

ACTION NEEDED: INCORPORATING JUSTICE IN THE
MISSION OF A WHITE MODERATE CHURCH

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Advisor: Rev. Dr. J. Terry Todd, PhD

Todd E. Leach
Drew University
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ABSTRACT

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Todd E. Leach

Shadyside Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, PA

Churches too often limit their outreach and mission efforts by only responding to the needs witnessed in their community and world. The Church is best at responding to crises by fulfilling immediate and systemic needs and, though there is a responsibility to practice such charitable acts, there is a further role to play. In addition to responding, the Church has the responsibility of working to prevent such needs.

Amid a global health pandemic (COVID-19) and during our nation's heightened awareness of current and systemic racism (response to murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and others), this project captures the efforts of leading a white moderate church toward incorporating justice ministries into mission. Justice is defined within the work, which includes the research of biblical, theological, and ethical rationale for the incorporation of justice into church ministry.

Context is important to ministry in general, and vital to practicing Public Theology. Significant effort is spent outlining Shadyside Presbyterian Church's historical and current context. Strategies and practices of early steps toward incorporating justice work are included, along with current steps and future goals. Finally, though this specific study does not provide a reproducible model, practical takeaways are highlighted in the conclusion for those who desire to both lead and sojourn alongside a similar church in its efforts to do justice.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my loving soulmate, Linda, whose gracious and tireless commitment to our family enabled me to pursue this study. And to my daughters, Nadia and Vinodhini, who are and will continue to be my inspiration. And, finally, to Shadyside Presbyterian Church, a committed faith community who has taken the risk of journeying alongside me.

Introduction

Powerless. Frustrated. Isolated. Tired. Impotent. Baffled. Angry. Emotions expressed by church members who gathered virtually to share reactions to the tragic murder of George Floyd – yet another unarmed Black man killed by police officers. In this initial gathering I shared images and video clips related to Floyd’s murder and requested that the forty church members who joined the virtual gathering share only their emotions. To this gathering I confessed that as a White man who had once been graciously adopted into a Black church and deeper into the Black culture, I still hold prejudices and filter my own racist thoughts. Following the sharing of their emotions I asked for the members’ commitment to engage a continued conversation on racism and the injustices that bleed from such prejudices. I closed the meeting displaying photos of local demonstrations and asked again for members to share their emotions: Truth. Hopeful. Possibilities. And after a pause, one member typed out two words: Action Needed. This was the defining moment our church intentionally began seeking and doing justice, and envisioning ourselves building for God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

The Church¹ is called to participate in God’s kingdom building work. Regardless of denominational affiliation this remains the call of the Church. Such work draws churches² beyond the walls of the sanctuary and certainly beyond the relative comfort of the pews. As individual members of the body of Christ we must be willing to be stretched so the body as a whole can be stretched. Too often when White, Protestant churches engage in “missional” efforts, churches often grow too comfortable responding

¹ For this writing, the term “Church” is meant to be the church universal – including all Christian denominations (and non-denominational) and the congregations within.

² Unless otherwise noted, the general term “church” refers to an individual Christian faith community.

to the apparent needs that church members define within a given community.

Unfortunately, churches fall too often into their limited, habitual acts of charity³ with little effort toward addressing the systems and structures which create the need for such charity. As churches take on a growing number of charitable acts, the tremendous breadth of congregational mission efforts does not appear to be matched in depth.⁴

Individual churches tend to respond to urgent or one time needs, as opposed to making long term commitments which could prevent some of those needs.

In addition, the church settles for a limited understanding of what it means to love neighbor. Love requires depth, something greater than a desire to meet and interact with neighbors. Interest and intrigue can be reached through short-term interactions. Love requires long-term commitment. Necessary acts of charity can be fulfilled in the short-term, and love could possibly be the motivation the initiation of such acts. Though, if churches are honest, there are times when acts of charity help the church and its people feel better about themselves. When focused inwardly, love is not the motivation. However, acts of justice require love. Could our self-fulfilling acts of charity be considered “missional one night stands,” in which our acts make us feel good for a short time, yet there is no true desire for a long-term, deeper relationship? Perhaps at the core of the church’s missional shortcomings is that the faith community is not connecting habits of service with the Lord’s cry for establishing justice.

In preparation for this project I have engaged in conversation with those who journeyed before me in leading the Church toward its call for justice. In so doing, I use

³ For this writing, the term “charity” refers to the act of responding to crises by fulfilling immediate and systemic needs.

⁴ Heidi Rolland Unruh and Ronald J. Sider, *Saving Souls, Serving Society: Understanding the Faith Factor in Church-Based Social Ministry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 5.

their works to build a biblical and theological framework for the individual church to expand its mission toward promoting and embracing justice because, as Christ proclaims, “the Kingdom of God is among us.” And unlike any other kingdom, this Kingdom settles only for justice. I explore Biblical texts through justice focused lenses in order to clarify that the church does, in fact, have a role to play. In this writing, theological, pastoral and prophetic voices are aligned so the church hears clearly its call toward embracing, promoting and, at times, establishing justice within and beyond our own faith communities. Finally, efforts toward leading Shadyside Presbyterian Church, to which I serve as the Associate Pastor for Missions, are woven in throughout the text. Woven through my ministry is my claim that, unlike most pastors who try to get people into the church, as mission pastor I try to get people out of the church and into the community.

In the early beginnings of my research I set out to find publications which captured a church shifting from charity based mission efforts toward justice based efforts. I know such churches exist. However, it seems that too often such churches are so engaged in “doing justice” that they do not take time to document their efforts in order to create a reproducible model. My research has led me to engage with leaders and prophets whose work is foundational to any such model.

I began this project knowing there would be some unexpected challenges. A significant and unanticipated challenge to my project has been COVID-19. The majority of my research along with the early steps of this project took place during pre-pandemic times. I shifted to online communication (such as Zoom) when the pandemic prevented us from gathering in person. This shift worked well for our formal gatherings, but lost were the informal conversations that organically take place when a church gathers. I

missed the opportunity for impromptu conversations to advocate for an intentional inclusion of justice work through our mission efforts. Though, I also recognized that those who are anxious about our church engaging in justice efforts had been unable to have the same impromptu conversations with those who share such anxieties. In this way, our inability to gather together may have prevented their anxieties from multiplying.

Additional significant and unexpected events were the murder of George Floyd by a police officer and the national reaction to the murder. Just as COVID 19 caused a brief pause in my project, the George Floyd murder revealed systemic racism and injustices in a way that energized my project. The outcry led toward public discussions and demonstrations, which highlighted systemic injustices more powerfully than I could have produced for the sake of a single project. These public events served as a launching pad for me to lead the church to wrestle with such injustices.

Revolution of Values: Reclaiming Public Faith for the Common Good author Johnathon Wilson-Hartgrove writes, “I didn’t need to invent a better way to be *Christian* [emphasis mine] in public life. I needed to learn it from the people who had been practicing it all along.”⁵ His personal journey toward seeking justice led him to realize a remnant of God’s justice seeking people existed and he needed to recognize himself as part of the remnant. This project has led me to search for something similar: a better way to be *church* in public life. This paper captures the theological and biblical support, while taking a deeper dive into the steps of becoming a church for its greater community.

⁵ Jonathon Wilson-Hartgrove, *Revolution of Values: Reclaiming Public Faith for the Common Good* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2019), 166.

Church Context

When the steel industry began to fail in the early to mid-1980s, the divide between the union workers and the executives widened. As the steel mills slowed their once heightened production, more and more union workers lost their positions. From their perspective, and the perspective of some other community members, the higher paid executives maintained their company positions. In an effort to bring attention to such injustice, the union workers staged a protest at Shadyside Presbyterian Church during the Easter service in 1984. Union members disrupted the service by entering during worship, marching through the aisles with signs calling out some of the steel executives who were worshipping in the sanctuary. In addition, during our church Christmas pageant, union workers forced a premature ending to the program by throwing a balloon filled with skunk oil into our parish hall. The public disgrace of such events caused Shadyside to shy away from the public.

Public Theology, perhaps more than any other discipline, necessitates the understanding of context or, better stated, the understanding of multiple contexts merging to create a public context. At its core, I believe Public Theology both recognizes and is motivated into action through understanding God is as concerned (arguably, even *more* concerned) about the soul of our community just as God is concerned for the soul of our individual selves. Author Rudolf von Sinner offers a general description of Public Theology, stating it “denotes a field and insists on ways of communication beyond the churches into the public sphere.”⁶ Though the Church has been engaged in Public Theology throughout its history, it is a relatively new academic discipline and one that

⁶ Rudolf von Sinner, “Public Theology as a Theology of Citizenship,” in *A Companion to Public Theology*, ed. by Sebastian Kim and Katie Day (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 247.

has multiple definitions. Sebastian Kim views Public Theology's diversity of approaches and engagement a strength, but suggests a "critical assessment from within theological circles in order to continue in its endeavor to bring God's presence into the public sphere for the common good."⁷ It is not the intent of this paper to narrow in on a definition, but argue that the purpose of Public Theology is "to articulate in a secular public sphere the fundamental Christian commitment to the struggle for social justice."⁸

God is present in the public and God is present in the church, yet there is often a disconnection between the two spaces. I believe the more deeply we understand our context the more deeply we can understand the points of connections and the points of the disconnections between the church and the public. In studying context I not only gain a perspective of current context, but intentionally discover the history which led to our current context. In studying my own church's history I am better equipped to both understand and address what are often unspoken and perhaps even subconscious perspectives which we have unknowingly inherited.

I currently serve as the Associate Pastor for Missions for Shadyside Presbyterian Church, which is located in the east-end city limits of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In the early eighteenth century as White explorers from France and England began surveying the region of what is now western Pennsylvania, the region was then held in dominion by the native Five Nations. The confluence of rivers made the landscape highly desirable and as the Native Americans were pushed westward, the English and French fought for control of the region in the mid eighteenth century. By the early nineteenth century

⁷ Sebastian Kim, "Public Theology in the History of Christianity," in *A Companion to Public Theology*, 63.

⁸ Nicholas Sagovsky, "Public Theology, the Public Sphere and the Struggle for Social Justice," in *A Companion to Public Theology*, 251.

Pittsburgh's manufacturing was flourishing and by 1840 it was one of the largest cities to be found west of the Allegheny Mountains. As immigrants relocated to this region, numerous (European) ethnically defined neighborhoods were established by the city's new residents. From the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century during the Great Migration, Black communities were also established within the city.

Pittsburgh became known for the production of steel and, eventually, became known for the pollution associated with such production. Manufacturing carried the city well into the twentieth century and as manufacturing died off, the city reinvented itself by capitalizing on the local universities' production of healthcare and technology centers. Though the city has lost nearly half its population since the height of its industrial age, Pittsburgh continues to be a vibrant city described as having small town charm with big city opportunities.

Shadyside Presbyterian Church is tucked within the neighborhood of Shadyside, which did not exist in early Pittsburgh history. As Pittsburgh began growing into a thriving city in the early nineteenth century, Shadyside, a mere four miles from the city's center, was a vast farmland. Some of the more affluent residents of the city would eventually escape the busyness (and pollution) of the city by spending time in this farming community. With the introduction of railroad and trolleys, Shadyside became an attractive place to reside for those businessmen who desired the fresh air of the countryside while working in the growing metropolis. In the late 1860s the Shadyside community was formed in the midst of farmland. Shadyside became home to city leaders, and soon became a thriving suburb for the most affluent Pittsburghers. Eventually, local shops opened in the high-end neighborhood and residents took comfort

in living in a self-contained community. To this day, the high-end business district and surrounding mansions remain in Shadyside. Shadyside continues as the most affluent neighborhood within Pittsburgh's city limits.

Shadyside Presbyterian Church is located in the heart of the Shadyside community. As the community began growing in the mid nineteenth century the growing population tired of commuting for work, school and worship. "The residents of Shadyside sought a private or 'select' school for the neighborhood children. It was that desire which set in motion the process of forming a church."⁹ These residents were also the founders of Shadyside Presbyterian Church. In order to worship in a church at that time, Shadyside residents' options were either to travel four miles to the downtown church or to travel one mile to nearby East Liberty Presbyterian Church. A Sunday school was soon formed for Shadyside residents and that Sunday school was the beginning of what later became Shadyside Presbyterian Church.

The early founders of the church, along with the generations that followed, invested heavily into the church structure and its ministries. They wanted an impressive building of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture, which had become quite popular in Pittsburgh at that time. By the end of the nineteenth century a beautiful, Tiffany window adorned sanctuary was built to accommodate 900 worshippers. Funds were secured in trusts and endowments to care for the physical structure and to carry the church into the future. To this day, more than fifty percent of the church budget is secured through the financial gifts of prior generations.

⁹ Timothy C. Engleman, *Liturgy: A Reflection on Shadyside Presbyterian Church* (Shadyside: Shadyside Presbyterian Church, 2016), 3.

Since the early beginnings Shadyside Presbyterian Church was considered the church for the affluent and influential. Well into the 1980's limousines parked on the perimeter of the church with drivers waiting for their passengers at the conclusion of the



(Photo – Shadyside Presbyterian Church exterior – used with permission)

church service. Into the 1990's the ushers (all men) wore morning coats with tails along with gloves as they ushered members to the pews. Throughout its history Shadyside has been a worship focused church, with great investment in both music and preaching. Shadyside was one of the first churches to have a radio broadcast ministry, and was the first church to broadcast worship services all the way to both the north and south poles. A generous endowment enables Shadyside to have a paid choir. This church has also been generous in missions, and heavily invested in China mission efforts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In addition, in an effort to display our oneness

in Christ, World Communion Sunday was established at Shadyside Presbyterian Church in 1933.



(Photo – Shadyside Presbyterian Church sanctuary – used with permission)

Like any church, Shadyside has had its own joys and sorrows, successes and failures over its last 155 years. However, a couple of instances are worth highlighting because, in addition to the church's institutional DNA from its early years, these instances helped to form the ethos of the church. Pittsburgh, also known as the Steel City, grew due to the early success of the railroad and the steel industries. In the introduction to this section, I mention Shadyside's encounters with the unionized steelworkers because, though the story is not often retold, the wound from this experience has been passed through the generations.

On the heels of those events Shadyside called a new pastor in the mid-1990s. This pastor had a short and tumultuous tenure, which led to significant church conflict. Some argued the pastor was who the congregation needed, while others “spoke of dark, hopeless sermons, an autocrat who was often ruder or worse, who ignored members’ concerns and made arbitrary, disconcerting liturgical changes.”¹⁰ Interestingly, when longtime members are asked for the greatest critique of this former pastor, the consistent answer is that the pastor “was just not a good fit.” The pastor’s greatest supporters left at the conclusion of his tenure so their perspective is lost. Regardless, the conflict became public and found its way on many occasions into the local newspaper, which garnered opinions of residents who were not affiliated with Shadyside Presbyterian. Eventually, the pastor agreed to leave after a compensation package was agreed upon. In the intervening years, neither healing nor reconciliation has occurred.

These two instances, along with its beginning, have impacted Shadyside Presbyterian’s self-image and approach to ministry. From its beginning, Shadyside Presbyterian Church was seemingly an exclusionary church. This remains a current critique of the church as the church is described as a “fortress” by members of its fellow Presbyterian Churches. Shadyside’s signage is limited intentionally, with one plaque and one stone sign discreetly bearing only its name. The church’s physical presence is symbolic of the church’s founding: it is a place for an elite gathering of an elite people. In addition, the term “justice” conjures memories from the tumultuous pastor who incorrectly (from the church’s perspective) claimed the church was unjust toward him. Finally, when discussions of Shadyside’s involvement with the public arise, so too do the

¹⁰ Engleman, *Liturgy: A Reflection on Shadyside Presbyterian Church*, 159.

memories of the public disgrace during the failing of the steel industry and the removal of the former pastor.

Fortunately, Shadyside serves a God who works through the brokenness of individuals, and through the brokenness of the Church. The healing of our brokenness is perhaps the place where we most intimately connect with our God. Yet, we need to be willing to face our brokenness, to admit our weaknesses along with our sin, in order to understand the depth of such healing. Shadyside, like most of us, has neither fully faced nor has fully addressed its brokenness. It shields itself from political, hot-button topics by stating that it is a “Christ centered” church. The church claims to be focused on Christ so that it is not distracted by periphery events, but I believe this practice prevents us from witnessing Christ within those events. The church too often wrestles with holding Christ at the center as opposed to following where Christ would have us serve: on the margins of our own society. The church holds Christ where we are most comfortable with him remaining (at our center) while Christ hopes to lead us to the marginalized.

With that, Shadyside Presbyterian is more diverse and more involved in its community than it has ever been. To be clear, we are neither ethnically diverse nor multicultural as our membership is 95% White, three percent Asian and two percent Black. The congregation is educated and the vast majority have served in white-collar positions. Shadyside’s current membership is middle/upper-middle class as compared to its prior upper-class designation. Also, Shadyside is now considered a commuter church with just over ninety-percent of our members living outside the Shadyside zip code. The membership’s greatest diversity is likely in its political affiliations as a “Purple” (both Democrat and Republican members) church. However, due to some historical conflicts

and a tendency to avoid conflict and risk taking, this political diversity is not discussed for fear of conflict. One of the church's longtime (and generous) members describe to me such practice: "Leave what's political to politics, and leave what's spiritual to the church. 'Never the twain shall meet.'" As one of the pastors, I know the depth of love and commitment this individual has for our church. I have seen this love in action, yet the church has potential to be so much more than the limitations from any one person's perspective. To be clear, the individual was in no way threatening to withhold any level of support, but simply defining the church as they know it and as they have helped to create it to be. Time will tell if the love and commitment remain as the church expands beyond any one of our definitions.

It was into this church that I have been called to serve as the Associate Pastor of Missions. Upon receiving a call to this church, though I was excited, in many ways I felt as if I was being called to my "Nineveh." It was a place unknown to me, and full of a people I had stereotyped. Having grown up in Appalachia and at times receiving public assistance in childhood, I held prejudices against rich, city dwellers. As a young adult who had moved to the city to teach in an urban setting, and later serve an urban ministry while living within the community served, I was eventually healed of my stereotype against people from the city. Yet my stereotype against the rich remained.

During my last interview stage prior to receiving the call to Shadyside I had the opportunity to meet the other pastors on staff. The Executive Pastor, who would be my supervisor, asked, "Can you be a pastor to rich people? Can you love rich people?" Honestly, it was a fair question. I grew up in the Appalachian region of Ohio and attended a cinder-blocked school building through the seventh grade. Those of us who

were well behaved had the opportunity to help shovel coal to feed the furnace and clean dishes in the school cafeteria. My family always had more than we needed, even during those few times when we relied on public assistance. I was one of the few in my community to have an opportunity to attend college, where I was introduced to other cultures. From there, I moved to our state capital city to teach in the public schools in an economically depressed community. Following my culture shock, I was embraced into a local Black church where I sensed a call to ordained ministry. While in seminary I directed a non-profit housing ministry which rehabbed vacant row homes. We purchased a vacant home for \$1000 and this neighborhood became my community for three years prior to my call to Shadyside.

Though the “Can you love rich people?” question was both fair and important, I was initially taken aback by it before responding, “I have never allowed one’s socioeconomic status to define them. This is true of my former neighbors, and it will be true of my future parishioners.” The Senior Pastor replied, “I appreciate your thoughtful answer, and in loving rich people can you pastor them to be generous stewards of their time, treasure and talents?” I was relieved by this question and assured him I could live into such a calling.

In retrospect I understand that both of these pastors recognized the challenges of turning an historic church toward focusing beyond itself. These two pastors were supportive and, in fact, they were the ones who developed the Mission Pastor position. They recognized there would be some concern expressed by some members, yet they also recognized that the church was shifting in its desire to change its mission approach. I often return to both of the two questions posed by my colleagues because, when I’m

honest with myself, I recognize my deep-seeded prejudices against those of means and I recognize how such prejudice can lead toward an impatience on this collective journey toward justice. I also recognize that we have a growing minority of members who desire for us to engage missions more holistically, including efforts of engaging justice matters. Simultaneously, I have grown to love deeply these members and it is out of such love that I want them to experience justice as well. As a play on King's words, I believe promoting justice for anyone is a gift of justice to everyone. Justice is transformative for all.

Community Context

Approximately one year prior to entering this Doctor of Ministry program I took a sabbatical to reflect on the mission efforts of our congregation. Our congregation had celebrated our growing ministry of serving those in need within our community. Though I agreed we had much to celebrate, it was only during my sabbatical that I could look critically at our efforts. I recognized that our efforts were not projected to make significant long-term impacts. Our efforts were focused on assisting people with their current needs, but were less focused on helping people overcome their needs. And we were doing nothing to help prevent the needs within the community.

Through our local partners we were able to cook meals and serve dinners to the homeless. We collected food for shelters. We helped to rehab homes for first time home buyers and tended gardens in an urban farm. We hosted retreats for women who experienced abuse and for others who were bravely overcoming their addictions. We hosted women and children of a local shelter at our annual festival so our children could play alongside these children. We helped to move furniture donations to families who

had no furniture. We sang carols at the local jail and held clothes drives for others in need. We had become a church that was more active in its community, yet our service efforts were lacking relationships. And with relationships lacking, we were unable to understand the poverty and injustices which lead to the need for such charitable efforts.

The goal of this project has been to move a local church, Shadyside Presbyterian (PCUSA), beyond our missional acts of charity to include seeking and engaging justice in our greater community. Initially, I approached this project creating an unnecessary tension between acts of charity and acts of justice. It was my intent to move our church toward incorporating justice. Recognizing that justice work prevents need for charity, I feel that I became too critical toward acts of charity. Until God's Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven, the church is called to engage in both charity and justice. Throughout this process my language has changed from "charity toward justice" to statements such as "both charity and justice."

Through guided study, the church worked toward defining the differences between what we term as charity and what we understand as justice. Such study revealed the majority of our church's community encounters are charity based as we provided relief to pressing issues, caused in various degrees by injustices. To be clear, Christians and churches alike are called to acts of charity (ex. Matthew 25). Such charity will continue to be part of Shadyside's ministry within and beyond our own community yet we must have a holistic approach by including ministries of justice which work toward preventing such need for charity.

Through strategic study and biblical foundations, Shadyside is in the process of expanding its outreach to include efforts toward seeking and establishing justice. The

anger from the many deaths of Black people at the hands of police officers (and those claiming to be citizen police) culminated in the unjust murder of George Floyd. Like many communities within the United States, there were large and peaceful protests in Pittsburgh against the systemic racism. Such protests helped to unveil the racism in such a way that many White people seemed to newly understand. Affiliates with national organizations such as Black Lives Matter partnered with local grassroots efforts such as Black Young & Educated to maintain the momentum of daily and weekly protests. The vast majority of these protests were peaceful gatherings of hundreds and in some cases, perhaps thousands, which caused interruptions with traffic flow. A few individuals broke from the groups and caused property damage, but that was certainly the minority. Police often focused on redirecting traffic, but there were occasions when the splinter groups of individuals were arrested and tear gassed. This was repeated throughout the country. The demonstrations succeeded in keeping the veil of systemic racism lifted for all to see. Communities beyond the church renewed their pursuits for justice.

The church is called to participate and lead in such pursuits. As an initial step Shadyside Presbyterian determined to deepen our current community partner relationships by joining alongside their efforts toward establishing justice. We currently have eleven local partners with whom we mostly engage in charity efforts. For example, we collect food for East End Cooperative Ministry and provide holiday gifts to women of Sojourner House. However, a few of these partners are already engaged in justice efforts. It is with these partners that we grow our efforts toward addressing justice. In so doing, our church better lives into our call to do justice and model for other churches how an established church can expand its impact among a community.

Through such efforts, the intention is that Shadyside Presbyterian Church lives better into its call to do justice, and will gain anew its relevancy in our community through addressing relevant challenges within our community. To gain such relevancy the church must not only have an awareness of what is happening in its greater community, but it must be engaged in the happenings of its greater community. In addition, we do not yet know what the post-COVID-19 church looks like. However, it is clear in this day that community members are less and less likely to enter the doors of the church. This reality does not prevent the church's ability and call to both enter and engage its community. Our understanding and practice of mission will expand upon the role of responding to needs/crisis, to include practices to prevent such needs within the community. In collaboration with nonprofits and differing faith communities, we are strategically creating efforts of building for the Kingdom of God.

In his book *Surprised by Hope*, N.T. Wright set out to reclaim a biblical understanding of heaven. Heaven is the Kingdom of God, and God's Kingdom was established by Christ's incarnation and the Kingdom will be fulfilled upon Christ's return. In this in between time, humanity cannot build the kingdom, yet we build for the kingdom. The acts of the Church (and all of humanity) have eternal consequences. To be clear, though the Spirit moves us to join in God's Kingdom building, we are incapable of completing that task. God's Kingdom has been established by God, though we wait for this Kingdom to come "on earth as it is in heaven." We hold this waiting in tension with Christ words of assurance that the Kingdom is among us. This waiting is not a passive time of waiting. Our waiting is an active waiting. Though we cannot build the Kingdom

ourselves, we are able to build for the Kingdom, and justice is a vital outcome of the building process.

The intended impact of this project is multi-dimensional. Initially, the project focused narrowly on the members and attendees of Shadyside Presbyterian. Before we were able to expand our ministries toward justice efforts, through a book study of *Toxic Charity* in which approximately seventy members participated, we were led to understand the theological and social limitations of our current efforts. We eventually understood the limitations of charitable acts and became conscious of the potential long-term harm caused by narrowing solely on ministries of charity. Such knowledge transformed our understanding of ministry and we began exploring efforts to shift toward preventing the needs for the charity we offered. In so doing and alongside our local partners, we are drawn deeper into our community, albeit slowly, through this project.

Just over a decade ago Pittsburgh was deemed the “Most Livable City” in the United States. Just last year, it ranked third. Yet, as I will highlight later, Pittsburgh is one of the most challenging cities to live for African Americans. As we delved into the injustices within our community we became awakened to the racism associated with such injustices. We educated ourselves about systemic racism as we prepared to journey alongside community members (within and beyond those of the Christian faith) to interrupt and eradicate such injustices within our community. In this way, through collaboration, our collective efforts impact our community by drawing us closer together as community.

Understandably and ultimately, this project is intended to engage the community beyond Shadyside Presbyterian Church. The public toward which this project is intended

are the many “publics” incorporated within the members and friends of Shadyside Presbyterian. Collectively we continue our efforts to seek and do justice within our greater community, and I expect such efforts will unveil to our members the injustices within the communities from which they commute. The continuation of this project will expand beyond the limited timeframe of this study. Individuals within the church are being equipped to lead the congregation toward works of justice. Such works draw the church more deeply into engaging its community and the individuals within. This public ministry of the church becoming involved in its greater community serves as an example displaying how individuals can engage their communities. This is especially important for members of a “commuter church” such as Shadyside.

As stated, Pittsburgh is among one of the worst cities to live for Black people. A recent report conducted by the City of Pittsburgh examined health, income, employment, and education indicators for six sub-populations in Pittsburgh: White women, White men, Black women, Black men, AMLON (Asian, Multiracial, Latinx, Other, and Native American) women, and AMLON men.¹¹ Rated alongside comparable cities, Pittsburgh has the second highest rate of Black girls’ living in poverty. Fetal mortality is two times more likely in Black mothers than White, and Black women are three times more likely to give birth to babies with extremely low birth rate. Ten in every 10,000 Black boys die compared to three for White boys, which is higher than 93% of similar cities. Black young men (ages 18-24) are an

¹¹ Junia Howell, Sara Goodkind, Leah Jacobs, Dominique Branson and Elizabeth Miller. *Pittsburgh's Inequality across Gender and Race*. Gender Analysis White Papers (Pittsburgh, PA: City of Pittsburgh's Gender Equity Commission, 2019), 5, accessed December 16, 2020, https://apps.pittsburghpa.gov/redtail/images/10645_Pittsburgh's_Inequality_Across_Gender_and_Race_JULY_2020.pdf

astonishing 13 times more likely to die than White young men and 42 times more likely to die from homicide. Nearly 40 percent of Pittsburgh's Black adult women live in poverty and Black Women's poverty in Pittsburgh is higher than 85% as compared with other cities. The same percentage of cities have higher Black employment than Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh residents are more educated than most comparable cities, except for Pittsburgh's Black women, who have less education than Black women elsewhere. Pittsburgh high schools rank in bottom 20% for students taking ACT/SATs.¹² This study displayed clearly that Pittsburgh is not "most livable" for all of its residents.

In the months following the George Floyd murder some of these and related injustices were highlighted. Through the efforts of local grassroots (such as Black Young and Educated) and longtime established organizations (such as the Thomas Merton Center) the injustices have been consistently highlighted in the public square. The veil to racism, both individualized and systemic, had been lifted to our greater population. As the intent of this project was to include the awareness of systemic racism, what was happening in the public square opened the door for deep conversations amongst ourselves. I did not have to create a program for our congregation to become aware because our members were already becoming aware through the Black Lives Matter and related movements in response to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. Weekly demonstrations kept the murders and associated injustices fresh for our communities and as the veil of racism was lifted within Pittsburgh, the need for justice became ever so present. Members participated in some protests and vigils, yet

¹² Howell, Goodkind, Jacobs, Branson, and Miller, *Pittsburgh's Inequality across Gender and Race*, 14, 17, 20, 21, 25, 27, 36, 43, 46, 76.

as I have previously described, Shadyside is a church uncomfortable with the call for “justice.” The need for justice was apparent, and so too was our reluctance to utilize the term in expressing such need. It was time for us to claim justice through defining justice.

Defining Justice

In the late eight century BCE, the prophet Micah wrote about relevant issues of his time: Samaria’s fall, Jerusalem’s expansion and Assyria’s aggression. The book of Micah offers a socio-theological understanding of these events and, like all Biblical prophets, Micah called for the actions of his society to align with the will of God. He didn’t mince words when it came to both judgment and hope. And Micah 6:8 remains a rallying cry for God’s people: “He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8 [NRSV]). Though this was neither the first nor the last cry, it has become a central text for God’s people to “do justice.”

The challenge is not the term “justice,” but the interpretation thereof. Because of the term’s various interpretations, the word “justice” is often preceded by an adjective. The church is most familiar with terms such as Biblical justice and social justice, yet there are numerous descriptions of justice within theological and social writings. The way leaders and churches strive toward doing justice is directed by how they understand justice. One article cites three categories of justice: 1) *Distributive* justice is concerned with the just entitlement to and fair distribution of societal resources. 2) *Corrective* justice is concerned with making wrongs right. 3) *Procedural* justice is concerned with

how decisions are made.¹³ Each of these categories seems to be subcategories of the justice the people of God are to do, especially from a Public Theology perspective.

Through the guidance of the Spirit the church is called to stand for what is fair, to right what is wrong *and* to give voice to how decisions are made.

“Justice” can be defined in additional categories. Another author argued, “Contemporary catalogues of justice tend to define the concept into three concepts: social justice, concerned with the well-being of those *within* a political state; international justice, concerned with relationship *between* political states; and criminal justice, concerned with the fair execution of the laws *of* a political state.”¹⁴ These definitions intentionally direct us toward seeking justice beyond our own communities. Often times those affected by “international” injustice can seem closer to us than those who are victims of “criminal” injustice. Though I appreciate the author’s perspective of directing her readers beyond their own communities, I feel that criminal justice should be coupled with social justice. The mass incarceration practices of our society are not only about the fair execution of laws (criminal justice), but perhaps a greater concern for the well-being of those within a political state (social justice). For definition’s sake, I would also place the categories listed in the prior paragraph (distributive, corrective, and procedural) under the category of social justice. We could continue creating additional justice categories under the already categorized “justices.” Perhaps this will be a necessary step in “doing” justice, but the paper is seeking signposts to lead the church toward the broad theme of justice.

¹³ Rich Janzen, et al., “Just Faith? A National Survey Connecting Faith and Justice within the Christian Reformed Tradition,” *Review of Religious Research* 58, no 2 (2016): 230.

¹⁴ Amy Lindeman Allen, “What the Bible Has to Do with It: God’s Justice and Social Justice in Matthew’s Gospel Account,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 46, no 4 (2019): 4.

The term justice will be used more broadly throughout this paper. For the sake of this writing I am defining justice in a way in which it “retains a more basic grounding in what is ‘right’ or ‘fair’ or ‘just’ in the course of human affairs.”¹⁵ To be clear, justice used in this manner does not negate the aforementioned categories, but encompasses each while giving more leverage to the “social justice” definition.

It seems that the biblical mandate is to pursue justice, but the Church seems stuck on providing charity. To be fair to the Church, biblical texts do call the church to acts of charity as well. In fact, Matthew 25:31-46 could be viewed as a call toward charity: for the church is to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome strangers, clothe the naked, care for the sick and visit the imprisoned. These verses do not speak to the need for systemic change. They do not call on the church to work toward the justice of ending hunger, nor eradicating poverty. In fact, Matthew later records Christ as stating, “For you always have the poor with you...” (Mt. 25:11 [NRSV]), which is too often misunderstood as meaning we should simply accept this fact. The Church must continue with its acts of charity, but the Church’s work should not be limited to such acts.

Author Amy Lindeman Allen makes the case that Matthew stands out as a biblical text through which one can explore concepts of God’s justice. She continues that Matthew “stands out not because of its disproportionate references to justice, but rather, because of disproportionate references to it, specifically Matthew’s 25th chapter, in discussing issues of justice – both social and personal.”¹⁶ I appreciate the claim that Matthew is focused on justice, but the texts she highlights seem to be charity responses.

¹⁵ Allen, “What the Bible Has to Do with It: God’s Justice and Social Justice in Matthew’s Gospel Account,” 6.

¹⁶ Allen, “What the Bible Has to Do with It: God’s Justice and Social Justice in Matthew’s Gospel Account,” 5.

Specifically feeding the poor, welcoming the stranger, clothing the naked, caring for the sick and visiting the imprisoned (Matthew 25:31-40). However, it is an interesting point Allen makes when she argues that translating the Greek *dikaionunai*, used in Matthew, as *justice* enables the reader to understand “more holistically as a part of God’s loving desire for God’s people to observe the law and the prophets in such a way that justice, mercy, and faith join together for the sake of the other (Matthew 23:23). This is, a *social justice*.”¹⁷

Our holy scriptures call us to participate in charitable acts: to give to those in need. As mentioned, the church too often settles into this practice and fails to take on the more challenging work to which the church is called: doing justice. In describing an effort of promoting and engaging social justice alongside a congregation, Allen described how a member expressed, “I just don’t see what the *Bible* has to do with *Justice!*” When Allen pressed the woman to explain, Allen found that the woman “didn’t mind justice. What she had a problem with was social justice. Social justice, she felt, was too political for church.”¹⁸

I believe Allen’s experience is not unique to her church. Unfortunately, it seems that the term “justice” has been hijacked by political commentary. Preceding justice with “social” increases the complexity. “The Bible talks about justice in terms of relationships between human beings and other humans (Dt. 20:19; 22:6; Rv. 11:18). Justice is a clear sign of the kingdom of God both present and future, an ethical requirement that is as

¹⁷ Allen, “What the Bible Has to Do with It: God’s Justice and Social Justice in Matthew’s Gospel Account,” 7-8.

¹⁸ Allen, “What the Bible Has to Do with It: God’s Justice and Social Justice in Matthew’s Gospel Account,” 4.

personal as it is social.”¹⁹ Justice, particularly social justice, is not apolitical. I believe the church would do well to embrace the reality that doing justice is intertwined with the political structure of the culture in which it resides. The church must clearly state that it engages politics for justice’s sake, and not that it is seeking justice for political sake. Though pursuing justice may be political, I do not believe it to be partisan. If a political party aligns with the church’s pursuit of justice it would be welcome, but I don’t believe the church should align itself with a political party.

There seems to be a leaning of the church toward engaging society at a superficial level and not engaging society at a deep level. At times the church pulls away from the society, and at other times the society pulls from the church. Author Ron Sider argues that one “factor that exacerbated the division between spiritual and social work in the early twentieth century was the rise of scientific philanthropy. This systematic approach to social services separated the concept of charity, meaning the provision of material aid, from correction, which referred to reform and conversion.”²⁰ He continued his thought stating this “new approach decoupled the religious mandate for social service from the goal of engendering spiritual change in others through service.”²¹ In other words, the rise of philanthropy fueled the hesitancy of the church to engage societal injustices, while taking comfort in responding to those injustices through acts of charity.

It seems that Christian philanthropy is at risk to either buying into or supporting the theological misunderstanding that we must merely survive this world before making it

¹⁹ Alfonso Wieland, “Social Justice and the Mission of the Church,” *Journal of Latin American Theology* 11, no 1 (2016): 99.

²⁰ Unruh and Sider, *Saving Souls, Serving Society: Understanding the Faith Factor in Church-Based Social Ministry*, 165.

²¹ Unruh and Sider, *Saving Souls, Serving Society: Understanding the Faith Factor in Church-Based Social Ministry*, 165.

into the glory of heaven. If the purpose of life on this earth is simply to be saved from it so we may make it to heaven, there is little reason for investment in this life. However, if we embrace the words of the Lord's Prayer that "thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," we must be open to a fresh understanding regarding life on earth. Darrell Guder suggests we need to push against the tendency of thinking, "Salvation is a question of 'where one spends eternity' rather than the larger biblical witness to the restorative and salvific reign of God breaking in now, whose consummation is yet to come."²²

Author Jack Jezreel believes that too many churches are missing out on their calling to envision justice within their communities. He states, "The most repeated phrase in the four gospels is 'The Reign of God,' and that phrase provides a mission statement for our lives."²³ Jezreel makes the point that our mission is to be sent out into the world to establish justice, and gathering for worship prepares us to be sent out. Unfortunately, too many churches gather without embracing their calling to be sent. "Gathering disconnected from sending ultimately mutates into something less than the Gospel and something less than what is so very compelling about Jesus and the church he inspired."²⁴ Churches that emphasize gathering and not sending, no longer even do gathering well, for we lose a sense of what we are gathering for.²⁵ Gathering equips the church to engage the community and seek for justice to be established within the

²² Darrell L. Guder, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 69.

²³ Jack Jezreel, "Gospel Driven Communities: Being a Church with the Biblical Vision of Justice," *Congregations* 39, no 2 (2012): 16.

²⁴ Jezreel, "Gospel Driven Communities: Being a Church with the Biblical Vision of Justice," 16.

²⁵ Jezreel, "Gospel Driven Communities: Being a Church with the Biblical Vision of Justice," 16.

community. Worship without doing justice is not worship at all. “The prophet Micah makes it clear that spirituality is made evident especially in concrete actions.

Participating in rituals does not suffice for him.”²⁶ Nor should it suffice for the church.

The church was established to look beyond itself, and to do so from engaging the greater community to which it belongs. When injustices are witnessed, the church is to intervene. “Activism is not tangential or secondary to religious commitment but an essential part of the mission to which God calls followers. Likewise, being a ‘prophetic voice’ means not only proclaiming the good news but also calling attention to the systematic ‘denial of God’s abundance’ perpetuated by social and political institutions.”²⁷ This is the biblical mandate for the church, to pursue justice specifically for those who exist on the margins of society. This may lead the church toward confronting those in power. The church would do well to heed to the reminder of author Jonathon Wilson-Hartgrove: “Jesus’ harshest words are reserved for religious leaders who used their spiritual authority to cover for political leaders and business elites.”²⁸

Justice as Community

Over the last decade Shadyside Presbyterian has established numerous partnerships both locally and globally. This project focuses on our wide range of local partners: a private, college-preparatory school for economically distressed students, a non-profit assisting residents to build wealth through first-time home ownership, a jail

²⁶ Dominiek Lootens, “Isabel Allende: An Inescapable Call: Practicing Charity and Social Justice.” *ET Studies* 3, no 1 (2012): 104.

²⁷ John D. Delehanty, “Prophets of Resistance: Social Justice Activists Contesting Comfortable Church Culture,” *Sociology of Religion* 77, no 1 (2016): 49.

²⁸ Wilson-Hartgrove, *Revolution of Values: Reclaiming Public Faith for the Common Good*, 39.

ministry which focuses on reducing recidivism, an urban farm located in one of Pittsburgh's food deserts, a homeless shelter which equips residents to reenter the job force, and shelters for women overcoming drug addictions.

A decade ago we shifted toward a relational approach to our mission efforts. In many ways we have succeeded. We have built relationships with our partners through our active engagements and volunteerism with their ministries. Such interactions and commitments have led to numerous members being invited to serve on the boards of these organizations. We host the leaders, mostly the directors and CEO's, to offer presentations and lead discussions with the church. In our survey, ninety-six percent of our members can name two or more of our local partners. A partner is highlighted in each Sunday bulletin and we often highlight "ministry opportunities" during the welcoming portion of our liturgy.

With that, the overwhelming majority of our interactions with our partners are focused on works of charity: We provide meals to students and homeless; we help to rehabilitate and restore homes; we plant and harvest crops; we offer retreats and social events to women who are overcoming addiction. We have realized that our partnering relationships are most often focused on relationships with the leaders of the ministries, and we are not investing in relationships with participants/clients of those ministries. In addition, a few of our partners engage in justice issues, but we are not partnering in those endeavors. Our efforts support their charity projects/programs and, if not interpreted theologically, our efforts become self-serving as we experience the benefits of helping those in need. If we are not careful, the privileged joy found by serving those in need supersedes the underprivileged injustices of living with need. If left unchecked, the joy

gained through serving others prevents us from questioning why such community members live in such need. Service, solely as acts of charity, becomes self-fulfilling and the individual we focus upon becomes ourselves.

Nearly every author in my research touched on the need for the church to shift from an individual focus toward a communal focus, especially when the church strives toward justices. This is true for our seeking of justice *with* a community and our seeking of justice *as* a community. “We must emphasize that the responsibility of doing justice does not correspond to just one person or one specialized institution but rather to the entire body of Christ, in the context of recognizing the gifts and talents of some to work in a more concentrated way in this area.”²⁹ Together, as the body of Christ, each member can offer their effort toward justice. In so doing, relationships are strengthened. This is true for churches as well, who are also members of Christ’s body. “Charity or aid in the Church, in the absence of horizontal relationships between and among churches, can rob people of everything that constitutes their being and essence.”³⁰ Horizontal relationships must certainly extend beyond individuals, and they must extend beyond faith communities to social agencies as well.

One step toward preventing such individualized focus is for us to serve through partnerships with other ministries and non-profit organization. A decade ago Shadyside Presbyterian chose to leave the walls of our building and explore what God is up to in our community. We found the homeless being fed and we joined in these efforts. We saw houses being transformed for first time home buyers and we joined in. We heard of a vision to transform vacant lots to urban gardens, and we joined these efforts. We saw a

²⁹ Wieland, “Social Justice and the Mission of the Church,” 100.

³⁰ Laurenti Magesa C., “The Priority of Justice Over Charity,” *AFER* 29 (1987): 354.

school addressing systemic racism and poverty one student at a time and we joined these efforts as well. We intentionally chose not to create our own ministry, but to join in the ministries already present in the community. These partnerships help us to maintain a balance between focusing on ourselves and on others. This new vision led us beyond ourselves and introduced us to the challenges faced within our greater communities.

To critique our decade long efforts, I developed a mission leadership team by inviting ten members who have led one of our various mission committees within the past six years to assess our current partnerships. Together, in self-reflection, we have realized that our partnerships are based on individual (as opposed to communal) relationships. With a desire to reengage our partners, the mission leaders within the church have met (virtually due to COVID) with our partnering organization to explore ways that we may become more engaged in their justice efforts (if such efforts exist) and if such efforts do not exist, to see if our partner would be willing to brainstorm with us how, together, we may partner in justice efforts affiliated with their causes. To initiate that conversation, our mission leadership team met with and discussed the following questions with our partners:

- a. Please define your community and describe how your organization is meeting the needs of your community.
- b. Could you give examples of how you are preparing participants of your ministry for success (and autonomy and ongoing community engagement)?
- c. Could you share some praises and critical feedback that you have heard directly from your ministry participants?
- d. How do you view your partnership with SPC, and how can SPC deepen its engagement with your ministry participants?
- e. What are some concerns for your community and how could we partner with you in addressing and preventing those challenges?

A common thread found in my research for churches to engage justice was a repeating theme that “we must partner with other civil groups for the sake of promoting and respecting human rights.”³¹ If the Church claims the identity of the Body of Christ, then just as Christ engaged those outside his own faith tradition, the Church is to continue that practice of the incarnation. Christ’s ministry reached beyond his own insular community, so the Church must reach beyond itself as well. David Claerbaut suggests, “If the incarnation of Christ is taken seriously, then the church must see itself as continuing the incarnation. The Christian church must act as Christ’s hands, feet, and eyes in the world. It must both preach a message and perform a ministry – just as Christ did,”³² The incarnation was not meant to benefit the church alone, nor was it meant to engage society alone. “Jesus does not simply call us to be faithful individuals, but to be His body, His community, promising to be with us when two or more group together in His name (Matthew 18:20).”³³ This calling to be part of something greater than oneself, and greater than an insular community, is countercultural in our society.

Dominiek Lootens reflects on making the ethical values of charity and social justice concrete in our Western society, and does so through by focusing on a specific South-American activist. He relies on the work of social philosopher Harry Kunneman, and more specifically his concept of the “thick-I” culture of Western society. The “thick-I” stands for “intemperance, never having enough, making oneself thick at the cost of others and having a thick skin for their suffering. Emphasis is placed on self-interest and

³¹ Wieland, “Social Justice and the Mission of the Church,” 100.

³² David Claerbaut, *Urban Ministry in a New Millennium* (Waynesboro; Authentic Media, 2005), 15.

³³ Diana R. Garland and Gaynor I. Yancey, *Congregational Social Work: Christian Perspectives* (Botsford: North American Association of Christians in Social Work, 2014), 204-205.

the right of the strongest.”³⁴ There comes a time when an individual must ask, “Should I take up my responsibility and stand up for charity and social justice?” Justice work is communal, yet an individual must make the choice to accept such a calling and to enter into it. Rich Janzen suggest the most prevalent example of a religiously specific obstacle to justice mobilization suggested in literature is a trend toward pietistic individualism; a spiritual prioritizing of nurturing individual faith at the expense of encouraging robust engagement with social issues.³⁵ Unless the individual joins the movement of the faith community, the faith of that individual is limited. And unless the individual community joins God’s movement in its greater community, the faith of that individual community is limited. In a highly individualistic culture it is possible for communities to be “individualistic” as well, and churches within this society have a tendency to fall into this category.

God calls us together as a gathered community, and then God sends us out into the world as a sent community. The individualism which is ever present within our culture more often than not prevents the church from being the church. As the gathered community, members are to care for one another, and they must collectively look beyond themselves as well. Darrell Guder highlights the dilemma stating, “Perhaps one of the most widely held convictions among missiologists of virtually all traditions is that God’s chosen instrument for mission is the particular community, the congregation.”³⁶ He, also, affirms that the “emphasis upon the corporate and the communal, which the congregation

³⁴ Lootens, “Isabel Allende: An Inescapable Call: Practicing Charity and Social Justice,” 92.

³⁵ Janzen, et al., “Just Faith? A National Survey Connecting Faith and Justice Within the Christian Reformed Tradition,” 232.

³⁶ Guder, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology*, 104.

represents, clashes with powerful components of the culture that shapes us. It is especially challenged by modern individualism.”³⁷

Since the Second World War, individualism has increasingly prevailed as a cultural narrative even in congregations whose theologies are more communitarian.³⁸ Perhaps individualism is in the DNA of our culture, where certain peoples were promised inalienable rights. The establishment of our nation was far different than the establishment of the church, where “The common objective was to live with God and one another in a way that represented right relationship for the sake not just of the individual but of the whole society and, indeed, the world (Gen12:1-3; Matthew 28:18-20).”³⁹

In his book *Where Do We Go from Here? Chaos or Community*, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led us to continue looking beyond individualism toward the injustices formed by it. King had been on the forefront of the movement which secured the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and in this book he reflects back only momentarily while focusing on the movement’s momentum and future. In speaking of “alliance politics” he states, “Some churches recognize that to be relevant in moral life they must make equality an imperative. With them the basis for alliance is strong and enduring.”⁴⁰ King continued and spoke of humanity’s interdependence. He, and so many others, recognized our nation’s inability to fathom such notions.

³⁷ Guder, *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology*, 104.

³⁸ Delehanty, “Prophets of Resistance: Social Justice Activists Contesting Comfortable Church Culture,” 43.

³⁹ Allen, “What the Bible Has to Do with It: God’s Justice and Social Justice in Matthew’s Gospel Account,” 6.

⁴⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010), 159.

Author Diana Garland refers to interdependence as “reciprocity.” She explains, “There is no poverty deeper than having nothing to give to others.”⁴¹ Having something to give, something to offer, relates to the claim that all are members of Christ’s body and there is a true need from each member. With that, Jin-Kwan Kwon makes the point “If reciprocity is the core of justice as many political philosophers argue, it does not consider the prevalent disparity of power, intelligence, property and self-esteem of the parties involved in the process of constructing justice through discourses and practices.”⁴² Serious consideration must be taken in Kwon’s point, and the result may be found in combining King’s need for “equality” as a precursor to the understanding of interdependence, or reciprocity as Garland describes. Vincent Lloyd suggests, “From a theological perspective, it is always important to emphasize interdependence, to emphasize community solidarity over individual success, to emphasize common good over consumer goods.”⁴³ This theological perspective has been emphasized at Shadyside, which continues growing to recognize its interdependence with its partners. Such interdependence helps us to understand community, and how injustices impact all community members. This understanding is a step in our justice efforts as we continue deepening relationships while journeying with our partners.

Toward Justice

When I began my tenure at Shadyside Presbyterian Church in 2008 I was given the freedom (and support) to restructure our mission program. This position afforded me

⁴¹ Garland and Yancey, *Congregational Social Work: Christian Perspectives*, 184.

⁴² Jin-Kwan Kwon, “Justice is Church’s Mission,” *Estudos de Religião* 32, no 3 (2018): 279.

⁴³ Vincent Lloyd, “Thick or Thin? Liberal Protestant Public Theology,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 42, no 2 (2014): 345.

the opportunity to engage our greater community so that I could get to know the church through the community's perspective. Those living within Shadyside were appreciative of the musical concerts offered. Those living within Shadyside with young children spoke highly of our pre-school. Those living outside of the Shadyside neighborhood knew us as "the rich church." And the local ministries and non-profits knew us as the place to apply for funding, but to not bother looking for volunteers from this church. From a mission perspective, we understood ourselves as a mini-foundation in that we received annual "grant requests" and supported such requests without engaging in long-term relationships.

Upon receiving this call to serve Shadyside Presbyterian, I met with Elders and mission committee members and proposed a restructure of our mission ministries in such a way they would promote relationships. First, we began asking ourselves, "What is God up to in the East End of Pittsburgh?" This question led us to numerous non-profit ministries with whom we began partnering. We began investing our time in journeying alongside these partners and our maturing mission leaders "invited others into ministry" (as opposed to "recruited volunteers"). I encouraged this language so our members would be continuously reminded, as members of Christ's body, we were joining in God's efforts. Members entered the community with a gravitas, understanding God was already present in the community. Our task was to seek God's presence in the community members with whom we were interacting. Mission began taking priority and, eventually, new Deacons and Elders identified mission as being their connection and inspiration to church leadership. Our partnerships included opportunities to serve in schools, homeless and women's shelters, housing ministries, urban farms, national and international

journeys as we grew in relationship with our partners. Like some churches our “mission program” carried us beyond our sanctuary, and beyond the Shadyside neighborhood of Pittsburgh.

Like Shadyside Presbyterian Church, the majority of American churches engage in charitable and civic activities but stop short of seeking change to the underlying structural causes of socioeconomic racial disparities. Less than one-fifth of American religious attendees have been invited by their churches to participate in a political rally or demonstration.⁴⁴ For too many, church begins and ends on Sunday morning. Though, for others, relationship with God continues beyond personal and communal worship. For these, there is a desire to live beyond a private faith but to incorporate that faith into daily living. “The expectation is not to do good works for those in need because it is the law, but rather, to recognize that it is the law because it reflects one’s right relationship with God and humanity.”⁴⁵ Just as we are to have horizontal relationships with one another, we are to have a vertical relationship with God. Worship serves as an introduction to live into this right relationship, a relationship that carries us into our lives beyond Sunday morning. And just as this relationship carries us beyond Sunday morning, our relationship with God leads us beyond the sanctuary and into the community.

In speaking of a church engaging its community in our context, author Amy Lindeman Allen states, “In a society that affirms the separation of church and state, it is perhaps most prudent if the church attempts to accomplish reform by regularly reminding

⁴⁴ Delehanty, “Prophets of Resistance: Social Justice Activists Contesting Comfortable Church Culture,” 42.

⁴⁵ Allen, “What the Bible Has to Do with It: God’s Justice and Social Justice in Matthew’s Gospel Account,” 8.

the institutions of power of their obligation to dispense justice.”⁴⁶ Seeking justice means creating changes in the systems that perpetuate complex social problems such as school failure, poverty, and family and community violence and replacing them with systems that give all persons access to the resources they need to flourish.⁴⁷ With too many injustices within our society, the church may feel paralyzed as it determines how to make that initial step toward seeking justice. It will benefit the church to continuously be reminded “social justice must be connected not to guilt, but to grace and to the gospel of Good News for all.”⁴⁸

Unfortunately, sometimes charity enables structural injustice situations to remain, and this is antithetical to human dignity. This is true when charity leaves unjust structures intact, perpetuates them or, even worse, creates them. For example, Shadyside supports and participates in a local program which provides food to families in need. The program was intended to provide emergency need to families, yet numerous families have become dependent upon this charitable service. Food continues to be provided without attempts of addressing the causes of poverty, including the need for living wages and addressing food deserts within this community. This is not to mention the psychological impact of dependency. It is often those who benefit from the unjust structures who are in the forefront, because they are in a position to dispatch this charity.⁴⁹ King argued that as the movement toward justice continues we will need to assess the justice of past and present practices and policies. Connecting his theological insights with his understanding of the political structure, King’s public theology is on

⁴⁶ Claerbaut, *Urban Ministry in a New Millennium*, 24.

⁴⁷ Garland and Yancey, *Congregational Social Work: Christian Perspectives*, 185.

⁴⁸ Garland and Yancey, *Congregational Social Work: Christian Perspective*, 188.

⁴⁹ Magesa, “The Priority of Justice Over Charity,” 351.

display when he wrote, “We are called to play the Good Samaritan on life’s roadside; but that will be only an initial act. One day the whole Jericho Road must be transformed so that men and women will not be beaten and robbed as they make their journey through life.”⁵⁰ He adds, “True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it understands that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.”⁵¹ King speaks truth to the need for the church to recognize its charitable acts as a beginning, and not an ending. The charity provides an opportunity for relationship, and the relationship gives a fresh perspective on the “edifice” at the core of the social issue. Such relationships provide opportunity for a new perspective. The one with the new perspective becomes aware of the need for the restructuring of which King speaks.

In John Perkins’ *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race and Love*, he reflects on his life’s work and how he hopes for it to continue. His work with the Christian Community Development Association serves as a model connecting the church with the public square. At the core of Perkins’ writing is his deep desire for what he calls “Biblical reconciliation” and defines this as “the removal of tension between parties and the restoration of loving relationship.”⁵² I see similarities to King’s call toward interdependence when Perkins states, “The closer we get to one another, the easier it will be for the fear to go away.”⁵³ He argues that as Christian brothers and sisters we are “one blood” and that, unfortunately, society has bought into the lie that there are different races of people. He argues that we must accept that there is only one race – one blood.⁵⁴ Like

⁵⁰ King, *Where do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*, 198.

⁵¹ King, *Where do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?*, 198.

⁵² John M. Perkins, *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race and Love* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2018), 17.

⁵³ Perkins, *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race and Love*, 164.

⁵⁴ Perkins, *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race and Love*, 146.

King, Perkins calls for unity and reconciliation and believes the church is the place to start. Though I certainly agree with this, I feel that part of Perkins writings could be interpreted as “one blood” being limited to Christians. I appreciate his dedication to the unity of the Church, but feel the movement could benefit from a united effort of interfaith collaboration as well. I especially feel this is important that neighboring faiths unify in justice efforts.

Rev. Dr. William Barber II wrote, “Jesus language was justice language – good news for the poor, freedom for prisoners, healing for the sick and oppressed.”⁵⁵ In leading the church toward both embracing and establishing justice I appreciate Barber’s interfaith efforts when he stated, “But I was careful to acknowledge that my Holy Bible as not the only holy book. When I or another minister stood to preach, we never stood alone. We stood with Christian, Jewish, and Muslim clerics surrounding us...”⁵⁶ Because Barber reaches across his own faith tradition in seeking justice, I do not view him as being less Christian. I actually view him as practicing his holy book’s instruction to journey alongside those who are at the margins of society. I embrace Barber’s embrace of other faiths while remaining true to his own faith and practice thereof.

Wilson-Hartgrove also encourages both ecumenical and interfaith collaboration, as he states, “But we who claim to follow Jesus must do it alongside people of every race, creed, religion, and culture because the moral crisis of our time continues under the leadership of men and women who claim the blessing of our God.”⁵⁷ This “moral crises

⁵⁵ William J. Barber, *The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2016), 36.

⁵⁶ Barber, *The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear*, 105.

⁵⁷ Wilson-Hartgrove, *Revolution of Values: Reclaiming Public Faith for the Common Good*, 173.

of our time” continues beyond the church’s engagement with other faith communities. We must also ask, “What does the world look like when more and more Christians integrate their political activity around the logic of the religious bias that everyone is precious in God’s eyes.”⁵⁸ Again, for the church to embrace its inherited relevancy it must be willing to engage in relevant issues faced within and beyond its community. And the church must be willing to engage at a deep level beyond its reactionary responses. As one author stated, “Whence, therefore, does charity find its authentic expression? Quite simply, in doing justice.”⁵⁹

After nearly a decade of ministry and following a prolonged search for a Senior Pastor, the church agreed to my request for a sabbatical where I could reflect on our growth in mission. Along with the church I celebrated our growth, yet in retrospect I got a bit ahead of our church with my critique. We had a programming structure that provided opportunity for us to respond to many challenges afflicting our community. Through our various mission partners, we had a broad reach into the community. However, I sensed that our depth in the community failed to match our breadth.

During my sabbatical I spent time attempting to see what I was missing while I was in the busyness of ministry. It soon became apparent to me that though our growth in relationships and member engagement was significant, our efforts focused on what I describe as charity: We were responding to the issues that affected our greater community, but we were neither attempting to prevent them nor were we addressing the injustices which led to such issues. I was energized with a new focus upon the sabbatical completion, but unfortunately rumblings between the church and the new senior pastor

⁵⁸ Jezreel, “Gospel Driven Communities: Being a Church with the Biblical Vision of Justice,” 18.

⁵⁹ Magesa, “The Priority of Justice Over Charity,” 353.

emerged as well. The church faced yet another transition following an unsuccessful tenure, and ministries across the board lost momentum.

In the midst of this transition the mission leadership team surveyed the congregation to learn our members' general understanding of mission. Recognizing some of the hesitancy within our congregation for embracing the term "justice," I developed a congregational survey to assess the openness of our membership to explore justice issues while refraining from using the term. I was intentionally attempting to prevent the reaction to a term while assessing the openness to engage in justice related efforts. I used terms and phrases such as "prevention" and "root causes" to assess openness to justice while using terms such as "immediate need" to assess preferences for charity-based responses. Approximately sixty-percent of our worshipping congregation responded, which was quite similar to a survey conducted for our Senior Pastor search. Ninety percent of respondents stated they had participated in a mission event within the walls of SPC, while just less than seventy percent stated they had participated in a mission event beyond the walls of SPC. Just over fifty percent prefer tangible, short-term projects as compared to just less than forty percent preferring consistent, long-term relationships. Just over half felt we should focus on "responding to needs" while nearly sixty-five percent prefer we focus on "solving the issues" which lead to such needs. Interestingly, nearly seventy-five percent feel that it is important that our Senior Pastor be engaged in our mission partnerships/relationships. One surprise in the survey was that nearly sixty-percent of respondents felt our focus should be on local partnerships as compared to ten-percent preferring an international focus.

The mission leaders were encouraged that a greater percentage of members would prefer we address the cause of issues as compared to responding to issues. Though the term “justice” was not included in the survey, we interpreted the findings that the church seems quite open to justice focused causes in addition to charity based causes. In hindsight, I wish we would have been more explicit with questions later in the survey, including terms such as justice. This survey was conducted prior to the wider recognition of systemic racism post the George Floyd murder. I do believe our survey would now skew more toward justice overall, with a minority among our congregation having greater discomfort with the justice term.

Following the survey results, the mission leadership felt that the strong emphasis on local partnerships coupled with the preference to solve issues plaguing the community were ideal responses which suggest there may be significant support for the church to begin addressing injustices within the community. As stated, approximately sixty percent of our worshipping congregation participated in the survey, and two-thirds of those completing the survey had participated in a mission opportunity “beyond the walls of Shadyside Presbyterian Church.” In essence, the majority of the members who took the mission survey were the very same members who participated in our mission efforts. Those who have been most engaged in mission are the ones who completed the survey. And though they had not been engaged in justice related efforts, they seemed most interested in engaging in the attributes of justice related ministries. The survey helped me to understand that a significant portion of our congregation would support justice so long as the efforts toward justice are clearly defined. Following the survey, I felt

confident that at least in theory/theology, enough of our membership agreed we should move forward with expanding our mission toward incorporating justice efforts.

I entered this Doctor of Ministry program and shared with the congregation a Prezi presentation entitled, *SPC Missions: Present and Future* in which nearly 90 people attended. I opened the presentation highlighting our current ministry through our partnerships and celebrating the shift in missions throughout the prior decade. Following the energizing celebration, I posted a slide on the screen stating, “That’s a lot...but what are we missing?” I shared the story of a fisherman who jumped in the river to save someone who was floating downstream, only to find another person floating downstream. The fisherman recruited people who succeeded in helping to rescue the people in the river. I explained that this is the story of our mission efforts, but it is time to send a group “upstream” to find out why so many people are in the river. I also shared some biblical passages that call the church to do justice. I suggested that we conduct a book study of *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (And How to Reverse It)*. I was surprised by the limited pushback to the discussion and pleased that nearly 70 members agreed to join the study. I expected the gathering to be more critical of my critique, but in hindsight I feel that I balanced the critique with celebrating accomplishments and encouraging deeper growth. I led discussion groups and found that I touched upon another aspect of diversity within our church: some members embraced the teachings of the book, some members would have preferred to burn the book. Interestingly, but not necessarily surprising, was the fact that those who were most engaged in our mission efforts were among those who were most offended by the book. There is a common (and perhaps pious) phrase often repeated by church members who

participate in mission endeavors: “I benefitted more than those who I was serving.” This study helped us to take ownership of our individualism and to see the hypocrisy in the truth of this statement. I knew this reading would be especially difficult for a few of our members who have expressed that very phrase.

I reached out to these members before they got the book in their hands. I wanted to prepare them for the difficult read, and assure them that my plan was to continue with our (healthy) charitable works alongside our partners. This helped to prevent some anxiety among some members, but there were others I had overlooked and they had adverse reactions as well. Several exclaimed, “Maybe we should not do anything because everything we are doing is apparently causing problems.” I addressed this both individually and at my following presentation. In these conversations I attempted to prevent guilt from leading toward anger, and expressed the challenges (and pain) of growth.

I chose *Toxic Charity* because it is relevant to our ministries and it is accessible and quite direct. As I explained in the follow up presentation when we reviewed the book together, I chose this book even though I knew it may cause “whiplash” for our view of missions. Members expressed the following: Feelings of guilt for efforts; Felt indicted for efforts; Book shared too much of what doesn’t work. We talked through such feelings before turning to possibilities when members expressed the following: Build independence, not dependence; Build relationships; Embrace humility and learn from those we are serving. This set us in the direction of thinking differently as we recognize our mission efforts are not only include our responses to needs, but also an effort to identify the root causes of such needs.

I knew we would not be able to ignore the book's teaching so I proposed that we embark on an "upstream" journey. I built upon the fisherman analogy and pointed out we have a strong team rotating in to provide assistance to those in distress. I emphasized again that we must continue this work. But I added that we must also pull a team aside, and have that team travel upstream to see what is causing so many to become caught in the river's currents.

This analogy worked for our congregation and it provided a foundation for additional exploration. In preparation for next steps I conducted a SWOT analysis with the highlights listed below:

- **Strengths** – History, music, engaged members, select staff, engagement in charitable acts (reactionary) within and beyond community, community partnerships, financial endowment – congregational giving, pared down membership, facility, location, nursery school.
- **Weaknesses** – Desire a return to history (pillar of denomination), focus on the good ol' days (desire for future is a return to the past), the 20 percent, no trespassing signs, transitions (including interims, five senior pastors in last eight years), staffing model, protection of facilities/endowments, fearful trustees, inside the box thinking, safe leadership, internal focus.
- **Opportunities** – Currently in transition, Engagement with community and vice/versa (inviting community in), greater collaboration among programs, by university campuses, move from reactionary mission/response toward prevention efforts (justice and advocacy), tap into parishioners commitment, vibrant/growing neighborhood, transition – opportunity for risk taking.
- **Threats** – "Apolitical," Hot button topics (theological diverse congregation with fear of offending one another/being offended), politics and the inability to engage with issues considered political, membership decline, decline in giving, lack of vision that could unite, a few lay leaders who carry power/authority are a threat because their inability to collaborate/hear ideas, being comfortable.

In addition to the SWOT analysis a Force Field analysis was also conducted with the following results:

1. Identify a goal or course of action that involves a change.

To move beyond reactionary mission/outreach toward including preventative (justice, advocacy, upstream) efforts.

2. List forces for and against to proposed change.

Driving Forces

- a. *Justice*
- b. *Equality*
- c. *Relationships*
- d. *Mission Pastor*
- e. *Preventing Issues*
- f. *Kingdom Work*

Restraining Forces

- a. *Comfortable with charity*
- b. *Only so much energy*
- c. *Doing good work*
- d. *Limited resources*
- e. *Fear of becoming political*

3. Analyze forces in terms of how real they are, how significant they are and how probable they are.

Driving forces – mission pastor; preventing issues, Kingdom work

Restraining forces – limited energy & resources, fear of becoming political

4. Determine what actions to take to maximize positive (driving) forces and minimize negative (restraining) forces:

Preach teach Kingdom of God, offer examples of relationships, “upstream” focus,

Limit need for finances, highlight Jesus actions which could be understood as political

Pausing to conduct these analyses enabled me to better understand and equip myself to move forward. It was within these studies that I realized a significant, yet unrealized challenge. These studies helped me to recognize that our church is highly programmatic and lacking vision to draw our programs together toward a common goal. The ministry structure of our church includes missions as one of these programs, yet my project is for holistic change though we are lacking a holistic vision. Ideally, our staff and leadership would work hand-in-hand in developing such vision. Unfortunately, at the time of this project’s implementation, we are in an interim period where our interim leadership prefers to maintain current structure as opposed to addressing its inadequacies. In essence we were to coast through the interim period.

I made the strategic decision to work within the structure we had through our interim period. My approach was to build justice into our mission programming in order to eventually build justice within our DNA. Soon following was the worldwide pandemic of COVID-19 and its arrival to the United States. Within days our church offices were closed and we scrambled to create online worship. Again, soon thereafter, George Floyd was murdered in the hands of police officers. It is an understatement to write that this murder, which was captured on video, led to collective protests against police violence which also highlighted the systemic racism within our society. Protests and prayer vigils took place in communities surrounding Shadyside.

Shadyside Presbyterian Church was represented at these events, albeit in small numbers. Within the context of worship, the interim pastor did not focus on (and rarely made mention of) the rising movement. The Associate pastors highlighted efforts during the announcements, and lifted our need for justice in our pastoral prayers. From a worship context, seemingly little was happening in the church's response to the societal call for justice. However, study groups were formed as the call toward justice was on our radar like never before.

Practice Justice

A common argument for a movement from charity toward empowerment is the adage, "Feed a man a fish, he'll eat for a day. Teach him to fish, he'll eat for a lifetime." I believe this is a good shift toward justice, but the adage falls short because it focuses on changing an individual without changing a systemic structure. Robert Lupton asks a pertinent question, "What happens when the fish disappear from the lake due to pollution

or overfishing?”⁶⁰ As Lupton points out, someone has to gain control to stop the pollutants and regulation the fishing. His approach toward gaining such control is through community development, specifically Asset Based Community Development (ABCD). It is a shift in approach when surveying a community: As opposed to asking what they need, one asks the community what assets they have that can be built upon. He then suggests that efforts focus on “front end” issues; important agendas of the community. Steps that follow include: investing in the community (refrain from charitable gifts); develop community leaders; resist the temptation to take over a project.⁶¹ This ABCD approach is a refreshing shift in community engagement. Yet, more emphasis should be placed on a relationship building phase which should be incorporated in Lupton’s first step of focusing on the community.

The proportion of American congregations’ formally seeking justice alongside community organizing networks remains smaller than 1 in 10.⁶² Seeing examples of others who promote and do justice along with a clearly articulated vision for justice are the primary motivators to engage people in justice work. In research, three main themes emerged concerning what prevented people from working for justice: 1) complexity, 2) lack of time, and 3) lack of awareness.⁶³ “Faith based community organizing (FBCO) is one of the main organizational paradigms through which U.S. congregations pursue

⁶⁰ Robert Lupton, *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help* (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 2011), 108.

⁶¹ Lupton, *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help*, 139-140.

⁶² Delehanty, “Prophets of Resistance: Social Justice Activists Contesting Comfortable Church Culture,” 41.

⁶³ Janzen, et al., “Just Faith? A National Survey Connecting Faith and Justice Within the Christian Reformed Tradition,” 239.

social justice activism today,”⁶⁴ says Delehanty who argues “FBCO groups work to build and deploy two main cultural narratives: first, that faith communities can successfully challenge systemic injustice through sustained political engagement; second, that social justice activism is indispensable to religious commitment.”⁶⁵

In their *Restoration Field Guide*, authors Strand and Wentz suggests a progression

LEVEL 1 Charity	LEVEL 2 Individual Development	LEVEL 3 Community Development
Most common form of response.	Less common form of response.	Very uncommon form of response.
Meet basic needs through “hand-outs”	Equip people in need to meet their own needs by providing a “hand up”	Advocacy and community and economic development
Can be done from a distance	Requires building a relationship	Requires addressing societal systems/structures and injustices
Immediate results short-lived, no significant long-term impact	Results take longer to achieve longer lasting impact, limited to individuals	Incremental results that effect significant long-term change for an entire community
Examples: Food and clothing drives, serving at soup kitchens, home makeovers, providing free Christmas gifts, disaster relief, global feeding ministries	Examples: Tutoring, job, parenting and life skill training, operating food co-ops, Giftmart, clothing resale ship, child sponsorship, equipping a community with clean drinking water or health care.	Examples: Micro-finance loans for start-up businesses, advocacy for equality in schools (Millennium Development Goals abroad and school finance reform at home), creating living-wage jobs, home ownership and higher education initiatives.
Strand and Wentz, <i>Restoration Field Guide</i> , 33.		

⁶⁴ Delehanty, “Prophets of Resistance: Social Justice Activists Contesting Comfortable Church Culture,” 38.

⁶⁵ Delehanty, “Prophets of Resistance: Social Justice Activists Contesting Comfortable Church Culture,” 39.

through the church's journey toward practicing justice. If a church is engaged in a Level 1 Activity (see chart on prior page), the church is practicing either a Crisis or Charitable Response (ex. Giving a fish). The authors suggest that when possible, the church engage Level 1 through organizations that follow community development principles. Level 2 is Individual Development which is designed to equip people to meet their own needs (ex. teaching to fish). This requires building a relationship and results take longer to achieve and are longer lasting. Greater impact on both the person serving and the one being served. Level 3 activities – Community Development/Advocacy (ex. Ownership of fishery) – address societal systems and structures that prevent people from breaking out of poverty or developing their full potential. This level requires even longer investment and results happen more slowly. The authors argue, “It is usually by engaging in Level 2 activities that our eyes are opened to some of the injustices that prevent people from breaking out of the cycle of poverty or addiction.”⁶⁶ Ideally, once eyes are opened the body of the church should live into its calling. This calling may include “organizing,” which “involves telling a story about how the interests of ordinary people are being trampled over by those with power.”⁶⁷

This chart has proven to be instrumental in our mission restructure. Our prior structure was comprised of several “Mission Action Communities” (see Appendix A) which focused on a variety of needs within our community. For example, members of the Hunger Mission Action Community gathered monthly to be updated on the various hunger ministries of our partners. While gathered they would lift these ministries in

⁶⁶ Kirsten Strand and Shannon Wentz, *Restoration Field Guide: Building a Church-Based Compassion and Justice Ministry* (Community Christian Church, 2015), 35.

⁶⁷ Lloyd, “Thick or Thin? Liberal Protestant Public Theology,” 347.

prayer while also preparing for a micro-event which included minimal members such as feeding at the local shelter and a macro-event that targeted the entire congregation such as a food collection for the local shelter. This structure seemed to be more geared toward providing the Level 1 – Charity efforts as outlined in the chart, which proved successful for getting our church into the community, but lacked in providing in depth and transformational opportunities.

I presented this chart to our mission leadership team and proposed that we reimagine our mission structure to support our justice focused efforts. We listed our current local mission efforts on the chart and, unsurprisingly, the majority of our efforts were best described as Level 1 with a few entering the Level 2 category of Individual Development. We were not yet engaged with Level 3 – Community Development efforts. We utilized the three levels of this chart in restructuring our mission program to include three entry points of engagement: Befriending Neighbors, Knowing Neighbors and Uniting with Neighbors (see Appendix B). Our mission efforts are now intentionally categorized as three levels which will lead to deeper relationships within the community, knowing significant growth is needed to recruit for the Uniting with Neighbors entry point.

Months prior to this shift in structure, through Zoom I hosted conversations on “Race, Demonstrations and Justice” in which approximately 50 members participated. Some members began asking what we can do, and I guided them toward an effort of educating ourselves. We needed to hear and learn from a perspective differing from our own. After conversations with two local pastors of predominately Black churches (and churches in which Shadyside has relationships) I felt more strongly that we must strive

toward educating ourselves before we engage in conversation with these neighboring congregations. One of these congregations had recently completed a book study with a suburban, and predominately White congregation. I thought if we studied an author who put perspective to writing, we could engage that voice to both learn and to prevent some mistakes that could happen in early conversations. Jumping into a book study with a Black church could tempt us to seek forgiveness before any confession, and may affirm our non-racist claims before we take the opportunity to search more deeply within ourselves and our society. A few members continued to advocate for dialogue with Black churches as a first step. In individual conversations with these members, I emphasize again that we had much to learn, and much to admit prior to engaging in conversations with our neighboring churches. Fortunately, these members remained engaged in our efforts of self-education.

An in depth study of Ibram X. Kendi's *How to Be an Antiracist* proved to be significantly important to this project. Shadyside Presbyterian church would fit the description of the "White moderate" for which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was so critical. Though not every member would be defined as such, our collective practice of ministry fits the description. I believe Kendi's writing targeted the White moderate who became comfortable with our "non-racist" claim. Kendi's writing had already gained much attention because of his argument that the "opposite of 'racist' isn't 'not racist.' It is 'anti-racist.'"⁶⁸ After reviewing the book I felt it would stretch our group significantly, and hoped it would stretch us without breaking us.

⁶⁸ Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (New York: One World, 2019), 9.

COVID-19 prevented us from gathering for a book study similar to *Toxic Charity*, and in the end that was a great blessing. I proposed that we study this particular book in small groups, scheduled throughout the week so members could virtually join the group that fit their schedules. I was hoping for intimate and authentic conversations in which members could be vulnerable with one another in a small group format. I initially proposed that we cover the eighteen chapter book in either three (6 chapters/week) or six (3 chapters/week) weeks. I had underestimated group's dedication to this study. The group of nearly 50 members (and friends) expressed interest in delving deeper into conversation with each chapter so we agreed to a nine week (2 chapters/week) study. There was a reluctance among participants to lead such conversations, so we agreed we would have "conveners" and I would provide a weekly video with proposed questions and conversation starters.

I took advantage of the opportunity to begin each study with a video introduction of the chapters. I felt that the groups may have a slow start to each gathering because of the gravity of the topic. Through the prerecorded video, I was able to begin each gathering by naming each topic, placing it in front of group members, and initiating the conversation while offering questions to be discussed. We had seven small groups scheduled throughout the week and ranging from five to eight participants, with each participant committing to attend each of the nine studies. As stated, I provided weekly videos with my own reflections, followed by questions to be discussed in small groups. In our early large group discussions I sensed there was momentum in the larger group and wanted to foster that momentum, so every three weeks we gathered as a larger group

to reflect and discuss the highlights from the prior six chapters together. No videos were offered for the large group discussion, but I was able to attend and lead each of these.

This group of individuals were quite committed to the study, and there was less pushback than I anticipated from our members who chose not to join the study. I heard from a couple members who were greatly disappointed that we were associating ourselves with Kendi. From these individuals' perspectives Kendi's views were radical in that he was speaking out against "law and order." Our study began as the 2020 presidential campaigns were beginning to ramp up. The Republican Party described itself, once again, as the "Law and Order" party. In an interview Kendi spoke out against such "Law and Order" politics.⁶⁹ A few members misinterpreted this as Kendi advocating for lawlessness and disorder. Conversations ensued with the individuals and I highlighted the difference between the phrase and the politics of "law and order." I offered examples, but in the end of the conversation the members stopped engaging and ended the conversation stating that we'll just agree to disagree.

Other members have expressed concern regarding the word "justice." These members have associated the term with the Black Lives Matter movement and associated the entire BLM movement with the destruction caused by a minority of offshoots within (and beyond) this movement. From their vantage point there is a direct correlation between the call for justice and the destruction from the offshoots of the demonstrations. Unfortunately, and in some instances reinforced by the media, images of people gathered in peaceful protests were followed by images of the offshoot riots with no distinction between the two. Some members had already connected the two groups together as one,

⁶⁹ Ibram X. Kendi, "White Supremacist in the White House," interview with Amy Goodman, Democracy Now!, August 31, 2020, https://www.democracynow.org/2020/8/31/ibram_x_kendi_blm_protests_trump.

and the media helped to foster this perception. It seemed that, for some, the “riots” became the focus of attention and, therefore, such focus prevented the addressment of the racism which led to the demonstrations in the first place. However, a great number of other members were able to see the two distinct groups without losing sight that injustices which are at the root of each response. Individual conversations with those who were unable to perceive that distinction have helped but not alleviated this tension.

Prior to and in the midst of the book study I had connected with Rev. Dr. Hunter Farrell, who is a cultural anthropologist and theologian serving at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. I had met Dr. Farrell a decade ago when he was the Director for World Missions with the Presbyterian Church (USA). Because of this prior position Dr. Farrell knew of many mission focused churches throughout the United States. He knew of my efforts in leading Shadyside to expand its ministry to include justice initiatives. Our early steps of practicing justice became more public when Pittsburgh Theological Seminary invited me to produce a promotional video for their month long seminar entitled, “Jesus Christ and the ‘Dividing Wall’: Race and God’s Mission.” In prior years, I served on the board of Pittsburgh Theological Seminary’s World Mission Initiative, which was hosting the seminar. Typically, this annual seminar is a weekend event. Due to COVID and the associated “Zoom-fatigue” the leaders chose to host four two-hour gatherings as opposed to packing the programming into one weekend.

Over four hundred churches from over forty states (and two countries) registered to attend this seminar, which was scheduled for four two-hour on-line sessions. The first hour was led by a guest speaker, followed by a half hour question/answer session. The evening concluded with individual churches gathering together to continue the

discussions within their own context. Shadyside had 30 participants who attended seminars led by Jonathon Wilson Hartgrove, Brenda Salter McNeil and David Campt. Following each session, members from Shadyside met virtually to discuss the learnings, which opened our eyes a bit more widely to ‘whiteness’ and the injustices remaining within our culture.

Those who participated were especially challenged by David Campt’s suggestion that White people must be willing to engage in difficult conversations with one another. Members expressed frustrations about prior attempts to engage friends and family in conversations about racism and injustices. They felt that Campt equipped them with new approaches. With Thanksgiving approaching, members expressed interest in reengaging family members in such conversations. To support that, our seminary intern and I modeled a conversation implementing Campt’s strategies. Campt first outlined practices to avoid: othering, racism binary, and “woker than thou” mentality.⁷⁰ He encouraged shifting the conversation from facts/concepts toward experiences and to continue connecting personally in the conversation. Also, through genuine questioning, one should find some common ground to build upon. We attempted to practice these suggestions in our modeled conversation, and the group reflected on the conversation before engaging one another in mock conversations. Following the session, each member expressed greater comfort with engaging such conversations and committed to putting such tools into practice.

⁷⁰ David Campt, “Keys for Allies to Use their Superpowers” (Lecture at Jesus Christ and the ‘Dividing Wall’: Race and God’s Mission, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, PA, October 28, 2020, accessed January 19, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZTNmBaXPFRg&t=7s>).

Focusing on intentional conversations with those with whom we are already have a relationship is one example of investing efforts into an individual. Teaching a person to fish rather than feeding the person a fish is an example of Individual Development, or an “equipping program” as described by Diana Garland. Similar to Strand and Wentz, Garland describes a “Continuum of Mission Engagement” with responding to need (charity) on one end and seeking justice on the other end. Where charity focuses on projects and justice focuses on systemic causes, “equipping and empowering” activities are “designed to equip people with the skills and resources they need to avoid or overcome crises.”⁷¹ Charity without social justice can become injustice.⁷² When suffering is either temporarily or slightly reduced, the need for systemic change is veiled.

William Barber suggests that in striving toward justice, and even before negotiating with those authorities in power, the first step is to do one’s homework and gather the facts.⁷³ I have witnessed colleagues and public theologians stand for numerous causes for justice, and they have stood with facts as the foundational support to their cause. I have seen where the same colleagues too quickly repost or retweet misinformation about the injustices they stand against. Those with whom my colleagues spent great time and energy attempting to draw toward their cause, turn away following the sharing of misinformation. I appreciate hearing Barber’s repeated advice to get the facts straight before engaging. Though, I do have a rising concern about the growing irrelevance of truth and facts in our society. Especially in our political climate, truth can be proclaimed as “fake news” while falsities and conspiracy theories and be packaged as

⁷¹ Garland and Yancey, *Congregational Social Work: Christian Perspectives*, 176.

⁷² Garland and Yancey, *Congregational Social Work: Christian Perspectives*, 187.

⁷³ Barber, *The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear*, 77.

truth. When one cannot argue against political ideologies that tap into our nation's founding words, it seems that too often one can change the conversation by creating a false narrative: the BLM movement wants to destroy our cities and suburbs; the election was stolen; the victim must have done something to deserve such treatment. Such responses have been excused to the point where they have become normalized. The normalization opens the door for such false dichotomies to be supported, even to the point of violence. A current example is the "voter fraud" which resulted in a "stolen election" that both justified and necessitated an insurrection at our nation's capital building.

In reviewing Melissa Snarr's *All You That Labor*, author Vincent Lloyd highlights what Snarr refers to as "Moral Agency," which is defined as "the moral knowledge judgment, and motivation to take actions related to the right and the good."⁷⁴

"Progressive Christians often understand themselves as advocating for justice rather than charity. Snarr implicitly complicates this framing. She is saying that we should advocate for moral agency rather than social justice." Lloyd describes, "Moral agency gives individuals the capacity to claim justice for themselves, on their own terms, rather than benefiting from a just social arrangement achieved by activists. Indeed, we might say justice is to activism as moral agency is to organizing (and as charity is to service)."⁷⁵

Author William Barber II actions incorporate this moral agency into his community organizing efforts. Before jumping into action and as stated previously, William Barber II suggest the facts first need to be gathered and evaluated. Others agree, "To carry out the biblical mandate of social concern, it is important that church members

⁷⁴ Lloyd, "Thick or Thin? Liberal Protestant Public Theology," 343.

⁷⁵ Lloyd, "Thick or Thin? Liberal Protestant Public Theology," 344.

study significant social and community issues and confront the congregation with the data.”⁷⁶ Following fact finding and negotiating, if the engagement leads to no action or change of bending the arc toward justice, Barber suggests that we move toward what he describes as “self-purification.” He describes this nonnegotiable step as a time to decide if, in fact, we may personally embrace the suffering we have sought to prevent.⁷⁷ “A distinction between Christian activism and Christian organizing must be made, where the former denotes advocacy on behalf of a community and the latter means standing together with a community.”⁷⁸

In his organizing work, Barber adopts and adapts from the civil rights movement a four-stage process for successful civil disobedience: 1. Gather the facts. 2. Negotiate with ruling authorities. 3. If negotiations are refused, embrace the suffering the effort is trying to prevent. Barber goes on to argue that only after “examining our own willingness to suffer until enemies become friends, can we move on to step four: direct action.”⁷⁹ This seems to be a tried and true practice for a journey toward justice. The church would do well to contextualize this self-examination, and implement the approach in its collaboration in justice seeking ministries.

Conclusion

In the opening of this paper I reflected on a meeting in which a member typed the words “Action Needed” while a group of congregation members reflected on the events

⁷⁶ Claerbaut, *Urban Ministry in a New Millennium*, 24.

⁷⁷ Barber, *The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear*, 77.

⁷⁸ Lloyd, “Thick or Thin? Liberal Protestant Public Theology,” 335.

⁷⁹ Barber, *The Third Reconstruction: How a Moral Movement is Overcoming the Politics of Division and Fear*, 77.

surrounding the George Floyd murder. Much action has taken place between the time of that meeting and this writing, yet much additional action is needed. In many ways it seems that this project has been a snapshot of my ministry with Shadyside Presbyterian Church. The trajectory of our decade long mission efforts proved to be a necessary preparation for this effort, and our future efforts toward tackling injustices will be a continuation beyond the project.

I began my research seeking the “holy grails” of books and articles which map out step-by-step approaches for a church to seek, engage and do justice while also participating in healthy acts of charity. Though my research did not lead me to such writings, I found instead prophets and leaders who connect the Church with its call to do justice. The ever relevant writings of King and the theological approach of Barber continue to be an inspiration. The vulnerability of Wilson-Hartgrove and the focused teachings of Sider help to balance the “head and heart” of Public Theology. The practical guidance by Perkins along with Stand and Wentz help me to envision ways forward. The many other authors and works outlined in the bibliography offer continued guidance. These thinkers and writers have provided much needed foundational thoughts on which a “holy grail” may stand.

Initially, I intended to create a reproducible model for a church to move beyond works of charity to incorporate deeper works of justice. It was my expectation that my research and practices of leading Shadyside would be contextualized and implemented in another setting. The research easily transfers to similar contexts, but I grossly underestimated the importance of the practice of Public Theology. Public Theology is practiced in space and time. It is not always possible to contextualize and adapt specific

practices. I did not create a program that could be adapted to other contexts because in the midst of my project I realized that Public Theology is practiced in the present tense. What worked not only for Shadyside Presbyterian Church, but for Shadyside in the midst of a global pandemic and in the midst of a heightened awareness of racial injustices cannot be replicated in an attempt to implement the same within a similar church at a different time. Public Theology both follows and leads in the public sphere, both reactionary and prophetic. The Public Theologian must speak prophetically with a willingness to be a lone voice as the leading call toward justice. In addition to a willingness to lead, the Public Theologian must also be willing to follow the Spirit's movement among others. A presence on the forefront is not a prerequisite, so long as the Public Theologian actively supports those working on the forefront of justice.

With that, there are a number of takeaways for my colleagues who are attempting to lead a church in a similar direction. In some ways I underestimated the community of Shadyside Presbyterian Church as, collectively, they responded favorably to the risks I have taken in leading them toward tackling justice. In hindsight, I recognize that I prefer to take precisely calculated risks, which in essence have minimal or no actual risk. I have learned to be more comfortable with risks associated with leading members and the church toward addressing injustices for the sake of God's kingdom among us. The theological framework produced within this paper supports the need for such risk taking.

Also, understanding the context of the church and the community, along with the connections between the two is paramount. Having an established trust within both contexts is of equal importance. Reflecting on the context of Shadyside Presbyterian, both its history and current times, has helped me to understand the importance of

education within this body of believers. As stated, I am a pastor whose goal is to get people out of the church and into the community. We have been successful with the breadth of our community outreach, but our depth is still lacking. I lead a people who are educated and wise, who will not follow haphazardly. The desire for education is in our institutional DNA, and the success of the outlined book studies displays the desire remains. Next steps include further education supporting our church's engagement with justice. This will draw additional members toward understanding the call to love neighbor, and such education will equip them to join in as we enter our community more deeply.

In the beginning stages of the project development I created an unnecessary dichotomy between charity and justice. Though it is imperative that a distinction is made, along with an understanding of healthy charitable missions, the two need not be held in tension with one another. The church is called to engage both. Similarly, I have created a dichotomy between (the comfort of) education and (the uncomfortable nature of) mission work. I have viewed education as separate from mission and now recognize the importance of education as the preparation for mission. Educational opportunities develop the initiative for action, followed by reflection of the mission efforts. Through education we strategically plan mission opportunities and follow by critiquing the opportunities we provide.

In addition, I also underestimated the timing necessary to lead a faith community toward incorporating justice into its efforts. Though the timeliness of Black Lives Matter and related social movements helped me to keep this topic in front of the congregation, the pandemic related Zoom-fatigue and inability to meet in person impacted timing as

well. It was easier for members to gather via Zoom than it would have been for us to gather in person, though the energy was less sustainable as a virtual gathering. Also missing were the informal, continuing conversations that take place among members as they both gather for and leave from in-person meetings. Zoom and similar platforms allow for a larger discussion, but the substantive conversations across a table and simultaneous encounters within the same room have not yet been replicated in virtual gatherings.

Our inability to gather for worship and fellowship events impacted both resistance and support. When a pastor knows the congregation, the pastor picks up on the informal gatherings and conversations taking place. I can often tell how someone feels about a sermon or how they are wrestling with what I have said in their body language as they greet me (or not) following worship. This affords me the opportunity to initiate conversation with them during our fellowship time or to reach out to them the following week. Without such social cues and without the ability to gather collectively as a congregation, it has been difficult to discern how much resistance there is among the less engaged congregation members.

Regardless, we have made progress, and Shadyside Presbyterian Church is already building upon the foundation this project offered. It is both true and vital that the church continue its charitable work, but such charitable work will neglect needed change unless it is coupled with works of justice, which works to prevent the need for charity. It is clear that the church is called to do justice as calls for justice are threaded throughout our sacred scripture. As difficult and uncomfortable it may make us, settling into our

comfortable acts of charity without pursuing justice is counter to scripture. My research has made it clear that, the church's mission must lead to justice.

Our specific justice journey includes the continuation of engaging more deeply with our partners. We are in the early stages of defining specific actions with numerous partners and these actions provide opportunity for our members to engage with community members in deep ways. For example, we are exploring ways for students of The Neighborhood Academy (a private middle and high school targeting students of families with financial challenges) to begin developing a professional network through connecting with Shadyside members and members of our greater community. As opposed to a typical high school "Career Day" in which students hear presentations from professionals of which there may be little interest in the presenters' professions, we are developing a series of career focused mini-videos. Individual members and friends of Shadyside Presbyterian Church submit a two-minute video highlighting their career and the educational background for such a career. Through the guidance counselor, students can email the professional to ask specific questions and, if interested, request the individual meet the student at school for a one-on-one conversation. If interest continues beyond that point the student may shadow the professional at his/her job site. And if interest continues beyond the visit, we will explore the possibility of a paid internship. This program will provide networking opportunities for a first-generation college student to break the systemic challenges of generational poverty.

We are also in partnership with two local shelters for women who are overcoming physical and substance abuse. The staff and directors of these programs express some of their greatest concern is for the women as they transition from their facility and back into

their community. We are exploring together the idea of developing a program connecting individual members and friends of SPC to individual women within the shelter. This would not be a mentorship but rather a relationship that is established while the woman is seeking treatment and the relationship is maintained beyond the completion of the recovery program. Similarly, we are exploring a relational based program which assists first-time homebuyers who are repairing their credit while preparing for home ownership.

Members of our Kendi study want to move forward with addressing systemic issues through advocacy. We are in the process of narrowing in on community partners to either join alongside or to organize new efforts of interrupting the injustices within our city. We are in exploration of joining our own denominations justice network, which will open the door for further education, training and opportunity.

As noted, Shadyside Presbyterian Church has no collective vision for its future. We are in the midst of transition as we await our next Senior Pastor and it would not be appropriate for me, as an Associate Pastor, to cast a vision for the next Senior Pastor to inherit. It is appropriate for me to shepherd a congregation into its community so injustices may be exposed. It is also my role to equip congregation members to address such injustices. Finally, an essential part of my call is to prepare these members to utilize their voices in helping to cast our future vision. I am unaware of the specifics, yet I am certain the term “action needed” will be part of our collective vision.

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Appendix A – Prior Local Mission Structure

MISSIONS AT SHADYSIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

The programmatic approach applied to our local work employs a network of Mission Action Communities (MACs). The Mission Action Community system connects organized groups of church members with our mission partners who are working to bring justice to a particular issue or need. The members of these MACs meet to foster relationships and, together with our partners, provide opportunities for congregation members to encounter Christ by serving in our community and throughout the world.

Through these MACs, we become better community partners and neighbors as we are able to build relationships and provide human resources in addition to financial assistance. We believe that the best way to do meaningful work in our neighborhood and beyond is to join in those efforts where God's Kingdom is breaking into the world.

Community Kids MAC

The Community Kids Mission Action Community (MAC) partners with schools, after-school programs, and non-profit agencies in Pittsburgh dealing with education and protection of children at risk. This MAC looks to find ways of financially supporting these agencies and recruits volunteers to tutor, mentor, or serve the ministries which look to the needs of youth. The MAC meets on an ad hoc basis.

- **The Neighborhood Academy** [theneighborhoodacademy.org]
Shadyside has participated in The Academy's capital campaign and offers an annual scholarship for a student in need. SPC also offers a book scholarship to a graduating senior and provides opportunities for parishioners to meet students.
- **Shadyside Presbyterian Church Nursery School** [spcns.org]
As a mission of SPC, the Shadyside Presbyterian Church Nursery School was founded in 1951 to provide a stimulating environment in which children can achieve their potential for social, intellectual, creative, emotional, moral, and physical development. With more than fifty years of experience with pre-school children, the nursery school takes pride in its long tradition of providing a safe, nurturing environment in which our children are encouraged to learn and grow. We believe each child is unique and special. The school has its own board of directors, but remains a mission of SPC.
- **Valley View Presbyterian Church**
Shadyside Presbyterian has a long history of partnering with Valley View Presbyterian. Most recently, Shadyside helped to design and implement the Arts and Crafts portion of the six-week Freedom Camp. Under the leadership of the Valley View team, members from SPC volunteered to work with the children during the camp.

Community Partnerships MAC

The Community Partnerships Mission Action Community (MAC) researches and considers requests from non-profit community groups not covered by the Community Kids MAC and the Hunger and Homelessness MAC. Once the MAC commits to supporting an organization, the MAC members then recruit volunteers for the program.

Appendix A (cont.) – Prior Local Mission Structure

- **Foundation of Hope** [foundationofhope.org]
Opportunities range from a one-time visit to lead Bible Study or sing Christmas Carols, to a year-long commitment to connect with an individual who is reentering his/her community.
- **Off-the-Floor Pittsburgh** [offthefloorpittsburgh.org]
The Community Partnerships MAC is searching for members who would be interested in helping to deliver donated furniture to those in need. Deliveries are scheduled on Saturday mornings. The MAC has held fundraisers for OTFP and individuals at Shadyside Presbyterian Church have donated furniture.
- **Pennsylvania Organization for Women in Early Recovery (POWER)** [power-recovery.com]
The Community Partnerships MAC at times collects items for welcome bags for each woman when she arrives at POWER. The women of POWER are also recipients of our “Giving Tree” program, which provides the women with new pajamas and slippers for Christmas.
- **Sojourner House MOMS** [sojournerhousepa.org]
Shadyside has partnered with this organization to help transform a vacant property into a play yard for the children of Sojourner House MOMS. Beginning in 2011 we have hosted an annual retreat where women of SPC join with women of Sojourner House. We have attended the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra’s Fiddletix concerts with the mothers and children. In addition, they are our guests at the annual Strawberry Festival, which provides an opportunity for SPC to strengthen our relationship with the ladies and children.
- **Veterans Place** [veteransplace.org]
As one of SPC’s newer partners, we continue to explore opportunities to connect with our local veterans. We have hosted events, provide opportunities for art therapy and connect veterans with some of our own outreach efforts. One example is having veteran’s help us to prepare and serve meals for EECM.

Hunger and Homelessness MAC

The Hunger and Homelessness Mission Action Community (MAC) seeks to connect with non-profit ministries dealing with hunger and homelessness in the metro area of Pittsburgh. They recruit volunteers for the events and ministries which serve to feed and house those in need in Pittsburgh.

- **East End Cooperative Ministry (EECM)** [eecm.org]
The Hunger and Homelessness MAC holds a quarterly food drive for the EECM food pantry and serves monthly meals at the EECM Men’s Shelter.
- **Garfield Community Farm (GCF)** [garfieldfarm.com]
Shadyside volunteers help prepare the soil, plant vegetables, maintain gardens and harvest crops. Shadyside has helped to build the farm’s shed, contributed toward the bioshelter and, through the SPC Trustees, funded a mobile farmers’ market, enabling fresh produce to be delivered to “food deserts” in Pittsburgh’s east end.
- **Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank** [pittsburghfoodbank.org]

Appendix A (cont.) – Prior Local Mission Structure

Shadyside provides volunteers for the food distribution efforts of GPCFB, serving the neighborhood of Garfield.

- **Open Hand Ministries** [openhandpittsburgh.org]
Shadyside members have participated in several work days in Garfield, transforming a vacant house for a first-time home buyer. In addition, SPC has held fundraisers for this ministry and have the opportunity to participate in their Circles program.
- **Valley View Presbyterian Church**
Shadyside provides volunteers for the food distribution efforts of GPCFB, serving the neighborhood of Garfield.

Special Events

The Special Events Mission Action Community (MAC) organizes major fundraising events each year and determines the ministries which will receive the proceeds from the events. The MAC meets on an ad hoc basis.

- **Golf Outing**
Shadyside’s annual golf outing supports Hosanna House. Based in Wilkinsburg, Hosanna House is a multi-purpose community center which serves over 27,000 people per year. This ministry provides opportunities that will empower families and individuals to discover, acknowledge, and develop their maximum potential physically, spiritually, and economically. The golf outing has provided thousands of dollars in support over the years and we build relationships with its members while on the course.
- **Alternative Gift Market**
Shadyside’s alternative gift market is traditionally held on two consecutive Sundays during Advent. The market was created with the hope that friends and members of Shadyside would consider giving gifts that add to the justice and peace of the world. Each year, Shadyside invites select partners to participate in the market, offering “gifts” that range from covering the cost of a shelter meal to purchasing trees for reforestation projects. In addition to raising funds, the additional hope is that the market brings awareness to our neighbors in need.
- **Mars Hill Mission Experience** [chcmadisoncountync.org]
In partnership with the Community Housing Coalition of Madison County, Shadyside organizes and participates in a one-week intergenerational mission trip to the Appalachian region of North Carolina. Through the day youth and adults work on home improvement projects, while children participate in age-appropriate service opportunities. Evenings kick off with worship, followed by informal fellowship.
- **Strawberry Festival**
For over twenty years, Shadyside has hosted this traditional evening of fun, games and delicious food to celebrate the impending arrival of summer. With something for everyone, the festival offers a perfect evening of family fun. Festival style food is served, baked goods are sold and activities range from balloon sculpting to a bouncy house. Sojourner House MOMS and their children are our annual guests as we continue to foster relationships with the ladies of Sojourner House.

Appendix B – New Local Mission Structure

COMMUNITY MINISTRIES SHADYSIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Mark 12:30-31

³⁰And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹ ... ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

Through Shadyside Presbyterian Church, members and friends engage our community in a variety of ways. Embracing Christ’s claim that the Kingdom of God is among us, we seek out local ministries where we witness God’s Kingdom being ushered into our world. We join in these efforts of building for the Kingdom as we engage with our neighbors. The following are the three entry points for participation in these efforts:

Befriending Neighbors

Matthew 25:35-36

³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’

We befriend our neighbors as we assist them with their immediate needs. Though Shadyside Presbyterian is committed to fulfilling these needs on a long term basis, members and friends can join the efforts as their schedules allow. Opportunities for these ministries requires a willingness to participate in a meaningful ministry without a long-term commitment.

- Provide meals at EECM
- Housing projects with Open Hand Ministries
- Tending Garfield Community Farms
- Golf outing efforts with Hosanna House
- Hosting Sojourner House at Strawberry Festival
- Continue Giving Tree with Sojourner House & Power
- Build home essential housewarming packages with Open Hand Ministries, Off the Floor Pittsburgh and Sojourner House
- Spearhead security deposit payments for those moving from programs to independent living (Vet’s Place, Sojourner House, Off the Floor, POWER, Open Hand)

Knowing Neighbors

Matthew 18:20

...For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.

Appendix B (cont.) – New Local Mission Structure

We intentionally build and invest ourselves in relationships with our neighbors, trusting that Christ is present in the midst of each relationship. We commit to knowing our neighbors so we can journey with them. Opportunities for these ministries are intended to build one-to-one or group relationships, requiring a consistent (often monthly) connection.

- Freedom Camp with Valley View Presbyterian
- Women’s retreat with Sojourner House
- After Care program with Foundation of Hope
- Friendship group with Sojourner House & POWER
- Open Hand Ministries Family Development program
- The Neighborhood Academy career mentoring program
- Develop grant writing/technical assistance team for building nonprofit capacity at no fee
- Continuing education grants for mission partners

Uniting with Neighbors

Micah 6:8

...and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

In addition to responding to the needs within our community, Shadyside Presbyterian Church is working toward preventing such needs. Through this emerging ministry, we, often in collaboration with other ministries, will help to organize and advocate with and for neighbors by working upstream to address their needs systemically. Opportunities within these ministries require consistent efforts and participation, with occasional opportunity for meaningful ministry on a short-term basis.

- Develop a team to drive exploration of PCUSA’s Matthew 25 ministry
- Engage Hosanna House’s policy efforts
- Join Grace Memorial’s racial equity task force
- Support/host/create opportunities with Pittsburgh Presbytery’s Justice Office
- Educational Team to address stigmas and stereotypes
- Policy Team for addressing unjust laws (racism, addiction related prison terms, etc.)
- Explore Jewish Community Center’s UpStander Project