sin, most notably, through nuclear conflagration. Many Christian fundamentalists argue that as the bastion of what is good, America has been chosen by God to be judge, jury, and executioner. One is reminded of the words uttered by former President George Bush after 9/11: “It is between them and us.” As Catherine Keller observes, “The enemy is not merely a historical foe, but a diabolical dark force against which only the white light of our messianic goodness can prevail. Over and over we have heard that ‘America will call evil by its name.’ The name of the Beast?”⁵³

Jürgen Moltmann criticizes this brand of Christian apocalyptic, the idea of a rapture that will soon take us from this earth to escape God’s wrath. He argues, “But Revelation was not written for ‘rapturists’ fleeing from the world, who tell the world ‘goodbye’ and want to go to heaven; it was meant for resistance fighters, struggling against the godless powers on this earth, especially the nuclear powers; it was written, that is, out of love for this world of God’s.”⁵⁴

In general, the parishioners at FUMC do not follow rapture ideology to the letter, nor do they carry a copy of *C.I. Scofield’s Reference Bible* to church. However, in terms of eschatology, they do seem complacent in terms of social justice proclivities – if Jesus is coming, why bother helping the poor? In addition, the majority of them view America as God’s agent in the world,

⁵² Ibid., 215-216.

⁵³ Catherine Keller, "Omnipotence and Preemption," in *The American Empire and the Commonwealth of God: A Political, Economic, Religious Statement*, ed. David Ray Griffin et al. (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 2006), 126.

⁵⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Coming of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996, 2004), 153.

called to bring law and order through the spreading of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Finally, they readily view world events as indicators of the coming judgment and the return of Christ.

Eschatology, Jürgen Moltmann argues, “is generally held to be the doctrine of ‘the Last Things,’ or of ‘the end of all things’... Eschatology seems to search for the ‘final solution’ of all the insoluble problems.”⁵⁵ It is this final solution of world crisis we are experiencing today – and in past years as well – that Christian fundamentalism hope to solve by nuclear confrontation. “But Christian eschatology,” continues Moltmann, “has nothing to do with apocalyptic ‘final solutions’ of this kind, for its subject is not ‘the end’ at all. On the contrary, what it is about is the new creation of all things. Christian eschatology is the remembered hope of the raising of the crucified Christ, so it talks about beginning afresh in the deadly end.”⁵⁶

It is Moltmann’s “remembered hope” along with the doctrine of the incarnation that this paper focuses on. However, I bring to the table two French philosophers that add an important element to the incarnational-eschatological dimensions of John 1:14: Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida. My argument is that both incarnation and eschatology, along with their proclamation and practice, are possible only within a framework of radical hospitality. I begin with Derrida.

Many Christians attempt to define who gets redeemed and who does not. In Derrida’s model of radical hospitality, such a stance harbors violence against the other. “Derrida believes,” observes Hans Boersma,

that there are problems with such restrictions on hospitality and with such attempts to determine the future. As soon as we try to determine, be it ever so carefully, what the messianic future might hold, Derrida believes that we become restrictive in our hospitality toward the other and in fact undo the alterity of the other by recasting him in

⁵⁵ Ibid., x.

⁵⁶ Ibid., xi.

our own image, so that it becomes impossible to avoid the wars of religion that have plagued us in the past.⁵⁷

History has shown that the notion of “recasting” the other in our own image so as to create a society in which religious (and cultural) uniformity is cherished does not avoid violence but, on the contrary, perpetuates it.⁵⁸ Postcolonial criticism has, among other things, pinpointed a number of practices that serve to “recast” minority groups into a model of religious and cultural uniformity, thus, perpetuating violent practices against them. I will mention two: Mimicry and Hybridity.

Mimicry perpetuates the dominant group’s desire that “their subjects be similar to them in matters of taste, opinions, morals and intellect, but in no way identical.”⁵⁹ In my experience, this practice is often accompanied by phrases such as “we are all the same,” “In terms of race, I considered myself colorblind,” or “I see you as a human being.” In all these cases, the oppressed group are identified with general markers, but are never quite recognized for who they are. In the church I serve this is a common practice, one that I have tried to confront and challenge, but in most cases the attempt has been futile. The Americanization of religion in this area of the country is fixed on classifying “real” Christians with “real” Americans. Thus, ethnic differences are subsumed within the delusion of “sameness.” In other words, to be a true American, you must be a Christian!

Conversely, Hybridity functions as a marker that identifies those who are not pure, but who exist because of racial breeding. While this mixing of races produces a third ground or space

⁵⁷ Hans Boersma, "Irenaeus, Derrida and Hospitality: On the Eschatological Overcoming of Violence," *Modern Theology* 19, no. 2 (2003), 165.

⁵⁸ See for example, Carol Anderson, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (Bloomsbury, 2016). Alcott and Mendieta, *Thinking from the Underside of History: Enrique Dussel's Philosophy of Liberation*; Catherine Keller, "The Breast, the Apocalypse, and the Colonial Journey," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 10, 1 (08/30/2016 1994), accessed 09/25/2017.

⁵⁹ Gayle A. Yee, *Postcolonial Biblical Criticism, Methods in Exodus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 199.

through which the dominant group can be challenged, the consequences for such practices can be devastating. Sadly, many of my parishioners, both of Latino and Caribbean descent, do not realize that, like the educated class of Indians in colonial India, they have been chosen to mediate between the American Empire and Latino and Caribbean communities.⁶⁰ That is, they are bridges of assimilation. What impedes them in recognizing their position in society is, I believe, the experience of accommodation, a process that hampers the development of social consciousness. These and other demeaning classification are just one example of Derrida's criticism of ideologies that determine the individual's eschatological future.

To be sure, the philosophical and theological underpinnings of the Mañana project consists of Levinas' "Transcendence of the Other" and "Infinite Responsibility," and Derrida's radical or "Unconditional Hospitality" and "The Gift of the Other."⁶¹

Both Levinas' and Derrida's philosophies of hospitality are considered an alternative to Western culture's infatuation with ontology. As Boersma explains,

Western philosophical tradition has consistently displayed a penchant for ontological categories, and because of its imposition of rational categories on the exterior world has been inclined to violence: The ontological event accomplished by philosophy consists in suppressing or transmuting the alterity of all that is Other, in universalizing the immanence of the Same or of Freedom in effacing the boundaries, and in expelling the violence of Being... Thus, rather than trying to impose my rationality upon the other, my primary attitude should be one of absolute openness and hospitality.⁶²

Thus, Plato's *Eternal Ideas*, Hegel's *Spirit*, and Heidegger's *Dasein* (Being) perpetuate the idea that "ethical relations between particular beings is subservient to universal mediators" and as such, these philosophies have "failed to give an account of the relationship between ethical beings."⁶³ Ontology emphasizes human relations in terms of the universal and the abstract, while

⁶⁰ Ibid, 201.

⁶¹ Shepherd, *The Gift of the Other: Levinas, Derrida, and a Theology of Hospitality*.

⁶² Boersma, "Irenaeus, Derrida and Hospitality: On the Eschatological Overcoming of Violence," 164.

⁶³ Shepherd, *The Gift of the Other: Levinas, Derrida, and a Theology of Hospitality*, 18.

Levinas and Derrida suggest a way of practice that is concrete and incarnational. For Levinas, ethics should not be seen as only a subset of philosophy, but more correctly, as “first philosophy.” In other words, philosophy *is* ethics.⁶⁴

According to Levinas, the other, the stranger, is the infinite “I” and places the burden of hospitality on the host. Levinas defines the noun “I” thus: “The word *I* means *here I am*, answering for everything and everyone.”⁶⁵ The ethical implications revealed in this statement are striking, and while critics have pounced on Levinas for views similar to this,⁶⁶ the possibilities for healthy human relations cannot be ignored. Robert Bernasconi, as cited in Shepherd, summarizes well Levinas’ notion of transcendence and infinite responsibility: “I am radically responsible for the other prior to any contract, prior to having chosen or acted, indeed prior to my taking up a subject position in relation to an other... [T]he responsibility inherent in subjectivity is prior to my encounter with the other... the possibility of ethics [is located] in the concrete encounter that realized the formal structure of transcendence.”⁶⁷ Thus, before any notion or self-conscious awareness of my responsibility toward the other, my actions of hospitality are already ingrained in my very being. The reasons I chose Levinasian ethics over against biblical ethics as the foundation for the Mañana project was mostly due to the latter’s pre-requirement for human ethics. For example, the mandate to love the other “as Christ loved you,” reveals a priori my relationship to the other: “I love the stranger because Christ loved me first,” rather than, “I love the stranger because I am here for that purpose.” The former, while identified as a derivative from grace, comes with strings attached in that there is a requirement to love because someone loved me first; the latter, however, does not.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 24. Emphasis in the original.

⁶⁶ Shepherd’s book and Boersma’s article are critical arguments that while praising some of Levinas’ and Derrida’s ideas, are nonetheless opposed to their views concerning radical hospitality and the transcendence of subjectivity.

⁶⁷ Andrew Shepherd, *The Gift of the Other: Levinas, Derrida, and a Theology of Hospitality*, 25.

During the research phase of this project, I struggled to find articles that treated incarnation and eschatology together. All of the articles I found presented each subject separately. What was also interesting was that certain articles paired incarnation with missions or ethics, and eschatology with politics, violence, or apocalypticism, but not one of them thought of discussing or even mentioning in passing the connection between incarnation and eschatology. As a result, I was left to find my own way through murky theological and philosophical waters, so to speak, in establishing this connection as I believe is depicted in John 1:14. During my readings, however, I came across Derrida's *Messiah Structure and Telo-less Future* as a possibility. What follows, thus, is suggestive in nature.

According to Shepherd, "Derrida's understanding of the visitation of the stranger as a messianic figure concurs with a rich tradition within Christian history, in which the receiving stranger was commended on the understanding that such a visitor may be a messianic figure or theophany."⁶⁸ The expectation of the messianic figure of the Messiah, in contrast with Orthodox Christian thought, argues for an "openness of time created by an expectation and waiting for the Messiah, which according to Derrida, prevents foreclosure and therefore keeps us open to a future of the *impossible*."⁶⁹ In the words of Boersma, "Pure hospitality means an unconditional and structural openness to the advent... of the wholly other: it is "a messianicity whose eschatological future always remains to come."⁷⁰ Because the coming of the Messiah is always delayed, futuristic expectation is always open to hopeful encounters with the stranger. By the same token, once the messianic expectation is fulfilled, the possibility of hope becomes nil.

It is this unknowability of the future that protects the other from violence. As mentioned above, the idea that I have a detailed understanding of the future gives me the right to dictate to

⁶⁸ Ibid., 75-76.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 76. Emphasis in the original.

⁷⁰ Boersma, "Irenaeus, Derrida and Hospitality: On the Eschatological Overcoming of Violence," 165-166.

the other whether or not they will be excepted in God's future. Therefore, Derrida's deconstructionist stance was introduced for the purpose of altering Western epistemological conceptions that arrogantly claim a complete and unaltered understanding of the future. Thus, deconstruction opens up "the philosophical discourse, to prevent philosophy – and literature, ethics, institutions – from becoming totalizing and hegemonic..."⁷¹ Christendom becomes one of these institutions that has a history of dictating to others what the present and future has in store for them, a future that is wholly dependent on their loyalty or disloyalty to the State and to the church.

The Christianity I am referring to is what writer T.D. Burnette refers to as "that form of Christianity that has linked arms with both Religion and empire, and whose sordid history has contributed to the form of the faith that more and more 21st century people are saying a hard no to."⁷² Burnette associates this brand of Christianity with what he calls the 5c's:

- Crusade
- Coerce
- Convert
- Conform
- Colonize

Note how these five indicators presents an ideology that arrogantly expresses absolute knowledge of the future, leading to religious hegemony and the predeterministic declarations regarding a person's destiny. To address the fall of White Christendom, Burnette offers five counter rubrics that his community of faith in California has identified with in living according to the way of Jesus:

- Connection – Hospitality
- Contemplation – Mystery

⁷¹ Shepherd, *The Gift of the Other: Levinas, Derrida, and a Theology of Hospitality*, 50.

⁷² T.D. Burnette, "Religion after Religion: It's the End of Christendom as We Know it," *Medium*, 01/10/2018, 2017, accessed 2018, <https://medium.com/@tdburnette/religion-after-religion-its-the-end-of-christendom-as-we-know-it-a058e9ee1ded>.

- Critical Thinking – Wisdom
- Creativity – Beauty
- Compassionate Action – Love/Justice⁷³

In the following chapter I will attempt to demonstrate how I correlate Levinasian and Derridean ethics, Burnette’s “5c’s,” coupled with Justo Gonzalez’s work, into the Mañana project. I will define the concept of Mañana in light of Gonzalez’s eschatological model, both in terms of the project’s philosophical and theological underpinnings and the practice of doing hospitality. In the words of Jacques Derrida:

Are we the heirs to this tradition of hospitality?
 Up to what point? Where should we place the invariant,
 If it is one, across this logic and these narratives?
 They testify without end in our memory.⁷⁴

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jacques Derrida to Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2000), 155.

Chapter 4: The Mañana Project

In his timely work, “*Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*,” Justo Gonzalez delineates a theology of Word, practice, and Spirit, specifically from a Latino context. Gonzalez’s premise is that the God of the Bible comes to us as a biased God, and as such, God’s agenda warrants a theology that is also biased:

One could even go so far as to say that the God of Scripture is not an unbiased God. God has certain purposes for creation and is moving the world and humankind toward the fulfillment of those purposes. This means that, in a sense, God is biased against anything that stands in the way of those goals, and in favor of all that aids them. If this is true, the task of theology will not be to produce some sort of neutral—and therefore inane—interpretation of the nature of God and the universe, but rather to discover the purposes of God, to read the “signs of the times,” and to call the church to obedience in the present situation.⁷⁵

Human bias, however, has driven many in the church to make unfair assessments of minority groups. One has only to look at the manner in which the film industry depicts Latinos (although this is slowly changing): Hispanic women are portrayed as temptresses while male Hispanics are depicted as knife-wielding lunatics, drug dealers, and womanizers. On another note, we are readily accused of arriving late to meetings or special events, or leaving everything for tomorrow. The idea of “laziness” is inherent in the notion that we Latinos live a life of procrastination. I remember attending a meeting at the Church of the Village (COTV) in New York City during my first year as Associate pastor there. The church was an amalgamation of three churches, one of them being a small Hispanic congregation that had been forced to move from their location in the Lower East Side. I had been appointed to COTV with the purpose of rebuilding the Spanish congregation who were having a difficult time adjusting to the new location. When I arrived, one of the committee members commented to another member, “My

⁷⁵ Justo Gonzalez, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 21-22.

goodness, the pastor is on time. He's not like those other lazy Latinos." I was not aware this person made such a derogatory remark until after the meeting. Bishop Johnson, the lead pastor, immediately took her to the side and gave her a lesson on bigotry. Afterward, she apologized. According to Gonzalez, it is "the indolent response of people too lazy to make any kind of effort."⁷⁶ And yet, the meaning of *Mañana* and its significance in everyday life for Hispanics is much more complex. According to Gonzalez,

Mañana is the discouraged response of those who have learned, through long and bitter experience, that the results of their efforts seldom bring about much benefits to them or to their loved ones. In this sense, *mañana* is the response of the farm workers who realize that no matter how hard they work, most of their income will end up back in the hands of the employer; or of the tenement dweller in New York who knows that efforts to improve living conditions will most likely be erased by slum lords, drug traffickers, and even city ordinances.⁷⁷

However, and more importantly, *Mañana* has end-time implications: it is "the radical questioning of today."⁷⁸ To be sure, we question today because the present has not been too good to us. From the Conquest to immigration laws that target even those Latinos who are legal citizens, we are a people who are continuously raped of our human dignity and worth. And many of us, in a desperate attempt to escape the present, sometimes rely on quick solutions to make the future a present reality, whether it is our young people selling drugs to get out of the violent neighborhoods they live in, or Latino mothers and fathers buying lottery tickets with the little they have in hopes of hitting the jackpot. Yet, "we can live the promise of *Mañana* today through the power of the Spirit."⁷⁹

More striking still is Gonzalez' assessment that *Mañana* is a word of judgment for the church and the world:

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 165.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 164.

When one looks forward to a Mañana one implies that the present is not as rosy as some would have us think. It is no coincidence that almost immediately after Constantine's conversion, there were many who felt that the book of Revelation ought not to be included in the canon. Not only did it speak of Rome—and Rome was now Christian—as the harlot sitting on seven hills and drunk with the blood of the martyrs, but it also spoke of a new heaven and a new earth, thereby implying that the benevolent “reign of the emperor” was far distant from the Reign of God.⁸⁰

Even today, while many conservative Christian groups see in the new administration God's answer for America and the world, world leaders have expressed alarm at an administration that resembles that of a totalitarian regime. Writer Berny Belvedere, in his article “Would Evangelicals Elect Lucifer,” observes, “Evangelicals give themselves wide latitude to have their causes advanced by ungodly men. They are perfectly willing to give political support to secular presidents, kings, and rulers who in return offer to promote their policies. That's just it—evangelicals care more about a president's policies than his piety.”⁸¹ Journalist Fareed Zakaria shows just how far America's foreign policy - or lack of it – can affect our global community: “What unifies Trump's foreign admirers is the idea that the existing global order is rotten and should be torn down. Many of Trump's domestic supporters would agree. All the European parties cheering Trump's victory seek the destruction of the European Union and, more generally, the tightly knit Western community centered upon shared values and interests.”⁸²

It is the eschatological realities embedded within the concept of Mañana that inspired me to develop the Mañana Project. Not only does the idea of eschatology find a niche in this program, but more importantly, it provides the ground for incarnation and eschatology to converge in new and exciting ways. The hope proclaimed in God's end-time empire does not

⁸⁰ Ibid., 164-165.

⁸¹ Berny Belvedere, "Would Evangelicals Elect Lucifer?," *Medium*, January 11, 2018, 2016, accessed 2018, <https://arcdigital.media/would-evangelicals-elect-lucifer-4380b843b9fe>.

⁸² Fareed Zakaria, "Trump Should Think Twice before Trashing Globalism," (November 18, 2016 2017). <http://www.newsmax.com/FareedZakaria/globalism-globalization-trump-russia/2016/11/18/id/759624/>.

side with notions of power we see in today's world. As Moltmann observes, "The 'God' of the poor, the peasant and the slave has always been the poor, suffering, unprotected Christ, whereas the God of empires and rulers has usually been the Pantocrator, Christ enthroned in heaven."⁸³ Indeed, what I could not find in my research I discovered during the twelve weeks I led the Mañana Project at the Hands Across Long Island-Community Wellness and Recovery Center. To be sure, the experience brought me face-to-face with the raw reality of incarnational presence.

As noted above, the purpose of this project is to be a catalyst for raising awareness of First United Methodist Church's role as God's agent of hope by connecting with community-based programs such as the Hands Across Long Island-Community Wellness and Recovery Center while seeking to discover and develop the assets of its participants for personal and communal transformation. Furthermore, it will also seek to improve the self-esteem of the participants. The project was planned and coordinated by the Lay Advisory Committee in conjunction with H.A.L.I. My hope was that the participants connect with the church community in ways that will provide an environment for radical incarnational-eschatological hospitality. The LAC consisted of four members, one from FUMC, a member of the Hauppauge UMC, the pastor of Christian Life Center, and a staff person from H.A.L.I. As I mention above, the motivating biblical themes are incarnation and eschatology, using John 1:14 as a textual foundation.⁸⁴

The project had three phases, the first of which the LAC and H.A.L.I. assisted the student in developing the format and curriculum for a three-month educational program that would help undocumented Latino participants integrate within the community. Additionally, discussion groups were created on how to assist the participants in developing a positive sense of self-esteem. During the second phase, the goal was to have one group meeting, which was led by the

⁸³ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 60.

⁸⁴ See Chapter 3.

student, once a week for three months. The group had a transitional structure, i.e. the purpose was for each participant to move on to the next phase of personal development for community integration. The third and final phase served as a conclusion of the program in which FUMC and the Mañana Project participants came face-to-face for the first time. This meeting of communities would take place at H.A.L.I.'s first Thanksgiving Luncheon event described below. Because of the time constraints in completing this project, a verbal survey was given to the participants in three parts.

The possibilities for running a group of the kind described in this paper emerged from a project assignment for the Methods and Research course I took in the summer of 2017. Our final assignment for the course was to schedule a number of interviews with three individuals on the topic of my choosing and prepare a transcript of the meetings, including a brief analysis, and concluding remarks. Because of its relevancy to post-election concerns, I chose immigration as my topic of discussion. Interviewees included Judy, a middle-aged Caucasian woman; Ray, a middle-aged Argentinian male; and George, a 40-year-old Peruvian male. Judy is Deputy Director of a community-based program in Central Islip, NY that provides wellness opportunities for a host of individuals, including homeless persons and people with mental health challenges. Ray works as a community advocate for the homeless population in Central Islip. He provides assistance in various areas such as employment, housing, and immigration. George is the pastor of a Hispanic Pentecostal/Evangelical Progressive congregation in Central Islip.⁸⁵ Pastor George

⁸⁵ The term “progressive,” as used by Pastor George, should not be understood as a theological mindset that seeks to reform the Christian faith using the postmodern paradigm to question biblical history and narrative integrity, or whether or not the stories are true. Of importance is the view that God is active in non-Christian religions; that Christianity does not have a monopoly on truth, and that the Bible should be taken “seriously” rather than literally. Add to this the struggle for the acceptance of LGBTQ+ communities within the life of the church. “Progressive” for pastor George, simply means breaking from Classical Pentecostalism’s emphasis on moral rigidity, dress code requirements, and a literalist view of scripture.

provides much needed services to the Hispanic community. His congregation has a growing young adult ministry who are very active in worship, social media, and outreach ministries.

Among post-election concerns, I also chose the topic of immigration for this project for three other reasons: (1) Discussion of the topic had been fueled by our administration's rhetoric that reflects, in large part, its animosity, in no unclear terms, towards non-White populations, such as Mexican-Americans, Muslim-Americans, and African-Americans.⁸⁶ (2) I felt the issue surrounding immigration was of the utmost importance for all three interviewees since they are directly involved with the community-at-large. And, (3) I was curious to see what responses I got from each participant I interviewed, mostly because I was struggling with certain imbedded theologies that for some time have influenced my thinking.

When I spoke with H.A.L.I.'s Deputy Director to ask her about the possibilities of running a program for Latino documented and undocumented immigrants, she saw it as an opportunity to provide much needed services to a population that was under attack. More importantly, H.A.L.I. was in need of programs that provided services in Spanish. H.A.L.I.'s CEO agreed, and in a matter of weeks, I was ready to begin the project.

What was it about the project that caught the agency's CEO and other staff's attention? The idea that H.A.L.I. would be offering a program set in the Spanish language was important, but, in my opinion, what got the project off the ground was its theme: "Mañana." I was surprised to see that even with no formal theological training, the staff at H.A.L.I. captured the essence of what I was trying to say and do. They could sense the eschatological and incarnational nuances in the curriculum I gave them, and as such they gave me all the support I needed.

⁸⁶ With the recent tensions between the US and North Korea, one may have to add Koreans to the mix of unwanted immigrants.

Once a start date for the program was established, the agency began inviting the Latino community to the discussion groups. With the help and suggestions of the LAC, I created a curriculum that included specific topics that were geared to fomenting a more positive sense of self-esteem among the participants.⁸⁷ General objectives and goals were created to provide continuity and a sense of direction for both the participants and myself. In addition, each four-week interval ended with the participants completing part of a general survey.

The methodology used for group discussions was gleaned from Ronald W. Toseland and Robert F. Rivas and their work on group dynamics in social work.⁸⁸ Robert Biehler and Jack Snowman's *Psychology Applied to Teaching* provided helpful insights into human stage theories of development.⁸⁹ Susan Robbins, et al, offered vital information in the area of Phenomenology and Hermeneutics, in order to foster an ontological hermeneutical model for social interaction.⁹⁰ Donald Capps' *Agents of Hope: A Pastoral Psychology*, offered invaluable case studies on the meaning of hope from a pastoral perspective.⁹¹ And Thomas A. Harris, M.D., in his classic work, *I'm Ok-You're Ok*, afforded his theory of Transactional Analysis as a method for grasping the intricacies of interpersonal behavior.⁹²

The first week was designed to be introductory in nature and our first meeting was spent in getting to know each other, explaining the purpose of the group, and answering any questions or concerns the participants might have. Participants were then informed that in taking part in the

⁸⁷ See Appendix IV.

⁸⁸ Ronald W. Toseland and Robert F. Rivas, *An Introduction to Group Work Practice, Social Work and Family Therapy* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2001).

⁸⁹ Jack Snowman and Rick McCown, *Psychology Applied to Teaching*, 14th ed. (Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning, 2014).

⁹⁰ Susan P. Robbins, Pranab Chatterjee, and Edward R. Canda, *Contemporary Human Behavior: A Critical Perspective for Social Work* (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1998). Hermeneutics is the study of written texts. Ontological hermeneutics is the study of "human" texts. Phenomenology offers a model for interpreting personal narratives. See also Robert C. Dykstra, ed. *Images of Pastoral Care: Classic Readings* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2005).

⁹¹ Donald Capps, *Agents of Hope: A Pastoral Psychology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001).

⁹² Thomas A. Harris, *I'm Ok-You're Ok* (New York: Avon Books, 1969).

program, they would be asked to participate in a survey, which they happily agreed to do.⁹³ They were also instructed to provide their signatures on a sign-in sheet before the start of each class. I made it clear to them that this information would be kept confidential, as would all group sessions.⁹⁴ Afterward, we delved into the topic of *Mañana*. At first, the participants seemed perplexed about what I was talking about; however, as we progressed, they began to get a sense of the implications of the theme and what it meant for them as Latinos.

Once the participants understood the meaning of *Mañana* and the purpose of the project, we began the discussion with the following statement: “Nosotros los Latinos, hemos sido acusados de dejar todo para mañana.”⁹⁵ The moment those words were uttered, I noticed the smiles and laughter generated by the comment I had just made, indicating that they were well aware of what I was saying. Immediately, they began talking about those menial things they leave for tomorrow, such as cleaning the house, paying bills, or checking up on family and friends.

Afterward, I began discussing the eschatological implications of *Mañana*. I started by saying that in accusing Latinos of leaving everything for tomorrow, we were being denied the rights and privileges for today, making tomorrow an uncertain prospect for Latino communities. Most of the participants realized then that the significance of *Mañana* was more serious than they had expected. One of the participants who I will call Maria, a middle-aged woman who readily attended the discussion group, spoke about the difficulty she had in attaining services for her mentally challenged daughter. For whatever reasons, her daughter was never afforded the services she needed to help her integrate into the community. At age 35, she lacked basic life skills that are essential for personal empowerment. Maria expressed her frustration as she travels

⁹³ See Appendix V.

⁹⁴ See Appendix VI.

⁹⁵ “We Latinos, have always been accused of leaving everything for tomorrow.”

from agency to agency searching for someone to at least here her out. Another participant named Jose, who lives in the streets, expressed his concerns over the difficulties he is having finding shelter. Jose is an undocumented Latino who has been in this country for many years and as a result of the new anti-immigration initiatives, lives in constant fear. He told the group that at this point in his life, his “mañanas” are uncertain.

I ended the session by quoting from Justo Gonzalez’s *Mañana*: “La pregunta debe ser si estamos dispuestos a vivir una forma de espiritualidad que, por medio de la presencia del Espíritu Santo, nos hace el pueblo del reino de Dios.”⁹⁶ Because nearly all the participants expressed some kind of religious affiliation, the quote was not only relevant but more importantly, self-affirming. I reminded them that “if we truly believe that our future is in the Reign of God, we shall start practicing ‘Réinese’ right now...”⁹⁷ I explained what it means to live in God’s “present” kingdom:

To love the neighbor, to do justice, to announce peace, to care for the widow and the orphan—all these are not things we do beyond or apart from proclaiming the good news. They are a necessary part of the good news. Evangelism must be grounded on the spirituality of the Reign of God or it is not the good news of Jesus Christ.⁹⁸

I also emphasized that living in accordance with a spirituality that is grounded in God’s “already and not yet,” will give them a sense of hope, since true hope is possible only when we see real change takes place. I encouraged the participants to continue to attend the program at H.A.L.I.; to partake in group activities, especially those that provided them with information regarding their much-needed services. I also reminded our undocumented friends to seek advice

⁹⁶ Gonzalez, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*. 167. “The question is rather whether we are willing to live out of that spirituality which, by the presence of the Holy Spirit, makes us the people of the Reign of God.”

⁹⁷ Ibid. The word “réinese” is translated “to reign.”

⁹⁸ Ibid.

from H.A.L.I.'s Department of Advocacy. Finally, I offered FUMC as a safe sanctuary in the case that they were threatened with deportation.

The next three weeks were used to discuss the theme of love as a form of resistance. An explanation is needed here. During my years as a seminary student, I had the honor of knowing and working briefly with the late Dr. Otto Maduro, Professor of World Christianity at Drew University's Theological School. During such time, Dr. Maduro asked me to work with him as an assistant for a project that involved transcribing recorded interviews with Pentecostal pastors from New Jersey. One day, while having lunch, I began sharing the challenges I faced in my new pastoral charge. Among them were the heightened tensions between my Latino parishioners and the African-American congregation that rented our space. It seemed that they were threatened by our rapid growth. From demanding we contribute more money, to restricting the use of heat during the winter months, to sitting in the back of the sanctuary during our worship service as a form of intimidation, it appeared we were constantly under attack. After sharing these and other concerns with Dr. Maduro, I asked him "Professor, what do you suggest I do?" He responded: "Threaten them with love!"

I wanted to show the participants that society may take many things away from them – economic livelihood, employment opportunities, social services, and even their freedoms – but they could not let the American empire rob them of their "moral vocabulary." As the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber, II reminds us, "We cannot let narrow religious forces hijack our moral vocabulary, forces who speak loudly about things God says little about while saying so little about issues that are at the heart of all our religious traditions: truth, justice, love, and mercy."⁹⁹

⁹⁹ *William J. Barber, II, The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement Is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear* (Boston, MA.: Beacon Press, 2016). Kindle Edition, Loc. 127.

The reaction of the group as a whole was positive. Many, if not all of them, agreed that loving God and neighbor was essential in creating a just society. However, some of the participants expressed their concerns regarding the church's lack of engagement in terms of social justice initiatives, particularly in Central Islip. In addition, some of the participants were appalled at the church's negative attitude towards the immigrant population in general. I informed them that those attitudes were based mostly on stereotypes fueled by the media and partisan politics. I assured them that the United Methodist Church in general was well aware of the justices being committed and was active in supporting undocumented populations through resistance strategies. For example, I informed the participants that a number of United Methodist churches who were already listed as "Safe Sanctuaries" were taking in hundreds of undocumented persons, defying ant-immigration laws. Other churches were registering their congregations as safe sanctuaries. They seemed relieved in hearing my words, but some still expressed their concerns with a religious institution that seemed not to care.

Because of the rise in discrimination here in Long Island, the next four weeks concentrated on empowerment strategies in order to combat racism. In these sessions, participants learned about the unique power of mindfulness, to which I am indebted to the works of Ellen J. Langer.¹⁰⁰ According to Langer,

Most attempts to combat prejudice have been aimed at reducing our tendency to categorize other people. These efforts are based on the view that, in an ideal world, everyone should be considered equal, falling under the single category of "human being." Yet categorizing is a fundamental and natural human activity. It is the way we come to know the world. Any attempt to eliminate bias by attempting to eliminate the perception of differences may be doomed to fail.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Ellen J. Langer, *The Power of Mindful Learning* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1997); Ellen J. Langer, *Mindfulness* (Boston, MA: Da Capo Press, 2014).

¹⁰¹ Langer, *Mindfulness*, 152.

Langer believes that emphasizing differences rather than sameness, e.g. being human, can serve better to combat prejudice in more effective ways. The key, she argues, is context: “If we keep in mind the importance of context and the existence of multiple perspectives, we see the perception of skills and handicaps changes constantly, depending on the situation and the vantage point of the observer. Such awareness prevents us from regarding a handicap as a person’s identity.”¹⁰²

Taking Langer’s notion of context as a catalyst for group discussion, I asked the participants how they saw themselves as Latinos, keeping in mind that some of them were undocumented immigrants. All of them affirmed their “Hispanic-ness” with pride and courage, despite the constant bombardment of racial profiling in Long Island. One participant mentioned the fact the Latinos have been in the Americas much longer than non-Latino residents and as such, that was enough to convince her that she had the God-given right to live in America and that her heritage should be respected.

I reminded the group that while humans are anatomically similar,¹⁰³ there were certain distinctions that they needed to be aware of, distinctions that did not degrade them but on the contrary, could be used as a catalyst for empowerment and developing a positive self-esteem. We then proceeded to discuss the importance of cultural and social context in an effort to understand that we are all different, unique and as such, we can come to respect and treat each other with dignity. They agreed that knowing and accepting who we are can help us come to know and accept others as well.

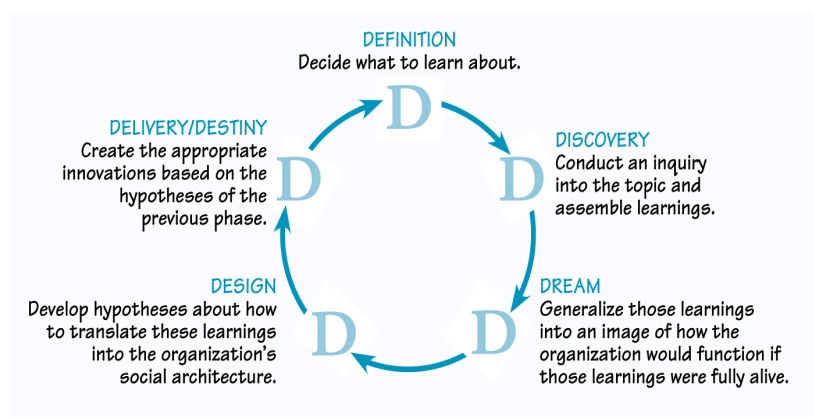
In *Appreciative Inquiry* (AI) theory, techniques are introduced to help participants forge a healthy self-image by describing and expressing themselves in positive terms. According to

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ I owe this insight to Dr. Louis Flam, professor of archeology at Herbert H. Lehman College, CUNY. Dr. Flam argued that while there may be minor skeletal differences among anatomically modern humans, we are all basically the same. What makes us different is culture.

Hammond, “Every human being has a need to (1) have a voice and be heard, (2) be seen as essential to the group (i.e. if I was absent, I would be missed), and (3) be seen as unique and exceptional.”¹⁰⁴ Hammond introduces the “5 D-Cycle” model¹⁰⁵ which is used to help the participant remain focused on his or her quest for fomenting a positive self-esteem, and more importantly, review and take note of changes in context. The first “D,” “Define,” asks, *How can I improve my self-esteem?* The second “D,” focuses on “Discover,” that is, the participant is asked to explain why he or she is important to the group. The word “group” is analogous to society as a whole. The third “D,” “Dream,” serves to help the participant envision “what might be.” The fourth “D” is “Design,” or the process by which goals and objectives are established to obtain future outcomes. The last cycle is dual in nature: “Deliver/Destiny,” and refers to the process of creating one’s future through a continuous change of attitudes and behaviors.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) 5 D-Cycle



In a perfect world, role play would have been a suitable teaching method to illustrate the power of AI. However, because of the lack of knowledge regarding this method of social

¹⁰⁴ Hammond, *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*, 271-272. (Emphasis in the original).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 274-640.

interplay, I was forced to implement the theory using the question and answer model¹⁰⁶ For the four to six weeks we discussed strategies for personal empowerment and positive self-esteem, there was an average attendance of about 5 participants. As we went around the room asking questions related to the “5 D-Cycle” method, participants responded to the best of their abilities. For example, when asked “How can I improve my self-esteem,” there was little feedback. One participant responded that taking a stand against injustice, or just feeling pride as a Latino was enough to bolster their self-esteem. I reminded the group that if they truly believe they are part of God’s reign, then they must take the first step in identifying themselves as God’s people, living within the present in light of the future, and that God’s future promised them a present of justice and hope.

When the participants were asked about their importance as persons to the group and to society as a whole, or what commonalities they had with other members of the group, and what their goals for making their personal dreams come true were, their response was next to nil. What I did sense was that the group’s self-esteem was not contingent on any of the facets of the 5 D-Cycle or any other method, but whether or not they could maintain their jobs to support their families here and abroad, seek medical attention when needed, or like Maria, obtain the needed services for a mentally-challenged child. All in all, most, if not all of the participants, felt that leaving all their struggles “en las manos de Dios” was all they could do.¹⁰⁷

But what I also came away with from these empowerment sessions was the fact that most, if not all of the participants, expressed their sense of self-esteem by what they called “orgullo cultural” (their cultural pride). Regardless of the discrimination most of them had

¹⁰⁶ It must be noted that when I introduced this model of AI to the group, it was done using a language that they could understand, mostly because of their ages, physical illnesses and illiteracy. This made the implementation of the model even more challenging.

¹⁰⁷ Trans., “In the hands of God.”

experienced, their “orgullo cultural” gave them a sense of self-esteem, something that the current social and political melee could not take away from them.¹⁰⁸

The last two weeks were used to discuss the power of stories. The purpose in using this method was to encourage the participants to see storytelling as a powerful means for resistance and hope. I started the session by sharing a short story I learned in my undergraduate studies called “La Muela Rota.”¹⁰⁹ It is the story of a young man who spends all his time with his mouth closed with his tongue inside his broken tooth. His meditative posture captured the attention of the townspeople and they immediately take him to be a philosopher of profound wisdom. His reputation spreads throughout the city, prompting the citizens to elect him as their mayor. But in spite of all the hoopla, the young man never says a word, never engages anyone in conversation, nor does he share any profound insights regarding life; he simply spends his time with his tongue inside his broken tooth.¹¹⁰ The group found the story humorous and added their own interpretations and insights, the main interpretation being that you should not judge a book by its cover. The story was also related to the naiveté most people demonstrate in their unwavering approval and support of politicians who live under a façade of knowledge and wisdom while in reality, lack political know-how.

The participants were encouraged to share their personal narratives as well, and were also asked to provide input of the stories shared by their classmates. During the session, I shared with group the words of Dr. Otis Moss: “Keep the story alive before the people. Someone will eventually catch on.”¹¹¹ However, though I spent two sessions discussing the importance of

¹⁰⁸ Once we wrapped up the session, the group completed the second part of the group survey. The survey was taken verbally.

¹⁰⁹ The Broken Tooth.

¹¹⁰ Though a short story, this very humorous and satirical narrative is much longer than the version I share above. Unfortunately, I’ve forgotten the rest of the story and my efforts to locate it on the internet have failed.

¹¹¹ Moss, interview.

storytelling for personal empowerment and developing a positive self-esteem, not to mention the importance of passing on their narratives, along with their cultural mores to future generations, the level of participation was poor. After the last week of class, the participants completed the third and final part of the group survey. The average class attendance for each session was roughly five participants and each session ran for about 45 minutes, depending on the topic of discussion.

During the 12-week period of group sessions, I struggled on how to connect the church with the Mañana Project. The solution to the problem came almost by accident. My wife, Yvonne, suggested I end the project with a Thanksgiving Luncheon celebration, an event that would take place on Thanksgiving Day, between 11:00 AM and 1:00 PM. Flyers would be handed out, and the community and H.A.L.I. staff would be invited to donate food and their time to help serve those who attended. Participants were also encouraged to attend. The event was announced at the church as well.

When we arrived at the center, we were taken aback with the amount of people that not only donated food, but gave of their time as well. Most notable was the group of parishioners from FUMC who came to volunteer their time. My wife gave church members a tour of the facilities, and they were stunned to see the kind of work that takes place at the center. Many of them promised to volunteer their time and skills. During the festivities, the entire group of participants thanked all the volunteers for their kindness and service to the community. Nearly two months after the event, staff and participants were still talking about the impact the event had on their lives. One participant who struggles with symptoms of schizophrenia and as a result, has never once smiled, was smiling ear to ear that day. The head of H.A.L.I.'s board said she had never seen so much diversity in one place, adding: "This is the way the church should be."

Words of wisdom, to say the least. The Thanksgiving Day luncheon was a success, and there are plans to make it a yearly event. All in all, over 40 people attended.¹¹² I believe the goal to connect church and community was established and the participant's self-esteem was bolstered. As I continue my work at H.A.L.I., I readily notice the change in the behaviors and attitudes of the Latino participants. They feel safer coming to the program; they are more assertive in voicing their needs; and many of them are inviting their friends to attend the center.

I believe the reality of incarnational presence, with all its power and extravagance, humbleness and inclusiveness, was apparent in the Mañana Project. In the midst of each participant's limitations and shortcomings, fears and concerns for the future, the proleptic realities of God's "not yet" were a constant bastion of hope and encouragement in a world in which radical hospitality is constantly under threat. In the words of Moltmann:

The incarnate God is present, and can be experienced, in the humanity of every man, and in full human corporeality. No one need dissemble and appear other than he is to perceive the fellowship of the human God with him. Rather, he can lay aside all dissembling and sham and become what he truly is in this human God. Furthermore, the crucified God is near to him in the forsakenness of every man. There is no loneliness and no rejection which he has not taken to himself and assumed in the cross of Jesus.¹¹³

On paper, a project such as the one I describe above seems easy to prepare and execute. However, as it is with the unexpected, I made certain assumptions about class participation, group topics, culture, and, especially, language. At times, I struggled with these issues making leading the group a challenge. But as we shall see in the next chapter, as I grappled with these circumstances, each session became a learning experience. And more importantly, I was getting a dose of what incarnational practice is all about, along with its promises and pitfalls.

¹¹² See Appendix VII.

¹¹³ Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, 414.

Chapter 5 The “Mañana” Project: Promise and Pitfalls

While the Mañana project can benefit individual participants, it was mostly structured for use within a group setting which helps to facilitate empirical findings more accurately. Therefore, the benefits of the discussion group model cannot be ignored. According to Ronald Toseland and Robert Rivas,

A group approach, as compared with an individual effort, has advantages in helping individuals, organizations, and communities accomplish tasks. In working with groups of people in organizations and communities, democratic participation is highly desirable. Participation through group interaction helps members feel they have a stake in their organization or community. Also, resistance to change is minimized when those who are to be affected are given the opportunity to participate in the change through group discussion and shared decision making.¹¹⁴

Townsend and Rivas also point out the disadvantages of the group setting;¹¹⁵ however, during the 12 weeks of group discussions, no problems occurred that challenged the project. More importantly, the group model foments an atmosphere in which participants experience the “power” to speak. According to Rebecca Chopp, language “can birth new meanings, new discourses, new signifying practices.”¹¹⁶ Carrying Chopp’s arguments that language carries with it birthing power further, Mary Clark Moschella suggests that “The power to speak, to tell one’s own story, is integrally related to the power of change.”¹¹⁷

Although the goals of the Mañana project were designed to discuss a host of topics, the main objective was to stimulate a sense of self-esteem within the participants. However, I found that self-esteem was intricately linked to personal empowerment. According to Susan Robbins, et al, “Empowerment is a proactive response to personal and societal forces that oppress and

¹¹⁴Toseland and Rivas, *An Introduction to Group Work Practice*, 20.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2008), 150.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

restrict human potential and well-being.”¹¹⁸ Moreover, since human problems “are social problems, caused by an inequitable social structure,”¹¹⁹ the group session model provided a forum in which the participant becomes part of a “micro” structure that enables them to deal with the “macro” counterpart that seek oppress them.

It has been my experience that when one prepares a curriculum for use in a program such as the Mañana project, including the intended objectives, goals, and outcomes, the results rarely fulfill the desired expectations. This is most true in any type of pilot program. When I began preparing for this project, I was confident that my own assumptions regarding the creation, organization, and implementation of the curriculum, if guided by certain theories concerning group dynamics, teaching styles, critical thinking, and personal charisma, would yield positive outcomes. Such was not the case with the Mañana project. However, being a pilot program, these findings do not necessarily mean the attempt was a failure. On the contrary, the lessons learned provided indispensable data for future projects. In what follows, I will pinpoint those areas of the Mañana project that I believe were positive indicators for further work and practice, as well as other areas that rather than fail personal expectations became instead powerful learning experiences.

I believe H.A.L.I. has been carrying the mantle of justice by providing services for participants with mental health challenges since 1986. Their work has given these individuals a sense of pride and self-worth that would have otherwise been denied to them. However, with the socio-political changes before us, H.A.L.I. faces its own challenges, among them how to provide the needed services in a political and social climate in which money for social programs is under attack. Moreover, with Latino immigrants under constant scrutiny and suspicion, H.A.L.I. faces

¹¹⁸ Robbins, Chatterjee, and Canda, *Contemporary Human Behavior: A Critical Perspective for Social Work*, 18.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

the daunting task of gaining the community's trust. It is in this atmosphere of uncertainty and fear that the Mañana project was conceived.

Throughout the entire 12 weeks, the participants showed a genuine willingness to be a part of the discussion group. During our first day together, I began by identifying myself as a doctoral student, and then explained the purpose of the program, its goals and objectives, and how their contribution would benefit my research. Indeed, their group involvement was so sincere that there were times when some in the group took over the conversation and led the topic of discussion. This type of participation was permitted so long as the other members of the group had an opportunity to take part in the discussion.

Participants were what I like to call "open to openness," and by this, I mean two things. First, they were encouraged to share their feelings and concerns in the presence of the other members of the group, a difficult task, especially for Latino males, who are readily discouraged to express their feelings in public. For example, on one occasion, a male participant shared his concerns about the amount of physical pain he endures on a daily basis due to his medical condition. He believes this is what was causing his depressive state. He shared with the group that he had not had a good night sleep in days.¹²⁰ Second, "open to openness" also meant that participants were encouraged to consider other modes of thinking in order to foment a sense of understanding and camaraderie. On another occasion, I challenged a female participant to rethink her notion that all people who are substance abusers are volitionally weak. I shared my own story of three brothers who all died as a result of alcohol abuse, emphasizing the fact that such tragedies are more the result of domestic violence rather than a weak constitution.

¹²⁰ Following agency protocol and with the participant's knowledge, I informed the H.A.L.I. staff about the participant's battle with depression.

The staff at H.A.L.I. were very supportive of my research, mostly because I was offering group discussion topics in Spanish. The staff was having difficulties recruiting volunteers for the sole purpose of reaching out to the Latino community. They were acutely aware that they were dealing with problems of language and culture, problems that could not be remedied by simple solutions. The dangerous situation that currently exists in Central Islip, especially for undocumented Latino homeless immigrants, demanded more than a superficial knowledge of culture. Mark Branson and Juan Martinez point to a holistic form of reconciliation that takes into consideration cultural proclivities, variables whose knowledge and understanding are also indispensable for community-based programs as well:

We have all been shaped in a historical context of prejudice and racism. We carry the influences of our environment in our minds and hearts; too often our actions, choices and words perpetuate ethnic biases. There are many prejudices, rooted in racism, built into our institutions. We believe that God's love for the world is definitive in Jesus' inauguration of God's reign, and therefore we believe that the church's identity and agency should be characterized by reconciliation. Such reconciliation, if it is defined and empowered by the gospel, must be personal, interpersonal, cultural and structural.¹²¹

Probably the most positive outcome of the Mañana project was having the opportunity to connect the church with the participants through the aforementioned Thanksgiving Day Luncheon. When I decided to announce the event to the church, I was somewhat skeptical that I was going to get some kind of negative response. It was only when I saw members of the church walking through the doors of H.A.L.I. that I realized that something good was about to happen. And it did! Before lunch was served, parishioners began interacting with participants, many of which sat at tables where participants were already seated and engaged in conversation. Parishioners who were unable to attend the event heard of the success of the luncheon and passed

¹²¹ Mark Lau Branson and Juan F. Martinez, *Churches, Cultures, and Leadership* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2011). Location 74, Kindle Edition.

the word to the rest of the church. Such “positive gossip” was well worth the wait and demonstrated once again that God is a preemptive God, working in places even before we arrive.

Finally, the opportunity to lead a group of this nature was truly an unforgettable experience to say the least. During the sessions, we grappled with issues surrounding the 2016 presidential elections and its aftermath, racism, micro and macro-aggression, sexism, parochialism, economics, sexual orientation, immigration, and violence, to name of few. I cannot say we came away with a comprehensive solution to the problems presented. As a matter of fact, and as expected, the issues, rather than lead to answers, raised more questions. But just getting the issues out into the open was a start in the right direction.

I particularly was ecstatic when during the Thanksgiving Day Luncheon, I spent most of the time jamming with a few participants and H.A.L.I. staff. Not only did I personally experience what is to play a Beatles song, along with the accompanying voices and guitars, but more importantly, I got to see faces that have not smiled in ages, break open with joy and gladness. This small, but profound outcome made the entire program well worth the effort.

But with promises comes pitfalls, a normal and natural result of a pilot program such as the Mañana initiative. However, such shortcomings should not be interpreted in a pejorative sense, but more correctly, should be seen as a challenge for future efforts. One of the challenges I faced was the complexities and evasive nature of language and culture. I was under the impression that my task would be an easy one since I was a Latino who spoke the same language and shared similar cultural beliefs and practices. To my surprise, however, the opposite was the case. I am reminded of the words of Branson and Martinez:

When persons of different cultures share life, once we get beyond music and food, the complexities increase. We claim that ‘paying attention’ is important and difficult. Just as a competent painter, carpenter or teacher learns, over many years, how to attend – how to train their senses and responses to their environment and their work – church leaders need

to pay attention to cultural characteristics and the work of shaping intercultural life.¹²²

I had committed the sin many students of anthropology make: I assumed that culture is something that other people have, nothing more, nothing less. Anthropologist Michael Agar, who spent seven years studying the tractor trailer culture by, among other things, spending countless hours riding in their rigs, makes this point perfectly clear:

Culture is something those people “have,” but it’s more than that. It’s also something that happens to *you* when you encounter them. As long as they’re just out there, just a different group of folk, you won’t have to deal with them. When you deal with them, culture turns *personal*. Culture is no longer what one group has; it’s *what happens to you* when you encounter differences, become aware of something in yourself, and work to figure out why the differences appeared. Culture is an awareness, a consciousness, one that reveals the hidden self and one’s paths to other ways of being.¹²³

The same goes with language. What we use as labels, thinking that it will give us comprehensive knowledge of the other, turns out to be more than we bargained for: “the name of the language doesn’t tell you enough about the scope of what you’ve learned.”¹²⁴

The issue of inconsistency was also a challenge. There were times I could not start the group on time either because of constant interruptions from English-speaking participants, individuals who did not want to remove themselves from the large TV room area assigned to us for our group discussion sessions, or because participants were in the main dining area eating, or simply wondering around. On one occasion, classes were suspended because no one showed up. Participants also arrived 10-15 minutes late as well. Some were absent from class more than once either because of medical needs or lack of money to attend the program. More disturbing still was the fact that some participants were homeless making their participation difficult to maintain.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Michael Agar, *Language Shock: Understanding the Culture of Conversation* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1994), 20. Emphasis in the original.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 213.

The challenges the agency is facing also effected group participation. As mentioned above, budget cuts have affected not only staff, but participants as well. Because H.A.L.I. cannot provide certain medical and psychiatric services, many participants have left the agency searching for greener pastures. In addition, as grant monies fade, H.A.L.I.'s CEO has been forced to develop strategies to obtain funding for other wellness services, a process that thus far, continues to effect community participation.

Finally, the mental health condition of most of the participants also added to the lack of consistency. And yet, this inconsistency is expected if one is to experience understanding, empathy, and ethnographic integrity. As Moschella observes,

Contemporary ethnographic theory argues for the validity of the subjective understandings of researches who learn about people through empathy and emotional intelligence, as well as through intellectual comprehension. Part of the wonder of the practice of ethnography is the way in which it opens up worlds of understanding among people. We have seen how healing, growth, and even new dimensions of truth can emerge from the interpersonal encounter. Additionally, ethnographic relationships, like all relationships, can be the cause of misunderstanding or even harm. Because so much is at stake here, it is imperative that pastoral researchers gain ethical clarity and practice accountability in all stages of this work.¹²⁵

When Miriam fell ill in class, I pulled her aside and began to ask her what was the matter. She informed me that she had forgotten her diabetic medication. When I asked her if she had lunch, she said yes, and I feared that having lunch without taking her meds could lead to high levels of sugar in her blood. Since there was no doctor or nurse on the premises, I immediately got my diabetic testing kit out and took Miriam to another room, accompanied by a social worker and the Deputy Director. While in the room, I tested Miriam's blood, which was over 400. The social work immediately rushed her home, where she was able to take her medicine. When she returned to the program, a resident doctor, who provides part-time medical services for the agency, was notified, and he in turn gave her a medical exam to make sure her sugar levels were normal or at

¹²⁵ Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction*, 86.

least close to normal. This ordeal demonstrated just how vulnerable most, if not all, of the participants really are. Because Miriam also suffers from dementia, she constantly forgets taking her medication to the program.

During all this time, I was acutely aware that the moment I decided to test Miriam for her sugar levels, I was breaking protocol. I had to decide right there and then if attending to her needs was worth risking the entire project. I thought it was, and would probably do the same thing again if the circumstances demanded it. The experience has taught me of both the challenges and risks that are involved in working with vulnerable populations. Such tension reminds me of the words of the great Yogi Berra: “If you come to a fork in the road, take it.”¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Ibid., 167.

Chapter 6 Where Do We Go from Here?

It was Pierre Teilhard de Chardin who stated: “Either nature is closed to our demands for futurity, in which case thought, the fruit of millions of years of effort, is stifled, still-born in a self-abortive and absurd universe. Or else an opening exists...”¹²⁷ To be sure, the idea that futurity is open to change, let alone that it is open altogether, is what the idea of incarnation and eschatology attempts to show in this paper. If the possibilities of an open future are non-existent, however, then life itself is absurd.

Conservative and fundamentalist notions of futurity are designed with a view of the future that has been preplanned by divine fiat. Under this rubric of ignorance, the future is unchangeable, unalterable, and unyielding to human desires and expectations; such a future closes the door on human creativity, social transformation, and personal hope. Within such an eschatological framework, radical hospitality becomes difficult to live out because its parameters have already been predetermined, pre-established by a naïve Biblicist conception of past and future realities. Thus, Derrida can say that “hospitality means a desire for and openness to a future of which we can absolutely not say anything—except that it is in no way contaminated by the historically restricted concepts of humanity, ethics, and democracy under which we presently labor.”¹²⁸

The doctrine of the Incarnation within the framework of a fundamentalist eschatology, stymies incarnational encounters and limits them to only those who claim theological absoluteness. Teilhard de Chardin spoke about the openness given to us in nature, an openness that allows for transformative change. Sadly, however, Biblicists thunder against an open future by using biblical texts to close off all avenues of change. Even nature, after getting a dose of

¹²⁷ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, "The Phenomenon of Man," (2015 2015). Kindle Edition. (Location 3796).

¹²⁸ Boersma, "Irenaeus, Derrida and Hospitality: On the Eschatological Overcoming of Violence," 166.

creationism, becomes a stage for male domination in its ugliest forms: war, conquest, and ecological destruction. God is proclaimed as the Great and powerful OZ, a CEO whose ministers use capitalistic ventures to further God's kingdom. The image of the Crucified Christ is jettisoned for a divine Pantocrator, who reigns in heaven, disconnected from human suffering, while reserving a future of eternal suffering for impenitent sinners.

Reza Aslan observes, "Indeed, most of the religious conflicts that continue to roil our world arise from our innate, unconscious desire to make ourselves the apotheosis of what God is and what God wants, whom God loves and whom God hates."¹²⁹ I have attempted to show that such violence is perpetrated within the purview of an eschatology that arrogantly proclaims a future reserved for a certain few, and an incarnational ideology that idolatrizes the divine in human form, a direct result of biblical literalism.

The staff at H.A.L.I. have asked me to continue leading the Mañana project for they feel that ending the program now would leave a void that would spell disaster for the few participants who benefited from it. As the situation in Central Islip concerning our undocumented homeless Latino immigrants worsens, the number of places they can find refuge continues to dwindle, along with the funds necessary to provide much-needed services.

In sweeps from California to Florida, Federal immigration agents descended upon dozens of 7-Eleven stores, arresting alleged undocumented immigrants in the process. Writer Patricia Mazzei reports that "The sweeps of 98 stores in 17 states, from California to Florida, resulted in 21 arrests, according to United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, which signaled intensified efforts against businesses that hire unauthorized workers."¹³⁰ More disturbing still were the threats uttered by acting director Thomas D. Homan: "Today's actions send a strong

¹²⁹ Azlan, "God: A Human History."

¹³⁰ Patricia Mazzei, "Immigration Agents Target 7-Eleven Stores in Push to Punish Employers," *The New York Times* 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/10/us/7-eleven-raids-ice.html>.

message to U.S. businesses that hire and employ an illegal work force: ICE will enforce the law, and if you are found to be breaking the law, you will be held accountable.”¹³¹ Sadly, conservative Christians agree with such actions. This is incarnational practice at its worse. To be sure, such views disavow important distinctions between civil law and natural law. As Groody notes:

When people cross borders without proper documentation, most are not simply breaking civil laws but obeying the laws of human nature, such as the need to find work so as to feed their families and attain more dignified lives. Moreover, crossing international borders without papers in most countries is an administrative infraction, not a felony; it is not a violation of divine law or natural law, and in such cases undocumented immigration should in no way be confused with serious criminal activity or threats to national security.¹³²

I have already informed H.A.L.I.’s CEO that I will be happy to continue the Mañana project. As a matter of fact, I was hoping that I would be invited to return. However, with the permission of the administration I would like to offer some ideas that I learned during my twelve weeks of facilitating the Mañana discussion groups. These ideas are meant to be strategic in nature. They are as follows:

- Even though the H.A.L.I. staff publicized the start of the Mañana project, I believe it did not go far enough. To be sure, a number of staff members have indicated to me that because many of the undocumented homeless Latino immigrants live in fear of being deported, they readily shy away from White individuals who represent the agency.
- Publicity should not depend simply on word of mouth only. I hope to travel throughout the community, meeting personally with the homeless community and assuring them that participation in the Mañana project in particular and in the other

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Groody, "Crossing the Divide: Foundations of a Theology of Migration and Refugees," 656.

- programs and services offered by H.A.L.I. in general, will in no way jeopardize their well-being.
- I would be open to train staff in the areas of cultural competency. The training would be less about book learning and more about immersion into the community – known also as “incarnational presence.” As Branson and Martinez argue, “A lifeworld is the full worldview of a culture; world concepts provide conceptual means for understanding standing a lifeworld; communicative competence among persons gives them the abilities to communicate fully and with integrity about their world and how to live in it.”¹³³
 - H.A.L.I. must fight to remain open. While the White House and Congress generally remain hostile toward legislation that benefit undocumented immigrants, liberal politicians at the local level are pushing for a return to normalcy. Writer Matt Stevens reports that, “The federal government said... that it would resume accepting renewal requests for a program that shields from deportation young immigrants who were brought illegally to the United States as children.”¹³⁴ The change came as result of a ruling handed down by a Judge in California.
 - I would also invite civic leaders, local politicians, school officials, and business owners to observe the program in action, and encourage them to speak to the participants in order to get a first-hand view of their struggles. I’m sure this experience will someone shape policy-making and appropriate much-needed funding.
 - Finally, I would encourage the church to continue to participate in this incarnational endeavor. Their presence would not only integrate them into the community, but more

¹³³ Branson and Martinez, *Churches, Cultures, and Leadership*.(Kindle Locations 992-993).

¹³⁴ Matt Stevens, "Daca Participants Can Again Apply for Renewal, Immigration Agency Says," *The New York Times*2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/14/us/politics/daca-renewals-requests.html>.

importantly, it would fashion a more positive image of institution that has lost its spiritual and social luster.

I believe that if H.A.L.I. is to be successful, it must receive support from religious institutions such as FUMC. But if this is to be a reality, the church as a whole must experience a paradigm shift, otherwise, the effort will fall on death ears.

To be sure, assumptions regarding the spiritual leadership that were at work more than half a century ago continue to undergird the church's theology of ministry. Back then the pastor was considered the spiritual leader of the church. From preaching sermons to leading Bible study groups, to doing visitations to performing weddings and ministering to the dead, the pastor was expected to fulfill said responsibilities and many more. To be sure, this perception of the minister continues today.

Since coming to FUMC, the expectations of the pastor as a spiritual leader have intensified as a result of a declining membership. Church leaders believe that ultimately it is the pastor's responsibility to do all he or she can to fill the pews. More people means more money, they argue. From the beginning, I have resisted the notion that the minister is the harbinger of an ideal spirituality (that is, a sort of 1950s kind of spirituality). And because the minister is called by God to grow a strong church, leaders simply sit back and let the pastor carry the burden. Thus, the pastor has become the center of the church's universe. This brings to mind two incidences that illustrate what I am discussing. On one occasion, during a meeting of the Pastor Parrish Committee, the issue of pastoral authority was addressed. I complained that a certain church leader was trying to usurp my authority, to which the chair of the committee commented: "This is unacceptable behavior! The pastor must be respected and obeyed. He is the king of the church, and as such, he has all authority." More recently, a parishioner requested prayers for her husband,

adding, “We come to you for help because we know you’re closer to God than we are.” To which I responded, “Believe me, I’m not as close as you think!”¹³⁵

While the context I describe above is cause for concern, I realize that such assumptions are a result of what Howard Stone and James Duke refer to as “embedded theologies,” or “the implicit theology that Christians live out in their daily lives.”¹³⁶ As a pastor, I realize that rather than criticize a person’s faith-view, I am beginning to understand, as Stone and Duke rightly argue, that “The final burden [of support and guidance] rests with ordinary Christians – parishioners and pastors – who face daily opportunities and conflicts with whatever resources their embedded theologies provide them with.”¹³⁷

As I invite the members of FUMC to connect with the participants of the Mañana project, I will attempt to slowly steer the congregation to a view of ministry that will give them a glimpse of what a ministry of presence looks like. But profound challenges lie ahead as to the nature of what a ministry of presence entails. Winnifred Sullivan’s points to the “secularity” and “immanentist” nature of a ministry presence, categories that, in my estimation, greatly strain the reliance of the biblical text as a basis for doing ministry:

Presence also works as a place of resistance to instrumentalist approaches to religion and spirituality. The ministry of presence refuses interpretation and explanation. While in some ways highly immanentist, even secularist, in a strong disenchanting sense, presence can refuse to be made part of a system – to be measured and quantified and offered as a means to an end. The ministry of presence respects loss. Presence, in other words, means or implies – or attempts to encompass – both presence and absence.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ After I shared this experience with Dr. Terry Todd, he suggested another possible response: “God is closer to you – to all of us – than we might sense.” I appreciate professor Todd’s insight.

¹³⁶ Howard W. Stone and James O. Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, Third ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 15.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹³⁸ Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, *A Ministry of Presence: Chaplaincy, Spiritual Care and the Law* (Chicago: Chicago Press, 2014), 177.

As I see it, the idea that “the ministry of presence refuses interpretation and explanation,” does not point only to the quiet pastoral presence at the bedside of someone who is critically ill, or who sits in the midst of a family who has lost a loved one. I believe it speaks to the eschatological realities imbedded in incarnational practice. The God made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth reveals a future that precludes any structured pre-understanding of the future. The future is not only open, but it is open to all people; it resists definition and explanation and in this way, entrance into the dominion of God knows no obstacles or boundaries, whether religious, theological, ethnic, racial, cultural, political, socio-economic, or sexual. But this is easier said than done.

For some time now, I have been struggling with my call, a feeling of which I am sure many pastors and religious leaders have also struggled with. My struggles stem from a number of things: the understanding and implementation of issues regarding radical discipleship, costly grace, social holiness, scriptural authority, the nature of God, the Holy Spirit as God’s empowering presence, Jesus of Nazareth, the resurrection of Jesus and its socio-political implications for the church and the world, love versus tolerance, hospitality, bigotry, inclusivity, scholarship and its relationship to Christian piety, and spirituality.

All of these themes are important in and of themselves. Yet, their importance does not mean that held together they cancel each other out. On the contrary, they are to be studied and practiced in connection with each other. For example, to be effective radical discipleship must follow a life of costly grace, a life lived under the cross, or otherwise, we will be tempted to live a life dominated by the tenets of cheap grace. Dietrich Bonhoeffer sums up cheap grace in this manner: Cheap grace “is the grace we bestow on ourselves... it means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without

the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”¹³⁹ For the apostle Paul, radical discipleship means we must be willing to “know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death...”¹⁴⁰

The resurrection of Jesus not only declares the death of death, and the possibilities of a life after life, but it also calls us to recognize the dawning of a new age in which the reversal of fortunes is already taking place and God’s kin-dom is becoming a reality in places where sin and death once reigned. Nonetheless, the message of the good news must be lived out in love, radical love, to the point of offending the traditional churchgoer if need be. Don Compier contends, “love is respect and solicitous care for the other as other...”¹⁴¹ He goes on to argue that,

Respect for the other is grounded in respect for the self. I respect the other because I consider the other as another like me. In theory, this plays out politically as tolerance. However, in practice, tolerance sustains itself only as long as real difference stays submerged. Once difference rises to the surface (as, for example, when the population of Latinos in the United States becomes large enough that whole neighborhoods become Spanish speaking and the need for English language instruction grows), tolerance fails when the illusion of sameness can no longer be maintained.”¹⁴²

Some churches use socio-economics as a marker for church membership. Some time ago I learned that the amount of money a church has will determine what a pastor can and cannot say from the pulpit. If the church has a considerable amount of trust funds, then fear not, the pastor can preach his or her heart out for they can put their money where their mouth is. But, if the church, for whatever reasons, is struggling financially, then the pastor’s message may be affected and the churches’ mission seriously compromised for lack of financial support.

¹³⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1963), 47.

¹⁴⁰ Philippians 3:10 (NRSV).

¹⁴¹ Don Compier, *God Is Love: Theological Reflections on the Spirituality of Young Adults, Constructive Theology: a Contemporary Approach to Classic Themes* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2005). Kindle Edition. (Loc. 1287).

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, (Loc. 1295-1303).

For other churches, race is the standard. I believe that, although there have been enormous strides in terms of racial justice, the rise in racial prejudice, both in overt and covert forms, is dangerously on the rise. In the last two elections, the geo-political landscape of this country is clearly divided, similar to that of pre- and post-civil war America. During his presidency, President Barak Obama found it incredibly difficult to push through legislation, especially health care reform, because of the partisan politics that is readily played out in Washington. Today, his efforts are being dismantled as millions watch in horror.

I am of the opinion that the animosity towards our president had really nothing to do with politics, but that politics was used as a smoke screen to hide a more sinister and deadly strategy of racial hatred. Derald Wing Sue calls it *micro-aggression*. But, I understand that there are many people in church that want to stay away from politics because of the pejorative connotation the word carries. And the pulpit should not be used to further one's political views or hidden political agenda, to which in part I agree. To be sure, clergy, more than anyone else, must use discretion when addressing the congregation on sensitive social issues, and as social prophets, we must resist the temptation not to cloud the message of the gospel with our own idiosyncrasies. But as a retired Bishop once told me, "everything we say is political."

According to Wing Sue, "microaggressions are brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership."¹⁴³ They have also been described as "subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously." The term has its origins in the world of business:

"Microinequities" is used to describe the pattern of being overlooked, underrespected, and devalued because of one's race or gender. They are often unconsciously delivered as subtle snubs or dismissive looks, gestures, and tones. These exchanges are so pervasive and automatic in daily conversations and interactions that they are often dismissed and

¹⁴³ Derald Wing Sue, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life* (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2010), 24.

glossed over as being innocent and innocuous. Yet... microaggressions are detrimental to persons of color because they impair performance in a multitude of settings by sapping the psychic and spiritual energy of recipients and by creating inequities.¹⁴⁴

These “snubs” come in various shapes and forms. For example:

- You speak good English for a Hispanic.
- You are beautiful for a black woman.
- Asians are such intelligent people.
- “He’s black, but he’s a good man.”
- “I don’t know this Hispanic kids’ name; let me call him Chico.”

The use of micro-aggression comes about as a White culture, whose dominant status is being challenged by the influx of minority populations, tries to come to terms with changing demographics. These highly offensive phrases are their way of dealing with the religious and cultural pluralism we encounter daily.

So, for example, a Supreme Court judge admits that he does not read the *New York Times* newspaper, or *Wall Street Journal* because of their liberal stance, but prefers to get all his information from political radio talk shows. And a police official in Wolfeboro, NH, unabashedly uses a racial slur in addressing former President Obama.

I am engaged in a battle with certain church folk who claim to be disciples of Christ, but who harbor deep-seeded feelings of bigotry and who through their power and influence are doing everything they can to limit the kin-dom of God to a certain few only. But the struggle is also with those who ignore what’s going on, refusing to do anything about.

My hope is that the Mañana project will be a catalyst for incarnational engagement. By witnessing what God is doing in places like H.A.L.I., the parishioners of FUMC will be able to

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

see for themselves that true engagement means enmeshing ourselves in the very life of the community. While the biblical idea of incarnation, noted above, is located historically in the life of a Mediterranean peasant Jew who lived more than two thousand years ago in Galilee of Nazareth, and through his manifestation in human flesh, the New Testament writers interpreted his life as the very embodiment of the divine, I argue for a more radical understanding of incarnational theology, one that does not consign exclusivity to Jesus of Nazareth but sees in the Nazarene one of many embodiments. Such a view, I believe, will be instrumental in disrupting the violence that is readily perpetuated by incarnational theologies that attach to it a sense of religious and philosophical superiority.

Laura Schneider observes how Black and womanist thought disclosed violent theologies that disseminated images of God that continue, among other things, to promote male dominance.

The quote is extensive but I think it deserves to be cited in full:

Feminist theologians have pointed out for decades that the God of Christians has been conceptualized in almost exclusively male terms. Black and womanist theologians have also pointed out for decades that the God of Christians has usually been conceptualized, at least since the invention of race as a “natural” category, in almost exclusively white and Euro-cultural terms. Both theological tendencies have contributed to male dominance and white supremacy in a world structured almost wholly by patriarchy and distorted by the systematic subordination of dark-skinned people. For those who take sexism, racism, heterosexism, and classism seriously as real evils and as barriers to faithful Christian living, the great theological challenge is to strip away the crud of patriarchy and white supremacy from our inherited concepts of divinity and to work toward language and images that bring the God of mercy, of justice, and of embodied engagement in the world more clearly into focus. Like all intellectual endeavors, the history of Christian theology is deeply embedded in the cultural norms and prejudices of its theologians. That fact is no less true now, although we are more aware of it and of the related fact that our concerns and norms are not the same as those of earlier generations.¹⁴⁵

With these ideas in mind, I hope to continue the Mañana project with the hope that the undocumented Latino homeless immigrants may experience God’s “real presence” as they

¹⁴⁵ Compier, "God Is Love: Theological Reflections on the Spirituality of Young Adults." Kindle Edition. (Loc. 1525-1535).

struggle to find their niche in the community of Central Islip. As Emily Pennington masterfully argues, “The eschatological future thus needs attention, as it has used its own constructions of male and female bodies to assign ultimate, divine worth to the former and inconsequence or iniquity to the latter.”¹⁴⁶ I might add that adding worth to undocumented immigrants also needs our attention.

¹⁴⁶ Emily Pennington, *Feminist Eschatology: Embodied Futures* (New York: Routledge, 2017). (Kindle Locations 156-158). Kindle Edition.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

ADVANCED INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS - 301 GROUP CURRICULUM

The Independent Living Skills (ILS) 301 groups are offered to participants successfully completed ILS-101 and ILS- 201. This level of ILS group will assist the individual in understanding the aspects physical health and well-being. It will continue to build on the foundation of knowledge for anyone who is planning to move into an independent living situation. Group will discuss topics specific to living independently such as social connectedness; harm reduction; impact of physical health on mental health; the importance of reducing hospitalization; Medicaid services; other social service benefits; continuing education; employment; and the use of microwave cooking. **Starting once a week on Thursdays only at 1:00 PM to 2:45 PM for a period of about 20 weeks.**

***This will be a small group of about 4 to 6 individuals who will need to attend 12 out of 20 weeks in order to successfully graduate. **All groups to be done at the HALI Mock Apartment.**

WEEK I: Introduction

- Introduction to new curriculum
- Review of ILS-101 and ILS-201
- Microwave Cooking

WEEK II: Personal Hygiene & Grooming

- Personal Cleanliness (skin, mouth, eyes, ears, hair, clothing, apartment)
- Stress Management
- Relaxation Techniques
- Fun and Hobbies
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK III: Physical Health Care – Part I

- Utilization of Primary Health Care Services
- Specialists (Cardiology, Diabetes Care, Vision, Gynecologists)
- Screenings and Annual Check Ups
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK IV: Physical Health Care – Part II

- Medication Management
- Medication Side Effects & Interactions
- Reducing Hospitalization
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK V: Physical Health Care – Part III

- Making and Keeping Appointments
- Medical Prevention & Self-Care
- Body Chart to Identify Discomfort & Pain
- Follow-Ups
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK VI: Physical Health Care – Part IV

- Obesity
- Healthier Eating Habits/Nutrition
- Low Impact Physical Exercises
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK VII: Harm Reduction – Part I

- Risky Sexual Behaviors
- Sexually Transmitted Illnesses (HIV, AIDS, Hepatitis, Syphilis, Gonorrhea, etc.)
- Safer Sex Practices & Condoms
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK VIII: Harm Reduction – Part II

- Statistical Facts About Smoking
- Smoking Cessations
- Available Products
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK IX: Harm Reduction – Part III

- Substance and Alcohol Use
- Treatment for Substance Abuse (Detox)
- Follow-Up / Support After Detox
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK X: Hospitalization

- Follow-Up / Support After Hospitalization
- Re-Hospitalization Rates
- Changes in Medicaid & Managed Care
- Relapse Prevention / Frequency / What's Working
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK XI: Medicaid Services

- Applying to Medicaid
- Changes in Managed Medicaid

- Medicaid Buy-In / Ticket to Work
- Applying to Social Services/Welfare Benefits/Food Stamps
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK XII: Continuing Education

- Education Assistance / Support if Warranted
- GED/College
- Vocational Training
- Academy of Peer Services
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK XIII: Employment

- Resume Writing
- Establish Account On-Line with One-Stop Career Center
- Working with Employment Specialist
- Job Search
- Obtaining References
- Initial Job Interview Appointment
- Exploring Child Care Options
- Keeping a Job
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK XIV: Housing

- Apartment Search
- Lease Agreements
- Housing Assistance / Stabilization
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK XV: Financial

- Overview of Financial Resources
- Preparing a Budget
- How Employment Affects Income; Reassessments; etc.
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK XVI: Legal Matters

- Tickets / Accidents / Arrests / Custody Matters
- Reduction in # of Arrests in past 30 days (from 1st service to date of last service)
- Seeking Legal Assistance / Support if Warranted
- Probation / Parole
- Court Mandates / Court Hearings
- CPS / Custody Issues

- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK XVII: Social Connections

- Connectedness & Support To / From Others [Community, Family, Friends, Co-Workers, Classmates]
- Identifying Friends
- Setting Boundaries
- Mutual & Peer Support
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK XVIII: Family Involvement

- Family of Origin
- Family of Choice
- Personal Goals & Recovery
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK XIX: Socialization

- Importance of Effective Communication
- Developing New Relationships
- Dating / Partnerships / Commitments
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK XX: Overviews

- Maintenance of all Safety Equipment
- Safety & Security
- Apartment Maintenance
- Emergency Contacts
- Wellness Self-Management
- Practice Cooking Skills [by one participant for the group]

WEEK XX: Graduation

INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS - 101 GROUP CURRICULUM

The Independent Living Skills (ILS) 101 groups are offered to participants is newly identified with the need for extra support in basic living skills. The ILS group will assist the individual in understanding the aspects of living independently that he/she may not even be aware of. It will prove to be a good foundation for anyone who is planning to move into an independent living situation. Group will discuss topics specific to living independently such as how to manage day to day living in your apartment (cooking, cleaning, safety, etc.); how to budget your money, the importance of socialization; how to tap into support systems; and much more. **Starting once a week on Mondays at 1:00 PM to 2:45 PM for a period of 20 weeks.**

***This will be a small group of about 4 to 6 individuals who will need to attend 12 out of 20 weeks in order to successfully graduate. **All groups to be done at the HALI Mock Apartment.**

WEEK I: Introduction

- Introduction to ILS
- Exploration of the Community
- Exploration of the Mock Apartment
- Questionnaire and Basic Skills Test

WEEK II: Personal Hygiene & Grooming

- Personal Cleanliness (skin, mouth, eyes, ears, hair, clothing)
- Stress Management
- Self-Care/Spa
- Relaxation/Sleep

WEEK III: Sharing Your Space

- Housemates/Partners/Neighbors/Roommates
- Finding Common Ground
- Responsibilities & Chores
- Consideration/Respect

WEEK IV: Self Care

- Physical
- Psychological
- Emotional
- Spiritual

WEEK V: Living Skills – Part A

- Tools of the Trade; List of Items Needed
- How to Maintain Your Living Space Room by Room
- How to Operate Appliances

WEEK VI: Living Skills – Part B

- Skills Demonstration: dusting, vacuuming, making a bed, general cleaning

- Practice Skills

WEEK VII: Living Skills – Part C

- Field Trip to Laundromat
- Laundry Cleaning

WEEK VIII: Living Skills – Part D [co-facilitated by Nutritionist]

- Planning an Entire Meal
 - Basic Nutrition
 - Making Healthy Choices

WEEK IX: Living Skills – Part E [co-facilitated Nutritionist]

- Creating A Daily Menu: Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner
- Creating A Weekly Shopping Menu
- Creating the Grocery List for the Meal Menus

WEEK X: Living Skills – Part F [co-facilitated by Nutritionist]

- Field Trip: Food Shopping/Pantry Shopping
- Shopping with Coupons
- Food Storing

WEEK XI: Living Skills – Part G [co-facilitated by Nutritionist]

- Cooking BREAKFAST Made Easy
- Preparing the *Previously Planned* Meal
- Table Setting and Serving
- Dinner for Guests

WEEK XII: Living Skills – Part H

- Cooking LUNCH Made Easy
- Preparing the *Previously Planned* Meal
- Table Setting and Serving
- Dinner for Guests

WEEK XIII: Living Skills – Part J

- Cooking DINNER Made Easy
- Preparing the *Previously Planned* Meal
- Table Setting and Serving
- Dinner for Guests

WEEK XIV: Community Resource Exploration [co-facilitated by Peer Liaison]

- SCAT Application
- Reduce Fare Card
- How to Use Public Transportation Route Map

- Traveling Expedition

WEEK XV: Financial – Part A

- Overview of Financial Resources
- Preparing a Budget
- How Employment Effects Income; Reassessments; etc.

WEEK XVI: Financial – Part B

- Field Trip to Bank
- Opening a Bank Account
- Writing Checks/Balancing Check Books/Money Orders
- On-Line Banking
- Debit and Credit Cards

WEEK XVII: Safety & Security – Part A

- Maintenance of all Safety Equipment
- Guest Speaker/Presentation: Local Fire Department

WEEK XVIII: Safety & Security – Part B

- How to be Safe
- Apartment Safety
- Close Up Check List
- Guest Speaker/Presentation: Local Precinct

WEEK XIX: Support and Socialization – Part I

- Benefits of Support Systems
- What does Social Support Mean to You? - Questionnaire
- How to Tap into Your Support Systems
- Socialization and How It Affects You

WEEK XX: Support and Socialization – Part II

- Effective Communication
 - Body Language
 - Listening Skills
 - Empathy
 - Starting Conversations
 - Assertive vs. Aggressive
- Exploring New Relationships

WEEK XXI: Graduation

- Overview
- Graduation Celebration
- Certificate Presentation

Daily Tune-Up Curriculum

This class provides a time for general discussion and mutual support at the beginning of the day. It's an opportunity for participants to plan their day and "fine-tune" what they want to work on. Starting once a week for a period of 3 months.

CURRICULUM TOPICS:

- WEEK #1: What is recovery?
- WEEK #2: What helps and what hinders recovery?
- WEEK #3: How do you culturally identify?
- WEEK #4: What are your strengths? What outside resources help recovery?
- WEEK #5: What goals are you working on?
- WEEK #6: What is your diagnosis?
- WEEK #7: How do you cope with stress and symptoms?
- WEEK #8: What is your "relapse prevention"?
- WEEK #9: How do you define a healthy lifestyle?
- WEEK #10: How often do you use physical healthcare services?
- WEEK #11: What do you do for "fun, health, and fitness"?
- WEEK #12: How do you define "healthy food and nutrition"?
- WEEK # 13: What are some unhealthy and dangerous activities?
- WEEK #14: What is your "wellness self-management plan"?
- WEEK #15: What is your support network?
- WEEK #16: What have you learned from this cycle of groups?

APPENDIX II



Community Wellness & Recovery Center Survey

Hands Across Long Island (HALI) is launching a Community Wellness Center in your neighborhood. HALI is a nonprofit organization and most of our services are free. We would like your feedback on what you would like to see in your community.

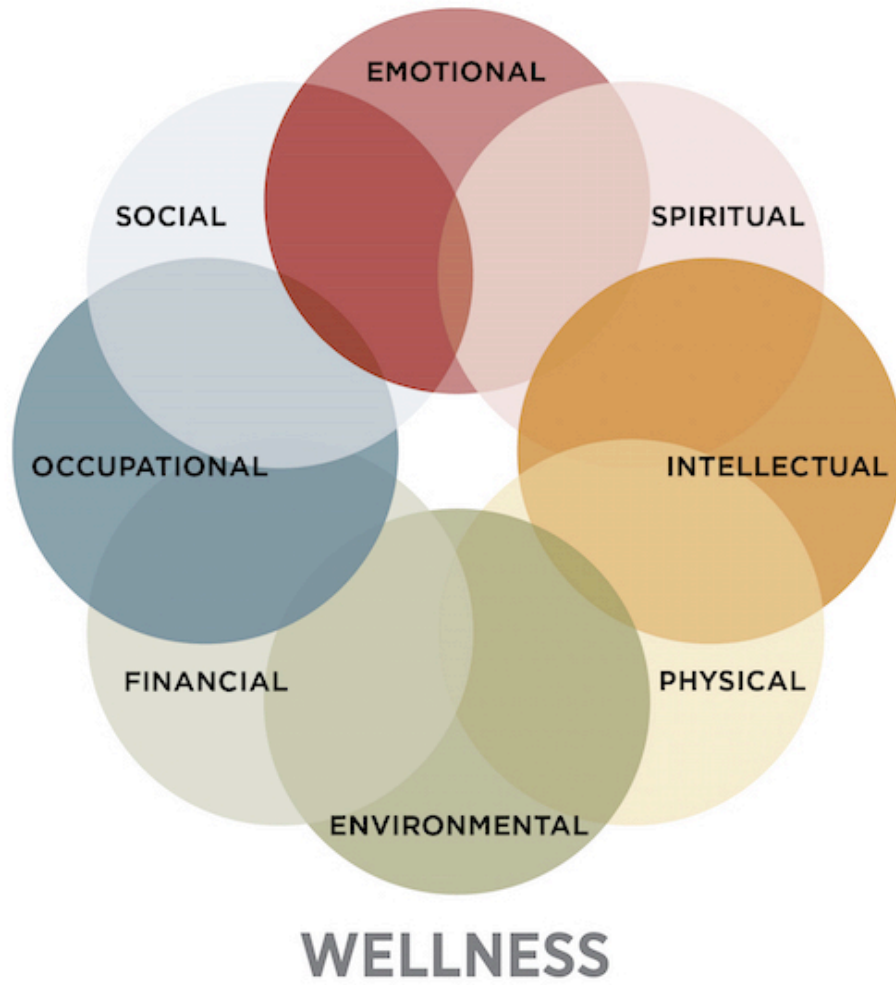
1. What activities would you like to see at the Community Wellness Center?

- Reiki
- Yoga
- Meditation / Spirituality
- Massage Chairs
- ESL (English as a Second Language) Classes
- GED (General Equivalency Degree) Classes
- Health Education Classes
- Diabetes Support Groups
- Health Screenings
- Self Defense / Safety Trainings
- Board Games
- Computer Classes
- Immigration Support
- Advocacy
- Parenting Classes
- Employment Enrichment
- Music Classes
- Community Events / Field Trips
- Help Quitting Smoking
- Conversation Groups

- Life Skills
 - Other (If other, please write below.)
2. What hours would you be available?
 - Morning (9AM-12PM)
 - Afternoon (12PM-4PM)
 - Evening (4PM-8PM)
 - I do not plan on attending
 3. Do you have any talents or skills that you would like to share with the community as a volunteer? If so, what?
 4. What concerns do you have surrounding your community?
 5. Certain special events may cost a small amount of money. How much would you be willing to pay for an event?
 6. How likely are you to attend the Community Wellness Center in the future?
 - Definitely
 - Probably
 - Maybe
 - Probably not
 - Definitely not
 7. Please list your name or contact information if you would like to receive more information about the Community Wellness Center.

APPENDIX III

The Eight Dimensions of Wellness



APPENDIX IV

The “Manana” Group Discussion Program Weekly Curriculum

Objective: To help participants become aware of certain affective traits that will help them better their self-esteem.

Participants will:

1. Be encouraged to take part in group discussions;
 2. Be asked to contribute their own discussion topics.
 3. Be asked to give feedback.
- Lesson plan for week 1 will center on the concept of Mañana.
 - Lesson plan for week 2 will center on “love of self.”
 - Lesson plan for week 3 will center on “love of other.”
 - Lesson plan for week 4 will center on “love of opponent.”
 - First Evaluation.

Objective: To help participants understand the importance of empowerment strategies.

Participants will:

1. Be encouraged to take part in group discussions;
 2. Be asked to participate in group dynamics.
 3. Be asked to give feedback.
- Lesson plan for week 5 will center on personal empowerment strategies.
 - Lesson plan for week 6 will center on the concept of mindfulness.
 - Lesson 7 will center on the notion of resistance.
 - Lesson plan for week 8 will center on summarizing empowerment strategies, mindfulness, and resistance.
 - Second Evaluation.

Objective: To help participants understand the importance and significance of storytelling.

Participants will:

1. Share their own stories.
 2. Discuss the stories of other participants.
 3. Relate these stories to their own struggles with self-esteem.
 4. Be asked to give feedback
- Lesson plan for week 9 will center on storytelling as a form of resistance.
 - Lesson plan for weeks 10-11 will center on having each participant share their stories.
 - Lesson plan for week 12 will continue storytelling and reflections.
 - Third Evaluation

APPENDIX V

PARTICIPANT SATISFACTION SURVEY

- 1. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the Mañana program and the discussion groups?**
 - Very satisfied
 - Somewhat satisfied
 - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - Somewhat dissatisfied
 - Very dissatisfied

- 2. Which of the following words would you use to describe our group? Check all that apply.**
 - Reliable
 - Informative
 - Helpful
 - Unique
 - Welcoming
 - Not enough help offered
 - Unreliable

- 3. How would you rate the facilitator? Check all that apply.**
 - Attentive
 - Not attentive
 - Friendly
 - Not too friendly
 - Informative
 - Not too informative

- 4. What topics would you like to see changed or added? Comment on your ideas and thoughts below.**

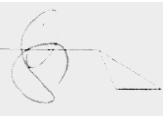
5. How responsive was the facilitator to your questions or concerns regarding your needs?

- Extremely responsive
- Very responsive
- Moderately responsive
- Not so responsive
- Not at all responsive
- Not applicable

6. How likely are you to continue to join us at the Mañana program?

- Extremely likely
- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not so likely
- Not at all likely

7. What other comments/suggestions do you have about the Mañana program?



HALI CWRC CLASS ATTENDANCE LIST

Name of Class: "Mañana"
 Location: Big "TV" Room
 Staff Leader of Class: Hector Rivera
 Date of Activity: 10/06/2017

Name of Members	
Print	Sign
WALTER [REDACTED]	Walter [REDACTED]
JOSE [REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
RICARDO [REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
ROSE ARCEBITE [REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
SILVERIO [REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
ANTONIO [REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
P. V. JOSE [REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Comments:
 Spoke on the topic of "Mindfulness" The group participated was very engaging! Will continue topic next time the group meets.

Staff Signature: Hector Rivera

APPENDIX VII
Thanksgiving Day Luncheon Sing-In Sheet
Thursday, November 23, 2017



Happy Thanksgiving!!!
 SIGN IN SHEET

P1044

NAME/AFFILIATION	In Initial	Out Initial
Anbera [redacted]	✓	
Sharen [redacted]	✓	
Josely [redacted]	✓	
Angela [redacted]	[initials]	[initials]
Katrina [redacted]	[initials]	[initials]
Tatiana [redacted]	✓	
Thomas [redacted]		
Beth [redacted]	B.V.	B.V.
John [redacted]	J.F.	J.F.
[redacted]	[initials]	
Ledi Diana [redacted]	✓	
Steve [redacted]	✓	
Alverson [redacted]	✓	
Rosetta [redacted]	✓	

Date 11/23/17



Happy Thanksgiving!!
SIGN IN SHEET

P2off

NAME/AFFILIATION	In Initial	Out Initial
RAIPH [redacted] - I AM HALT	RBM	
Patricia [redacted]	PAS	
SAC Suterine [redacted]	SMS.	SR.
Edward [redacted]	EDY	
James [redacted]	JMS	
Radley [redacted]		
Sybil [redacted]		
New H. [redacted]		
[redacted]		
Victoria [redacted]	VM	
Colin [redacted]	CB	
[redacted]	PS	
David [redacted]	DM	DM
Carol [redacted]	CM	CM

Date 11/23/17



Happy Thanksgiving!!! SIGN IN SHEET

P3084

NAME/AFFILIATION	In Initial	Out Initial
Carole [redacted] Jackie	CR	JK
Victor [redacted] Jack-	VM	JM
Alexis (+9)	ax	
Cynthia [redacted]	C	
Peg [redacted]	P	
Natalie [redacted]	NB	
Erin [redacted]	EB	
[redacted]	[redacted]	
[redacted]	[redacted]	
Product [redacted]	[redacted]	
Rachel [redacted]	[redacted]	
Debbie [redacted]	[redacted]	
Melba [redacted]	ML	
Tara [redacted]	TL	

Date 11/23/17



Happy Thanksgiving!!!

SIGN IN SHEET

P4044

NAME/AFFILIATION	In Initial	Out Initial
Desiree [redacted]	✓	
Willie [redacted]	✓	
Brian [redacted]	✓	
George [redacted]	Ⓟ	
Chris [redacted]	AG	AG
Ashley [redacted]	AG	AG
Anthony [redacted]	AG	AG

Date 11/23/17

APPENDIX VIII
Thanksgiving Day Luncheon Pics



Figure 1
Participants and volunteers enjoy their meal.



Figure 2
My wife Yvonne getting ready to enjoy her meal with a participant.



Figure 3
Church members serving food.



Figure 4
Jamming with HALI staff, church members, and participants.

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