COMMUNITY AND SPIRITUAL CARE OF YOUNG ADULTS OF THE

CARIBBEAN DIASPORA

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ABSTRACT

COMMUNITY AND SPIRITUAL CARE OF YOUNG ADULTS OF THE

CARIBBEAN DIASPORA

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The project develops an education/evangelistic process and practice at the Merrell

United Methodist Church (MUMC) which seeks to connect young adults of Caribbean

immigrants with older Caribbean immigrants and arises out of concern that descendants

of the Caribbean diaspora in south Florida are not fully invested in the life of the church

while requiring occasionally local church interventions or services.

The purpose, developed through open space technology is to initiate renewal of

the relationship of the church within a wider context, that facilitate and empower

conversations toward creating community and spiritual care for and with young adults of

Caribbean immigrants.

The project explores the ways that MUMC has disconnected with young adults

and examines ways of reengaging young adults. Through interviewing six young adults, I

discovered intersections of culture, future goals, expectations and experience of church,

and some concerns related to their community and spiritual care. An action plan was

crafted with participation of four MUMC stakeholders (church leaders) using data from

the interviews, applying Appreciative Inquiry theory, and learning through theological

lens to be hospitable neighbors. The action plan encourages intentional conversations

where older adults meet younger adults by facilitating safe and non-judgmental space for

full self-disclosure, along with facing fears in society. The goal is to learn together how

to be an inclusionary church within conversations that are relatable and offers space for

re-imagination of being neighbors loved by God.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Purpose of the Project

        The purpose of the project is to develop an education/evangelistic focus at Merrell United Methodist Church (MUMC) that connects adult children of Caribbean immigrants with older Caribbean immigrants. The process attempts to re-orient my local church by encouraging the opening of spaces or opportunities that empower conversations in community and in developing spirituality toward just relations. I perceive that this is an opportunity for the local church to reevaluate and relook at what it means to care for community and spiritual needs presently. Many young adults of the Caribbean diaspora request help or services from the church but will not become regular participants or "join" church. The nearness of these descendants of Caribbean immigrants may include immigrant descendants coming to the United States or, those born in the United States descent. I became concerned about this trend and began to ask questions: Why are young adults of the Caribbean diaspora not invested in church? What can older adults in church learn in a constructive engagement with young adults to offer spiritual care?

        It is my belief the MUMC is available to offer community and spiritual care that is relevant to young adults of the Caribbean diaspora. There are gaps in connecting with young adults to offer care which demands a different learning and mission strategy in doing Christian mission for the 21st century. The development of this project proposes the preparation of MUMC leaders to lead the local church to live creatively within

community by creating open spaces within right atmosphere using appreciative conversations that is conducive to our stories, contexts and the gospel. This project involved interviewing of young adults who are either unaffiliated or loosely connected to our church. The assessment of the data from the interviews will be used to craft an action plan that can lead to relevant practices for spiritual development of all concerned. The action plan will be crafted in collaboration with some church leaders and members who I refer to as stakeholders. The project indicates that some young adults' aspirations, challenges, and epistemological perspectives of the role of church demand intentional appreciative learning. There is an expectation for creative and synergetic learning spaces/conditions that will encourage the holistic development of their lives. This project design revealed an approach for reaching young adults in their respective realities in a non-judgmental way, and for church to be open spaces of learning and development for community and spiritual care. The overarching project goal will be to create conversations that motivate activity for positive change where the local church will be able to comprehend daily realities of young adults and in so doing morph into an open space of learning where both community and spiritual care are mutually offered and received.

The Narrative of Concern and Opportunity

I believe that Merrell United Methodist Church can encourage conversations for change by offering dialogical open spaces for God's liberating love. These open spaces appreciative for conversations and change may encounter conflicts and tensions that must be recognized. Recognition of these conflicts and tensions within community

and the church has the potential to exclusively focus Christ's ministry in the multi-cultural and diverse South Florida. For this study, the nature of any conversation with older adults and young adults of the Caribbean diaspora is cognizant of how young adults relate to church in the United States.

A study released by Pew Research Center in August 1, 2018 questions "Why Americans Go (and Don't Go) to Religious Services?"[1]   This study reported that 3 in 10 persons do not attend religious services because they are unbelievers.[2] There were in contrast to those referred to as unbelievers "a fairly religious group" with some 6 in 10 who are Christians.[3] Those persons who are Christians and do not attend religious services regularly

1.   Practice their faith in other ways

2.   Dislike things about particular churches or religious services

3.   Have logistical reasons "like being in poor health or not having the time to go"

 The adults choosing to attend religious services regularly were motivated:

1.   to become close to God

2.   so children will have moral foundation

3.   to make me a better person

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[1] Pew Research Center. August 1, 2019. "Why Americans Go (and Don't Go) to Religious Services," Religion and Public Life, Pew Research Center, 2018, accessed November 2, 2018, www.pewforum.org/2018/08/01/why-americans-go-to-religious-services.
[2] "Why Americans Go (and Don't Go) to Religious Services", 3
[3] "Why Americans Go (and Don't Go) to Religious Services", 4

4.   for comfort in time of trouble/sorrow.[4]

There are other practical and competing situations that influence American church attendance such as leisure, sports, and employment requirements. Based on this Pew study, churches with Caribbean immigrant attendance are among those referenced. Taking information like the Pew study seriously, Merrell United Methodist Church (MUMC) and the wider community acknowledge that there is a challenge to the familial and kinship nature of Caribbean immigrants where church is an important, or at least an available institution for social support and community action. In general, older adult Caribbean immigrants tend to participate in organizations like the Church. The descendants of Caribbean immigrants engage in little or no church or organizational participation in community. This trend may threaten or negate an important role of the Caribbean Immigrant Church to (a) facilitate transition in the US context, (b) help immigrants to establish residency and (c) promote assimilation within community and civic participation, and political action.[5]

Context of Ministry of Merrell UMC

       The ministry setting that I currently serve is in South Florida in the city of Lauderdale Lakes. In this small city of about 36,324[6], the Merrell United Methodist Church is prominently situated as part of central Broward County. Merrell UMC is across

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[4] "Why Americans Go (and Don't Go) to Religious Services", 3.
[5] Nguyen, Taylor, and Chatters, "Church-Based Social Support among Caribbean Blacks in the United States," *Review of Religious Research* 58, no. 3 (09/2016).
[6] US Census Bureau website for City of Lauderdale Lakes estimate population as of July 1, 2018, accessed May 29, 2019. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/lauderdalelakescityflorida,US/PST045218.

the main road from an elementary school, near to two strip malls, other business places, and surrounded by several communities within 5 zip codes. The city demographic consists of about 84.7% Black/African Americans, about 11.7% white, 8.7% white but not Hispanic, about 4.6 % Hispanic/Latino and smaller percentages of Asians and other representations. The congregation has a majority black Caribbean representation with some Central American flavor. On the membership roll, there are some 400 members with more than 50% attending weekly services. There are several Caribbean national, and ethnic identities represented within the congregation. The cultural diversity experienced within the congregation is seen in varieties of customs, languages (such as Creole, English, Spanish) and ethnicities connected by shared histories of the Trans-Atlantic Slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Many of the members immigrated to the USA from Caribbean states from the Greater Antilles such as Jamaica and Haiti, down to the oil rich Trinidad and Tobago in the south, across to South American Cooperative Republic of Guyana, and Central American connections to Panama and Belize.

Merrell UMC is home to older adults many who are retired. This congregation has a history of change. It began as a white American southern United States fellowship. Over time with changed community demographics that transitioned to being majority black, the congregation reflected the face of the community. This church has been had families reflecting a multigenerational character. As children became adults and pursued career paths, they left the older adults to continue connections within Merrell UMC. Their adult children live in varied locations in Florida and other States. Young adults as descendant of immigrants do not necessarily identify with all of the present demographic

and culture of the congregation due to church practices which are conservative and traditional in nature. The congregation is not always amenable to new expressions in the church life. It is sometimes challenging for new persons to break into the culture of the congregation. The history of the congregation is not without conflicts some stemming from communication deficiencies. These communications deficiencies include black and white racial divide, internal conflicts, imposition of codes of conduct, and issues of control. Young adults do not want to connect with some of those historical experiences of the older adults in the church. While young adults care little about some practices of church culture, they are invested in the cultural connections they find meaningful. These descendants of immigrants relate to the nuances within language usage, culinary tastes, economic and social challenges. MUMC is suitably located to facilitate the interactions that can deepen relationships within experiences of immigrants to encourage and lead in change.

The Scope of the Project

I believe there is opportunity in bridging any gaps or at least some of the gaps that connect generation, gender and other social realities to 21st century Christian mission in community. This project will identify an approach for community and spiritual care within the 4.5-mile radius of the church. This is an approach that realistically recognizes the challenges of meaningful conversation among Caribbean immigrants and their descendants. Conversation for community and spiritual care have relevance to issues of powerlessness, racism, economic inequity, and other justice issues. Other challenges include employment, or under employment, protection of children and the home bound all of which impact community and church.

As MUMC communicate with young adults of Caribbean diaspora, some themes may explain their tendency toward unaffiliating over time or loose connection. Learning to have appropriate conversations within given space may have implications for local church ministry. By learning to listen, and acting for community well-being, the local church in following the example of Christ in the gospels, may learn ways to "love God and love neighbor"[7] (Luke 10:27) in and beyond Caribbean diaspora.

Jesus' mission to communities in the scripture offered liberation and transformation from oppression that marred the wholeness of community. This involved dialogue and cooperation for life. The Christ of the Christian Scriptures was a master of using stories to recognize, revalue and offer freedom to oppressed people. The MUMC doing relevant ministry to all in community is to affirm the dignity and wholeness of people as Christ did (Matthew 10:41-42)[8]. To affirm dignity and rights of people suggests the transformation of communities for their healing and well-being.

Limitations of the Project

The limitations of this project are listed below:

1) The small representative sample as a slice for theoretical consideration may not capture the widest variety of young adult experiences that can contribute to more data

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[7] Luke 10:27 leads into conversation who is the neighbor created in God's image.

[8] The church in mission is sent to be Jesus's representatives to the world. Disciples are neighbors and alternative minority countercultural group working at extending God's salvation to all according to the text of Matthew 10. The hospitality and care, offered, and received leads to transformed relationship with God and people. Created in God's image people are bounded together as neighbors that develop together. Immigrants and their descendants are included in the prophets, righteous, and little ones involved in God's care and hospitality.

points. The narrow nature of the data and implications thereof will have gaps in applications.

2) Ethnic experiences may create bias and blindside objectivity. While the experiences are unique, Caribbean immigrants living within South Florida settings will have aspects of assimilation and resistance to dominant culture. There is the possibility that the totality of experience is comingled reality of past and present. This researcher being of Caribbean diaspora may have missed some voices of concern because of working within assumptions within relationships of Jamaican reality and a conservative church culture.

3) The application of an action plan needs sufficient time within congregation in testing practice and formulating theory for doing mission in community in and beyond church.

4) The assumptions of communication, engagement and strategy may need to be adjusted in relation to conversations with young adults and congregation.

5) The congregation's reluctance and resistance to disrupt familiar conversations.

Definitions

I use the following definitions in the explanation of the main ideas for this research. Community and Spiritual Care refer to communicating and sharing well-being in community. People in community can find meaning and value for their lives that allow them to flourish within complex choices, while they utilize cultural and spiritual tools within life contexts.

Caribbean diaspora describes the identity of migrants from Caribbean regions who have dispersed, or spread across nations, or political boundaries to which one is not native. However, Caribbean diaspora continue to maintain distinct kinship, and cultural preferences that interface with the new realities where residence is established.

Open Space[9] is an opportunity to offer participatory paths in God's mission. Open space allows church to engage with people in their life situations, in dialogue, to listen and learn together as partners with the church thus facilitating meaningful change in community.

Generational differences suggest that age cohorts have different priorities and within year ranges, tend to act predictably according to those priorities. The above stated action can result in disruption of communication and association across discernable generations.

Unaffiliated and loosely connected young adults refer to proximity and levels of participation with church that describe little or no commitment in regular participation or interest in church and its message.

An Approach for Having Conversation for Mission in a Caribbean Diasporan Church

Broadly speaking, church is based on relationships that use conversations, often geared toward community enrichment that fosters growing relationships locally. Sometimes the church misses this ideal where there is little allowance for constructive

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[9] Owen, *Open Space Technology - a User's Guide*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Berrett-Koeher Publishers, 1998, 2008).

conversations, or a refusal to converse about some topics. The refusal to converse with persons and on some topics depreciate community enrichment. This depreciation in understanding occurs when congregants do not talk with each other openly, but leave with their own sense of previous knowledge. Some congregants rather keep their positions or ideas entrenched without learning from each other's experience. This depreciation in understanding necessitates a process to encourage learning from varied experiences. I am suggesting a process in which conversing begins with framing their experiences by following the way of Jesus of the gospels and from social sciences.

A way of having conversation is possible that allows people to see strengths and past successes, and then take action based on learning that is cooperative, or intersects with experiences of the community. This process, one that encourages learning and resists having definite conclusions through consistent learning is known as Appreciative Inquiry or AI.[10] While I explore this further in Chapter Two, I want to make a clear connection to this form of communication at the very beginning. Professors David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva were pioneers of appreciative inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is used in professional practice of organizational development and change management. AI it is not a new method. Appreciative Inquiry drives conversations for change in organizations and an organization is at core people working together towards a defined purpose. Appreciative Inquiry when used in organizations, employ principles and practices that recognize "collective strengths do more than perform-they transform."[11] Its main characteristic focuses on an aspect of organization called

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[10] Cooperrider, and Whitney, *Appreciative Inquiry - a Positive Revolution in Change* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publisher, 2005).
[11] Cooperrider, and Whitney, *Appreciative Inquiry,* 13

appreciative learning. According to Cooperrider and Whitney, "Appreciative inquiry is the cooperative, coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives life to an organization or a community when it is most effective and most capable in economic, ecological, and human terms."[12] AI embodies change at fundamental levels, especially assumptions and thinking. Assumptions are implicit in organizations and churches like Merrell UMC. These assumptions are observed in the practices among the people that relate to organizational culture. Culture change is hard to achieve without encouraging buy-in.

In general, this cycle represents the positive principle that focus using positive affect and social bonding such as hope, inspiration, caring, and joy in the developing and maintaining movement into change.[13] The resulting change is dependent on the nature of the question asked. The AI theory focuses on people thriving in deference to concepts advocating deficit-based change. Further, organizations are centers of human relationships that thrive "where there is an appreciative eye."[14] An appreciative eye describe when people see the best in each other's lives as they contribute voice and affirmations toward making a better world.

I believe that AI can have an ecclesial application at Merrell UMC in challenging change for community and spiritual care of Young Adults. When applying an appreciative eye, inquiry into Merrell UMC as a church can discover the best of itself for change. The generation of energy within relatable experiences, history, and congregation internal knowledge will encourage change. However, in applying AI, I will have to

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[12] Cooperrider, and Whitney, *Appreciative Inquiry,* 20
[13] Cooperrider, and Whitney*, Appreciative Inquiry,* 72
[14] Cooperrider, and Whitney*, Appreciative Inquiry,* 81

accept that there are assumptions in the church. "Assumptions are the set of beliefs shared by a group that cause the group to think and act in certain ways."[15] Assumptions present in a group over a long period of time are difficult to change. Congregants will not easily see the contradictions of beliefs or convictions in the face of new information or changed realities.[16] This is typical of church practices within congregational life. Assumptions are located in the unwritten rules in the church, context of the choices of behaviors, sublime, but near surface unconsciousness expectations, and past experiences.[17] The assumptions associated with this topic may produce tensions, and uneasy feelings for the participants of the project.

In summary, this first chapter introduces the goal and direction of the research project. Chapter two provides the biblical and theological basis that support the work associated with the research, delves further into Appreciative Inquiry and explores Open Space Technology as a method. Chapter three describes the method used in the project for interviews and working with stakeholders in determining an action plan. Chapter four formulates an action plan and interpretations that generate movement for change with vital conversations with the stakeholders.

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[15] Hammond, *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*, 3rd Edition ed. (Bend, OR: Thin Book Publishing Co., 1996, 1998, 2013). 2013 #111.

[16] Hammond*, The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry, 3rd ed.,*10.

[17] Hammond, *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry, 3rd ed.*,11.

Chapter 2 -   Biblical and Theological Background

Relating Education and Evangelism to Context

Caribbean diaspora young adults in South Florida are in and around Merrell United Methodist and while they are people who are offered equal space in developing relationships, they remain on the periphery of church. Similarities and differences of immigrants and their descendants display intersections of Caribbean cultures including areas such as language, culinary tastes, relationships, visual representations, economic, cultural, and religious choices. I propose a biblical and theological foundation for undertaking this project, one which attempts to establish an education/evangelism focus for re-imagining of Christ's mission within Merrell United Methodist Church setting. This project is an attempt to develop an approach to Christian mission among first and subsequent generations of Caribbean immigrants who are unaffiliated or loosely connected to the Merrell United Methodist Church.

Conversation About Life

Conversation for community and spiritual care have relevance to issues of powerlessness, racism, economic inequity, and other justice issues. I believe that Jesus showed in the gospels how conversations can evoke thinking for change. The miracle of Jesus calming a storm, in Mark 4:35-42, for example, illustrate how he began a conversation with his disciples within real life circumstances. The twelve sought faith and validation during a life-threatening storm by asking an existential question to Jesus,

"Teacher, don't you care that we are drowning?" (Mark 4:38) CEB. This important

conversation about life contrasted the disciples' fearful disposition to the trust exhibited

in the storm comfortable Jesus. In the disciple's question are overtones of the psalms.

These psalms called to Yahweh for immediate action within shared dangerous

predicaments that threatened survival from mortal threats.[18] Jesus silenced the storm then

asked, "Why are you frightened? Don't you have faith yet?" (Mark 4:40) CEB. Jesus

conversation began with questions to the disciples about their relationship with him.

These questions would lead to talking. Talking together within life experiences can effect

change and, or possibilities. Conversations of life begin with generative questions the

potential to change human thinking and possible action. Jesus questions seem intended

to raise the level of the disciple's discussion from the immediacy of the predictable

situation/routine or as in this story, the danger of the storm, toward thinking about the

future with him in a thought-provoking manner. The disciples experience contributed to a

conversation that would become a discussion inside and outside of their fear of the

unexpected change. The question led to an urgent inquiring conversation and assessment.

"Who is this? Even the wind and the sea obey him!" (Mark 4:41) CEB. Jesus command

over nature was as though a prophet of old Israel was pointing the disciples to a new day.

As a prophet Jesus is "enacting renewal of Israel" in opposition to the prevailing ruling

forces.[19] The twelve disciples wondered how the significance of Jesus who controls a

situation of chaos far from human control had among them a transformative potential.

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[18] See Psalms 35:23, 44:23-24, and 107:28-29. While popular references to the nature miracle of Mark 4:35-42 contrasts faith over fear within the close proximity of Jesus, I choose to focus on the constant conversation concerning life in community outside of our influence of control. The church as Jesus community is an alternative for living within boundaries of empire, helplessness, traditions, etc., within transformational conversations.

[19] Horsley, *Jesus and Empire,* 72-74.

This may have been a frightening new possibility for these disciples. There was

theological learning for the disciples in conversation about life with Jesus which allowed

them to experience God's new possibilities. Present day transformative conversations

about life with Jesus in varied experiences are possible. I believe that conversation about

life with Jesus for local church ministry should be modeled in stories like this in the

gospels and can be replicated in communities. By learning to listen, and act for

community well-being, the local church follows the example of Christ in the gospels.

The conversations at the local church encourages new ways to "Love God and love

neighbor" in and beyond Caribbean diaspora.

Biblical Exploration

      Caribbean diaspora experiences can identify with immigrants in biblical texts.

The Bible contain stories about immigrants on a journey to a new place or experience.

The immigrant or stranger is the story of Israel as a pilgrim people having the protection

of God on life's journey. Abraham as an immigrant left his own land and journeyed

toward a new place of promise (Genesis 12:10; Genesis 15:13). Moses named his son

Gershom because he was an immigrant among the people (Exodus 2:22). Eventually, the

Israelites with experience of what it meant to be strangers or immigrants began to

welcome other immigrants into their community. Eventually, guidelines for living

together with immigrants encouraged Israel to regard the dignity of all persons. These

guidelines for social engagements with immigrants set regulations for worship,

commerce, and safety (Numbers 9:14; 35:15). The guidelines are a clear recognition that

God acts in justice for the least and weakest in community (Deuteronomy 10:18-19).

This validation of all persons as children of God has been a consistent concern as recorded in biblical texts. Jesus of the gospels used immigrant experiences to teach what it meant to live in solidarity with all people. In the telling of the parable of the "Good Samaritan" (Luke 10:25-37) in discussion held with a legal expert Jesus established a pattern of living with the stranger. This pattern was to act as if all people were our neighbor. Jesus challenged a past practice with new ethical practice for mission. In the parable of the Samaritan, Jesus illustrated how a disliked foreigner showed love for the healing of the neighbor. The neighbor has no boundaries for the sharing of life. As Amy-Jill Levine suggests of the legal expert, Jesus gave him the charge to "live now," and focus little on eternal life.[20]   This parable helped to communicate to a belligerent legal expert about changing his hostility toward Jesus, and how to love his neighbor as part of God's mission. This mission charge was represented earlier in Chapter 10: 1-12 of Luke's gospel, when Jesus sent out the seventy to share good news. They returned reporting eschatological and existential changes (Luke 10:17).

In the Bible immigrants participate in God's mission to the nations. On occasions the stranger/alien (immigrant) is to be God's mission. The church can be considered a Christian community of immigrants who share good news of God's love with people, particularly young adults. According to 1 Peter 2:9-12, Christians live as pilgrims, or neighborly community whose land and nation is beyond the rules of this world. However, according to the text, while in this world believers in Christ should conduct themselves with an attitude that will be praiseworthy of God. This community represented in the text of first Peter, is both aliens or immigrants in the prevailing culture,

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[20] Levine, *Short Stories by Jesus* (New York: Harper One, 2014), 83, 104.

and yet belonging ultimately to another place with God. This dual tension of belonging to

the here and now, as well as to the not yet future in God, is used in the text to encourage

Christians not to withdraw from participating with people in different lived contexts.   In

the dual nature of participating in God's mission and being God's mission, the beloved

should: "Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor" (1

Peter 2:17, NRSV). Church as a community of faithful immigrants exemplify living in

God's love by living in pursuance of justice and peace for transformation of people.

MUMC as a community of faithful immigrants affirms as neighbors' young adults who

are vital to the transformation of community.

Rationale for Mission Among Young Adults

There are several methods and approaches to evangelism[21] that involves

Christian mission. Mission is what the church does together in order to expand its

borders. This word missions, according to Orlandi, is "Participation of the people of God

in God's action in the world."[22] If this be the case then, relating to young adults is a

legitimate activity for Christian mission. Christian mission flows out of the grace of God

for all individuals. Doing mission allows the congregants to be present actors in God's

initiative of grace. God's initiative works through the Holy Spirit who is within the life

of God's people. Discerning where the Holy Spirit is leading for participation suggests

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[21] Cardoza-Orlandi, *Mission: An Essential* Guide (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press), 21-36.
[22] Orlandi, *Mission*, 57.

connecting with God's love within community.[23] Since God's activity is in the world, the

activity of mission by congregants is not static or hollow but dynamic and surprising.

Evangelism is an aspect of the mission of the church.[24] Evangelism is the

church's taking good news to the world. This good news is tempered by the Holy Spirit

and with an astute understanding of the good news for today. Evangelism is a humble

task that respects people in their desires within the context of dialogue.[25] Our proximity

and utterances are powerful agents. We should therefore be cognizant that relationship in

taking good news to the world is grounded in dialogue. This dialogue of the church in

local community is to be authentic within cultural contexts. It is imperative that for

cultural and local contexts, the Caribbean diasporan church in relationships would be

more equipped in community to better speak truth to power and live out the gospel of

Christ. The MUMC is called to evangelize in the world within relationships.[26] This

gospel is liberating and transforming (Ephesians 4:15) to people, and affirms that the

gospel of Christ is good news to descendants of Caribbean diaspora in Florida.

Pastoral and Spiritual Care

A theory of pastoral care assumes that care is offered to persons in a

nonjudgmental safe space and time. Pastoral care involves showing welcoming and

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[23] Orlandi, *Mission,* 61.
[24] Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission, American Society of Missiology Series,* Vol. 16 (Maryknoll, NY:Orbis Books, 1991), 11.
[25] Keum, ed., *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013), 32.
[26] Keum, *Together Towards Life,* 29.

healing within a particular congregation and the wider community within life realities.[27]

Pastoral care and spiritual care have several models depending on context and

interpretation.[28] Jesus practices a form of pastoral care within the communities. Jesus

related to strangers by inviting them into a new potential of themselves united in God's

love. In his journeys, Jesus encountered lepers, paralytics, accused sinners, non-Jews, and

those who did not understand his mission. All were strangers even when they were within

similar Jewish realities. However, Jesus respected and actively engaged religious

differences for healing those in community who witnessed the work of God.

In John 4, the story of the Samaritan woman, encounter with Jesus restored her

confidence and perhaps privilege when she invited her community to "Come and see a

man who has told me everything I've done! Could this man be the Christ?" (John 4:29)

CEB. The stranger found a home and a nurturing space with Jesus. Throughout the

Christian bible the search for home as existential and eschatological is depicted as

journey toward community wholeness in the divine one. Community wholeness

presupposes proximity of care. Giving oneself with undivided attention to the person is

the essence of that proximity. There is an incarnational nature to the work of making

home with young adults. This is when as ears and hands of God, as the people of God in

community, young adults will begin to understand the relational nature of God. In a

sense, home must be shared with neighbors including young adults in our community. By

being home for all allows for sharing a variety of experiences, while encouraging a

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[27] Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counseling: Resources for the Ministry of Healing and Growth*, Revised and enlarged. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 26.
[28] Doehring, *The Practice of Pastoral Care: A Postmodern Approach* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), xix -xxi.

spiritual center and core. Pastoral care is deemed an ethical failure when the church

neglects community and spiritual care dimension of people's lives.[29]

Church as Safe Space for Integration of Caribbean Immigrants.

Caribbean migrants have kinship support. Family contacts reflect the constant

intergenerational integration providing vital social support to members. Family support

crosses international boundaries in the case of Caribbean immigrants according to

researchers.[30] In Jamaican families for example, it is typical of women taking significant

leadership in organizing and maintaining relations.[31] Churches that are either majority

Caribbean diaspora, or include Caribbean diaspora have generated support networks as a

subgroup within Black population in the United States. According Ann Nguyen[32] early

Caribbean immigrant churches assisted new immigrants in three ways. First, there is the

facilitation of transition in a new context with social integration. Second, interacting with

immigrants helps to establish quality of residency. Third, promoting assimilation within

community mobilizes civic participation and political mobilization.[33] Enhancing this

process is that older black Caribbean immigrants "had higher levels of church attendance

and non-organizational participation than persons of Caribbean descent who were

born…in the United States."[34] It is believed that the home cultures and religious practices

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[29] Lebacqz, and Driskill, *Ethics and Spiritual Care: A Guide for Pastors, Chaplains, and Spiritual Directors* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000),115.

[30] Forsythe Brown, "Kinship Support in Jamaican Families in the USA and Jamaica," *Journal of African American Studies 21* (2017),187-202.

[31] Forsythe Brown,190.

[32] Nguyen, Taylor, and Chatters, "Church-Based Social Support among Caribbean Blacks in the United States." *Review of Religious Research 58, no. 3 (09/ 2016)*,385-406.

[33] Nguyen, Taylor, and Chatters, "Church-Based Social Support", 387.

[34] Nguyen, Taylor, and Chatters, "Church-Based Social Support", 387.

are reproduced.[35] The researchers did not clearly indicate a variety of Caribbean church

experiences. The researchers suggested that participation in the church is an implicit

factor in social mobility. An association with church can help in seeking upward mobility

in the American landscape. The measure of success of the immigrant while keeping

social contacts, for example the church, has many dimensions.[36] Spiritual well-being may

be connected with motivation to participate in community and avoid pitfalls like

isolation.[37]

Diasporan Context

As stated in the previous chapter, diaspora as a term has been applied to the

dispersion of Jewish people over all the world from biblical times. Over time the usage of

term diaspora expanded to include other kinds of shifts beyond geographical shifts,

including history, experience, and understanding. Such an understanding of diaspora is

dependent upon interpreters moving beyond the mainstream background or taking an

indigenous perspective. In other words, the Caribbean diaspora identity is not easily

defined.[38] Salmon-Reid describes Caribbean diaspora identity as having components of

culture diversities, making of a hybrid experience as result of the history from three

continents, intellectualization tools associated with Black Atlantic Experiences, and

Caribbean American identity. Although this wider understanding adds complexity, the

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[35] Nguyen, Taylor, and Chatters, "Church-Based Social Support", 380.

[36] Karen Fog Olwig, "Social Construction of Improvement: Continuity and Change in Caribbean Migrants Life Stories," *Anthropologica 53 (2011),* 41-51.

[37] Gaskin-Wasson, et al., "Spiritual Well-Being and Psychological Adjustment: Mediated by Interpersonal Needs?," *Journal of Religion and Health* 57, no. 4 (2018), https://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10943-016-0275-y.

[38]Reid-Salmon, *Home Away from Home: The Caribbean Diasporan Church in the Black Atlantic Tradition, Cross Cultural Theologies* (London; Oakville, CT: Equinox Pub. Ltd., 2008).41-42.

danger of categorizing Caribbean diasporan experience as monolithic is shortchanging the fullness of identity and community. Clearly, there is a richness to the experiences of the Caribbean immigrant journey that should be acknowledged.

<u>Caribbean Diasporan Church</u>

Delroy Reid-Salmon offers a theological perspective on being Caribbean diasporan church in the United States[39] in terms of faith in Jesus Christ the Emancipator. The Emancipatory Christ has expression through music, literature and testimony.[40] This outworking of a theological foundation nuances a dialectic of Eurocentric and African heritage.[41] Therefore, Caribbean theological roots are connected with history of experience and hermeneutically is not patterned in mainstream interpretations.[42] He argues that the liberation trend for emancipation is universal and local. The rich theological experience of the diasporan church has theological infusions that are Incarnational and Pentecostal.[43] The emancipatory nature of the theology consistent with history is for freedom, evokes protest, and seek justice for community. Theological interpretation within Caribbean theology is contextual[44] and I must add dynamic. There is self-understanding within Caribbean diaspora projected at understanding God as within unique human experience and initiating a new person.[45] Within Pentecost, the animation

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[39] Reid-Salmon, *Home Away From Home,*77
[40] Reid-Salmon, *Home Away From Home,*78
[41] Reid-Salmon, *Home Away From Home,*64-71
[42] Reid-Salmon, *Home Away From Home,*79
[43] Reid-Salmon, *Home Away From Home,* 80
[44] Reid-Salmon, *Home Away From Home,*88
[45] Reid-Salmon, *Home Away From Home,*89

of Caribbean church experiences is demonstrated in the activities associated with the diversity of Caribbean people.

While Reid-Salmon work is insightful there is a limit to his focusing on Black Caribbean diasporan experiences of being too normative. He admits that Caribbean experiences are as complex as diverse people of various world cultures that have been forged into one. The theological context of the Caribbean has several layers of diverse experiences that influence understanding as church. This Caribbean diasporan ecclesiology is expressed in the context and intellectual tradition of church in community. The context is the struggle of the Caribbean people for change, searching for a better life. Caribbean people have been a pilgrim people searching for a better life.[46] Salmon-Reid suggests some qualities of the Caribbean Diasporan Church as a community of learning, an alternative community of faith, and as home.[47] Home was suggested as journey to ancestral land, return to one's native land and "search for and formation of community that emerges from memory, history and culture."[48] Searching for home as community is that distinctiveness of memory, history, and culture that shapes the diasporan church, making it possible.

The Caribbean diaspora born in the United States participate in church less than the older adults before them. These American born with Caribbean heritage are contributing to the growing non-religious population. This is an increasing change within this generation. I believe that complex nature of Caribbean diasporan belonging cannot ignore survival and adoption of religions as a result of the combined histories of Europe,

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[46] Reid-Salmon, *Home Away From Home,* 100
[47] Reid-Salmon, *Home Away From Home,* 150-59
[48] Reid-Salmon, *Home Away From Home,* 160

Indian Sub-Continent and other regions within the orbit of the trans-Atlantic trade of the

Colonial period. Usage of religious experience offered strength in affirming humanity

and belonging.[49] That innate affirmation is represented in a diasporan church like Merrell

UMC today.

Theological Rationale in Having Conversations for Community and Spiritual Care

   The theological rationale for being involved in conversation for community

and spiritual care with young adults of Caribbean diaspora is the good news of God's

love in Christ. MUMC is not having meaningful conversations with young adults toward

community and spiritual care. There is need for change among leaders and congregation

that will engage with young adults in conversation. Any conversation with young adults

and leaders of MUMC should understand the good news within practicing values of the

gospel of Jesus that is intentional, willingness to listen, and contributing to mutual

development of God given potentials. All of these factors will engage persons who are on

the periphery of the church community. Conversations with young adults should be

invitational and done within an open space. This open space is where shared concerns

drives mutual engagement develops trust in relationships. Open conversations that arise

within an open space encourages transparency of practice and freedom of

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[49] *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, s.v. "American Religious Empire and the Caribbean," Epub.

movement/participation.[50] Open here considers collaboration, community values,

convenings, histories, and technologies within context.[51]

Further, the open conversation that make practical the "good news", is located

in the MUMC leaders welcoming the aspirations and experiences of the young in the

Caribbean diaspora. The conversations at MUMC must connect social and theological

realities within real time. The cultural influences, life challenges/goals, how the church

has been experienced, and what community and spiritual care may look like in given

situations, mark the common ground or concern upon which open conversations hang.

Young adults along with Older adults of MUMC with this common ground can make

vital contribution to any conversation toward liberating new ways of being church.

MUMC can experience change in engaging young adults when ready to listen

along with young adults about community and spiritual care. This listening and being

responsive by leaders to young adults can create and or strengthen relationships toward

full human potential. This full human potential acknowledges many aspects of self as

faith in God is developed that will assist living within a changing world. This too is

within the invitation and change possible in the good news.

Young adults are and want to be recipients of good news; however,

meaningful connection must be strategic. I understand strategy as deploying the resources

available to greatest advantage. There are available resources at Merrell UMC and a there

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[50] Zimmerman, and De Michiel, *Open Space New Media Documentary: A Toolkit for Theory and Practice, Routledge Studies in Media Theory and Practice* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2018), http://ezproxy.drew.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat04465a&AN=drew.taf9781351762090&site=eds-live&scope=site, https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781351762090.

[51] Zimmerman, and Michiel, *Open Space New Media Documentary*,2-3.

is a possible strategy to engage intentionally with young adults not connected and non-committal to church. Resources include the physical building, people who are welcoming, and planning of activities that help personal and spiritual development. This is a description of church generally having a base from which the Holy Spirit is able to work in the wider community that the church is located.

I believe that the Holy Spirit communicates with people and renews community life. This picture of the renewal of community has a description as "the community of believers…of one in heart and mind," (Acts 4:32) CEB. This biblical image holds as vital the wellbeing of people acting by their faith convictions within given reality grounded in belief in God in Christ Jesus. The hermeneutical considerations of context and method of reading of Bible are not without challenges of history, interpretative traditions, interpretation tools and experiences. Some young adults of the Caribbean diaspora are exposed or immersed in contexts and methods of reading Christian Scriptures. Some young adults already have a developed view of life, church, and exercise of spirituality that is already in conversation with traditions of Merrell UMC. Connecting with young adults in conversation will necessitate entering an already active conversation.

An intentional learning process is required for having meaningful conversations among young adults and older adults in church. This conversation must be structured for learning by being exploratory, respectful, and a sacred place. Learning that is exploratory suggests practices that are lifelong and open to reality using Christian faith foundation. Learning that is respectful upholding human belonging and healing. Learning that is done within a sacred space considers transformation for mission. Norma Cook

Everist[52], characterize church as a learning community in mission. In an approach to Christian education that is rooted in incarnational theological perspective carries the presence of Christ to real experiences of people. People should be able to bring issues of life to the learning community of the church for meaning and practice. Everist argues for learning that is student (people) focused within the witnessing community.[53] Learning takes place when people bring all that matters to the shared space of ministry together. According to Everist, "Learning which leads to mission and back to learning will use the gifts of people outside of the classroom."[54] Encounters with young adults may require having conversations with creativity in any learning space.

I concur with Everist that mission shapes learning.[55] Christian learning listens to its context by connecting Word and world.[56] Within learning spaces are "intersections of experiences, stories, concepts, questions, and actions…."[57] Learning is not smooth or not without challenging the heart and thinking.[58] I consider doing mission as learning, unlearning and relearning to energize radical change at MUMC. Learning and teaching missionally attempts to engage young adults and the entire church with questions and possible directions.

Within a black Caribbean diasporan majority church like MUMC, learning for mission among people is contextual. Within a black Caribbean diasporan majority church like MUMC learning for mission among people is contextual. Word and world are

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[52] Everist, *The Church as Learning Community: A Comprehensive Guide to Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002).
[53] Everist, The Church as Learning Community,230.
[54] Everist, The Church as Learning Community,234.
[55] Everist, *The Church as Learning Community,*237.
[56] Everist, *The Church as Learning Community,*238.
[57] Everist, *The Church as Learning Community,*74.
[58] Everist, *The Church as Learning Community,*239.

connected. MUMC must be a learning congregation sharing good news with young

adults. Engaging young adults who are loosely affiliated or not connected with MUMC

has challenges of interest and proximity. Learning for mission begin with the church

moving toward young adults with a view to start a conversation about life. The whole

person is involved in Christian mission and so the church's fears, practices, signs of

Christian belonging, and stigmas that stifle seeing one of God's creation is part of the

learning process. As noted, before, the process of doing mission among young adults is

for the allowance of conversion of MUMC community and young adults. Vital life

change is the focus of the conversations and the learning that derived from missional

engagements. Learning mission among or alongside young adults will necessitate a

process of learning, unlearning, and relearning how to make disciples of Christ who will

help to be world transformers.   This Christian education model is unique in the context

of descendants of Caribbean immigrants who have theological, sociological positions or

aversions about church. There are several factors that contribute to Christian mission

learning within conversations that are important considerations in this study.

First, conversations are done in an open space. The idea of the open space for

conversation is adopted from Harrison Owen's Open Space Technology.[59] Harrison

Owen an Episcopal priest, and civil rights activist invented a process that involved

organized employees when he observed that coffee breaks were a productive time among

some employees. There are four principles and one law that guide this system. Whoever

comes is the right people, whatever happens is the only thing that could have, whenever it

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[59]Owen, *Open Space Technology – A User's Guide, 3rd ed* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1997, 2008.

starts is the right time, and last principle is when it's over, it's over. The one law is that if one is not learning they should use their feet to move to a better circumstance. Open Space Technology is a way of conducting a meeting organized to focus on a specific task. Open Space technology is participant driven as people create the agenda. The tendency to control is resisted. At the end of the meeting a document is created representing the meeting. The self-organizing process is called an open space. For open space technology to work there must be a real business issue or problem that received passionate focus on. I believe that open space that allows constructive conversation among older adults at MUMC, and young adults mirrors Owen's process. Conversation in a process for development of young adults should be mutual agreed engagement that can be accepted and acceptable. The process of engagement can be chaotic, or have turns but will come to consensus.

Second, all voices must be valued in conversation. This implies sharing space where physical, emotional, mental and spiritual aspects of circumstance and persons gets acknowledgment. This may take intentional or deep listening of stories, heart and differences. I borrow a quote by Sue Patton Thoele, that states, "Deep listening is miraculous for both listener and speaker. When someone receives us with open hearted, non-judging, intensely interested listening, our spirits expand."[60] Encounters with people should be opportunity to grow. Reference to growth is located in an Ashanti proverb, "two men in a burning house must not stop to argue."[61] Responding to the immediate situation demand focusing experiences.

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[60] Neal, and Neal, *The Art of Convening* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehlar Publishers, 2011),95.
[61] Vanzant, *Acts of Faith - Daily Meditations for People Of Color* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993).

Third, conversations that value people, and done in open spaces, facilitates decision making and purpose making by community. The diasporan church like Merrell UMC is culturally and theologically organized for welcoming the neighbor for sharing mission together. There is an existential challenge in engaging the reality of young adults who are not joining church. Church as a community of faith needs to interrogate its faith practices to see if any of them prevents or dissuade young adults from participating in church. When young adults are invited to participate, the older adults at church come to the realization that the deficit of the representational profile of the community is absent. Conversations with young adults lead into a participatory value of the meetings. The benefits of participatory value include full participation, mutual understanding, inclusive solutions, and shared responsibility.[62] The benefits of participatory value may also emerge with stronger individuals, stronger groups and stronger agreements.

Appreciative Inquiry

A process for encouraging conversations that reflect valuing of people, open spaces and facilitates owned decision making is known as an Appreciative Inquiry. Appreciative Inquiry is derived from the field of positive psychology applied in changing organizational structure or directions. It is a philosophical approach to organizational change that inquire into people or organizational strength, possibilities and successes.

The application of AI can change organizational culture and productivity as people contributing to process is valued. The use of positive questions enhances the best

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[62] Kaner, et al., Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014),29.

in a system's potential. AI assumes that people-based systems, or community have

positive resources for capacities that can be tapped into. This is considered as the positive

core. Positive core is related to the persistent questions that indicate direction of growth

of human systems.[63]   The intent is to do an organizational-wide discovery and analysis of

the positive core.[64]   That activity contributes to positive change using discovery,

analysis, and dialogue of an organization's positive core, toward knowledge to agendas of

change.[65] Gathering data for change in AI employs the appreciative interview as one-to-

one dialogue among persons in the organization or community.[66]

In the book "Conversations Worth Having" written by Jackie Stavros and

Cheri Torres, the Appreciative Inquiry 5-D cycle[67] is explained. Professor Jackie Stavros

and Dr. Cheri Torres are authors and teachers in the use of this method. Appreciative

Inquiry (AI) is an established approach in "discovering the best in people, organizations,

and the communities through conversations and meaning-making."[68] Professors David

Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastava were pioneers of appreciative inquiry. There are two

appreciative practices and five AI principles.[69] Two appreciative practices are Positive

Framing and asking Generative questions. The two appreciative practices shared with the

stakeholders is to first, have "positive framing" with focus on a direction or outcome

desired. Second, by asking generative questions adopt an attitude of curiosity and an open

mind. The first practice is to name the opposite of what is not needed, flip it around and

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[63] Cooperrider, and Whitney, Appreciative Inquiry,21.
[64] Cooperrider, and Whitney, Appreciative Inquiry,24.
[65] Cooperrider, and Whitney, Appreciative Inquiry,25.
[66] Cooperrider, and Whitney, Appreciative Inquiry,27.
[67] Stavros, and Torres, *Conversations Worth Having: Using Appreciative Inquiry to Fuel Productive and Meaningful Engagement* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc, 2018).
[68] Stavros, and Torres, *Conversations Worth Having,* Preface X.
[69] Stavros, and Torres, *Conversations Worth Having*, 64-65.

frame what outcome is desired. This second practice asks generative questions that focus on what has been best and what might be.

There are five powerful principles for driving constructive conversations. The first principle is the Constructionist Principle is that conversations shape what we believe and who we are. The Simultaneity Principle is that whenever a question is asked changes happen. The Poetic Principle is that there are several perspectives in seeing people, organization or circumstance. The Anticipatory Principle state that our conversations are influenced by our anticipation and expectations that inform what we look for and see. The last conversation driving factor is Positive Principle in that the questions we ask inspire images that in turn motivate activity. We can become authors and drivers of our conversations.

The five powerful organizing principles in the AI 5-D cycle are Define, Discover, Dream, Design, and Deploy. Define phrase is about framing the task and crafting generative questions.[70] Discover phrase is appreciating what gives life.[71] Dream phase seek to envision what is possible.[72] Design phrase work for the co-constructing of what should be.[73] Deploy phrase is living into empowering action.[74] These principles encourage activities where all stakeholders contribute their wellbeing. While this method of AI 5-D cycle has worked in the business world. Stavros and Torres believe these findings and practices can be applied in everyday situations at home and with other contacts outside of the workspace. For these authors, the key to this method of

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[70] Stavros, and Torres, *Conversations Worth Having*,91.
[71] Stavros, and Torres, *Conversations Worth Having*,98.
[72] Stavros, and Torres, Conversations Worth Having,100.
[73] Stavros, and Torres, *Conversations Worth Having*,101.
[74] Stavros, and Torres, Conversations Worth Having,102.

"conversations worth having" encourage four factors. First, actions, ideas, and words are impactful. Second, conversations present pictures and scenes which affect vision of the future. Third, there several postures in choosing a conversation; these include critical, destructive, affirmative, and great. Fourth, everything is in motion with flexibility. There is intersection of two conversations.[75] They assert that "every conversation is a series of defining moments that shape and change us."[76] While this process is business focused, the principles and process are useful in challenging institutional change among leaders and members in approach to having great conversations that can change situations toward welcoming and engaging young adults. This process has flexibility for application to conversations generated within a majority black diasporan church among Caribbean immigrants and their descendants, while holding in tandem making home in the United States within the influence of the Caribbean experiences of home. Conversations within Caribbean diasporan church can renew shared vision, impact change, by being definitive. Conversations for mission with leaders of MUMC must allow for dissonance and reassurance in learning to unlearn, and then to relearn innovative ways of doing missions along with young adults in community.

Summary

This project explores a process for change in Christian ministry practices. I will encourage church leaders to learn to engage in vital and life-giving conversations with young adults. Young adults in community are in need of spiritual care. The church in moving toward young adults to offer spiritual care is exercising Christian mission. As

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[75] Stavros, and Torres, *Conversations Worth Having*,128.
[76] Stavros, and Torres, Conversations Worth Having,129.

MUMC engages its mission, learning that is contextual will inform the congregation and community members. The church will then develop resources using themes discussed in an organized space for dialogue between young adults and older adults. I will emphasize the importance of listening to the young adults, seeking to understand their values with regard to community in relation to the church. My vision is one in which hospitality and welcome offered will encourage older adults to engage young adults. Young adults within the hospitality offered can begin see that they are valued as we listen to their experiences. Older adults in particular, and the entire congregation need to be in close proximity to facilitate conversation. Conversation with young adults within open spaces is indeed possible.

In asserting that conversations within open spaces with young adults is possible, the above theological and sociological frame can provide an evangelical and practical education for church members in how to connect with young adults. By developing process through AI the conversational goals within open spaces can be accomplished with MUMC leaders and young adults. This focus on caring for young adults as integral to our community invites conversation for change. Conversations will challenge MUMC mission identity, moving from one of safety of "belonging" to a habitual new practice which can transform our understanding of faith. I also have suggested that young adults begin to understand that they have their own religious and theological frame from which can gain knowledge. The intersections of culture, food, language and other patterns can help to negotiate a process for dialogical engagement. It is within this dialogical engagement, one with interpretations of faith past and present that will create something new for church in mission. If the church is to learn, unlearn

and relearn to do missions among young adults, then meaningful connection and conversation must occur in open spaces. Open spaces for conversations that are appreciative of young adults' value in Christian mission, with older adults will guide the quality and expectations of our discoveries. The next chapter will examine interviews and implications of conversations with some young adults.

Chapter 3 - Methodology and Project Design

The research is focused on how Merrell United Methodist Church creates a welcoming community by offering spiritual care to/with young adults of Caribbean Diaspora. The particular population consist of those young adults who are unaffiliated or loosely connected through family and proximity to the church. My question is: What would it mean theologically and practically to initiate a strategy for the Community and Spiritual Care of Young Adults of Caribbean Diaspora that are unaffiliated, or loosely connected to the MUMC? The older adult congregants of MUMC are being asked to converse with young adults, while acknowledging generational challenges and opportunities. I earlier stated that young adults of the Caribbean diaspora occasionally request help, or services from the church, but will not become regular participants or "join" church. I believe these young adults of Caribbean diaspora can receive community and spiritual care, and this project will ascertain how this can be accomplished.

To assess why young adults do not participant at MUMC, I spoke with 6 young adults, who were 18 years of age and older. I identified themes and constructed typologies from the interviews. The main points were then used to initiate learning with some stakeholders of the MUMC. I now turn to the first section of the project, the interviews with six persons.

<u>Demographic and Context of Interviews</u>

The six persons interviewed are young adults who either have a near or distant connection to members of the church. The interviews involved three females and three males. These young adults were designated letter codes of A, B, C, D, F, and G. There is

no person coded E because that interview did not occur due to logistical and other issues. The interviewees though of Caribbean heritage were predominantly descendants of Jamaicans. The interviewees ranged from age 26 to 39. All were either self-employed or working within a city, or corporate entity. The places of birth were equally divided between the Caribbean and Fort Lauderdale. Each person agreed to be interviewed when introduced to the topic, and purpose of the project. On agreed meeting dates, we had conversations at the MUMC and at a family home. Each conversation varied in time, but was typically completed in about 50 minutes. The original planned time was for maximum of 60 minutes. A typical meeting began with welcoming and greeting time, reviewed the purpose and their role of being interviewed, signing of the consent form, and acquiring permission to audio record the session. After the interview, we reviewed what was done, shared the next steps of the project, offered my personal, as well as the project supervisor's contact information, and reference material to further their inquiry. All interviews were done without coercion. I made transcripts of all interviews. Content analysis was applied to the transcriptions to observe the patterns, trends, and themes present.

Demographic and Cultural Identifying Inquiry

There are two interview questions that established the person's Caribbean heritage and place of birth. The first question is "Where were you born?" The second question is "What were your parents and grandparents place of birth?" The answers indicated that all young adults were born of Caribbean parentage and claim Caribbean ethnicity. The next question is "What do you appreciate or not appreciate about your parents and

grandparents' culture?   This question inquired about their construction of cultural understanding, and appreciation or non-appreciation of different aspects of the culture. Family connections and cultural values and expressions, particularly food and music, were positive indicators for these young adults. Person A stated that, "What I appreciate is the fact that its family centric, in dealing with anything is always dealing with the family. And whether that be good, bad, or ugly, as far as family is concerned that's the unit you protect. That's the unit that no matter (how) bad things may seem, everybody is there for everybody else. It's a very valuable thing (but) also on the same point of time there are no secrets from anybody."

Person F stated, "I appreciate the familial connections with the strict approach to discipline of children, and the food that can be related to." Person G reflected, "What I appreciate is the food, (also) my father and my mother. I grew up with my grandmother, lived with my uncle and my brothers, five of us, but the food was good. While she was alive, whenever I came from school that was nice." Person B summed up the personal and communal nature of the Caribbean diaspora experience in America. He stated that, "I appreciate the food and the close family connections. I also love the music from that culture….(In) Florida where the Jamaican and America culture are so near and present, where you can get the food you want…it's usually good. Food makes you feel at home. Food and a sense of community." Community and food hold value for young adults in Caribbean diaspora presence in South Florida.

There were other aspects of the Caribbean/Jamaican culture that were not liked and were being reinterpreted regarding its usefulness. Music, for example, is a positive aspect that encourages a sense of belonging in the Jamaican diasporan community. There

are sometimes negative connotations in the music which promotes negative conversations in the culture. Person F suggested that the newer kind of Jamaican music negate healthy relationships between males and females. Person F said, "I mean the newer generation music. I think that some music by the nature of its subject areas do not promote healthy relationships. This (music influences) …how the younger (male) generation deals with the opposite sex." This concern may be a critique of how the use of a particular Jamaican genre of music disseminates stereotypical messages about a particularly patriarchal understanding of gender roles within this culture. I heard in this generalization, the potential negative role of music not as cultural subversion, or offering social resistance, but rather as way of discerning that among young adults there are other levels of conversations taking place. These conversations address liberation, gender roles and familial ethical concerns toward valuing persons in relationships. In a newer Jamaican music derivative from reggae, called "Dancehall", the struggle between male and female gender roles and value was expressed in a song published as "Round Table Talk."[77] The singers/DJs, Lady G (Janice Fyffe) and Papa San (Tyrone Thompson) discussed gender roles reversal where a female is employed while the male is required as stay home partner to care for household concerns. The tensions in this life arrangement and life choice issues for independent living threaten to "destroy the relationship." This cultural challenge is an important factor that warrants consideration for spiritual and community care of young adults.

Along with the concern about gender roles is the unease of a "narrow vision of life among some within the Caribbean church culture." Person D critiqued the

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[77] https://youtu.be/bFhxnJ8-7-E?t=6

narrowness of a particular conservative church culture that she experienced during

childhood and into adult years. When asked about what she did not like about Caribbean

culture, she responded after a little thought.

> (Laugh) Church! I grew up Apostolic Pentecostal and just remembering the
> strictness of it. So just even when we move to the states, when my sister and I
> move to the states, my mother had been here for a while and she had married
> another Jamaican they had been here for a while, and I had stayed with my older
> sister in Jamaica. Just the strictness of it, you really did not have a choice. Church
> was forced on you. It wasn't explained. It was more that this was what you had to
> do, and you had no opinion about it. So even when we came to the (United) States
> it was the same concept. We immediately went to church everyday all-day
> concept. There were a lot of rules around and here are a lot of things you could
> not do, but they never explained why you couldn't. You can't wear pants. You
> can't wear jewelry. You can't wear makeup. It was all of these. They, while
> growing up, never gave you things to do but church and everything else was no.
> That is what I did not appreciate about it.

The nature of coerced or practiced religion as opposed to explained faith

highlights the importance in having conversation that value the whole person's

ontological reality. This valuing of personhood can be marred with reluctance of some

older adults disconnect from young adult realities. Person C shared frustration that too

many older adults refuse to adopt to the new realities and continue lifelong learning.

"What I don't like is that they don't feel the need to like advance. Whatever they are used

to they will stick to it and they don't like to listen, (to) any opinions that you may have."

Some interviews suggested that there was smooth integration within the

American, South Florida experiences as young adults are able to live with the twin

American and Caribbean realities. Person A, for example, enjoyed,

> Everything from food, that was the biggest thing with moving away from the
> culture the biggest thing getting used to. Nobody knows what ackee and saltfish
> is. Nobody understands, they think Thanksgiving is like you know, American
> Turkey and Ham, there is no Jerk Chicken type of thing, and then the music is
> kind of…the musical culture of the Caribbean has kind of infiltrated the American
> culture of music for younger people. But other than that, that's pretty much it.

Future Aspirations of Young Adults

The goals and challenges varied among the group. In answering interview question about "what is important for your future in the USA as a black Caribbean descendant," they wanted to make the best of their opportunity as young adults. Person B for example shared, "It is something you make the best of. Everyone has to see the future like that. But as a black Caribbean man I don't think it is being threatened being a black American in that context...."

Person D addresses the matter of living for the future as a black person in another way.

> I see my future as a positive one, putting politics aside. But I do believe I have been equipped with tools, (and) things as a black (person) and even if I don't have, I can achieve them in the U.S... But as a black woman I am not sure you are leaning toward racism or sexism but being a woman who owns my own business in the field that I am in, I don't really experience that a lot versus rather in the corporate setting I would probably see it more, where I did work in corporate before but mine (working experience) was a little more in real estate corporate where as a self-employed person I am my only limit.

It is interesting that even in the polarized settings of the United States, young adults are confident in being themselves as Americans with Caribbean lineage. The sense of grasping and making the most of opportunities for their wellbeing can be limited only by self-drive. Education that is coupled with self-drive, encourage young adults' quest for future independence. For example, Person G has vision of "Opening up an (auto repair) business later on down the road and I am working towards it." Person C envision improvement for self and family, "By getting a good education, at least have a degree in something, at least to feel somewhat accomplished."

Young adults understanding of their faith values contribute to their being holistic people. It was the opinion of Person A, that community and faith values are needed to be successful today.

"(That is) continuing to be with the family and eventually when I have my own family to continually grow that context and to make them know that the family unit is of all importance. As well for me personally, how that relates to Christianity and church in that (my) growing up, church was the epicenter of everything."

Further, Person A contends that, "…growing up with some young people who are currently in the church that is what I definitely realize is a key to their success. Especially nowadays." The keys to a successful future have multiple connections that may include, marriage, partnerships with people and in keeping cultural family relationships alive. In keeping these relationships alive have the implication of educating and modeling the good for the next generation. As Person F state for a hopeful future, "Ah…you know I still will be working, I still will be living here, you know. If you are talking fifteen years (from today) I would hope that my child will be a big soccer star and I am moving into ahh…Europe or Canada or someplace…for right now my goal is to raise my children for the next ten years, (for) they still be quite young."

Here is an indication that the cultural connection with family help focus on the wellbeing of the next generation via learning and their making contribution to community.

There are challenges in holding family and community together within the Caribbean diaspora according to the interviews. First, negative images and music threatens good relations with females and males. This observation was previously

discussed. Person A made the point of generational shifts and present-day challenges. As

a person having twin lens of diasporan culture and livelihood in South Florida,

> …comes with its own unique set of challenges…the people who came before us
> has definitely made it easier and now my only biggest concern is as a young
> person, … especially since I left the Army last year, in having to deal with 18 year
> old every single day, the rap music. Even though I appreciate rap music, it is
> definitely a cultural detriment. Compared with some of the troupes and some of
> the things that they want to accentuate and make seem like it is cool. And the
> value of hard work is being lost on America's youth. That's one of the biggest
> things that scares me. Ok, everybody thinks that the phones and the internet are
> the end all and be, and that is not the case.

The observation that the power of words via music, rap music for example, is

challenging the value setting and formation of youth in America positively and

negatively. The pressure of images from music has power to sway both behavior and the

quality of relationships. The sense of having convenience of relations via technology is

suggested as a mechanism for youth coping with reality. There is social pressure in

community about expectations of young adults. Person A opined that due to judgment

accompanied with social pressure, conscious or unconscious, young adults need "…a

space to escape daily judgment in society that is accepting of you." From interviews the

issue of pressure of social judgment and fear of future are mentioned. Young adults need

assistance in facing the unknown. According to Person B, "I have come to find out is that

a lot of people in that demography are scared." Scared young people looking at their

future have needs that can be met. Again, according to Person B, "And the needs I would

say is to be more open and honest without being judged because everyone wants to feel

like they got because everyone seem like they have it. I might not have and act like I have

and then having been judged…. I would say that needs are to be more open and honest."

The emphasis here suggests having conversations allowing for creative and honest engagements for achieving life goals.

Spiritual Development and Church

The next area of concern attempted to capture the importance and connection of church to Caribbean immigrant community in relation to their expectation and experience of Church. When asked, "What importance does church existence have for Caribbean immigrant's community and spiritual development?", the answer had a three-tiered connection. First, the church connection to Caribbean Immigrant community in South Florida facilitates faith development for daily logic of living. The church is symbolic of helping faith development and as a reminder of the value of faith development for the community. The importance of this role is not often recognized by my local church community at Merrell UMC even in the absence of regular church connection of the young adults. Any conversation with young adult who struggle with what it means to live with faith in God within the economic and social realities of their lives and aspirations allows for self-reflection. Person C for example, struggle in understanding with her faith. "I am in a struggle with my faith. With me, I know as a fact that there is a God. I have trouble in putting two and two together, if that makes sense. A lot of times I do not feel healthy. In order to get things done, you have to have mental stability and probably the church does offer like things (or resources) that you can come and speak to someone and what not."

I believe conversation with young adults like Person C can help Caribbean diasporan church to recognize, and walk with persons who struggle in understanding and

owning their faith. This struggle in faith understanding, and practice among some young adults, can be addressed when the church facilitates conferencing or meeting together for mutual learning. This mutual learning of young adults along with older adults can contribute to their decision making and holistic living. All interviewees valued life "lessons" from the church. MUMC as a local church community has an unspoken demand to locate and engage young adults in their faith development.

While there is an unspoken demand to connect with young adults in conversation about their faith development, there was another view that the church has lost its influence for faith development with young adults. Young adults are not interested in church, citing its practicality and important to the trajectory of their lives. Person G does not share this view, however. He is of the opinion that the role of a benevolent deity as the Holy One is available for holistic development of young adults. Young adults should exercise thanksgiving as an act of faith, because all things are not in their control. Church community offers space to exercise learned thankfulness. In the interviews, I noted that there were different views and experiences of how the church operate or should operate. Yet for Person G "Church is important, and some people have a different view of how church operates. There is value in the church. The young people (can get) closer with the church (allow them) giving thanks to see another day. They don't come to church or give thanks for that."

Giving thanks for another day in the understanding of Person G, gives a high valuation of church from an insider point of view. Important to this view is being grateful for daily living and sharing meaning of that experience with other persons within community. Giving thanks as a common relatable activity is a conversation starter with

young adults. In this conversation starter the church's connection with wider community

with young adults, acting as symbol or real influence on faith development is

acknowledged.

The second connection expectation and experience of church is the Caribbean

church's potential as an environment of acceptance. This environment of acceptance is

space where young adults can find solace or escape from pressures of being in diverse

society in south Florida. It is a space for relating to young adults where they are at the

moment. Person A said that church can act, "as a space to escape daily judgment in

society that is not accepting of you." According to Person A, this acceptance was not

about discrimination and ethnicity,

> But how it relates to young people now is (pause) I mean there is something about
> going to church and something about being in an environment where especially
> nowadays with social media and everything like that, the feeling of being judged
> 24/7, being in a place that is accepting of you do, who you are, I mean everyone is
> there to praise the Lord and give back to something more than just about
> themselves and doing something that is not self-centered. That I think holds a
> really big value, I wish more young people would come to understand that.

This sense of being other centered than predominantly self-centered values living

within community with core concerns that build or develop young people. People that

live in the United States and Florida particularly need a space, like the church, for

meaning making, or making sense of what is the bigger picture for living within the

pressures that narrows focus on self. The MUMC must evaluate how to be an

environment of acceptance for meaning making, and a safe space for some young adults.

A third connection about the expectation and experience of church needing to be that

environment of acceptance is allowing persons room to embrace life in all dimensions.

Person D reflects on church as a cultural closed system that has difficulty in embracing

anything that does not fit within established parameters. She said, "We joined a church

that was one hundred percent Caribbean, Jamaican specifically, and that was my identity

in that, that is what I was exposed to. You had a birthday party, wedding anniversary,

Mother's Day, everything was done at the church. We never ventured out."

Further, this closed church experience within the United States, while offering

protection and safety was not willing to offer space for anyone who was not cloned to

that church cultural ethos. The church in that sense was counter cultural by not

assimilating dominant culture and protecting immigrants to cope in wider community.

The importance of church for development of young people has narrowed in scope of

relating faith to real life experiences beyond local church. The acceptance of varied life

dimensions is not considered irrelevant to what the church as a community is capable of

offering outside of spiritual practices that sometimes inadvertently close opportunities to

connect with young adults.

Again, Person D says it in this way, "… you did not accept people or give the

information, you just want everyone to convert into what they (that church culture) want.

I would hope now you see, as time goes on, more of an acceptance of the whole person is

explored versus the spirituality of that person." Also, "If you just want to come to church

for spiritual (living) that is fine. But you cannot just tunnel vision me just to see this. If I

want to go explore other parts of my life emotionally, physically – like working out,

dieting, my health aspect. I believe a community offers all than just more than one thing."

This focus of the church being a community for holistic development of persons

from another interview further suggest its importance for children moral or ethical

formation and for future development. Phrases such as "guide them," "right direction,"

and "stay in that path" are generational aspirations of Caribbean people in diaspora, and

perhaps all other persons irrespective of national belongings. Church can be an agent of

this formation of spiritual ethical formation that can lead to a hopeful future when openly

connecting with people in context.

Young adults need space to facilitate learning and respect for their choices. The

interviews suggested that this diasporan church should be relating to young adults by

offering community space for safe and holistic development. While this may be a way of

church mission engagement, the young adults lived interpretation of their life experiences

asks for an environment of acceptance. This environment of acceptance will not demand

blind conformity to church spiritual practices and traditions, but rather require

conversations that result in understanding and learning. This understanding and learning

will result in young adults making meaning of varied experiences. This meaning making

challenges some of the traditional and other ways of being church beyond gathering in

particular location. The young adults have a general understanding of the operation of the

church associated with spiritual care, formation of ethical practices that focus on giving

to others, guidance for responsible decision making, facilitating safe space to escape the

daily judgement at work or beyond, and relate to young adults who prefer conversation

over coercion. Young adults have expectations of church as they see potential there.

There seem to be an underlying tension that the church offers service to the community,

but it is more than a service center that offers a product. The Caribbean diasporan church

is being reinterpreted as a potential open space for connecting with the real issues of

young adults, their belief systems, life choices, emotional and social pressures that impact

their interpretation of the community, and the church within it. Merrell UMC challenge is

to be that open space where transparency of practice and freedom of movement shows an empowering of the Holy Spirit for transformed lives all around.

Connection with Church

The issue of connection and involvement in church was direct. The question was asked, "Why do you or don't you attend Church?" There are multiple responses. Person A response is associated with near tragedies, and a renewed interest in the Bible. "On top of that, church also brought back the importance of reading the bible. And my parents, like understanding (explaining) things like bible stories will never leave (me) but until you actually dive into it for yourself, you don't really grasp certain concepts or certain lessons they are trying to teach."

Person D has not lost faith in the church but is seeking a certain fellowship that identifies with her present interests. Further, Person D spoke about church fatigue, church hurt, and locating a right church home. Church hurt is associated with disappointments and unresolved issues resulting disconnection with fellowship with associated pain and loss. Church fatigue is associated with the being burnt out when overextension of time and energy result in emotional, physical and spiritual exhaustion because of performing church duties. "I would be in church and tapped on my shoulder to come out to be in a meeting. There is always a meeting about something, there is always an issue.…I no longer felt I was growing spiritually in church which is the main thing in going to church. And then so other church issues they call it church hurt. I don't think I am church hurt. I just think that I have not found the right church at this time." I was not able to ascertain

the criteria for right church home except that it is in relation to perceived needs of the person.

Person B suggested that his current employment obligation on Sunday is a factor in not attending church. Further, it was opined that the lessons learned at church were standard, already known and sufficient for his own sense of being a person. He shared, "Getting full time work and asking for Sunday's off maybe a little difficult and after a while you know, you don't feel the need to go. It is like I got the lessons you are going to get. I am more of a self-soother, anyway, now is like I don't like look to certain answers I just deal with things accordingly." Person F spoke about the "redundancy" in the traditional church service of Merrell UMC that discouraged engagement. "Merrell is your traditional church. Church begins at 10 AM and you are out by 11:45 AM. You know the program. This is what's going to happen. So, the thing is it is the same, this redundancy. It doesn't excite me as say church hopping."

In general, for some young adults, there is little or no motivation in connecting with or joining church for regular worship services. Contributing to the lack of motivation for connecting to church include understanding of the construct of worship, near accessibility to a church nursery for adult and children attentiveness, time of worship, the lack of understanding of traditions, printed or visual message/sermon for reflection, and good audio/visual systems. According to Person C, "Most of the time I don't hear what is being said and I come late most of the time, so, I miss what the lesson is all about or something like that. But a lot of time I don't necessarily understand at the end of the service what happens. And the second reason is my son. He frustrates me sometimes I cannot deal with him all over the place."

The issues that challenge connecting with church are not unique to persons familiar or unfamiliar with church practices and facilities. While Merrell UMC have a care facility for young children, there is no summary of the day's lesson that is available to the public as noted before. Church services need to be interpreted to persons, or designed to be more accessible and understood by persons. Person G introduced another factor to not attending church. Living with persons who are not interested in attending church may limit ability to be at a church service. He said, "Ever since I came here it has fallen off (because the) people that I was around didn't have any interest in the church or talk about church."

The discussion from interviews suggest that there are several factors associated with attending church. There are factors of motivation or non-motivation that are associated with attendance of or participation with church. A motivation factor includes the connecting of Bible with valuation of life. Non-motivation factors include church fatigue and hurt, redundancy in faith practices, living with people not interested in Church, or don't know why there is no motivation. There is more non-motivating than motivating factors according to the above explanation. This way of assessing the absence of young adults at church is listening to the interpretation of their experiences, and expectation of what the Caribbean diasporan church need to be for them. These experiences and expectations can be understood as, (1) spiritual care and ethical formation, (2) offering safe space for acceptance and faith development, (3) recognize and reduce church fatigue and hurt, (4) make church practices and traditions relatable to context, and (5) engage with young adults within their experiences.

Role of Merrell UMC for Young Adults

The question of "What role of a church like Merrell UMC should be for Caribbean people and their descendants," probed about the benefits that can be derived with an active church in community. This question received multiple responses. On top of the responses is that the church uses modern communication platforms such as emails, website, text and other electronic based communication tools to connect with young adults. Person C said, "I wish, you know, how you get email blast or text blast reminders or something like that. If you had something set that was happening every week or once every month, (with) people of the same age group."

Some young adults' connection with church is not restricted to times of worship. Person C suggested that the church should be offering training in developing life skills. These are "sessions that you would be having, always…free to come and you could have people coming in who are successful who could probably talk to you about certain things, or people who have or what not who could come in. Even you as a pastor you cover a lot of stuff, so you know you could extend yourself." Referring to the pastor was as reminder that the church in community is the servant of all people. There expectation of the church for this young adult necessitated relating to young people out of Sunday preaching engagement by sharing relevant experiences.

 Person G suggested an additional way of connecting that is more labor intensive and personal. He said, "It would be good if a few members of the church could go out and like to share more…" Person A is concerned for children's future and the importance of church in their development. In his view, "I know for the younger kids, growing up in the church this time now is going to play a role as to how they develop and act as adults."

Person D insist that young adults must be met at their point of need or concern. Church need to connect, relate and, or focus on transitory stages. Church should not attempt to meet all needs or concerns. To assess what the need of persons are was not discussed during interviews. However, the meeting of needs suggests having constructive conversations. I believe having a conversation is the beginning of meeting persons in their "transitionary stages." This is a demanding, but necessary exercise for the local church to be an available church in community. Person F understands the major role of church as teaching how to live a "God fearing life."

Person B coined a term to describe what a church like Merrell UMC should be. He said of the church that it should be, "A warm environment. I use the word safe. A safe place is broad for it can be physically safe, emotionally safe, being able to express yourself without feeling judged... The role of the church should be like a role of, this is going to sound really silly, like the role of a really cool uncle like someone who, you know what I mean, (you) can talk to and who you can really get the best (advice)." This is a poignant and radical description of what the diasporan church should be. The church needs to be welcoming by offering a warm environment for safety and developing of young adults. Church as "warm environment" embodies being a space that is emotional, intellectual, and physical place for young adults. This space is not simply a building, but a body of people who will be available to offer a non-judgmental zone. This zone can welcome renewal when mistakes are made, and reconstruction for self-development.

The imagery of the church being a Cool Uncle, (later to be more inclusive in terminology) further suggest the extended nature of being family and friends in community. The church must be an available space where physical (and virtual) contact

in communication is mutually beneficial. It is space for conversation that is welcoming, safe place, for honest and open conversation with opportunity to correct, lead, encourage, essentially learning to listen and to respond truthfully. This welcoming response of the church community that young adults expect is challenging church to some older adults of MUMC context. The cool uncle imagery suggests church availability, openness of care, and learning with young adults. I believe that if this is the case, a pedagogy geared at listening and learning with young adults will be required. The church may need to learn new practices that is inter and cross generational. This positive view of the potential of church also suggests giving the support needed by young adults unfamiliar with the role of church.

Church Responding to Young Adult Needs

Responding to the question, "What needs among young adults of Caribbean diaspora should the Merrell UMC be responding to at this time to" was varied. Person A thought that bible study made available to young adults can be life changing. "I would think getting more young people into bible study maybe." Person D believed that church should focus on particular areas. She thought that church should "…brand …to the different phases of people's lives." The concept of the church connecting and meeting people where they are situated in life journey is not a new idea, but require Merrell UMC to discover ways for meaningful connection with young adults.

Some of the persons interviewed believed that the physical church space can be used to facilitate seminars and conferences in teaching life issues. This idea was mentioned earlier in this study. Several topic areas may include workshops about money

management education, planning for life transitions, and communication skills in relationships. Making crucial life decisions is challenging some young adults. According to Person B, "I have come to find out is that a lot of people in that demography are scared." Some young adults need help in facing the unknown future, and older adults should be able to help by trying to engage them in patient, and honest conversation. The local church in relationship with young adult can be organized to facilitate the concerns of young adults.

The three immediate needs shared by young adults are seeking are spiritual, economic, and aspirational. There is spiritual care via learning for the bible. The available space of church facilities can be made available for hosting organized forums and seminars that will teach or encourage practical life skills. Another stated need is associated with helping young adults with anxieties about challenges and possibilities of failures in future endeavors. When MUMC and church in general build relationships with young adults beginning with unconditional invitation to consistently share space and voice, trust will develop over time.

Opportunities and Tools for Spiritual Care

The last interview question asks, "What tools and opportunities to encourage conversation should be made available to non-church, or occasional participants to churches like Merrell UMC to assist in spiritual care?" Two interviewees suggest Young Adults be asked about their interests and ways they want church to relate with them. Person D simply suggested, "Ask!" Person C thought that accessing information sources

with demographic contacts is a starting place. This information should be used by the church to ask them about interests and invite them to church and non-church resources.

Interestingly, spiritual conversations are expected as an essential church support for some young adults. Spiritual guidance in a safe open space from experienced persons that offer Scripture instructions along with fellowship among peers was desired during and after structured interviews. Person F went further suggesting that the church develop an app that can communicate daily reflection and information with young adults. I believe this idea is relevant to all generations as modern phones with internet are extensions of daily living. Person F noted that, "The 40 and younger are tech based. If a church has the capacity of email resource, text messaging, that people can say, "I want to download this app" and you give me a daily scripture to read. Or send out text messages as a daily, you know…see…the responses." Person G also suggests connecting with young adults through live broadcasting for example Sunday worship.

Caribbean diasporan church will have to embrace the implementation and usage of technology as tool in communicating with young adults. This virtual connection is ubiquitous, yet my local church is slow in formally engaging with online facilities for communication. One of the interviewees was frustrated with a parent unwillingness to be proficient in the usage of computers and modern phones. Recognizing that need, one of the interviewees is willing to teach the use of their phones in classroom setting. Some young adults also express that churches must market better of its activities. This is an appeal for church to engage young adults and many others by extension. Person A made this an imperative. "Marketing is definitely key to that…having an event so that you could market it toward young people."

Finally, teaching the church community to be a patient and understanding ear to young adults feeling is essential. This tool in teaching church how to be a friend in Christ is a gift of the whole church beyond counseling by clergy or by a professional counsellor. Person B believes that young adult feelings are important that they need to be shown empathy. Young adults when struggling with concerns will require an approach that is non-threatening while trying to discover the way they feel.

Learning About Connecting to Young Adults

From the interviews, I observed that some young adults have interest in the church functioning even when they are not willing, or interested to participate in regular worship. The church is encouraged to respectfully converse with young adults for meaningful connections. The church can connect with persons at church's regular events and via regular surveys. These surveys and conversations can deepen relationships by connecting with their concerns and interests. Also, local church is encouraged to be proficient in the use of technology platforms to connect with young adults. The organizing of young adult groups for bible/spiritual discussion, and the usage of internet web-based tools to communicate bible teaching material is possible with young adults. The church will have to be willing to be involved in conversation with young adults as partners in Christian ministry or development in community. A way to conduct conversation and connect with young adults considers interpretation of data that led to a development of an action plan.

Four Thematic Considerations

Using content analysis of the interviews, I noted four thematic areas that are compelling in this study. These are cultural influences, goals and challenges, expectation and experience of church, and elements contributing to a meaningful community and spiritual care.

(i) Cultural Influences

The first theme of Cultural Influences has four modalities. These are (1) Familial connections, (2) Influence cultural identifiers, (3) Tension of Generational differences, and (4) Balancing Caribbean heritage while being an American. Coming together with a common story is celebrated in family and with friends in gatherings. These gatherings pass on experiences and use resources of common story to navigate daily living. Family ties in interviews indicated strong parenting presence and influences. For example, the parenting style of robust discipline was reference consistently throughout the interviews. This pattern of strict discipline of children is a pattern used by at least one young adult in the care of her children.

Second, the influence of cultural identifiers in the Caribbean experiences. There is the passing on of language, stories, food and music seem to shape diasporan identity. The unique Caribbean cuisine, and cultural artistry particularly in the music is celebrated. Music as a source of influence was constantly referred to. Music's power and potential surfaced in significant ways during this interview.

Third, the tension of generational differences was noted. While connecting with older adults of the Caribbean diaspora is life giving, there is some reluctance to accept

choices of young adults in context. Young adults tend to respond immediately to several tasks via technological tools particularly cell phones. Older adults tend to value time tested experiences and norms. Generally, young adults while holding value to past experiences, would like the older adults to connect to some of their life realities in this technological age. During the interview usage of technology for communication and other purposes was seamlessly integrated with everyday decisions. Consternation that older adults are reluctant to learn how to use technology competently was expressed. It is important to say, that older adults are using communication media. Another area of generational difference is more in terms of preference, in that young adults find it difficult to share in older adults' social space. As one person indicate that older adult's social fun activities was not his own. The generational difference is visible in choice of lifestyle, ease of communication, and respecting differences in life experiences.

Fourth, young adults balance Caribbean heritage as contributing to their wellbeing. The experiences were mostly positive while not trying to impose their uniqueness on others. Their cultural identifiers did not affect their adopting and thriving within their environment. This fact suggests willingness to learn and live well in the context of their space. Consistent in the discussions is that they did not feel helpless in facing the future. In the balancing of young adult experience in the South Florida, they were not hindered by cultural or racial barriers to their own wellbeing. They were benefitting perhaps from the resilience of the struggles of Caribbean immigrants along with the continuing struggles for economic equity in the United States.

(ii) Goals and Challenges

A second theme from interviews pertain to young adult's goals and challenges. I noted two goals of importance. One is for academic training geared toward self-accomplishment. I learned in the interviews that some persons who did not have a college degree desired to boast their own achievement and satisfaction while having family. Self-employment seem to be a marker for the future with aim of offering service particularly in the Caribbean. One person, a mother is mixing educational choices that form academic and ethical values of children for them to strive for the future. That projection toward the future is within the scope of the second thread of their goals. Young adults interviewed were living not for themselves, but for the next generation. They are patterning ways to assist next generations to develop skills for success in the global marketplace and consistently changing world.

There are several challenges that face young adults, but only two were repetitive in the interviews. First, it was believed that negative images, and music threatened positive community and family relationships. For example, negative images in social media and media, influence the behavior and values of young adults. Some of these negative images and messages located within some rap and Caribbean music in particular Jamaica, reggae music. Those negative images, and messages allow for free expression of self without preparing young people for full responsibility in building community. Some young adults will believe more the message in music and other artistic forms that mirror more of their lived experiences. While music is commentary of life or offer entertainment, one interview pointed to the negative impact for maintaining healthy relationships among males and females, or other relationships. It was her experience that

some aspects of Reggae music forms may negate living with integrity within relationships. In general reggae musical genre often promote messages of emancipation from oppression and underdevelopment while calling for unity; some of the newer derivatives of the music form seem to negate the females and males inhabiting healthy relationships. Another interviewee thought rap music among some young adults did not encourage doing hard work. Some of the tropes in rap accentuates negative life values as being cool. He observed as a result that some young adult males in general were losing the value of hard work. Losing value of hard work may also be associated with being "hooked to alternative realities in phones or on the internet."   These realities are within the experiences of Caribbean young adults.

The second general challenge to young adults is the pressure of social judgment and fear of the future. All of the young adults interviewed had positive outlook for their future. They were positive because they were either young or already reaping some benefits of economic success. However, the sense of caring for themselves and family cause them to make choices geared for economic survival. Young adults struggle with mental pressures associated in making choices for the future for themselves. In the interviews mentioned was made of the mental struggle in making sense of life circumstances, struggling with fear or being scared in not doing the right things that may affect life goals. There is the pressure of failing and how one is viewed by people seem an important implied marker.

(iii) Expectation and Experience of Church

Expectation and Experience of church is a third thematic area from the interviews. The church community as fabric of the wider community is expected to offer spiritual care and the development of persons in their daily living. The spiritual care of the church by implication is not subject to the four walls of the church. Young adults too expect church to be available to them beyond Sunday engagement. That as community members the church is to care for the whole person around them. The care of the inner person associated with spiritual care resonated in all the interviews. I understand that spiritual development may or may not be sought after by some young adults, yet the value of it in persons lives should not be discounted. Yet for some young adults, spiritual development offered by church is at times too regimented toward uniform conformity of practices. Church value for some young adults is for its lessons for moral/ethical choosing or engaging in the wider community by offering religious or social service in worship to the Holy One. With this understanding of community and spiritual care and the value of it, young adults from the interviews are not in agreement of what constitutes a holistic application of spiritual care and development.

A second expectation is that the church should be an accepting environment for young adults. An accepting environment of a Caribbean diasporan church should risk welcoming, and embracing people on their terms and not only on the terms of the church's mores and traditions only. Implied is the church's willingness to accommodate young adults in their interpretations of life while having a willingness to learn and grow with them for common good of community. The immigrant church has been an accepting environment for immigrants to the United States that offer support for integration into

society and finding stability while doing so. Yet in these days, young adults seem to be recasting an understanding of what an accepting environment will mean for next generation Caribbean Americans. I understand that the expectation of church as an accepting environment, and as space of engagement for conversation will lead to mutual understanding. Further, I understand that this expectation of church as an accepting environment is not only a perception, but also a preparation for renewing church in its conversation about Christian mission in community. I believe that MUMC community must have space to elevate consciousness toward creating conversations that inspires young adult's life goals.

Young adults have positive and negative experiences of church. The positive experience may include parental nurturing and being examples of Christian love, and the value of biblical teaching. While acknowledging those aspects of church there is experience of "church fatigue and church hurt." I understand church fatigue as being overutilized in a variety of church functions and coming to a point just being burnt out. In one interview it was shared whenever a particular task was needed within church settings, this person was routinely taken out of worship, and became tiring of this overdemanding service, for example. This picking on the same young person seemed to deter giving the best of self. Particularly being an imposition "in the name of the Lord," with overdemand may literally discourage young adults' participation in worship. There is also the possibility of church hurt (evangelical church's terminology) that I understand as circumstances and situations where the church or church member did or said something that hurt, or turned away someone from the safe and healing space of the church. Without better definitions of the experience of church fatigue and hurt, it is important to recognize

that some young adults while willing to fully participate in an area of interest, would like

to choose the scope of their involvement and service. Also, any aspect of hurting

associated with church for young adults has the real possibility of their disconnection

from community and spiritual care. The church that offers young adults' opportunity of

forgiveness, and openness for reconnection, after church hurt encourages a welcoming

space.

A second negative experience of church is the "redundancy" of church practice

and traditions. Worship times for the MUMC are known and the service is standardized

because it is a traditional and conservative church. There are occasional variations,

inclusions, and unplanned situations. The repetitive nature of worship and practices

associated with this church were challenged in a several of interviews. Additionally,

redundancy in church practice and tradition has the primary tendency to be surrounded by

church culture, rather than the church assisting in understanding life, in its fullness within

social settings.

The local church can either inhibit or allow exploration in relation to living within

contexts. Two interviews with female young adults rejected patterns that restrict or

inhibit self-expression and growth. In the case of person D, she insisted on exploring all

aspects of her life within the context of living in community outside of the narrow

conformity of her church childhood experiences. Person F who also grew up in church,

needed the choice to dress casually to church, and to explore different worship spaces

outside of the MUMC traditions. She desires worshiping with persons outside of MUMC

who are unfamiliar with her and will regard, respond, and respect her as an adult. While

there is value for the consistency in liturgy in Merrell UMC worship services, I believe a

greater point of connecting worship to life events and allowing space for young adults to

be involved in the creation of experience is important to consider.

(iv) Community and Spiritual Care

The fourth theme suggests some areas that are achievable, and relatable for

community and spiritual care of young adults. There were six threads that I noted within

the interviews. The first is to "meet young adults with relatable needs-based issues."

Another way of saying this could be, meet young adults at their points of need. This was

a consistent tread throughout the interviews. Young adults need, and should receive

assistance with life issues when they are receptive. Meeting someone require willingness

to have honest conversation while inquiring about one another. The church community

like MUMC that has majority older adults in need of spiritual care, will have to meet

young adults at their point of need in order to do Christian mission. The meeting of which

I speak will require being caring, humble, and welcoming even in the expectation

surprise responses. It is exploring new ways of belonging together and in essence sharing

good news rather than telling our version of the good news.

The second thread relating community and spiritual care is captured in phrase "Be

a cool uncle." This phrase would later be updated in discussion with stakeholders to read

"be an awesome aunt, and a cool uncle." The idea emanating from one of the interviews

define this action of the church as "a safe and non-judgmental space that allows for full

disclosure of self and helps to face future beyond fears." It is a space for young adults to

relate with members of the church in ways that will mentor, dialogue with, or assist in

listening, and leading young adults in the most helpful way. This engagement demands

trust and sensitivity with young adults in their life journey. This engagement encourages

congregation to listen in multiple ways. Further, it also requires that the older adults

relate to the young adults as adults.

The third thread for community and spiritual care for young adults is the usage of

non-worship times to facilitate free public forums, and/or seminars for training in life

skills. In two interviews interest brought to light the need for supplemental knowledge

and skills for everyday living. Some young adults are seeking transferal of everyday life

skills from church and community members to assist them in coping with family, and

other life challenges. The other three focus areas are organizational that the majority of

interviews referenced. These include:

- Usage of social of media to market church activities,

- Biblical teaching for developing spiritual coping skills.

- Care for children within the church during worship.

These six threads or focal areas have the potential to enable meaningful conversations for

young adults and Merrell UMC church community.

Conclusion: Stakeholders and Developing an Action Plan

These six general focal areas for community and spiritual care become the talking

points with members of church community. The church community was represented by a

four-member group who are referred to in this study as stakeholders. These stakeholders

are members in the church that hold varied responsibilities in the life of the church

community. They also represent a spread of older adults who are either employed or

retired. In the group there were three females and one male that is an approximate

representation female to male ratio in the congregation. The stakeholders all agreed to participate in this aspect of the project in framing an action plan.

The stakeholders agreed to two meetings to facilitate working on an action plan. The intention is to teach the stakeholders a conversational process that engages young adults. The approach during these meetings utilized insights from Christian education and evangelism to encourage conversations for mission among young adults. The two sessions lasted for 90 minutes each, on a Saturday and Sunday. The Local Advisory Committee (LAC) observed both sessions and were not allowed to participate in both sessions. In the first session, I distributed handouts, used power point presentation of the material, and record on charts the ideas and comments of the stakeholders. The session aimed at encouraging the stakeholders to know some of the needs of young adults that the church should embrace. I introduced an approach to having "meaningful conversation" with young adults using a method derived from Appreciative Inquiry theory. In the first session the four themes of cultural influences, goals and challenges, expectation and experience of church and implications for community and spiritual were shared with the stakeholders. These themes were earlier introduced as a discovery by the stakeholders putting together a giant 12-piece jigsaw puzzle. This process was to encourage stakeholders working together in solving a real-life puzzle. This generated curiosity and a little challenge in the limited time that was given to them to put puzzle together. With the themes discovered, I went on to propose conversation method with young adults via short talk and use of handouts, and via PowerPoint presentations. The LAC and the Stakeholder group had handouts given to them. For each focus or thematic area, the stakeholders were asked to think about the needs to address; how to address the need;

statement of what is needed; who is to be involved. This became the frame for all themes discussed later in this project.

The second session engaged the stakeholders in framing an action plan based on previous session's information and work. An action plan was outlined by the end of the second session. The stakeholders offered comments and made suggestion of changes for example, the aspect to community and spiritual care that used a phrase from interviews for the church to be like a cool uncle became by session two, the church to be like "an awesome aunt and a cool uncle." Recognition of the inclusive nature of relationships is reflected in the change. At the end of the session the stakeholders made a commitment to support teaching and modeling this conversational process within the congregation. The stakeholders also gave written evaluations of the two sessions. These comments contributed to the practical and theoretical considerations in an analysis of the project. The next chapter will describe the crafting the action plan and discuss the implications in conversations with unaffiliated and unconnected young adults with the MUMC.

Chapter 4 - Action Plan and Conclusion

<u>Making Conversation using Appreciative Inquiry and Open Space Technology</u>

I will discuss an understanding of the data from the interviews, and how the themes discovery contributed to the crafting of an action plan. The crafting of action plans use interpretation associated with themes arising from the interviews. The action plans suggest to the Merrell UMC, particularly older adults, practical applications from having conversations aimed at intentional welcoming and working with young adults. In the previous chapter, I indicated how important it is to establish communication that will facilitate engaging young adults who are on the fringes of the church and where some older adults congregate. I facilitated two sessions with four MUMC stakeholders by examining four general themes that contribute to community and spiritual care of young adults. These stakeholders are a mix of older adults with leadership and other responsibilities at Merrell UMC. The four general themes are cultural influences, goals and challenges, expectation and experience of church and what is community and spiritual care.

A giant jigsaw puzzle with those themes gave the stakeholders an activity in problem solving together. With the jigsaw pictured theme completed the stakeholders were able to identify the four themes associated with the study. I led the stakeholders in using aspects of Appreciative Inquiry 5-D cycle as a tool we would use in learning from the interviews for conversations with young adults. Using the book "Conversations Worth Having" written by Jackie Stavros and Cheri Torres, the Appreciative Inquiry 5-D

cycle[78] became our guide for discussion toward making an action plan relating to the study. As noted earlier, Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is an established approach in "…discovering the best in people, organizations, and the communities through conversations and meaning-making."[79] Appreciative inquiry premise is that there is a positive core in systems and connecting them produces positive movement toward desired change. I introduced how conversations can be generally driven according to five AI principles.[80] I explained each principle. The first principle, the Constructionist Principle, is that conversations shape what we believe and who we are. The Simultaneity Principle is that whenever a question is asked changes happens. The Poetic Principle holds to several perspectives in seeing people, organization or circumstance. The Anticipatory Principle state that our conversations are influenced by our anticipation and expectations that inform what we look for and see. The last conversation driving factor is Positive Principle in that the questions we ask inspire images that in turn motivate activity. We can become authors and drivers of our conversations.

I presented as I outlined earlier, the usage of two simple AI practices and five powerful principles for driving constructive conversations. The two appreciative practices shared with the stakeholders is to first, have "positive framing" with focus on a direction or outcome desired, and second, adopt an attitude of curiosity and an open mind. The first practice is to name the opposite of what is not needed, flip it around and frame what outcome is desired. This second practice asks generative questions that focus on what has

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[78] Stavros, and Torres, *Conversations Worth Having : Using Appreciative Inquiry to Fuel Productive and Meaningful Engagement.*
[79] Jacqueline M. Stavros and Cheri B. Torres, *Conversations Worth Having: Using Appreciative inquiry to Fuel Productive and Meaningful Engagement.,* First ed., Preface X.
[80] Jaqueline M. Stavros and Cheri Torres, *Conversations Worth Having.* 64-65.

been best and what might be. The five powerful principles in the AI 5-D cycle are Define,

Discover, Dream, Design, and Deploy. Define phase frames the task and asks generative

questions. Discover phase inquires what gives life to the situation or people. Dream phase

attempts to envision what the outcome may be. Design phase encourage collaboration in

constructing what should be. Deploy phase is living into empowered action.[81] All of these

points I reviewed in order to move to the next step.

Process for Formulating Action Plan

I engaged the stakeholders by introducing AI theory and then applied the two

appreciative practices and five AI 5-D cycle to an encounter in the Bible about Paul the

Apostle and Eutychus (named lucky as possible translation from the Greek) in Acts of the

Apostles, chapter 20 verses 7-12. In this story, Paul spoke extensively among Christians

until midnight, when a young Eutychus fell out of a window due to his weariness and

died. Paul restored Eutychus's life, and, this brought joy to the people who later took the

young man home. The AI 5-D cycle was applied to the story and the stakeholders began

to appreciate the process of approaching conversations with people in more focused way.

I repeated the 5-D cycle that was on a PowerPoint presentation and on the handouts

provided to encourage having a working knowledge of the principles for formulating the

action plan.

Formulating an action plan using AI principle, I asked the stakeholders to craft

possibility statements based on themes. A possibility statement is challenging the

intentionality of congregation members by addressing ways of welcoming and enriching

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[81] Jacqueline Stavros and Cheri Torres, *Conversations Worth Having*. 89, 104

lives of young adults. Possibility statements begin with asking generative questions. What need is to be addressed at this moment? How will we make this happen easily? What statement of the story is to be told? And who should be involved? It is important that the action plan begin to set the ground for conversation that the church can have with young adults who are not involved, or loosely connected to MUMC. I proposed a framework using AI 5-D theory for considering answerers to the question as a template. This template covers four areas. There first is framing possibility statements as preferred situations opposite to situations associated with disputes, inertia, and problems. The possibility statements hold in balance the define and discovery aspects of the AI 5-D cycle. The next area asks is who would be involved? The answer is the people we meet in our contexts. The third area of the template is to take action by answering where, when, and how? The last area of the template is to engage in prototyping for congregation learning. To prototype is to model a behavior that applies a concept that was discovered. I will now assess the process of formulating the development of an action by the stakeholders and myself.

Meeting Young Adults at Their Relatable Needs

I led a discussion on the issue of meeting young adults at their relatable needs. The relatable need of a young adult is discerned within conversation. Based on the interviews it is my understanding that young adults have goals and challenges. These goals and challenges are aspirational and practical. Young adults desire tools and strategies that lead to meaningful life application. These life applications can be discovered when opportunities for conversations are made available within community

and at the local church. Welcoming this conversation among older adults is not happening enough at the MUMC. From the conversation guide of AI 5-D we encourage two appreciative practices of positive framing, and asking generative questions, to begin to relook and re-evaluate by all who are involved in the conversation. In the discussion of meeting young adults at the points of their relatable need, consensus was formed about the Possibility Statements to define and discover what are the needs. The possibility statements are allowed for hearing and responding. One possibility statement is, "We will be more welcoming of young adults." The other possibility statement is, "We will practice active listening in appreciating all persons." One implication is that leaders and members of this diasporan church while listening, must be intentional. The church must be prepared to get an answer, any answer. When an answer is offered, it should be valued for having the potential for transformation. I believe active listening is engaging persons by communication that they are valued. Active listening is also missional as young adults become "friends" in company with Christ as referenced in the gospel of John 15:15. Active listening that values persons at the Merrell UMC imply the willingness to listen to young adults as neighbors, or friends of God.

Following the Possibility Statements, the question of who would be involved is asked. The stakeholders answer is the church family in conversation with young adults convening as groups. This answer has a both/and approach for the church community, and young adults, in conversations about life. These conversations provide feedback as new energies for further conversations and activity. The stakeholders understood that facilitating possible conversations with young adults is continuous work. Further, the stakeholders agreed that in meeting young adults where they are, they would need to re-

orient themselves regarding the manner of meeting young adults at the point of their

relatable needs. The MUMC must engage in prototyping for congregational learning. It is

the church re-orienting itself in its spiritual ethical practices of listening to people where

they are whether economically, mentally, or spiritually. This would allow persons to

address their heartfelt concerns without interruption of any kind. As the stakeholders

indicate as their priority, we will "practice healthy respect for all persons as children of

God via interpersonal (one on one) conversations." This is one open space needed that

the local church can offer to young adults.

Awesome Aunt and Cool Uncle

The church being cast into a role of being an Awesome Aunt or Cool Uncle is

also a space needed for young adults. Reference to church as a cool uncle is from an

interview with person B while connecting reference to awesome aunt came from

discussion of this area by the stakeholders. As discussed in the previous chapter, young

adults in the making of their own decisions need older adults, or institutional places to

periodically seek advice. They need a safe and non-judgmental space for full self-

disclosure as well as guidance in facing their future. This is an interesting view of church

having the potential of being a safe and bold space for young adults even if they are not

"joining" the church. I shared an after-church incident to the stakeholders about a young

adult who had prominent tattoos on display on exposed parts of her body and was asked

by an elderly person why this young lady was "spoiling her beauty." That young adult

remarked in my hearing "that she would never come to this church again." The sensitivity

to young adults in lived realities need to be appreciated by older adults and vice versa.

Learning how to be accepting and honest in conversations across generational divides will take time and persistence.

Formulating an action plan for this challenging area of church being Awesome Aunt and Cool Uncle, begin with a possibility statement. The statement is that Merrell UMC will be a safe space for opening to new life perspectives by developing and insisting on being a non-judgmental "free zone." A free zone is understood by stakeholders as a space where valuation of another unedited concerns and feeling can openly be shared without recrimination or fear. This sharing calls for mutual regard in talking and listening to each other. The church, or church members as aunts and uncles, while not a new concept, re-interprets the past by opening avenues for new interpretation regarding life experiences. Young adults express the need for available spaces in order to wrestle with thoughts and ideas about life issues and while being offered wisdom and even corrections. This engagement is for offering service in sharing available community wisdom from older adults as a resource, while in close enough proximity to young adults that are in need. This is church being available to the community without seeking demanding conformity.

This action aspect of the plan involves the stakeholders who are church members as community neighbors. MUMC will be engaged in prototyping and congregation learning when all of the faith community become available, approachable, and amenable to hear and help young adults on their terms. The congregation will be taught how to communicate using AI 5-D cycle in small groups and other gatherings. Young adults will be made aware that MUMC is available to facilitate care for persons as resources permit. Young adults will experience care within the grace of God toward developing faith

practices. Within open space using AI to drive conversations, MUMC is fulfilling the

Great Commission of Jesus to make disciples. Young adults within church "free zone"

are forming and strengthening living faith toward championing new ways of doing

Christian mission in keeping with their realities. The congregation is learning to be a free

zone space for courage, forgiveness, love and re-energizing of faith, while holding the

dignity and wholeness of young adults.

Open Space for Free Public Forum

Young adults interviewed need an available, inclusive and empowering

congregation that will connect to their life realities. They called as an example, for church

to have an open space for free public forums and seminars for life skill training. Life skill

training involve the transfer of knowledge from older adults or from experts in

specialized skills for necessary daily life applications. Some young adults conceivably

require education about money management, and building a good financial future. There

are unique experiences to young adult life that could be the focus of motivational talks

and informational forums. This was once a familiar function for African American

churches, and for Caribbean churches during historical pre-Independence period. With

the sharing of limited resources, and opportunities churches assisted the community to

build economic and political strength. Some young adults have indicated that this aspect

of self-development remains a need.

The action plan begins with the Possibility Statement, "I am a valued person, not

just a young adult." This statement is prioritizing the affirming nature of being a person.

This valuation of personhood is given practical cognizance in recognizing young adult's

independence and interdependence in South Florida. The church values the young adults
when they are recognized as persons who are our partners, or associates on life's journey.
We are in need of each other. The public forum open space invites the empowering of
young adults by affirming who they are. Meeting with young adults at such gatherings is
allowing space for conversations that impact areas of life for all families. The possibility
statement does allow space for young adults and older adults to experience mutual
sharing of life energies. Such opportunity can be energizing to address primary life issues
for community and spiritual care. The exchange of information for teaching young adults
is beneficial for personal, family and community wellbeing. The young adult,
congregation and skilled persons in and outside of the church who are willing to transfer
skills contribute to a strong community. The public forums and seminars could become
quarterly or half yearly events. The congregation learning, unlearning, and relearning
sequence should model caring for young adults. Congregational sharing of resources and
skills with young adults provide opportunity in developing mutual valuation and trust.
Sharing of life skills may become an opportunity via open forums of "conversations
worth having." These conversations in proximity to the congregation have potential to
build relationships and trust, which in turn will signal change for the common good.

A challenge for the stakeholders is that having free seminars where young adults
have not invested could result in a lack of motivation and participation. However, the
offering of seminars as a gift to young adults and the wider community has the potential
to be more impactful in developing persons who are better skilled for their living
contexts. The stakeholders and I thought that it is important to survey young adults to
determine their interests are before planning any seminars.

Social Media Platform for Communicating with Young Adults

One area of agreement among the stakeholders is the need for MUMC to advertise and connect with young adults where they are easily accessible. In a unique, way the internet and social media is an open space for conversations and information sharing. The interviews clearly indicated that young adults of the Caribbean diaspora are invested in the internet and social media. Therefore, the congregation should be marketing activities via the internet and social media. The MUMC has a limited web footprint although having officially a website. Young adults interviewed were asking for MUMC to have a more visible internet presence to offer invitations to worship, live viewing of the worship services, as well as sending out invitation, and reminders for church events. Some interest was shown for having sermon summaries online. The congregation will need expansion of its internet offering to young adults. Young adults are interested for greater access to the local church via the world wide web.

For the stakeholders, this lack of better usage of social media is named, flipped and refocused in a possibility statement. The possibility statement is optimistic by stating the importance of "reaching Young Adults by connecting via social media for meeting and encouraging life conversations." This task is achievable. The formation of a volunteer social media team is needed to drive a process for engaging young adults. The concern that consistency in regular communication with young adults on the internet communication platforms is maintained. This social media team is to dedicate communicating with persons on social media using all possible and safe media tools.

The leaders and congregation's role are one of encouragement to learn how to accept social media presence and the use of technological tools in general to participate in promoting a welcoming presence of the church. A social media team will create and post online content in consultation with church staff. The team will write policy that will guide work of the church in community. Engaging in prototyping and congregation learning is holding conversations with all adults and young people to manage changes that will occur.

The need for change in having conversations with young adults via social media will have learning challenges. Older adults need to be taught how to better use phones and other computerized gadgets in their possessions as part of doing mission in the world. Older adults are already aware how the world have changed around them due to innovations in technology, but need help in overcoming the fear to try new practices. This conversation with older adults about our changed world may evoke pushback involving anger, grief, other forms of resistance. However, resistance unfortunate is a characteristic with the idea of change. The conversations with older adults about marketing of the church via social media are difficult, but necessary for moving church's availability and reception. Accomplishing those practices will move the church beyond the cultural practices of being a brick and mortar church.

Bible Training and Spiritual Coping Skills

The next area of need for young adults is for accessible Bible training and gaining spiritual coping skills. This need was not at first clearly understood by the stakeholders. The idea arising from two interviews is of a positive nature. In general, young adults

think that teachings or lessons from Christian scripture, are not relatable to their context and current living situation. There is interest in having bible teaching for young adults however, prefer different times with their peers. There is concern in one interview (Person A), about the absence of values formation via biblical teaching with many young men today. For example, Person C thought that if the church was able to organize alternate ways of meeting with peers for bible discussion, they could develop tools for coping spiritually in their life circumstances. The development of these tools would be evident in the formation of their ethical practices. However, the level of this interest warrants further investigation. The need for biblical discussions and developing spiritual coping practices were discerned throughout the interviews.

The Possibility Statements for the action plan is "Open more avenues for biblical/spiritual training. Young Adults support each other in fellowship when meeting for spiritual conversations." The persons involved in this process include the pastor, pastoral team, and social media team. Merrell UMC older adults when facilitating this open space offers opportunity in allowing for new possibilities and tools development for spiritual coping among Young Adults. The stakeholders also envisioned (dream stage of AI 5-D cycle), that mini-video clips can periodically be produced on topics and church events and placed online. A designated team survey either online, or at outreach events can assess the effectiveness of spiritual. Engaging in prototyping and congregation learning is for the local church to model for/and with young adults the practice of faith. The local congregation will have to learn how to share faith and worship space, beyond Sunday services, while learning to adjust to different worship forms, or activities, when engaging young adults.

Assessment of Stakeholders Learning

The stakeholders did not discuss the need to have a care facility for small children during worship. I noted the importance of this need from the interviews. The MUMC already has a nursery during Sunday worship but not at other related events. The direction of this area of concern I believe is not facilitating an open space for conversation, but facilitating via volunteer's young adult with families who may have that need.

Stakeholders recognize that the project has long term implications for the leadership and congregation in the practice of Christian mission. Leaders and the congregation are being led into change for the work of communicating with young adults. In order to engage young adults, we must recognize the relevance and urgency of creating open spaces for learning, unlearning and relearning of the congregation and leaders. The congregation and leader's partnership with the young adults can result in trust and informed action toward mutual spiritual care. The stakeholders in this regard would serve as advocates along with the pastoral leadership to make possible the transitional stages necessary for a working partnership possible. This working partnership with young adults in our community requires the stakeholders to be champions and commitment to this process.

I believe that a working Action Plan has the component of what I term as "champions and commitment." Champions and commitment are about becoming involved in a change process and to promote this implementation of this process. The stakeholders are important in making the action plan possible. The elements contributing

to the working of this action plan include: the financial implications, facilitators, learners, open space, and timelines. However, for this project the focus on the renewal of community life for all of the community will lead to enliven communication that values all persons. This is an important aspect of the project that the plan provides empowering action for positive change. The stakeholders seem to understand that the action plan is at the Deploy stage of the AI 5-D cycle that empower Christian mission at Merrell UMC. Empowering action also values the process of the church becoming a learning community. Valuing the wellbeing of young adults whose vision of the world differ in practice with the older adults, contributes to community and spiritual care of young adults. Conversations are not static but, continual. Stakeholders appreciated that our conversations set the tone for the climate of our communications. They understand that our words are powerful as they contribute to change. Stakeholders were willing listeners during the sessions. In the formulation of an action plan, the stakeholders recognized that conversations with young adults and older adults in MUMC are not linear. Therefore, allowance should be made for the unexpected, "twists and the turns" in conversations. Within the unexpected, "twists and turns" learning happens. The importance of flexibility, and persistence in conversations contribute to constant learning.

The stakeholders offered varied responses in their contribution and understanding of the action plan. They agreed that older adults should meet the young adults "where they are." This thought was not easily accepted by all but appreciated. People are at different stages of experiences and we should allow self-revelation to promote development. Further, meeting young adults "where they are" was challenging them to change the habit of perceived judgmental conversations. The AI 5-D Cycle model along

with two appreciative practices is understood as continuous and leading into new practices. Stake holders recognize that new practices allow for young adults to find other avenues in engaging with church. When older adults converse with young adults within open spaces, mutual development across generational lines. I agree with the above positions that a church in conversation should value young adults, even when many are not interested in a "joining" with church.

The reactions of the stakeholders to a strategic usage of conversations as a tool with young adults allowed them to be impacted in their own personal development. The area of Cultural Influences was an identifiable generational factor for at least one stakeholder. This person had to find balance in the United States while holding to Caribbean roots as an immigrant young person. The focus on Goals and Challenges is relatable to another of the stakeholders who has a young adult child. The meeting of young adults via social media as an active space for conversation encourages social media integration for older adults may not require too much of a radical culture change to the mission of the church. The stakeholders also noted that education that encourages learning among older and young adults resonated with them. All four appreciated, and related to the urgency and practical approach in engaging young adults in conversations about life.

I believe working together with the stakeholders' influence changes toward vital conversations with young adults. However, the stakeholders cautioned accommodating young adults on their terms only. However, they believe meaningful engagement with young adults as persons in open spaces must contribute to some achievable, social and professional acceptable community standards: those standards suggested are those that

encourage responsive conversations that are contextual as well as ethical. Further, the theoretical assumptions and process in formulation of open spaces as mentioned in this project, must consider perception versus reality. It is believed that young adults are inexperienced and need guidance, but they often feel that as adults they must be allowed to make independent assessment. I noted two stakeholders' responses to their concerns for young adults without being overpowered by older adults.

Initially in discussion with the stakeholders, I am sensed the frustration of attempting to assist young adults in decision making. However, they want to take responsibility for their own lives, even if they are in close proximity to the older adults. From the interviews with young adults, they prefer to meet among themselves or within needs-based group for discussion about life. The focus of this study is to encourage invitation and participation of young adults in life discussions. The stakeholders recognize that older adults will need to learn being a patient resource similar to a library that is accessible for experience and knowledge.

Secondly, I understand that there is a conversation already taking place among older adults and young adults at the periphery of the church. The conversations are with different interests of culture, goals, and spiritual values that focus at different spaces. This project encourages older adults within church to facilitate open spaces that will lessen the tendency to advice, dictate, or review, and place more emphasis on learning with the whole community for Christian mission today. Conversations for change with young adults according to this project has the variables of young adults and older adults within community realities. In order to move the young adults from the periphery of church and within the inner sanctum of the church will necessitate structured and participatory

changes of the whole church in the way conversations are engaged. This is a cultural shift for stakeholders and the church in general, in accepting and seeing persons from their experiential eyes.

The stakeholders evaluating the action plan envision this research as more than a project because it is addressing a current issue in the life of the church and community. Conversation with young adults of the Caribbean Diaspora is relevant in diversifying and encouraging greater cooperation for immigrant community in the church, and wider community. The ideas and process of this study address current reality that if applied, will result in viable outcomes. Again, the implication is that this work is applicable and scalable. Vital to this effort is teaching the local church leaders and congregants how to have "conversations worth having" with young adults.

Evaluation and Learning

I focused the project theologically and practically on the importance of offering community and spiritual care to unaffiliated or loosely connected Young Adults to the Merrell UMC. I examined within the Caribbean Diasporan church and context of mostly immigrants and how young adults do not regular engage church community. In this work the leaders or stakeholders were asked to re-look and evaluate an understanding of doing mission with young adults by having conversations that matter. The theological core of this project is related to reference of being strangers or immigrants who are accepted as friends with Christ as indicated in the gospel according to John 15:12-15 in the working environment of agape or love. Friends of Christ are loved within the context of their community. This love of Christ is available to young adults and the church has

opportunity to offer spiritual and community care. The project sought to explore what it will mean to change the church's culture of older adults toward meaningful spiritual and community care within constructive engagement with young adults in and around the church. Assisting during this process is the Local Advisory Committee (LAC). The LAC is not a stakeholder group but whose involvement offered consultative oversight and advise to the project process. From interviews and discussion with stakeholders along with consulting with the LAC, I appreciated bridging gaps of communication with young adults as a learning process that is beneficial, educational and evangelistic approach of being a local church.

Within the context of the Merrell UMC and spiritual care of young adults is important. Young adults are near the church and as discussed have interpretations of the practical nature of the church for them. Their interpretations of church are direct for what care should look like. From the research I note that the young adults need to be met at their point of needs and their point of need is understood when there is conversation with them. This meeting young adults at the point of their need argues for the church to bridge any proximity gap or factors contributing to separation. Older adults that constitute the majority numbers in church need to move physically nearer to young adult spaces or initiate opportunities for being in contact.

I am suggesting that "conversations worth having" with young adults is a process beneficial in the context of MUMC. This conversation of life offers physical and rhetorical space to young adults. The conversation driven by AI is operationalized within open spaces. The activity of welcoming young adults uses appreciative conversation as an intentional process for life conversations. Further, the leadership and influential

persons at MUMC connections with young adults needs flexibility and willingness to go where young adults are located. There is theological basis and value for this engagement with young adults. The gospels always had Jesus Chris in close proximity to people in the context of their communities or needs. Meeting of people takes effort and will mean going to persons rather than waiting for them to turn up. Conversations are the result of the church going to people and encountering life together. Conversations and within context of the love of create change. In similar manner when MUMC connects intentionally with young adults of the Caribbean diaspora and beyond, conversations will take place. These are conversations that (a) values community as God's community, (b) drives a narrative for the wellbeing of persons, and (c) challenge assumption and practice of ministry in the local church.

I have demonstrated that meeting young adults at their point of need requires a systematic conversational method. I am convinced that the process of meeting young adults in conversational spaces is less about accommodation and inclusion but more about interpreting life in the love of God together in community. As friends of God in community the conversation model used in this research encourage continuous learning as church community to listen intentionally. We listened to young adults in relation to their challenges, experiences of life, interpretation of the role of church as well as goals. I appreciate that listening well must be modeled for congregational learning beginning with church leadership teams.

Another area of importance is in producing safe and non-judgmental spaces for meeting young adults at the point of their needs. Safe space is an opportunity, and a gift of opening one's self to new life perspectives. A safe space facilitates a free zone which

according to stakeholder discussion suggests a place where full self-disclosure is expressed between two or more persons. This free zone values interpersonal contribution for development. The approach and method for conversations as noted earlier is an opportunity for intergenerational exchange of experiences.

I believe conversations among young adults and with older adults will be very demanding for a diasporan church like MUMC. Older adults while holding on to their values, must admit to their assumptions that limit situations that contribute to mutual listening and responding to young adults. This listening that is non-judgmental models' an openness of heart and mind with young adults. Pastorally, this way of engaging people mirrors the gospel accounts of Jesus. Pastoral leadership challenges personal and institutional assumptions about young adult's well-being, and how the church can better welcome them. Young adults are already interpreting implications of pastoral leadership for spiritual care in their realities. Young adults already have an idea of what spiritual and community care may look like for them with or without the church.

In offering community and spiritual care, I understand MUMC as an open space for young adults to have connections. As mentioned before there is a proximity gap in older adults connecting with young adults at MUMC. Reducing this gap means moving outside church walls to establish connections. Utilizing technology is useful for connecting with young people via social media, mass data bases, and available live, or delayed video feeds. Some young adults are interested in biblical discussions, skills transfer, and mental coping strategies. A church as an open space is a way of describing the sharing of resources of space, time and experience in growing with young adults.

Ministry offered in the wider context of diasporan community will have a meta-spatial nature. There is a physical aspect of church (building and people) and a non-physical aspect (prayer and worship). Meta-spatial nature of church for young adults envision the church's ministry beyond models of church being multi-generational, or a space for all generations. Young adults' sense of the divine is not limited to time and space. They are not confined to limitation of a singular congregational identity. So, the MUMC must be easily available, and relevant in creative connections with young adults. For older adults of the Caribbean diaspora, thinking about the church as meta-spatial may be a near difficulty. Yet, by appealing to older adults to how Jesus modeled the direction of his work among people is instructive for the church presently. In the gospels, Jesus' resurrection appearances beyond closed doors influenced the disciples for change. Change in the life of disciples after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus was gradual. Yet, Jesus' post-resurrection appearances set the stage for new conversations involving His early followers. I believe this post resurrection appearance of Jesus at the local church will be a gradual change process in conversation among older adults and younger adults. The research demonstrated that change in thinking about relating with young adults is not only possible, but urgent.

Conclusion

Community and spiritual care can be offered to young adults who are unaffiliated, or loosely connected to MUMC. Young adults are not connecting to MUMC due a variety of reasons. Yet they are not far removed from the local Caribbean diasporan church because of the intersections of cultural experiences, goals and challenges, their

varied experiences and expectation of church, and the need for community and spiritual

care. The local church aims at creating a welcoming community to young adults by

offering spiritual and community care through inquiry and sharing of life experiences that

is faith-based experiences. Interviews with young adults, and dialogue with stakeholders,

in MUMC produced an action plan for an educational and evangelistic approach in

having "conversations that matter" in the process of changing church culture.

This project used Appreciative Inquiry 5-D process along with the application a

theological understanding of being the immigrant neighbor to discover new ways of

engaging with young adults for Christian ministry for spiritual and community care. The

project while engaging some members of the church as stakeholders, and working with

an advisory committee, a significant portion of the congregation was not involved. I

believe the principles and practices in this project can be replicated within this or similar

congregation over a period of time. During the project, the stakeholders adjusted their

assumptions, expectations, and listening strategies toward having great transformational

conversations. For the stakeholders, the immigrant neighbor at the Caribbean diasporan

MUMC is learning that neighbors have no boundaries of sharing critical life. The focus

of sharing life together challenges church leadership, pastoral team, and indeed the whole

congregation into an intentional, value forming, dynamic, and persistent conversation that

inquiries about relevance of congregational assumptions for Christian mission.

For further study, examination needs to be given to the assumptions about church

from older adults of the Caribbean diaspora who are not church members. Those are

older adults who oppose the institution of the church, and how that experience is passed

on to young adults. I believe that young adults are influenced by older adult parental

ideas and practices. Also, being able to name clear assumptions inherent in

congregational culture may assist in clarifying how particular ecclesial practices

contribute negatively, or positively toward spiritual and community care of young adults.

These assumptions will need to balance perception with reality that engages learning with

young adults, especially those with self-determination, who may, or may not perceive the

need for community and spiritual care.

APPENDIX A

Community and Spiritual Care of Young Adults of the Caribbean Diaspora that are

Unaffiliated or Loosely Connected to MUMC

Action Plan Connecting To Young Adults Presentation To Stakeholders

Power Point Session 1

PROJECT FOCUS

•   Develop an education and evangelistic focus at MUMC that is cross-generational and intergenerational connecting young adult descendants of Caribbean diaspora in church.

•   Goal is to change interpretation and practice as servants of Christ in engaging young adults in our community.

•   To re-look and re-evaluate community and spiritual needs of young adults and craft an action plan for what it may mean to offer care as a local church.

Process So Far

•   Interview of 6 Young Adults 18 years and older.

•   LAC assisting via pre meetings.

•   Thematic threads noted arising from interviews

Our Task

•   Examine themes

•   Use Appreciative Inquiry for "Conversations Worth Having" to assist in prioritizing outcomes.

•   Craft statements of story we want to become new reality.

•   Prepare an outline ACTION PLAN.

Put Together Jigsaw Puzzle in 120 seconds:

Appreciative Inquiry 5-D Cycle:

•"(AI) is about discovering the best in people, organizations, and the communities around them. We create our world through conversations and meaning-making." – Preface

•David Cooperrider is the cofounder of AI in the 1990's.

•Book "Conversations Worth Having" – Jackie Stavos and Cheri Torres guide discussions.

•Proposes Two simple AI practices and five powerful principles – that will be tailored to our discussion time.

Shifting to Conversations Worth Having

Appreciative	Conversations Worth Having	Affirmative Conversations
Depreciative	Critical Conversations	Destructive Conversations

Two Appreciative Practices:

1. Positive Framing – "focusing attention and action on where we want to go or what it is we want more of."

Name it ⟶ Flip It ⟶ Frame it

2. Adopt an attitude of curiosity and an open mind. Ask questions that are generative. Generative questions focus on the best of what is and what might be. When asking questions, we must be prepared to receive an answer, any answer.

Drivers in and a method to our Conversations

Handout #1 with Table 4.2

Handout #2 Figure 5.1

Handout #3 Figure 5.2

Application to a Bible Story Incident

Acts 20:7-12   Story of Paul and Eutychus (lucky).

On the first day of the week, as we gathered together for a meal, Paul was holding a discussion with them. Since he was leaving the next day, he continued talking until midnight. There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we had gathered. A young man named Eutychus was sitting in the window. He was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell from the third floor and died. Paul went down, fell on him and embraced him, then said, "Don't be alarmed. He's alive!"

Then Paul went back upstairs and ate. He talked for a long time—right up until daybreak—then he left. They took the young man away alive, and they were greatly comforted. (CEB)

Test Drive Approach Crafting Conversation:

Define Phase: Framing the Task and Crafting Generative Questions

What can we do to help this dead man?

Discover Phase: what gives life to the gathering?

They were experiencing how alive God's word is for all conditions in community.

Dream Phrase: What do we envision as the outcome?

Eutychus will be alive again.

Design Phase: Co-constructing What Should Be.

Eutychus return facilitated to meaningful meeting in community as being alive with community.

Deploy Phrase: Living into Empowered Action

Eutychus was taken home with much happiness. Notice this was the plan/objective.

Action Plan Using AI to assist Conversation

Eutychus is alive. (Affirmative conversation)

Positive Framing – [Note Paul's statement and community reaction]

Generative Questions – [What questions were implied about the circumstances that led to positive outcome?]

DEFINE – What is the task?

DISCOVER – What gives life to Eutychus and community?

DREAM – What might be?

DESIGN – What should be the ideal story to tell?

DEPLOY – What empowers Eutychus and community action?

WHAT CONVERSATIONS ARE WORTH HAVING WITH YOUNG ADULTS?

THEMES DISCOVERED FROM INTERVIEWS:

A. Cultural Influences:

i.   Familial Connections important.

ii.   Influence of food, gathering, and music.

iii.   Reluctance of older adults to accept social changes.

iv.   Balancing American reality and Caribbean experience.

B. Goals and Challenges

i.   Academic training toward self-accomplishment

ii.   Living for next Generation.

iii.   Negative images and music threaten good relations.

iv.   Pressure of social judgement and fear of future.

C. Expectation and Experience of Church

i.   Spiritual Care and Development for daily living

ii.   Accepting Environment.

iii.   Church fatigue and church hurt.

iv.   Redundancy in practice and traditions.

D. Community and Spiritual Care

i.   Meet Young Adults with relatable needs-based issues.

ii.   Be a Cool Uncle – Safe and non-judgmental space for full disclosure and facing

fears.

iii.   Public forums/seminars for free life skills training.

iv.   Marketing activities via social media advertisements and invitations.

v.   Make Bible teaching and spiritual coping skills more accessible.

vi.   Facility to care for children during worship.

Possibility Statements based on themes

•   Need to be addressed at this moment:

•   How will we make this happen easily?

•   Statement of story that is to be told:

•   Who should be involved?

END OF SESSION ONE

APPENDIX B

Community and Spiritual Care of Young Adults of the Caribbean Diaspora that are

unaffiliated or Loosely Connected to MUMC Plan with Stakeholders

Power Point Session 2

Action Plan To Connect To Young Adults

Our Mission Focus

Theological framework of engaging conversation with Young Adults of Caribbean

Diaspora as neighbors loved by God in need of church's community and spiritual support

and care.

PROJECT FOCUS:

•   Develop an education and evangelistic focus at MUMC that is cross-generational

and intergenerational connecting young adult descendants of Caribbean diaspora in

church.

•   Goal is to change interpretation and practice as servants of Christ in engaging

young adults in our community.

•   To re-look and re-evaluate community and spiritual needs of young adults and

craft an action plan for what it may mean to offer care as a local church.

Our Task

- Consider themes

- Adopting Appreciative Inquiry for "Conversations Worth Having" to assist in prioritizing outcomes.

- Statements of what story we want to tell.

- Craft outline ACTION PLAN for conversation worth having.

THEMES DISCOVERED FROM INTERVIEWS:

A. Cultural Influences

B. Goals and Challenges

C. Expectation and Experience of Church

D. Community and Spiritual Care

ACTION PLANNING AREAS:

- Possibility Statements: Appreciative Inquiry 5-D cycle.

- Who would be involved? People in context.

- Take Action: Where, When and How?

- Engage in prototyping and congregation learning: Model, early sample, example,

or built to test concept or to be learned from.

Meet Young Adults at Relatable Needs

Possibility Statements:

We will be more welcoming of Young Adults. We will be practice active listening in appreciating all persons.

Who would be involved? The whole church family along with encouraging Young Adults to meet as a group in conversations.

Take Action: Immediate and continuous weekly conversations

Engage in prototyping and congregation learning:

Practice healthy respect for all persons as children of God via one on one conversations, whole church events and welcoming YA with tech.

Be A Cool Uncle/Awesome Aunt - safe and non-judgmental space for full disclosure and facing fears.

Possibility Statements: Safe space for opening new life perspectives. Develop a non-judgmental "free zone."

Who would be involved? Stakeholders: church and community neighbors.

Take Action: Seminars in non-class room and worship settings. Quarterly or half yearly organized sessions with needs surveys and advertisements online.

Engage in prototyping and congregation learning: Practical and ethical responsible relationships within community. Faith community becomes available, approachable and amenable to hear and help. Capacity of congregation to forgive and to influence for common good.

Space for Free Public forums/ Seminars Life Skill Training

Possibility Statements: I am a valued person, not a young adult.

Who would be involved? Young adult, general congregation and skilled persons of and outside of the church to transfer skills.

Take Action: Quarterly or half yearly sessions with follow up seminars

Engage in prototyping and congregation learning: Congregation sharing resources developing mutual valuation and sharing life skills. Proximity of experiences may allow "conversations worth having" with potential for significant changes.

Marketing Activities via Social Media Advertisements and Invitations

Possibility Statements: Reaching Young Adults by connecting via social media for meeting and encouraging life conversations.

Who would be involved? Volunteer team involving or led by Young Adults dedicated to communicating on social media using all possible media available and safe.

Take Action: Form technology tech team and create online ministry policy. Advertise and post church and community activities regularly.

Engage in prototyping and congregation learning: Conversation and exposing congregation usage of basic technology by encouraging usage of social media.

Bible Training and Spiritual Coping Skills More Accessible For Young Adults

Possibility Statements: Open more avenues for biblical (spiritual) training. Young adults will form fellowship for spiritual training.

Who would be involved? Pastoral Team of the church and social media team. (All of church and neighbors in and beyond community).

Take Action: Advertise bible lessons and make summary online or printed. Place mini-video clips of topics and or events online. Active survey congregation and at outdoor outreach events to ascertain effectiveness of invitation and needs in community.

Engage in prototyping and Congregation learning: Modeling with Young Adults practice of faith. Faith sharing beyond Sunday service.

Facility To Care For Children During Worship

Possibility Statements: This area was not discussed. A statement can be "There will space provided for the safe care of infants and toddlers of young adults while connected to worship service"

Who would be involved: Trustees and worship areas of church along with trained volunteers.

Take Action: Immediate organization

Engage in prototyping and Congregation learning: Young Adult families are supported in spiritual care.

Champions and Commitment

Leadership and congregation long term implication: Stakeholders to partner with pastoral team to make this reality.

Resources needed: Inventory list prepared for funding via budget.

Value the progress and inquire into what made it possible: Feed Forward what works and did not with intention for revision and new start via our conversations.

Valued Listening for next steps in conversation: Participants, Young Adults, congregation are encouraged practicing active listening.

Flexibility and Persistence: - recognizes that our "conversations worth having" with young adults are not always linear and allow for twists and turns for our constant learning.

Reflections and Evaluations

1.	What did you learn from this process?

2.	What theme or themes are most applicable to you?

3.	What area(s) needed clarity?

4.	How can Appreciative Inquiry 5D cycle be used in your conversation?

5.	What are other comments about this project?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GREAT PART

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