

THE BIBLICAL URGENCY OF MULTICULTURALISM

IN THE BLACK CHURCH

BY

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ABSTRACT

Is it possible for public theologians to use the term “Multiculturalism”? This question is pertinent because the term is a secular term that refers to an assemblage of people and/or community. Multiculturalism is used here within a biblical and theological frame to focus on a movement to create a Church to bring people of all races, cultures, colors, and ethnicities together within the Church and society. In this project, I will focus on an African-American Pentecostal church located in an economically and socially stable white neighborhood. In this context, the church is seeking to welcome, open its doors, extend koinonia, embrace and eventually evangelize those in the neighborhood. The goal of this endeavor is to move this African-American church toward Multiculturalism.

To think about how this African American Pentecostal Church, in this unique social context, can found its endeavors on a “multicultural theology”, I will be engaging chapters two and five from the book of Acts. I will explore the early church’s concept of faith, asking this question: was the concept of the house of prayer the forerunner of God’s “the universal church, multiculturalism,” which we have gotten away from today? This paper endeavors to provide a brief research portion that sets forth a proposed model for a multicultural church.

Public theology is in my opinion has three publics: the Church, the Academy and Society. Public theology is the need for theology to engage, interact with and participate in public issues in the public arena. Public theology is the new vehicle that must be the voice that brings the various sectors in contemporary society i.e., the political realm, capital markets, economics, cultures and ethnicities, religions, third world and international countries and issues brought on by this pandemic together in dialogue with one another to bring about radical human and social change.

In the article *A Companion to Public Theology* by Kim and Day, Theologian Linell Cady suggests that when we speak on this topic generally public theology refers to the church reflectively engaging with those within and outside its institutions on issues of common interest and for the common good. Therefore, the church has the responsibility to be in reflection, looking at itself inward and outward to the community. Its members are challenged to understand what the church represents and how best it can use its time, talents, and service to improve the community.

Kim and Day further define Public Theology in this manner:

“Generally public theology refers to church reflectively engage with those within and outside its institutions issues of common interest and for the common good.”¹ “The goal, finally of the theological project is not to evangelize a sinful society, focusing on individual salvation, but to seek God’s intention for all creation, i.e., the common good. Public theology is concerned with all aspects of human life and social experience.”²

To extend this out a little further public theology in my opinion is involved in public discourse and the social processes of the public arena. What this means is that “in the democratic public forum, only when theology is willing to enter the discourse by arguing “in ways that can be evaluated and judged by publicly available warrants and criteria can it be considered a public theology.”³

¹ Sebastian Kim and Katie Day, *A Companion to Public Theology*, Leiden Boston, Brill, 2017 p.2

² *Ibid*, p.11

³ *Ibid*, p.15

The conclusion to the definition of this is that referring back to Kim and Day “Public theology seeks the shared values by which arguments can be heard and critiqued. Ultimately such dialogue can move toward public action for the common good.”⁴

Public theology has to identify and examine how the church will work for the common good and engage people from outside its walls through the environmental, economic, political, and global issues as part of its vision for the common good. E. Harold Breitenberg, Jr., suggests that public theology intersects with and is found in all forms of discourse, public and private. For a further view on public theology Bonhoeffer, King, Tutu and Niebuhr public theology resided in a theology and social activism and a social engagement in human experience that led to moral action. In the words of John Lewis, it led to “good trouble.” In the final analysis, in my opinion public theology is meant to evangelize but when looked at in its narrowest vein, it is meant to be concerned with all aspects of human life and social experience in terms of its relationship to multiculturalism.

Public theology can be cast as a concept and support for multiculturalism when looked at in the historic frame of the early church. In that public arena it is conceivable that the early apostles may have viewed their Pentecostal movement as a move toward the multicultural church that God intended. We do not know the minds, the intent or the thinking of the apostles at that time. However, there is evidence we do have regarding the equal sharing of the gospel by many races, creeds, ethnicities, colors and cultures under the same roof. Consequently, what is attempted to be illustrated and described in this paper may in fact have been the church and the kind theological and religious society that we have grossly deviated from today.

⁴ Ibid, p.16

In public theology and the focus of multiculturalism, we seek to provide grace, salvation, and prayer, to be inclusive, extend love, and care. We hope to bring about what Howard Thurman calls the “Beloved Community.” We intend to address issues of equality in a community effort, confronting social justice, and issues of inequality in a divided society. Per God’s plan, we endeavor to speak truth to power, provide a pathway to healing, be responsive to the needs of equality, faith, poverty, and the issue of race in the face of diversity in the Public Square. We are called to provide a prophetic voice and vision of a different world where everyone is free to worship in diversity. This is the theologian’s role of being active, committed, and in communication in all aspects of justice: social, political, economic, psychological, and spiritual interaction within the public arena.

Introduction

The decision to engage multiculturalism for this project was borne out of the fact that my church finds itself in a unique and interesting ministry position. The church, the Faith and Victory Deliverance Church of God is an African American Church, located in a white neighborhood. The church relocated from Jersey City to Bayonne, New Jersey as the result of a search for a better building. Because the pastor and the church intend to engage with the predominantly white community, I have decided that a multicultural theology of this black church is a necessary aspect of the church's expressed intention. This theology would help transform the black church into a multicultural church. From my research, this is a unique situation that is not currently being explored by any other Church in the area, and has rarely been explored across the country.

Some might question the rationale for this pursuit of multiculturalism considering the current Covid Pandemic scare, divisive sentiment over the killing of George Floyd, and rampant Trump Era Racist environment. The answer may be found in the fact that America was historically

a nation built on secular individualism. We must move to a position where this individualism is rejected. We need to see that we are a people and a nation interconnected. That this individualism will lead us down the road to human tension, destruction, and lead to the possibility that we may turn on each other. One group may view another and make it societies' scapegoat and the lynching's may once again begin. Some might argue that that lynching has never really ended. Multiculturalism presents an opportunity to articulate a new vision in public theology as seen in Jesus' handling of the near tearing apart of the woman at the well for adultery. In so citing of this Biblical event (Jesus provided the moral edict that he who is without sin, let him cast the first stone) biblically in multiculturalism there is an attempt to humanize everyone. It is borne out of a belief that socially and theologically multiculturalism can not only be achieved but be beneficial not only for people in this community but have universal application to all people who might attempt this endeavor in their community. It is the belief that the Biblical mandate to Love Thy Neighbor, requires the Church to go into all regions of the earth spreading the Good News of the Biblical message.

The United States remains the most powerful nation in the world. Despite the last four years of Donald Trump, the deadly Covid 19 Pandemic, the Trump MAGA philosophy, the refusal to concede the loss of the Presidential election, and his incitement of January 6, 2021, terrorist mob attack on Congress and the Capitol of the United States. Consequently, taken all together, it means we will never go back to normal life as we knew it. There is a need for change. The reality of that quest for change is no one knows where to look for it or how to bring it about in the economic, social, political, or religious arena.

Why we can't wait. Given the Black Lives Matters protests, the continuous killing of black men and women, like George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmad Arbery, Sandra Bland, Rashad

Brooks, the rampant spread of the Covid Pandemic Virus across our country, and the lack of moral leadership at the head of our government, there is an urgency now in Public Theology. It requires a prophetic vision that will at this time bring about better humanity, restoration of justice, and major change in a less than moral society.

The question that must be asked and must be answered by Public Theology and the idea of Multiculturalism is how theology speaks to the challenges we face as a Church and a society today and in the future. How do we combat and do away with this culture of whiteness, white nationalism, and white privilege that threatens to tear this nation apart? Where is and what will be the theological voice in public life to address these issues?

Public theology asks the question in the face of racism, white exceptionalism supremacy, social injustice and demands to know how we relate our faith to these everyday experiences as Christian. Public theology asks us to look at how we ought to live, what kind of society we ought to form, and it calls us to define what we mean by justice, freedom, liberty, and equality of all men and women.

I believe the church has to squarely take a stance for moral justice and social action in the public arena to speak to the various levels of government for social, economic, and legislative change and local community change. On the national level, the church should seek to elect more of its leaders to congressional and senate positions to affect national policy and legislation. A greater effort should be made to support the movement spearheaded by Reverend Barber. On the local community level, the church should act as a catalyst to promote multiculturalism not just in the church but act to bring the community together for both identifying community needs and community engagement on issues of race, police oversight, and gun violence. The church in its move toward multiculturalism is moving toward that end.

In public theology, as a public theologian, we are called to provide a prophetic vision of inclusion, of a different world where everyone is free to live and worship in diversity. This is the theologian's role of being engaged, active, committed, and in communication with all aspects of the everyday life of the community which is related to the justice, social, political, economic, psychological sphere of capitalism and bring about its transformation through the lens of spiritual interaction within the public arena.

Despite some expected unknown obstacles and a fair degree of resistance the outcome, the creation, and development of a multicultural/multiracial Church offer the promise of healing and reconciliation in the community at large.

Therefore, given these most recent events that have taken place in our society, especially the recent invasion and near takeover of the U.S. Government at the Nation's Capital by racist Proud Boys and white nationalist groups in our society, the main focus of this DMIN project paper views as a solution and a response to this national crisis the Biblical Urgency of Multiculturalism and its plausible implementation within the framework of the Holy Christian Church. It is my opinion that men and women can say and do what they will, but, in the end, God's word will prevail.

In its prophetic stance my Church, Faith and Victory Deliverance Church of God, will seek to provide grace, salvation, prayer, and, be inclusive within this community, in a thoughtful manner to extend love and caring, worship, programming, and fellowship. The Church hopes to bring about the Beloved Community. In its prophetic imagination, this project is an attempt to give a futuristic picture of the intent of what the Church can be and how the Church is to be proactive in a response to Covid 19 Pandemic, community food insecurity, dealing with race, social justice, and inequality in a divided society following God's plan. In the Church's endeavor is to speak

truth to power, it has to provide a pathway to healing, be responsive to the needs of equality, open the door to faith, and highlight poverty with the major issue being that of race in the face of diversity in the Public Square. In my research on this topic, my source material consists of the published works by such scholars as Dr. Curtiss DeYoung, Michael O. Emerson, Walter Brueggemann, Charles R. Foster, Korie L. Edwards, and Howard Thurman to name a few. In addition, there are included other components of this project which will be incorporated in the theoretical design of a Multicultural Church. Among them will be demographic analysis of the area that where this project is located, three case studies of Churches that have moved to Multiculturalism, and results of a separate internal/external Survey solicited from Church congregants and the community at large regarding Multiculturalism.

Section One: The Theological Frame

Book of Acts

The Theological frame that this paper is founded upon the Book of Acts. The theological and biblical scholarship that supports the topic of Multiculturalism is founded in the second chapter of the Book of Acts. There we find the Church as it should be today. However, looking retrospectively, before modern-day Multiculturalism there was the establishment of what was termed Houses of Prayer. Before the formal building of temples and synagogues, and what we know as Churches today, early Christians met in various homes to “break bread”. After the time of Jesus’ death, these early Christians would render the message of Jesus, grow in faith, support each other in prayer, spread Christian love, and worship in Houses of Prayer. In these Houses of Prayer people of all types, colors, ethnicities, all races, all languages, and all cultures met and worshipped. Here there was “a type of unity that occurred as local congregations strategically implemented Jesus’ vision that “my house shall be a house of prayer, a house of prayer for all nations.”⁵ Together these congregations moved to social unity across the great divide of the Biblical text in Acts Chapter 2. When examined closely it can be realistically concluded that there is evidence of the first hint of biblical multiculturalism.

Similarly, in the Upper Room, we find there were all types of people fellowshiping and worshipping together. This signaled to the world the Birth of the Church. If we look at who was in that room, there was a wide and varied mix of people. By his very omnipotent nature, this could be evidence that God in his divine wisdom may have intended from the beginning, the design and human composition for the early formation of the multicultural Church in the book of Acts. The

⁵ DeYoung, Curtiss, P., Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, Karen C. Kim, *United By Faith, The Multiracial Congregation As An Answer To The Problem of Race*, Oxford University Press, 2003, p.37.

scripture does not simply describe or speak of the multitude in numbers but speaks of the diversity of people, cultures, ethnicities, colors, and creeds, etc. and everyone spoke in his/her language. “There were Parthians, Medes, Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and the Cappadocian Monks, people from Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt, and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews, and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs.”⁶ These people were from different regions, different cultures, different languages, different colors, and especially different ethnicities.” “So, continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily those who were being saved.”⁷ This is evidence of the house church and the houses of prayer where everyone of all nations and all types gathered in a multicultural worship style in the ancient Judeo-Christian context.

Without knowing for certain the mind or intent of Christ, the House Church seemed to be the precursor for the establishment of the multicultural/multiracial Church. This seems to be a major issue that Theological scholars, Pastors, and bible readers may have overlooked or not emphasized. It is also instructive of how prejudice, color, racial and ethnic distinctions were not a factor. It seems that there were none.

Multiculturalism and the Church

At an elementary level, it should be acknowledged that multiculturalism’s impact on humankind, is that society will benefit, society will improve, and society will be enriched. It will create public interaction between people. Lastly, multiculturalism will encourage cultural, ethnic, and racial diversity in the Church and promote positive change in the public arena. Looked at in

⁶ King James Version of the Holy Bible, Book of Acts 2: 9-11.

⁷ Ibid., p.46-47.

a socio-political-theological frame, multiculturalism, because of its use as a vehicle of diversity to open up community, can be a catalyst for bringing about equitable treatment of different cultures, ethnicities, and races and promote their peaceful co-existence.

Multiculturalism makes the mission of the church to preach the word that is to be heard, believed, and proclaimed. There it delivers the theological frame one that must demand the church and the theologian not hide behind the gospel but go out beyond the church doors and proclaim the gospel regardless of the racial or ethnic group or ethnic constituents of a neighborhood. As in the second chapter of the Book of Acts where various early religious groups gathered together to worship, multiculturalism can be analogous to a heterogeneous society where people not only retain basic traditional culture, but they become like a chef salad in a clear bowl where different races, ethnicities, and cultures are brought together for a unique gorgeous mosaic we call a faith community.

In support of what was just quoted given what this African American church is attempting to do it causes us to ruminate on this: What then is the Church and why this topic multiculturalism. Bruce Fields provides some insight:

“The Church in its simplest definition, whether it is African American Pentecostal or Roman Catholic is an assembly of persons with like religious beliefs and an extension of evangelism which extends from God to the people of God within its respective Christian community. The Church’s primary mission then is to preach the word that it has “heard, believed and been commissioned to proclaim. The Church, in turn, must proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ regardless of its racial-ethnic constituency.”⁸

⁸ Fields, Bruce *Introducing Black Theology, Three Crucial Questions for the Evangelical Church*, p.41

Why multiculturalism Korie L. Edwards sheds some light on that:

“It has been over forty years since Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., dared us to strive toward amending our past of racial segregation. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, we are seeing positive changes in the religious landscape as it relates to race. Denominations and parachurch organizations are more and more making racial issues important items on their agendas. Churches are working to become places where African Americans and whites worship together. Nevertheless, our racial history and contemporary racial experiences make these endeavors a challenge and they continue to plague religious organizations’ capacity to forge communities that Blacks and whites can fully call their own. This is one clarion declaration made by noted author Korie L. Edwards. However, the vast majority of our churches still remain segregated at 11:00 a.m. Sunday morning. The biblical idea of worship of One Lord, One God, One Faith by whites, blacks and peoples of color still remains a very much distant strange religious and spiritual phenomenon. The Kingdom of God on earth has yet to be realized. Multiculturalism remains an invisible and elusive spiritual biblical concept. The Beloved Community remains an elusive dream.

Whether black or white, we are theologically alienated from each other by our various styles of worship even though we pray to the same God. One (dominant) group cannot see all of us in communion with One Lord, One God, One Baptism in the Body of Christ under the same ecclesiastical roof. It is unclear whether Black, White, Asian, Hispanic, etc. could see the divine world through the eyes of the other. Thus the 11 o’clock Sunday morning worship hour (as Dr. ML King lamented) remains the most segregated hour in this country. If this is true and we hold to these beliefs to be true, how then is it possible to bring about the Multicultural Church? The

question someone raised with me was, “Where is the true God in Multiculturalism, if we cannot get along with each other on a human secular level outside the Church as a people with varied but very defined differences?”⁹ How, when, where do we begin the search for the common ground?

The looming question for this project is: Where do you go with this African American Pentecostal Church that finds itself in the unique position of being located on Lord Avenue and 4th Street in Bayonne. The Church is situated as the sole African American Church in the heart of a major white community. In addition, the Church is surrounded by a second white community with a housing development on its fringe. The housing development contains low-income Hispanics, African Americans, low-income whites, Asians, a population that is rumored to be unchurched. This is to be considered a test area for the recruitment of this project.

There is a Roman Catholic Church nearby (St. Andrews) and the community is Roman Catholic which has not attempted to reach out. Church members have been informed verbally, by some in the community and/or members of the Catholic Church that the Church is not well attended. There is a rumor that some internal issues are challenging the Church. Indications are that its parishioners may be seeking an alternate Church in which to worship. The major concern on our part is that our African American church does not want to be seen as deliberately attempting to woo people away from the Catholic Church, nor interfere in their affairs. Our members have been asked to cease conversations of that nature. Good theological relations dictate that it would not be appropriate to engage in the church's interests to cause any conflict or be seen as attempting surreptitiously siphon members away from their Church. It is believed that the Church is a place for changing hearts and minds. Multiculturalism calls for us as a Church to bring about compassion, agape love, brotherhood, and empathy in a revolutionary manner.⁹

⁹ Korie, Edwards, L., *The elusive Dream, The Power Of Race in Interracial Churches*, Oxford University Press, 2008 p.139

There are a few underlying theological questions the Catholic Church must answer. Is Christ for them an equal opportunity Christian? Is the Church for them the proper forum for discussion of race, equality, social justice, evangelism, faith, hope, and social change? Is the church willing to be a theological force in the model of a radical Jesus Christ to create transformative change? Where is God in all this? We hope to arrange a series of talks to engage with the Roman Catholic church hierarchy about partnering with us to conduct a community health fair, a forum on race, politics, and social justice, and a seminar on the radical love ethic of Jesus and our evangelism efforts.

Furthermore, in support of this statement about the Church, in the Roman Catholic tradition, Vatican II marked a significant change in the Church's self-understanding and its missionary strategy in the world. Foundational to this change is the conviction that the Church should consider itself as part of the larger human community and share the same concerns as those outside the Church. Vatican II "Christ came not to be served but to serve."¹⁰ The theologian must see him or herself as both a servant of the people and as a catalyst for change who like Jesus has no time to be a bystander but an activist for social justice, economic and political change. The end goal, given the present Pandemic conditions and the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota where everyone is suffering must be to create a revolutionary change in this capitalist society to eradicate racism, bring about justice, stamp out oppression, greed, and biased classism so that everyone shares equally and has enough in a new society. As the church is the body who regardless of color, culture, or denomination, is an assembly with a belief system of like believers, that has a multicultural mandate which stems from Acts Chapter 2 has a call on it to be active in

¹⁰ King James Version of the Holy Bible Gospel of Mark 10: 45

the public arena to be concerned with the “least of these” in the outside world, obligates us like Jesus to go into the highways and the byways, get in the mess and make a major change to pull down the capitalist system. It mandates and demands that we as the people of God go outside the walls of the church to show love, justice, and compassion, to meet the needs of the poor, the oppressed, and the helpless who live on the margins of society. Hunger knows no color. Need knows no color. Multicultural nor multiracial culture knows no color. Especially in the Church.

This notion of moving this African American Church toward multiculturalism, located in a white community, is reflective of its God-inspired desire for Table Worship and Koinonia, reaching out to the least of these, those on the margins, embracing whites and others with welcoming transformative arms, love and opening its doors to the neighborhood. It is an invitation to whosoever will, to come in voluntarily, to worship in a divine spirit with a heart of God, in love, to eventually evolve into a multicultural church with a God-based divinely inspired Black Pastor leading the charge.

In Matthew 25 the gospel writer identifies Christ as the stranger we meet in the hungry, the naked, the imprisoned. Strangers from this perspective, “enlarge our total well-being rather than diminish it.” “In each instance like Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, a stranger brings blessings that cannot at first be understood, and yet when received, brings hope and transformation to our human experience.”¹¹

“The metaphor of the stranger consequently provides a helpful way of describing the process through which congregations embracing human diversity nurture the ties that bless their experience of the community.”¹²

¹¹ Foster, Charles, R., *Embracing Diversity, Leadership in Multicultural Congregations*, The Alban Institute Inc., 1997 p.54.

¹² *Ibid* p.54.

For the sake of a Grand Theological frame what if the following would have been a reality for the existence of mankind: “Suppose there had been the insistence that to be born again, to accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, a man must be free of prejudices based upon color or “race”. Such prejudice would be defined, therefore, as a mortal sin, and harboring it would jeopardize a man’s soul. Racial prejudice, then, would create in such a person the kind of guilt that would separate him from God and His Christ. If this had been a part of Christian orthodoxy, then the enormous energy and vitality which evidence themselves wherever orthodoxy prevails would have been reflected in an experienced democracy in American life. This would have accomplished what no mere social gospel or liberal Christianity could affect. The purification of the life, the redemption of the spirit, the salvation of the soul, would not be possible for a man who closed the door against his fellows, whatever might be their status, color, or position in the world. Such a position would define for the believer the things for which he must stand with his life and the things against which he must stand. Social responsibility would be the inevitable result flowing from his experience of personal redemption.”¹³

And although Thurman was writing in the late 1950s and early 1960s, this is where we are today:

“What inevitably happens in talks with a white sympathetic layman is that “the minister discovers with his friend what the country as a whole has slowly discovered – that racial prejudice has stained the mind and the conscience of America and that like a dreaded sickness it has poisoned the will and paralyzed the intent of community.”¹⁴

¹³Thurman, Howard, *Footprints Of A Dream, The Story of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, p.144

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.147

It suggests that the whole picture would have been very different in American life if there had been included in Christian orthodoxy a judgment which said that racial prejudice (and hate) would bar a man from salvation”¹⁵

The upshot of these series of quotes is that, in our prophetic imagination, if it was made known to all mankind that as the main condition for entry into heaven, acts of racial hate, racial discrimination, and racial prejudice would serve as an instant bar. This world would be a different place in which to live.

In retrospect imagine if the Church Fathers like Augustine, Polycarp, Ignatius, Irenaeus, Origin, and Tertullian had written into its doctrinal orthodoxy and holiness of life as part of the Catholic Church Nicene and Apostolic Creeds that acts of racism, prejudice and discrimination would bar entry to heaven, we might not have the issue of hate, white nationalism, white privilege, and racism that exists today. Further, we find support for the theological framework of multiculturalism in 1st Peter 2:17 which calls us to honor all people and love the brotherhood. Miroslav Volf in a book entitled, *We Are the Church Together*, uses the term “Theology of Embrace.” He describes the framework for mediating the conflicts in a study among ethnic and religious groups in the Balkans. He observed that, “the act of embracing always involves two movements on the part of two people or groups- a movement to create space in myself for the other and an enclosing movement to communicate that I do not want to be without the other in her/his otherness”¹⁶ Foster writes, “To embrace others suggests that we cannot live authentically without welcoming others-the other gender, other persons or other cultures” – into the very structure of our being. Volk suggested that “we are called to others because we are created to reflect the fellowship

¹⁵ Thurman, Howard, *Footprints Of A Dream, The Story of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, p.143.

¹⁶ Foster, Charles, R. *Embracing the Diversity, Leadership in Multicultural Congregations*, The Alban Institute Inc., 1997 p.1.

that exists in the triune God.”¹⁷ So when we speak of the practices of embrace, we are referring to “the movement of different people in community that seek to be close to others without losing the integrity of their own identities.”¹⁸ Theologically this is what we as the Church seek to do.

Our intent is to figuratively and physically perform a theology of embrace of the other, the surrounding community in a divine spirit-filled embrace to welcome them into our church.

My question then becomes: Can the differences we share and that are so ingrained in our psyche and embedded in this society of American white Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism accept an embrace of difference? Can they exercise a Theology of Embrace? Foster shed some light on this when he says:

“We cannot begin a conversation on embracing difference in congregational life in other words, unless we begin with the basic humanness in each of us – that our destinies are bound up more by our shared experience of citizenship in a specific nation and by the common experience of our baptism into the body of Christ than by the divisions of culture and race.”¹⁹

For Multiculturalism to work and sustain itself, we must recognize that our destinies are bound up together more than we realize. Theologically we all emanate from God. We eat, live, and breathe the same air. We live in the same space. We have similar wants and desires. We live and we die.

This embrace of difference I point to is “having to do with differences in racial and ethnic/cultural heritage in this strive toward multiculturalism rises out of a biblical supposition and

¹⁷ Foster, Charles, R. Embracing the Diversity, Leadership in Multicultural Congregations, The Alban Institute Inc, 1997 p.1

¹⁸ Ibid. p.7

¹⁹ Foster, Charles. R., Embracing Diversity, Leadership in Multicultural Congregations, The Alban Institute Inc.,1997, p. 15

belief that congregations discover new possibilities for their futures through their responsiveness to people who do not share their racial and /or cultural heritage.”²⁰

The Bible can break down the walls of racism and discrimination. However, it can also be used to the contrary. People can become deluded and misguided in their interpretation of the Bible. There were white nationalist forces who stormed the U.S. Capitol using the Bible, the Cross, and chanting prayers many of whom were Evangelicals, Protestants, and Catholics. This, they believed, gave them the right to overthrow the democratic and political system. They were theologically intoxicated. They claimed that they were justified in their insurrection in a misguided belief that God ordained them to save the country.

These were people of faith who believed anything they were told. They became afraid to think for themselves. They were loyal and trusted anything that the authoritarian leadership of Trump said. They believed they were being oppressed, deprived of their rights and liberties and that the election had been stolen from them. Therefore, they believed that God was on their side, and they had to right these wrongs. The gospel has always been corrupted for the purpose of manipulation to expand power and wealth.

In fact, they believe that their actions are justified and that this is a conspiracy against them and their status in society. It is because of this that when we talk about the Theology of Embrace, there is a major theological problem in the Church. The Catholic Church in my community among others has played it safe and has remained silent about the issue of race. It has not taken a position on gun control. The Church has not condemned nor spoken out on mass violent shootings. It has not forcefully voiced its theological disapproval of Trump’s use of the Holy Bible in front of the Church in Washington, D.C. The Church has not engaged itself as a problem solver, but rather

²⁰ Ibid., p.3.

stood silently and done very little. It is my guess that the Church will now have to confront and enter into serious dialogue with some of its parishioners who showed up and actively took part in the destruction of the nations' capitol. To be silent is synonymous with turning against Christ, his teachings, and the church.

Walter Brueggemann provides a theological insight that is useful for a theological framing of Multiculturalism in the contemporary world set against the old conservative tradition using prophetic imagination. There has to be some Prophetic Imagination inserted into bringing about the desired effect of the creation and development of Multiculturalism and the Multicultural Church.

Wrapped up in Brueggemann's Theology of Prophetic Imagination he identifies that there has to be a point of mercy which yields to a spirit that allows an African American would-be multicultural church to have the capacity to give one's-self away for the sake of the neighborhood of God and for the purpose of bringing about the beloved community.

Working toward that beloved community for multiculturalism within this theological frame, the highest form of human sacrifice requires the demonstration of a willingness to give oneself away for the sake of winning over the other. This is usually accomplished by outreach and an open extension Christian embrace to those in a community who do not look, act, possibly think or worship like you. The ultimate risk is that of rejection.

There are not many multicultural churches in this area or the nation. When the subject is discussed, it is discussed with skepticism. My optimistic response to my faith in the development of the Biblical Urgency of Multiculturalism is that some men see things as they are and ask why and I imagine things as they could be and ask why not? Why can there not be a multicultural

church where Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, Asians, etc., worship together in a White neighborhood? It can go from a dream to reality.

When theology is placed against racism and tradition against imagination there are several infinite possibilities, the challenge of which is to move against the tradition of conservative thinking to a hoped-for imagination of something new to come. That something new is the preaching of a new public theology embedded in multiculturalism. There must be a new public theology wrapped in the gospel message which addresses issues in the public arena. The Church, especially the Black Church, which has been in a spiritual malaise since 1968 (Dr. ML King/Civil Rights Movement) has to greatly step up.

If all politics is local and that includes public theology, then the marching order for the Church is total involvement and taking an active substantial role in the public arena. The demand is for something new in a quickly changing world. We need a local Church theology. If the world we have trusted in is vanishing around us my prophetic imagination informs me that we/ I as a public theologian have to be bold. We are not to become narcotized robots programmed to the continuance of the status quo.

Within this theological frame, theologians have to be the catalyst for bold change. The theologian has to be prophets, pastors, counselors, and moral teachers of change. We must have that transformative ability to meet the expectations of the status quo. That prophetic imagination has led me to the development of the belief that there is an urgency of the biblical need for the Multicultural Church in our communities across the country.

The Public theologian cannot promote or advocate violence. It only leads to bloodshed and death. The result will be the loss of intelligent prominent moral leaders like Robert Kennedy,

Martin L. King, Jr., Malcolm X, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi, and others. Violent overthrow, coup, or civil war will not work.

Jesus was a messenger of transformation and a way of life that commanded that we love our neighbor. God is a God concerned with justice, joy, and peace in this world. Jesus displayed conduct and character that teaches and commands us to love and live as he, Jesus lived. We are called to live by the Great Commandment. We are called to live by the fruits of the spirit and to love Jesus as the center of our lives and Christianity. The last four years in America have been a true unveiling of American White Supremacy. The reality is that the country is becoming more racist. We as a people and we as a nation need a true vision for how we can live as better people. As this theological frame sets out that one way to do that is via the creation of the multicultural Church where we learn to live under One God, One Love, and One Faith as one loving family. The theologian can lead the way to show how we as people can help heal this Nation.

Within this theological frame the mind, the conduct, the thinking, and the attitude of white America have to be changed. The Public theologian must speak truth to the pillars of power to radically dismantle this capitalist system. Under this theological frame since the white population controls the media, industry, manufacturing, labor, the financial district, and the education system, whites will have to talk to whites about the massive changes and corrections needed, understanding the system requires a new economic, political, and social order. Therefore, the church and the public theologian both bear the remarkable responsibility of creating a new intellectual and theological paradigm of radical economic, social, and political change. In doing so, the public theologian must send a clear message to white nationalist and white exceptionalism that dispels America's historic contradictions in the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, and the truth about slavery upon which this nation was founded.

My prophetic imagination informs me that the theologian's job is to reframe the issues within the social order. This means that we, the Church, will have to look at things from a different angle. Radically speaking this means the prism through which we presently see things may have to be turned on a different Christian theological axis and/or in many different directions. Only then can the prophetic light of God show through. Pastors/preachers, public theologians, and other would-be do-gooders have to preach with conviction a message contained in the word of scripture that relates to the everyday life in the public arena rather than from self. That word has to be freeing and healing for people who hear it. My assertion is that sometimes it must offend to shake up and awaken the humane sensibilities of humankind.

However, Thurman speaks to this condition in that he says in his writing that the true mark of the development and creation of the proposed project I call the multicultural church may be found in his words:

“It is our faith that in the Presence of God- with His dreams of order there is neither male nor female, white nor black, Gentile or Jew, Protestant nor Catholic, Hindu nor Buddhist nor Moslem, but a human spirit stripped to the literal substance of ITSELF! And wherever man has the scent of Eternal Unity in his spirit, he hunts for it! In his home, in his work, among his friends, in his pleasures, on all levels of his functioning.”²¹

And where you find people Jew and Gentile, black and white, rich, and poor clergy and lay, men and women, youth, and age, sharing a spiritual unity in celebration of a concrete religious fellowship that on its daily functioning demonstrated that experiences of community are more compelling than all the things that divide.”²²

²¹ Thurman, Howard, *Footprints of A Dream, The Story of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, Eugene, OR Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009, p.107

²² *Ibid.*, p.108.

The question for the community around the Church is will they be willing to find religious fellowship and experience spiritual community in a black church?

The real test and the issue for the individual and the community are found in the question regarding the basis for the Multicultural Church. For whites in the Bayonne community surrounding the Church, it may be found in the similar question asked of those seeking membership at Fellowship Church for all Peoples: “Why did I join fellowship church? Because I wanted to worship God in a church that is open to all people without regard to race, creed or culture.”²³

The ministry I strive for in the reading of Thurman and others is, in the midst of this white community, when you join public theology and multiculturalism the goal is “to worship God in a Church that is open to all people without regard to race, creed, or culture.” The establishment of the multicultural church is the goal of multiculturalism. It is believed that this is the path to the Beloved Community and bring forth the Kingdom of God on Earth. In this way it is hoped that the eye of the soul of mankind will be opened to focus on the divine will of God.

However, given the severe impact of the current Covid-19 Pandemic, the reality of these conversations taking place, is that it may take weeks, if not months before this Pandemic is eliminated. The sad reality is that unfortunately the upshot of these conversations may not be revealed in this Theological frame.

²³ Thurman, Howard, *Footprints of A Dream, The Story of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, Eugene, OR, Wipf and Stock, Publishers, p.112.

Section Two: Ministry Setting

Bayonne, New Jersey, is the location of this ministry setting. It is a municipality that is situated directly adjacent to the City of Jersey, Hudson County, New Jersey. Historically, Bayonne was an ultra-extremely conservative white Republican community. It was a known fact that in the 1960s once you crossed 53rd Street entering Bayonne from Jersey City, as a black person whether driving or walking, you traveled very cautiously for fear of being detained by the police and questioned, physically driven (run) out of the city and/or not-so ceremoniously asked to leave.

Today, profiling has moderated. The city is less conservative. In the last 12 years, there has been a democratic Mayor and City Council elected. The city has become moderate, accepting, and less rigid. The city last summer tolerated a small march by Black Lives Matter within the city. This administration has pledged and been open to hiring a multicultural staff and willing to express a transformative intent to establish an anti-racist, equality, faith-based, religiously tolerant, social justice-minded community.

The Ministry Setting for the implementation of this project is one whose task is that of comprehensively connecting with others in the community.

Being the visionary leader, the pastor declared a unique vision for his ministry. This vision saw residents in the surrounding white community coming into this black church to worship and potentially seek membership. This vision was given to him by God.

One disadvantage in formulating this ministry project is the fact that there is little written material that can be referenced, used as research material, or serve as a guide to provide direction regarding the intent of an African American black church that has successfully demonstrated or completed a move from a mono-cultural faith community to Multiculturalism.

Howard Thurman, in his book entitled, *Footprints of A Dream*, is the closest guide which provides an account of how his Church, The Church for the Fellowship Of All Peoples in San Francisco, California was developed.²⁴ They intended to develop into a multicultural church. Therefore, this book is one of the primary source materials used for this project. To restate, the rationale for the concept of this project is multiculturalism borne out of the fact that this African American Church finds itself in the unique and interesting position of having it as the sole African American Church in a white neighborhood.

In this ministry setting Christianity requires a theological activity to express faith carried out as the prototype of the Great Commission. This prototype which underlies and is the foundation of multiculturalism is The Great Commission: “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”²⁵ It is the belief of this African American church to carry forth Christ’s mission into the community and the world.

We have a theological passion in our heart to help, heal and spread God’s word into this community. In this ministry setting, we believe evangelism is the foundation of the Great Commission and promotion of the cross-cultural work needed in Christian theology we call multiculturalism in the form of development of the Multicultural Church. The Great Commission Jesus calls us to be ambassadors to the community which is what becoming a multicultural church is what the church intends to do. In this ministry, we see ourselves as a faith community able to articulate a faith foundation to the community. As part of the theology, the Great Commission is

²⁴Howard Thurman, *Footprints of a Dream: The Story of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, Eugene, OR Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009).

²⁵ King James Version of the Holy Bible Gospel of Matthew 28:19-20.

the foundation of evangelism and the Christian responsibility to share. And as Christians, we are all expected to share our faith daily.

From a theological/biblical stance coupled with public theology, Thurman enunciates the firm basis for this Multicultural DMIN paper and contributes to what I have learned when he states that “The Negro has a rich and redemptive heritage which must not be lost in this effort to become an integrated religious fellowship. How to conserve the essential idiom which has kept alive in the spirit of Negroes a courage and a vitality that has sustained that spirit in all of its vicissitudes, and at the same time to bring into its fellowship more and more of those who are not Negroes, until at last from both sides there is a common meeting place in which there will be no Negro church and no white church, but the Church of God – that is the task we all must work to finish.”²⁶ A close reading of this Thurman quote illustrates our intent and what the church is deliberately working to achieve by the church is described in Acts Chapter 2.

This is the basis of this project research paper and what this project paper strives for creation in the community.

Race has always been the common denominator in anything that is done in society. Race is a common factor in attendance and administrative operation of the Church. People’s social lives are ingrained in this conscious and unconscious thought process and American culture is destructive. It is so destructive that I am well aware that this could serve as a bar to the establishment of the multicultural church, which should not see or use color, race, or creed as a barrier to the creation of the Kingdom of God on Earth.

Most problematic of all in this fragmented, divided, violence-prone society is this question that must be asked: in this turbulent time in which we live, can we come together and take a stand

²⁶ Thurman, Howard, *Footprints Of A Dream, The Story of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, Eugene, OR., Wipf and Stock Publishers 2009, p.157.

on the number one issue facing this nation? That being, can we find common ground in God's kingdom to come together and rectify racial injustices? Race is the dividing line in this country. It is believed that multiculturalism can bring about a shift in the current patterns of belief systems and religious participation to diminish color such that the white community can embrace a public theology where on Sunday morning they can boldly cross the line and join us to serve one faith, one Lord and one God.

Given that the multicultural church is untried and relatively new, this mission will be met with skepticism, doubts, and setbacks. However, my understanding, belief, and faith leads me to be convinced that it is achievable in this neighborhood and throughout this country.

The project in its research wants to erase this notion that the African Americans have no confidence they will normally and courteously be received in a white church, there could be a similar perception that whites may feel the same way going into a Black multicultural setting. Thurman reflects that he is "profoundly convinced that it is very difficult to meet as friends before the altar of God if there is no fellowship in the marketplace."²⁷ He continues, writing that "Many Negroes who would like to participate in the religious life in the so-called white church are unwilling, for many reasons to take the step because they have no confidence that they will be received normally or courteously."²⁸

When anticipating how a church will be received by a community in the framework of theology, it is incumbent upon the public theologian to assess as much as humanly possible, the psychological, political, and social impacts that the church will have on the community. This

²⁷ Thurman, Howard, *Footprints of A Dream, The Story of the Church for The Fellowship of All Peoples*, Eugene, OR., Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009. p.154.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.154.

means looking at the effect of the churches' movement in the public square we call community and its impact. There are at least three scenarios that can be drawn when imagining the church.

The White Church Community

Typically, within this community, the moment an African American church that is racially diverse moves in, meaning, 75% to 85% majority black and 30% European/other moves into a majority white neighborhood and its surrounding subdivision “then the for-sale signs sprang up in the subdivisions around the church.”²⁹ It is often the occasion for “white flight”.

When this racial imbalance is realized by the white European Anglo- Saxon community there is often an exodus by a majority of its residents from the neighborhood, and two things usually take place which Foster points out: They also left the Church. “Some long-time members did not share this new vision of the church and left for other congregations.”³⁰ The church eventually turned African American.

Sometimes as the neighborhood changes, especially with the exodus of the once dominant Anglo-Saxon Community, other ethnicities move in. There could be an influx of Hispanic, black, and other minority groups into the church. There is a fear of no confidence on the part of the white community that the Church will live up to its good neighbor standards. However, given the character of the church and the strong stability of this Bayonne neighborhood, it is not anticipated that this will take place in this neighborhood.

The aim of this soon-to-be multicultural church is not one to cause displacement within the neighborhood but to provide additional stability to the neighborhood. The corollary to this is “what about the white church that is in a neighborhood that is changing from white to Black or some

²⁹ Foster, Charles, F., *Embracing Diversity, Leadership in Multicultural Congregations*, The Alban Institute Inc, 1997, p. 41.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.44.

other so-called ethnic minority?”³¹ One result that could take place over a 5–10-year period is that the Church after some time will likely move from that neighborhood or both churches could continue to co-exist.

The Black Church Community

What happens in a Black church that is in a neighborhood that is slowly changing from white to a host of different ethnic minorities? In short, the black church will most likely stay in that neighborhood and absorb those ethnic groups into its worship. “An alternative to moving is to develop a program that meets community needs for recreation and various kinds of community service for any and all while the formal religious Sunday services are maintained strictly as the one unbroken link between the church and its white members.”³² This multicultural church plans a variety of community services and forums by which to engage the community.

As pointed out by Thurman, “the second alternative to moving the church is to try to make the people who are coming into the neighborhood feel not only welcome but comfortable in what for them is a new experience in a new environment. Goodwill is not enough; it takes more than goodwill.”³³ This multicultural church hopes that it will be welcomed by the community in its experiment to open its doors in its theology of embrace of the community.

The Multicultural Church Community

The question that comes to mind is, can the White Community make this mental transition? Can this white community become welcoming enough to accept this African American Church, its people, its worship community and not flee?

³¹ Thurman, Howard, *Footprints Of A Dream, The Story of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, Eugene, OR., Wipf and Stock Publishers., 2009, p.151

³² *Ibid.*, p.151

³³ Thurman, Howard, *Footprints Of A Dream, The Story Of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, Eugene, Or., Wipf and Stock Publishers., 2009, p. 152.

The problem to be confronted, especially for this proposed Multicultural Church research project paper is squarely this. Built-up over time in the minds of the white community is what is appropriately described as the historic concept of the “fear of tipping.” setting in. The concept of the fear of tipping involves a certain psychology of the mind that fosters the perception that the presence of too many blacks coming into a neighborhood will be detrimental to property values and lead to lower homes sales. Therefore, whites become sensitive to changes in the racial composition in the schools, homes, and their white neighborhoods. It is for this reason that white neighborhoods tend to turn over faster when the share of minority households in their neighborhoods reaches or exceeds the tipping point, which is usually 50%. Therefore, white neighborhoods usually ensure that there are higher home sales and high property values, which helps to maintain the integrity and stability of their communities. When racial transition occurs, and they perceive both home sales and property values go down, the result is white flight.

The question I raise is by the establishment of this multicultural church in this white neighborhood: Will this happen? This is one of those socio-economic-political challenges that remain to be seen. I remain optimistic.

In my opinion, it is important to compare Multiculturalism in terms of the Black Church because it has to be mindful of its impact within the white community. The role of the church in the life of the Negro has been like an oasis in a desert or a windbreak behind which the community could develop a sense of belonging and dignity which could not be found in any other aspect of his environment.³⁴ While the congregation may accept that the music, the hymns sung, the order of service, staffing and leadership, content of the preached word, may be modified or even changed, basic prayer focus on God and the Pentecostal worship tradition cannot change.

³⁴ Ibid., p.155.

I think it is important for the Church to maintain its foundation in education, political activity, and social justice but it must also be willing and open to change yet maintain its basic identity in the face of change.

Viewing multiculturalism from a historic viewpoint, what the church meant to the Negro was that: “The church served as a rallying point for all of the organized life of the Negro community. The sanctuary of the church was often the only possible meeting place for public gatherings.”³⁵ The multicultural church intends to conduct community seminars and community forums on race and social justice. The multicultural church while willing to diversify will provide cultural insights into the nature of those who would be willing to worship with them. It must be understood that the multicultural church will be a vehicle for public theology and promoting social justice. It will be a public voice. The public theologian will be a catalyst for change in the community.

As a demonstration to meet the serious needs, promote change and help eliminate suffering the church twice a month operates its community food bank. It provides food for at least 500 community residents per month. It also provides donated clothing to those in need. In contrast, the Roman Catholic church, St. Andrews, located one block away which is aware of this community-wide activity has not offered to partner with us but stands as a monument of silence and inactivity to the needs of this community.

Charles Foster, the author of *Embracing Diversity*, in his research, highlights a distinction that sets apart the multicultural church from other churches, including the white and black church. He found that “each Sunday we were greeted at the door by two men, one white one black who welcomed us and gave us a copy of the liturgical bulletin. We later discovered that this was not a

³⁵ Thurman, Howard, *Footprints of A Dream, The Story Of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, Eugene, OR., Wipf and Stock Publishers., 2009, p. 155.

coincidence. The visible interdependence of the black and white leadership of the congregation was carefully orchestrated. This is because they wanted to present that image to newcomers and to prevent themselves from falling back into the patterns of associating primarily with people “of their own kind”. You are trying to present intentionality. That in God and His worship, there is no color. No East. No West. No Jew. No Gentile. Just One Family. We are one people of God.”³⁶ The difference here is to show the white community diversity, unity and that we can as one people fellowship under the roof of the same God. This is what the multicultural African American Church ultimately seeks to do.

As another example, the Pastor standing up and announcing, “Welcome, we are Family here, or This is the Church where the World gathers to worship or Spiritual seekers, regardless of racial, sexual or religious orientation are welcome.” They communicate to everyone what we say, what we believe about ourselves.”³⁷

This is the extension of Christian witness traditionally carried out by a black pastor who wants to give a Christian welcome that this is the church of God. To its credit the one church I can identify that carries out this mission is Middle Church located on the lower East Side of New York City.

The point is that the clear and unmistakable message that the multicultural church is sending to the white community is that in its ecclesiology and public theology:

“There has to be a striving for creation of a community of friendliness in which it will be reasonable for men to trust one another and to love one another”³⁸ and an appreciation for life and mutual regard for the other regardless of one’s social circumstances. The purpose

³⁶ Foster, Charles, R., *Embracing Diversity, Leadership in Multicultural Congregations*, The Alban Institute Inc. 1997, p. 55.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 80.

of all of this that “a man must seek to become alive to himself so that he will not seem to himself to be of no account.”³⁹ That the value of human life is good and immeasurable no matter the circumstance. There has to be an appeal that there is an Openness and there is Oneness in God which makes us all equal in His sight. That is the challenge.

According to the bible, there is a belief that “the Lord does not see as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart.”⁴⁰ “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ.”⁴¹

On the Biblical and secular level, multiculturalism tends to open up the social realm and allows us to become more of a beloved community where we can see each other as equal human beings in one another’s and in God’s sight as shown by Korie L. Edwards. Whites explained that attending an interracial church enhanced their religious lives. It added a little extra something to their worship experience or filled what felt like a void in their spirituality. They also felt that attending an interracial church broadened their worldview.

One person admitted that “there was something in my faith growing up in all-white churches when I was little. It just feels like something was missing. I’m not really sure what, but it would be very hard for me to go back to an all-white church. ?”⁴²

People from interracial families explained that the church's diversity provided them with a level of comfort that they often did not experience in other churches. For these families’ interracial churches were a refuge from a racially segregated world. “No one stared at us. We felt very

³⁹ Ibid., p.80.

⁴⁰ King James Version of the Holy Bible, 1 Samuel 16:7

⁴¹ King James Version of the Holy Bible Galatians 3:28

⁴² Edwards, Korie, L. the elusive Dream, The Power Of Race In Interracial Churches, Oxford University Press, Inc. 2008, p.110.

welcome. We saw other interracial couples. We felt at home. We didn't have to explain anything or like when you go to a grocery store, and they ask if [my wife and I] are together—that happens a lot. So, we felt welcomed.”⁴³

The greater fear expressed in this research is the fear of the African American church losing its cultural identity and heritage. “People who have long experienced minority status may fear losing the clarity of their racial and cultural identity that has sustained and supported them through generations of oppression. In a society that historically sought to prevent the transmission of minority racial and cultural identities, congregations have often been the primary agents to that identity’s maintenance and renewal. Given the ambiguous motivations for embracing racial-cultural differences in many congregations, it should not be surprising that people in historically marginated congregations might resist efforts to join dominant culture congregations.”⁴⁴ From this quotation, it is clear that minorities want to maintain their autonomy and cultural identity through the church.

My research showed that while the church still maintains a healthy relationship with the community, discussions with both white and black pastors of multicultural churches in different sectors of the United States there was almost unanimous agreement that the formation and development of the multicultural church is the wave of the future. Furthermore, they foresaw those factors like lack of a relevant message, decline in millennial attendance, dwindling financial resources, and the aging out process, are harbingers that the monocultural church was becoming extinct.

⁴³ Ibid. p.110

⁴⁴ Foster, Charles, R. *Embracing Diversity, Leadership in Multicultural Congregations*, The Alban Institute Inc., p.19.

An issue in the development of a multiracial church is Whites not being comfortable sitting under the Pastorate of a Black male or female. This is one of the main barriers that is anticipated in establishing a multicultural/multiracial church. Since Racism is acknowledged as ingrained in the fabric of America in a comparison between the black and multicultural church it is felt that the black Pastor may still encounter a multitude of disparities.

Multiculturalism seeks to eradicate the disparities, inequities, and prejudices encountered in secular society as well as in the church. “What inevitably happens in talks with a white sympathetic layperson is that “the minister discovers with his friend what the country as a whole has slowly discovered – that racial prejudice has stained the mind and the conscience of America and that like a dreaded sickness it has poisoned the will and paralyzed the intent of community.”⁴⁵ It is the role and responsibility of the public theologian to place him or herself squarely in the middle of the paralysis in the public arena and diffuse the tension in the community.

In the construction of this research paper, the writer takes the position that “A true Christian who believes in the fatherhood of God, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the brotherhood of man, and the dignity of every person and believes that the church is God’s house cannot deny membership to another Christian nor deny membership to one of the same faiths. If Islam can admit all races to the mosque and if atheistic communism can allow all races in its fellowship without segregation, certainly the Christian can do the same in his church, and it is wholly within his power to do so.”⁴⁶ There is a certain risk of rejection. When we speak of rejection as in the days of Christ some agreed with his ideas and there were those in opposition. However, there is always a residual hope of embrace of difference in rejection. In a way of optimism, there is a positive alternative in that

⁴⁵ Thurman, Howard, *Footprints Of A Dream, The Story of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, Eugene, OR., Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009. P.147.

⁴⁶ Mays, Benjamin E., *Seeking to be Christian*, p.75.

Foster says, “I tried to capture the phrase “embrace of difference” and “The practice of embracing others is not easy—especially given the proclivity to exclude, dominate, and oppress people who are the other and to privilege and give preference to ourselves. It begins with a discerning difference as a possibility - a gift – rather than a problem.”⁴⁷ “It continues with the recognition that our lives and our cultures are inextricably intertwined and interdependent – even though when examined discreetly they often seem to be studied in contrast. It requires the affirmation of cultural “others” on their terms and at the same time, an affirmation of our cultural embeddedness as a primary resource to the depths of our own identities. This requires that members of each racial and cultural group grant the other “sufficient respect” to listen and trust enough to challenge and critique. This cannot happen without sharing power, creating a collaborative engagement on the issues that matter most in the common life of the congregation.”⁴⁸

There is a divided mind in the community regarding the opinion of engaging with the Black Church. The community survey returned by the neighborhood residents seemed to indicate an acceptance to attend if invited. This can be referenced in the Appendix to this research paper. This is beyond dispute. Second, there are whites, residents in the neighborhood who have expressed an interest in attending the Churches services, if invited. There was both a Community and a Church Survey conducted whose results will be briefly discussed later. The major hurdle or challenge to be overcome is how to get our neighbors in when no one from the white community wants to be the first to be seen entering an African American Church. There is also the fear of the unknown. The objective of the church will be to minimize fear, embarrassment, or backlash

⁴⁷ Foster, Charles, R. *Embracing Diversity, Leadership in Multicultural Congregations*, The Alban Institute Inc., 1997, p.147.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.47.

because it is felt that, based on interaction with the community, there are sufficient arguments for the need of a multicultural church.

Black and White are theologically alienated from each other by our various styles of worship even though we pray to the same God. As previously mentioned, religion is a part of culture for these groups, which keeps them tight-knit and may make it difficult to branch out to churches of different races or practices.

While it is firmly believed that the Church is a place for changing hearts and minds, multiculturalism calls for us to bring about compassion, agape love, family, and empathy in a revolutionary manner. An example of an attempt at community outreach is the creation of the Faith and Victory Community Services 501 c (3), a food and wellness program and food bank, which is a not-for-profit corporation. It was established in 2016. The food bank operates every two weeks out of a month. It has a staff of ten (10) volunteers. Since its inception, it has been open to the entire community surrounding the Church and Bayonne residents. Demographically the people who take advantage of the services of the community food bank are Whites, African Americans, Asians, Latinos, and Egyptians. Most of these people come from within the Bayonne community. The church has three ministry programs: (1) an annual Breast Cancer Fundraiser in October of which my wife is a Breast Cancer survivor. It is open to the community. This is part of the Faith and Victory Community Services Corporation. (2) The Church conducts its College Enrichment Program. This program provides \$500.00 scholarships to graduating high school seniors. Annually between three and five scholarships are awarded. (3) Finally, there is a Home and Foreign Mission Ministry to support inner-city Africa. This ministry provides \$1,000.00 in support to missions in Africa to help construct schools, and purchase books and desks for students.

“When differences cannot be changed or overcome (as in gender, race, culture, and class) the resistance to negotiating ways to live in solidarity tends to increase. When those differences are reinforced by the systematic forces of racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, and classism, the repugnance of “the other” is intensified both for those who have power and those who are powerless. For the powerful, the embrace of difference requires suspending privilege, status, and power they have enjoyed. For the powerless, it involves transforming their patterns of protection and defensiveness into patterns of mutual engagement. The task is not easy for either party. Fear and apprehension are common responses.”⁴⁹ I believe this is true. While it has most often been the Black Church that has had to compromise in the effort to achieve diversity in the community, the question for the congregation will be: “What changes will they be open too to attract members of the White community to the church?” Congregations of every ethnicity who endeavor to become more diverse will find it necessary to adapt, make changes on the way to achieving this goal. The key to advancing this effort will be building relationships (partnerships) with the community before worshipping together becomes feasible.

However, while the members of Faith and Victory Church embrace the idea of multiculturalism and becoming a multicultural church, there were some exceptions. Some who had been longtime residents of the city indicated they had attended various churches in Bayonne including Catholic churches because there was no “black congregational setting” nearby to attend. They indicated that they were there to seek God and no exceptions or adjustments were made for them. They indicated that while they could see adjustments to be made, that the same would hold for newcomers. They hoped that any newcomers would come seeking God and the worship of God and that the Church would hold to its basic Pentecostal tradition.

⁴⁹ Foster, Charles, R., *Embracing Diversity, Leadership in Multicultural Congregations*, The Alban Institute, Inc., p.15.

As the writer of this DMIN Research paper, I am under no delusion that for a variety of reasons there will be resistance and possible rejection of the idea of the creation of this multicultural church in the Bayonne Community.

What I have learned as one outcome of reading Thurman is to agree with the major stance taken on his conviction elaborated upon in his book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. It is from this book which embodied my convictions “that the segregated church as such was a reaction response to the environment and not inherent in the genius of the Christian faith itself.”⁵⁰ Furthermore Thurman goes on to state, “The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples which he founded in 1959 was in its essence an attempt to establish empirical validation for what to me is a profound religious and ethical insight concerning the genius of the church as a religious fellowship” and “to phrase it another way, I had to find out for myself whether or not it is true that experiences of spiritual unity and fellowship are more compelling than the fears and dogmas and prejudices that separate men. And if these experiences can be multiplied over a time interval of sufficient duration, would they be able to undermine any barrier that separates one man from another?”⁵¹

The Church has not tested reaching out its hand to other faith communities to determine whether spiritual unity and fellowship can overcome the color and racial barriers that separate individuals from one another.

Thurman holds to the proposition that “Religious experience must unite rather than divide men. There must be made available experiences by which the sense of separateness will be transcended, and unity expressed, experiences that are deeper than all diversity but at the same time are enriched by diversity.”⁵²

⁵⁰ Thurman, Howard, *Footprints Of A Dream, The Story of the Church for the Fellowship Of All Peoples*, Eugene, OR., Wipf and Stock Publishers, p. 21.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* p.21

⁵² *Ibid.* p.21

In this current COVID ridden grossly imbalanced have/have not, race divided society, when it comes to actively deal with social issues such as the issues of equality, access to health/medical care, food insecurity, voter suppression, black lives matter, fair treatment of the LGBTQ community, unemployment, job creation, and stimulus relief in the public arena we have a divided Congress. There is no Church response and no consensus to act in the public square. There is still the question of race in this country.

The major goal and objective of this paper is to create and develop something that has not been imagined or accomplished by a Black Church in this area. The intentionality of this creative thought to create a multicultural church in this neighborhood is to attract whites, Hispanics, and other ethnicities into a Black church from within and outside the white community.

In looking at the events of January 6, 2021, our Nation's Capital in Washington, had broad theological implications. These people comprised of groups, including Q-Anon, Oath Keepers, and the Proud Boys, had the intent to attack the capitol, kill the vice-president and members of congress. Signs, bibles, and crosses proclaiming belief in Jesus was evidence that these terrorists had some catholic and evangelical Christian religious affiliation. Their claim was that God ordained them to do this, that God was on their side. They insisted that they were doing this to reclaim the good of their country. We cannot say for sure, but it is conceivable these were people of faith, Catholic, Evangelical, and Protestant who had come from all over the country from states like New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut, the Midwest, and from as far away as California, some even from in and around Bayonne, New Jersey.

Donald Trump, aside from having deceived the nation about the danger of the COVID-19 pandemic, served as an inciter in chief of this attack. Video tape footage of his speech to his supporters is evidence that he ignited the fire which led to the domestic terrorism that almost

brought down this nation. I mention this because Bayonne is a small cosmopolitan snapshot of America and is part of that history.

It can be assumed that it was white nationalist Christian supremacy, underlined by race, and, the dog whistle Make America Great Again, that fueled this domestic terrorism. As part of its fictitious Christian colonial thinking were of the opinion that the election was stolen from them. Whites felt they had been lied to. The real reason which no one wants to openly talk about is the fact that this was a last-ditch effort to keep the blacks in their place. In Trump, the white nationalists, evangelicals, Oath Keepers, and Proud Boys were signaling to the nation that we want to keep Trump in power because whites do not want a browning of the United States. White men are in fear of losing their power, place, and privileged status in the United States.

The Church and I speak of the Church Universal, which has some serious Theological work, some soul searching to do because of the domestic terrorist events at the Capitol. It has to be acknowledged that not all of the many thousands of Trump supporters who participated and descended on the Capitol will be legally prosecuted. So far that number to be prosecuted is 300. The many thousands have blended in and returned to ordinary life and are sitting in the pews of the Catholic, Evangelical, and Protestant Church. How do you help? The outreach of a Multicultural Church might be the answer. The question that Church Theologians must confront is:

- 1.) How can this group be convinced to subvert and surrender their immoral ideology and reunite with the other half of the American citizenry and embrace a theology of unity, civility, and Godliness?

- 2.) Can the theologian speak the truth in the name of brotherhood and love where understanding of thy neighbor can be achieved in conversation in a faith community of diversity? Is multiculturalism a viable option for bringing about unity?
- 3.) Will Church leaders be silenced by the philosophy behind this domestic terrorism and have its Christianity thrown it back in the face of the Church.

The first thing that can be assumed is that these Trump followers may be (1) existing members returning to the church; (2) prospects who may come into the church; or (3) people seeking faith or renewal of their faith and counsel, all needing spiritual healing. This also may become an outreach mission of the church to counsel and heal those who participated in this domestic terrorism.

In the face of racism, multiculturalism presents the opportunity and a challenge for my church and the Catholic Church in Bayonne to create a partnership vehicle to show that through diversity and faith there can be a path to mutual respect and understanding.

This is said because the domestic terrorists, silent sympathizers as well as those who simply participated in the January 6th U.S. capitol riot came from all over the country including the northeast. There are still those who are grappling with the question, Is This Us, Are We This America? This could be a way of the Church using its venue and tools of public theology for brokering conversation and engagement of new ideas within the church to reform, reconcile and possibly evangelize these individuals.

In this ministry setting this exploration of racial ideas and identity among various groups of interracial church attendees is that people of different races can worship together, even when the icy silence of racial identification would rather be avoided across racial groups. Social group identity theory proposes that interracial churches can be created and sustained by reducing the

salience of racial identities among group members and promoting an identity that encompasses a oneness of identity among multiple subgroups. Interracial churches attempt this by a social identity that is common among church attendees, generally a religious identity, and deemphasizing racial differences. The salience factor in the social group identity theory is what a multicultural church is trying to achieve. The goal is to take the emphasis of the fact that you are white, I am black, he is Hispanic, she is Asian. Therefore, the position of this paper is not just that a multicultural church is needed for black people, the multicultural church is commandment of God for all people, no matter their cultural origin. Interracial churches are the bedrock of the initial House of Prayer, where all people come together to love and worship in peace and harmony. In addition, we are to celebrate all people, races, colors, ethnicities, and cultures on a monthly or annual basis as an inclusion of God's commandment that we are to be a house of prayer and worship of all faiths. That must be the basis of the multicultural church.

In my reading, an example was given of an interracial church that tried to address the issue of race in the church. One such church illustrated was Mosaic. "Mosaic a racially integrated congregation in Los Angeles, intentionally emphasizes congregants' identities as "followers of Jesus Christ" as a strategy for successfully unifying members of diverse backgrounds. This strategy renders ethnicity in this religious organization "irrelevant"⁵³

Alternatively, Middle Collegiate Church, unlike many other Churches, promotes appreciation for difference and regularly addresses racial/ethnic dynamics. This is because many of the so-called theologians are not aware or are afraid to speak from their pulpits about racial and ethnic dynamics such as civil rights, racial attacks and killings such as George Floyd, LGBTQ issues especially, and political issues, i.e., the recent election.

⁵³ Edwards, Korie, L., the elusive DREAM, The Power of Race in Interracial Churches, Oxford University Press, Inc, 2008, p. 99.

While acknowledging a strategy for lessening the tension and focus on ethnicity, the public theologian as a follower of a radical Palestinian Jesus Christ must embrace a radical gospel. He or she must always speak truth to power in the public square, and fight against the injustices harming the followers. Therefore, the public theologian must advocate the Middle Church model, even in the face of fear. A public theologian must step from behind the sacred safe haven of the pulpit and speak to the issues of civil rights, including the discrimination against and killings of human beings, like George Floyd, in the public arena of this society.

The Biblical Urgency for Multiculturalism

In conclusion, Public Theology in my estimation has to be bold, Christ-based in its Prophetic Imagination. It must be concrete and thought out in its planning and direction. It has to consist of definite strategy and advocacy for change and be result-oriented to be effective in the Public Arena. This is the basis for the Multicultural Church.

To further confirm my conclusion, Howard Thurman speaks to this point of Public Theology and prophetic imagination when he says, “I am convinced that it is possible to develop a religious fellowship which is so unifying in its quality that the barriers originally separating its members one from another will gradually disappear, leaving in their stead a new sense of community.”⁵⁴ Ergo the theory and push for Multiculturalism. Herein is confirmation of the possibility of the creation of the Biblical Urgency of the Multicultural Church.

⁵⁴ Thurman, Howard, *Footprints of A Dream, The Story of The Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, Eugene, OR., Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009, p.137

Section Three: The Research Project

In public theology, the theological frame in this ministry setting of multiculturalism for the development of the multicultural-multiracial church demands a different type of organizational and administrative approach. The imagined or pictured image of the future multicultural church might in theory be conceptualized as containing the following elements:

The Necessity of Intentionality

There should be members black and white at the Church doors for all to see. They must be warm. They must be friendly, welcoming, and faith filled. They must send a message that God worships here to all newcomers.

The Necessity of Greeters

As described by Forster, “Each Sunday we were greeted at the door by two men, one white and one black who welcomed us and gave us a copy of the liturgical bulletin. We later discovered that this was not a coincidence. The visible interdependence of the black and white leadership of the congregation was carefully orchestrated...because they wanted to present that image to newcomers and to prevent themselves from falling back into the patterns of associating primarily with people “of their own kind.”⁵⁵

The Necessity of Seasoned Ushers

The greeters should deliberately direct these newcomers to seasoned ushers. The ushers should not only engage newcomers in conversation but strategically seat them near seasoned members of a different color or ethnicity. Ushers would familiarize them with the location of bathrooms and hand sanitizer stations.

⁵⁵ Foster, Charles, R. *Embracing Diversity, Leadership in Multicultural Congregations*, The Alban Institute, Inc., 1997, p. 50.

“These visual messages provide a persistent implicit message that this congregation may have an unconventional way of relating to the structure of power in society. Our greeting at the door reinforces this perception. No one announces that this congregation welcomes “black” and “white”, but the presence of black and white greeters underscores the explicit message that racial and cultural homogeneity is not the way this congregation defines itself.”⁵⁶

The Importance of Staging

My research uncovered another key source for implementation and design of the proposed multicultural church: *Multicultural Ministry Handbook, Connecting Creatively to a Diverse World*, by David A. Anderson and Margarita R. Cabellon, states an essential element is the intention to do Staging.

“When people walk through the doors of our Churches, they must see others that look like themselves, or they may feel out of place, like an outsider. We want the opposite to be true. We want them to know that there is indeed a place for them in our church. We want them to feel at home.”⁵⁷ Staging is an essential and intentional element. Cabellon and Anderson insist that there be deliberate intent in the design of this Church that upon entry, it is essential that there is a visual sighting of people who look like you. As an example, a black, an indigenous, and/or a white person either in the band section, the choir, or the pulpit staff by design to show inclusiveness, diversity, and a theological community. Evidence of what I speak can be verified in a discussion of one of the Churches researched for this paper. That information can be found referenced in *Tapestry Church* in the Appendix. The Pastor of *Tapestry church* constantly referred to the fact that staging and intentionality were key to the design and development of his multicultural church. That his

⁵⁶ Foster, Charles, R., *Embracing Diversity, Leadership in Multicultural Congregations*, The Alban Institute, Inc., 1997, p. 56.

⁵⁷ Anderson, David, A. Margaret R. Cabellon, *Multicultural Ministry Handbook, Connecting Creativity in a Diverse World*, InterVarsity Press, 2010, p.5.

musicians were husband and wife was not a mistake but intentional. His praise team and choir were comprised of black, white, and Asian. His band, which consisted of an Indian-Native American, a black, an Asian and a white female, was no mistake and the fact that they were all young and enjoyed music was no mistake but deliberate. He said when people walk through the door, especially young people, they are impressionable, sensory oriented, and want to see someone who looks like them that they can relate to in multiple contexts.

In his book *United by Faith*, Curtiss DeYoung echoed the same sentiment that in a multicultural setting that people of all ethnicities and colors regardless of dress, faith etc., who entered the church will indeed want to see someone who looks like them but more importantly want to experience and know “if God is in this place.” Ironically the same unsolicited sentiment was stated in a conversation which took place in an interview with a Pastor of Holy Christian church, a multicultural church in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He stated that people want to hear, see, touch people who look and dress like they do, but more importantly want to know and experience “is God in this place.” Additional research support for multiculturalism and more detailed conversational interviews can be found in the Appendix to this project. Based on the research and these conversations the purpose of “multiculturalism” is fulfilled.

In a conversation with the Pastor of a multicultural church, Holy Christian Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota he asserts that God must be the center focus of the church and not color. I wholeheartedly agree with this statement and this theological position.

Identity

There is a need to be authentic. You have to demonstrate that you are who and what you say you are. You have to be true to who you say you are and what you believe in. You have to show that you are authentic.

When you are trying to establish your identity both as a person, a leader, or member of a church moving from monocultural to a multicultural African American Church you have to be your authentic self. “The you that bears the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The you that allows you to say to others, ‘Follow me as I follow Christ’ This demands on the part of the leader or leadership or even the congregation, don’t try to be something or someone that you’re not.”⁵⁸ The mission of the church leader has to reflect that “a good leader cultivates an environment where people can be themselves, bring their “stuff” to the table and be encouraged and influenced to run hard after God without being judged, dismissed, disrespected, or rejected.”⁵⁹ Anderson and Cabellon go on to say that “The people have to be initiated into the fact that they can worship openly and freely in the style they feel comfortable in without fear of being ostracized, ridiculed, or shamed. What people see when they walk through the doors of your church is critical.”⁶⁰

In the design of the multicultural church, blacks and whites must be free to worship the way each wants without fear, criticism, or ridicule. Congregations that seek to incorporate diversity must include gathering people in the fellowship of the congregation, embodying the church's mission, and linking the congregation’s faith in Christ to the cultural experiences of people.”⁶¹

“When in a multicultural setting, we must always see the ministry and structures we create through the lens of diversity.”⁶² The fact that this church has decided to pursue the route of multiculturalism is that we believe “Maybe God has brought your team of diverse people together to show an unbelieving world that God loves all people and that together they can make an

⁵⁸ Anderson, David, A., Margaret R. Cabellon, *Multicultural Ministry Handbook, Connecting Creativity to a Diverse World*, Inter Varsity Press, 2010, p.52.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.52

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.52.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.23.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p.8.

incredible sound for God’s glory. This is what worship is meant to be.”⁶³ This is what my church, the Faith and Victory Deliverance Church firmly believes in this move to multiculturalism.

Pastors Goal and Objective

Another aspect that is essential to the successful creation of the multicultural church is the Pastoral message. The Pastor in the opening of the Sunday message should stand and announce a Welcome, emphasizing that “We Are Family.” Or emphasize that “This is the Church where the World gathers to worship” or that spiritual seeker, regardless of racial, sexual or religious orientation are welcome.” They would communicate to everyone that what we say, we believe about ourselves.”⁶⁴

By doing this it would show that the goal of the Pastor and the leadership of the Church is that “The leadership of multicultural congregations is transformative. Primary attention is not given to maintaining the status quo of any one group but to the nurture of change in the congregation for the sake of a new relationship among racially and culturally diverse groups and ultimately with God.”⁶⁵

Leadership

The public theologian in public theology is faced with a relatively new kind of theology in this new multicultural setting. The public theologian has a dual role to play in society and in the church. In my opinion, the public theologian must take the position of an activist in a divinely ordained office called to do novel things, sometimes clerical, sometimes pastoral, and sometimes disruptive in the public arena. Whether it is to his or her liking, the public theologian is called – to coin John Lewis’ phrase, get into “good trouble” – in the public square. In the sphere of his or

⁶³ Ibid., p.9.

⁶⁴ Foster, Charles, R. Embracing Diversity, Leadership in Multicultural Congregations, The Alban Institute, Inc. 1997, p.55.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p.117.

her ministry, and like the Jesus whom he follows there, the public theologian must pay a personal and spiritual price for advocating change in the public arena. For example, alliances and partnerships to bring about change may result in a loss of public favor and the making of enemies. There is also the always present risk of personal safety for actions taken in the public arena. The prophetic theologian must approach the public arena with the attitude that “God did not give us a spirit of fear but of power of love and of a sound mind” which is often found in the face of hostile public and political challenges. The public theologian must be prepared to offer a prophetic vision, a new reality, and the belief in a new faith community.

On the other hand, the public theologian in terms of church leadership must be divinely inspired, faith filled, trust in God, and be guided by scripture. In his leadership capacity, the public theologian must not only follow Christ but also be surrounded by those who can teach the word of God and be among leaders who can teach the word of God and lead others to the word of God. He, along with his team, must be servants of God and willing to serve the community and the people of God. In the multicultural setting, the leadership must also be intentional by design and divine in its composition. Whether it consists of whites, blacks, Asians, Hispanics and /or Indians, they must be on one accord. From a Christian gospel aspect to strategic planning, they must operate and administer the church as one faith, one body, one gospel, one God.

As church leaders, we must understand that the ministry of reconciliation bears fruit through strategic planning and intentionality. “Multicultural ministry does not come through a multi-colored worship team, leadership team, or congregation. While each of these is important, the most essential task for a church desiring to create a ministry of reconciliation is to change the mindset of the people within the church.”⁶⁶ You cannot just have a black, a white, and an Asian

⁶⁶ Anderson, David, A., Margaret R. Cabellon, *Multicultural Ministry Handbook, Connecting Creativity in a Diverse World*, Inter Varsity Press, 2010, p. 123.

Pastor on staff just for the sake of window dressing. They must work together as One in Spirit, in Unity, and the Love of God and that must be demonstrated in their actions continuously for all to see and in the eyes of God. There has to be a unity of spirit and a commitment by all worshippers to do the work of Christ.

To create and develop a multicultural church successfully, it takes work, and it does not just happen. There has to be some intentionality. “It is the intentionality in statements, staffing and prayer.”⁶⁷ “Now here there must be total intentionality. A leader in a multicultural church must firm up the decision to choose intentionality in staging above being popular, must trust God to bring the right people, and must be certain of the calling.”⁶⁸ The intentionality must be done with sincerity and humility. It cannot be done as a matter of fraud, to impress someone, or with an ulterior motive.

The point of leadership is illustrated in the Pentecost Paradigm which has convinced me that public theological leaders, due to the extremely divided world in which we live, must be unique, bold, and have an Isaiah-like, farsighted eagle-eyed, prophetic view of the world. This means that he or she must be able to effectively and accurately articulate not his but God’s divine view for those in his public arena. They must present a world view. “The public theologian must stand against greed, nihilism, and exclusion, and demand the faith community stand for an alternative reality of hope, healing, and freedom from cultural and spiritual tyrannies. In an age of technology, it is necessary for prophetic witness to engage justice issues in the public square as well as in the congregation.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Ibid., p.54.

⁶⁸ Anderson, David, A., Margaret R. Cabellon, *Multicultural Ministry Handbook, Connecting Creativity to a Diverse World*, Inter Varsity Press, 2010, p.13.

⁶⁹ Lewis, Jacqueline J., and Janker, John, *The Pentecost, Ten Strategies for Becoming A Multiracial Congregation*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2018, p.47

“The spiritual leader is both a teacher and student reaching beyond the most common expectations for clergy leaders as “Bible study teacher”. There are rich and diverse ranges of topics and resources available for the edification of believers. In multicultural, multiracial congregational settings, the role of a leader as an educator is even more essential. It invites the congregation into structured conversations where norms for dealing with difficult conversations are made clear and a safe space is created for honest dialogue. In the case of Middle Church, we have offered adult study groups on “Erasing Racism,” “Exploring Race, Class and Culture,” and “Race, Grace and the Reign of God,” all of which invite participants to explore their own stories regarding the formative messages and lessons they received regarding race while growing up in this society. Additionally, we have convened a Racial Healing Task Force, which has committed to a year-long process of shared learning to engage in truth-telling, storytelling, research, and the evolution of a learning design for others who want to work at issues of race, racism, and white supremacy.”⁷⁰

In a statement from Pentecost Paradigm, “the spiritual leader in a multicultural multiracial setting is called to provide opportunities for the members of the faith community to deepen their understanding of each other and issues impacting the world around them. These leaders must see themselves as students of race, culture, and the dynamics of white privilege and white supremacy to be effective in the work of healing and reconciliation.”⁷¹

Another role that the public theologian must play in the public square in order to bring about stability and change in the community is that he/she must know his community and be a community organizer.- If the public theologian is going to position him/herself as the catalyst

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.47-48

⁷¹ Lewis, Jacqueline J., and Janker, John, *The Pentecost, Ten Strategies for Becoming A Multiracial Congregation*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2018, p.48

within the community the theologian and the church must establish itself as leader and the center of the community, must know the issues affecting that community, provide an analysis of those issues, and work for social justice, housing, and equality. This was echoed in a statement found in the Pentecost Paradigm, “These leaders are community organizers and activists. Effective leaders in multiracial multicultural faith communities are required to possess the skills needed not only to organize their own congregation but also the ability to analyze issues, network with others, and organize the larger community on issues of social justice and common the good. Without active engagement with the larger community and a willingness to put oneself in the public arena, advocating for those without a voice, the children, the hungry, the poor and the left out, -without such activism, the witness of the faith community will be greatly diminished.”⁷²

“Spiritual leaders are able to manage conflict and difference. Sharing power across racial and cultural boundaries, not letting differences become polarizing, keeping communication open and healthy and ensuring mutuality in accountability, - these are helpful norms in diverse settings. These spiritual leaders are intentional in *developing other leaders*. In a congregational setting, leadership development must move beyond the categories of standing committees and the exercise of filling mandatory slots in an organizational structure. As clergy are expected to engage in continuing education, so members of the faith community should have the expectation of their own spiritual, intellectual, and emotional development. Opportunities for learning and growth are important to the health of the institution. Leaders have been trained in the story of race and culture, understanding the dynamics of change, how to manage conflict and difference and how to set healthy norms for group effectiveness. They carry with them the vision of the congregation and are purposeful to enact that vision, and they make space for others to exert leadership and offer

⁷² Ibid, p.48

their and expertise to expand the impact and influence of the congregation. Leadership is diverse and encourages inclusion. True leaders know when to step aside and mentor new people with new ideas to step forward. Trusted, transparent, competent, informed, and flexible leadership in multicultural, multiracial congregational settings is central to the health and witness of these ministries.⁷³

The Congregation

What then is a congregation? In its simplest definition, we like to define it as a group of people who come together as an assembly of like-minded believers for the worship of the same God under the same roof. In the research regarding Congregations, C. Ellis Nelson reminds us that congregations are gatherings of “people who share beliefs and seek to understand and do God’s will in the circumstances of their lives.”⁷⁴

Foster reminds us that “when congregations embrace racial and cultural diversity, they can no longer assume that the past shared experience of the community will continue in the future. The disruptive character of diversity confronts them with the recognition that community life is always fragile and needs to be intentionally sustained and renewed. And yet in the embracing of diversity, they also discover that it functions as a catalyst to new possibilities in community life. Indeed, some people in these congregations refer to their encounters with a difference as being the work of the Holy Spirit. God is at work through them creating something new. The power of the experience of that moment, in other words, takes precedence in the ordering of congregational life over the routines and structures of the scheduled time.”⁷⁵

⁷³ Lewis, Jacqueline, J, and Janka, John, *The Pentecost Paradigm, Ten Strategies for Becoming a Multicultural Congregation*, Westminster John Knox Press, 2018, p.49

⁷⁴ Nelson, Ellis, C., *Congregations, Their Power To Form and Transform*, p.21.

⁷⁵ Foster, Charles, R. *Embracing Diversity, Leadership in Multicultural Congregations*, The Alban Institute, Inc., p.114.

In my opinion in order for the multiculturalism to be effective it must be a welcoming lively spirit, have a sense of community and be meaningful in its relationship across ethnic and cultural relationships to attract those of the non-minority culture for voluntary worship.

This is the hope of my ministry setting in this Multicultural project. The desired goal is to overcome social impediments in the face of the many enormous human obstacles including hostility and rejection to be faced in this community, something new will be formed. The hope and goal of this DMIN project is that the white people in this community will not see color or race, but see the movement of God.

Ultimately the focus of this project is to reduce racial hostility through religious understanding and Christian unity. This hopefully can be a bridge to human equality and social justice for all.

Acts Chapter 2 not only shows that Jesus' gospel promulgated a radical multicultural ministry, but Jesus himself was a radical multicultural Palestinian. If we are to be public theologians and leaders in the public arena, we must recognize that we are called by the gospel to model the bold radical examples set by the disciples, prophets and apostles who were pillars of the church in the Bible.

Therefore, public theologians and Christian leaders in this multicultural setting must acknowledge that "their commitment is sustained and imaginations for community life are fired by the visionary leadership of Moses, Jesus, Paul and certain saints of the church, past, and present. These visionary leaders at times used parables and stories to convey their message. The pandemic has changed the traditional method in which the church is conducted. Likewise, the public theologian must change. The use of biblical parables and secular stories can at times result in a Christian identity and a sense of commonality which builds a bridge of unity of faith. As such

these stories can bring about a greater understanding among various racial and ethnic groups and energize preaching and teaching of the biblical scripture.

The overlap of cultural traditions and practices with centuries of painful and often violent cross-racial/ cultural encounters call forth from them an innovative spirit directed to the embodiment of a vision of community that embraces the diversity of God's creation."⁷⁶ Again, just like blacks, whites must come with their own faith stories and experiences and break them open in the presence of God to move closer to a point of family.

I am not a Pastor. Nor am I the Pastor of this church moving toward multiculturalism. However, my vision is fired by the readings of Moses, Jesus and Paul, and other church saints. These readings lead me to firmly believe that "there will come about a substance of things hoped for and an evidence of things not seen." This is rooted in the readings of the Bible and the teachings of the Bible that the lamb one day will lie down with the lion.

Living in the present the mixing of different people and different cultures inevitably involves a certain volatility, some conflict, and inevitable challenge. Sometimes there will be an imminent failure and sometimes slow success. Regardless of what is said and done that fact is, it is just human nature.

The number one issue race has been at the core of three major events in this country. The U.S. is divided and tense as a result of the killing of George Floyd. Secondly, the January 6th insurrection and near toppling of democracy is another. Thirdly, is the voter restriction laws passed in 21 of the 50 states in the U.S. which threatens to take blacks back to the pre-reconstruction era. This multicultural project is a challenge to the issue of race as it exists in this nation and locally in Bayonne.

⁷⁶ Foster, Charles, R. Embracing Diversity, Leadership in Multicultural Congregations, The Alban Institute, Inc., 1997, p.117.

The challenge and the message mainly for the white community about the outcome of this multicultural project is this: “The practice of embracing others is not easy—especially given the proclivity to exclude, dominate, differentiate, and oppress people who are the other and to privilege and give preference to ourselves. It begins with discerning difference as a possibility - a gift – rather than a problem. It continues with the recognition that our lives and our cultures are inextricably intertwined and interdependent – even though when examined discreetly they often seem to be studied in contrast. It requires the affirmation of cultural “others” on their terms and at the same time, an affirmation of our cultural embeddedness as a primary resource to the depths of our own identities. This requires that members of each racial and cultural group grant the other “sufficient respect” to listen and trust enough to challenge and critique. This cannot happen without sharing power, creating a collaborative engagement on the issues that matter most in the common life of the congregation.”⁷⁷ It is a common fact that to get something you may have to give something up.

“But as Christians, our vocation grows out of our responsibility to be neighbors to one another.” This includes those we despise, those we oppress, the sick, the imprisoned, the poor, and the powerless.”⁷⁸

The question is this: the people of the African American Church have expressed an interest to open its arms to those around them, are the people who live in and around the Church willing to be neighbors and provide a mutual embrace? This is the challenge confronting this Church in this community.

⁷⁷ Foster, Charles, R. *Embracing Diversity, Leadership in Multicultural Congregations*, The Alban Institute, Inc., 1997, p.47.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.51.

The Church is an unknown quantity and stranger to the community. A stranger is someone who is not known to us, someone we have not seen or heard before: someone who is not usually in this place or does not fit the situation. The most common human response to “strangers” ranges from curiosity to fear.”⁷⁹ The great challenge may be fear, race, or even dislike. However, my opinion, my belief and my faith tell me that fear of the stranger could be erased in a congregational setting.

“From the very beginning the high point in each week was the Sunday morning worship service. It is so designed that there is for each person a moment which becomes his moment in the presence of God. It may be in the hymns or in the silence, in the music, in the reading of the Scripture, the speaking of the word, the period of prayer and meditation. Among the congregation there must be a moment which becomes intensely personal and private for each worshipper. The order of service carefully devised is largely non ritualistic. In my opinion the most important part of the service is the period of meditation preceding the sermon. Here the congregation and the minister become still in the presence of God. This is the time when the innermost secrets of life are laid bare without pretense, when each one of us feels that he is in the presence of the One who understands thoroughly and completely and, in whose presence, it is unnecessary to pretend anything. Out of the period of meditation there comes a high resolve, and a sense of being cleansed; sometimes there is the conviction of sin; but most often there arises hope and confidence for what awaits at the next turning point.”⁸⁰

“At the same time, they had to convey a sense of the Eternal. It was necessary that the total setting of worship and its total content would enable the worshipers to sense the historical roots of

⁷⁹ Ibid, p.47.

⁸⁰ Thurnan, Howard, *Footprints of A Dream, The Story of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, Eugene, OR. Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009, p.70

religious experience and to understand the flowering of beliefs, creeds, and commitments. ⁸¹ Here is where I think that human experience must meet spiritual insight. I have to interject here that sitting through this learning process of Public Theology and the shaping of my ministry, one of the underpinnings of the Multicultural church in my opinion is to have man and woman, both black and white stand before the presence of God at the throne of Grace and lay bare the secrets of racism that lay within and come away with new secular and spiritual insights to improve the world.

Neither the black church nor the white church can achieve this. It is my belief that only the multicultural church can address this core issue. Multiculturalism lends itself to deal with the fire of racism, the hate associated with color, and the sting of prejudice. It is my opinion that when stories are shared, experiences are verbalized, faith conversations are exchanged through prayer, meditation, fasting and worship, one soul is transformed into another before God. This could then lead to improved human understanding, reconciliation, and healing between black and white people.

This is another of the positives of multiculturalism. It cannot be stated more emphatically the proposed multicultural church is not there to make life uncomfortable for anyone, destabilize or block-bust the neighborhood, devalue the property of the community, bring trouble, or make anyone uncomfortable but to follow the biblical edict of Christ that “this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”⁸²

That in this faith-driven public theology push toward multiculturalism: When people see our ministry, they are reminded of what the kingdom of God is supposed to look like. People from every nation and culture and age group worshipping God together.

⁸¹ Ibid., 72-73.

⁸² King James Version of the Bible, Gospel of John 15:12.

“For your multicultural worship ministry to have an impact on your congregation as well as your community you must be intentional about what you produce, for people to hear and see, and be sensitive to the cultural dynamics of your congregation.”⁸³ If I have learned anything as part of my ministry setting, the two prior quotes from Howard Thurman in large part is what Public Theology is about doing in the Public Arena.

The inclusion of whites, Indians, and Asians means multiculturalism can work in the Pentecostal church. The congregation needs to know and to see that it is okay to respond to God in various ways. Multiculturalism can include all types of styles and expressions of worship. The Church as an expression of worship to the community has an abiding belief in the faith of God that we are called to love one another. It is believed that the transitional move to multiculturalism can impact the neighborhood in at least three ways:

First, “When we open our hearts and minds to accept the diversity of prayer traditions, we have around us, we find ourselves in so many ways and discover new and rich ways to communicate with our Lord in prayer. The goal of leading prayer in the multicultural church is to make it a house of prayer for all nations.”⁸⁴

Second, 2nd Corinthians 3:17 tells us “Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is freedom. No matter how diverse the constituency of the prayer group, when we unite in the Spirit worshipping and honor, the Holy Spirit approves and anoints the meeting and is free to reign.”⁸⁵ “When the Holy Spirit is welcomed under the foundation of unity and grace-induced love, we experience God’s blessing of freedom. Specifically, the love of Christ that we received compels

⁸³ Thurman, Howard, *Footprints of A Dream, The Story of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples* Eugene , OR., Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009, p, 83.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.101.

⁸⁵ King James Version of the Holy Bible 2nd Corinthians 3:17.

us to pray.”⁸⁶ “When we gather to pray, we gather at the foot of the cross to humbly commune with God and to serve and support our brethren, motivated by the love of Christ alone. We humbly serve one another under the lordship of Jesus Christ motivated by the love of Christ, we become participants in a beautiful, powerful liberating, and passionate mosaic that is multicultural prayer.”⁸⁷ This is the gorgeous Christian mosaic God intended in the Book of Acts, Chapters 2.

Third, “It should be a place where men and women can come to share in search of a better understanding of God and through him of each other; and of all men (and women) everywhere – may grow together in wisdom and maturity seeking for the enrichment of their lives and for the valid principles of action for the solution of human problems on a broader scale.”⁸⁸

I think that Thurman further builds on what the image of the Multicultural Church should look like when he states that: “I am convinced it is possible to develop a religious fellowship which is so unifying in its quality that the barriers originally separating its members one from another will gradually disappear, leaving in their stead a new sense of community.”⁸⁹ The aim and challenge of multiculturalism bring us to the intersection of faith, politics, and public policy. It is here we find hope. It is here that we find humanity.

Compelling Reasons for the Development of the Multicultural Black Church

There are many compelling reasons for the establishment of the move for multiculturalism and the formation of the multicultural church in this community. As a public theologian, the Universal theological construct for multiculturalism can be found in the Book of Acts. Its biblical rationale and justification can be located in the Book of Acts Chapter 2 of the New Testament of

⁸⁶ Thurman, Howard, *Footprints of A Dream, The Story of the Church for the Fellowship of All Peoples*, Eugene, OR., Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2009. P. 109.

⁸⁷Ibid., p.111.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p.111.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 137.

the Holy Bible. The fact that this is the foundation of the Church in this Book of Acts has been ignored and not recognized by theologians, clerics, and humankind. As a result, we see evidence of that in the formation of various churches by denomination, color, and race. The great theologians have either missed, ignored, or deliberately failed to call this fact to the attention of the Universal church and neglected to call the church to order according to the Holy Word. Acts Chapter 2 requires the multicultural church to solidify the fact that diversity is God's desire for the church and going forward with church worship.

White privilege, white supremacy dating back to Jim Crow laws, Black Codes, white exceptionalism, and superiority have made America a ticking time bomb. The January 6, attack on the U.S. Capital heightened the emotions of some in the crowd who may have been simply peaceful protestors. This was a majority of whites and a small segment of misguided blacks. A good segment of these people was carrying crosses, saying prayers, carrying flags with bible verses painted on them to save this nation in the name of God. Some had mace and bear spray others were armed with guns.

America needs counseling and healing on many levels because of this national debacle. The people who took part in this violent insurrection, those who were just there as participants, and those whites who were just sympathizers of this insurrection across this country who are still wrestling with the question: Are we that kind of people? Is that us? Are we in need of help and healing? One of those places that healing, and counseling can take place is within the confines of the multicultural church.

The question of dominance and racial superiority is a serious hurdle that the white community has to confront. In a multicultural setting, the inclusion of a majority of whites brings with it the attitude of superiority and that like society, economics, and politics stipulates that

everything to be valid has to bend to a standard of whiteness. Multiculturalism can be a means of demonstrating the value of power-sharing or subordination to qualified, capable intelligent black leadership.

The white church advocated a type of individual limited personal salvation while the black church advocates a unique emotional, spiritual, physical freedom and a degree of active vocal social justice. The multicultural church represents a blending of the two. This is what makes the multicultural church attractive and compelling.

Multiculturalism provides the opportunity to break down invisible barriers and gives access to whites' need to understand the value of other cultures, ethnicities, and races. The multicultural setting provides whites and others the opportunity and willingness to learn and not act from a superior position. It allows them to acknowledge that they do not know it all or that they have it all figured out. The multicultural church provides an avenue for whites to see that there must be an openness and a willingness to see others as God sees them that they would not otherwise see in an all-white monocultural church. Add to this the fact that the multicultural church is one concrete way of allowing whites to work out their biases. This is very important because there is no other environment where whites can freely interact and have open dialogue on race than in the multicultural church. This is what makes the multicultural church attractive and compelling. It is one way to openly work out racial differences in a community in a friendly environment.

There are other equally important reasons for the creation and establishment of the multicultural church. Among those are the fact that while the experience will be uncomfortable people have to be willing to undergo the experience for their personal growth. Multiculturalism brings about a willingness to integrate worship cultures (Whites, Indians, Asians, Egyptians) that

have been separate for years. By this people actively move to cease the separation in worship following the Book of Acts Chapter 2 as God intended.

The compelling nature of multiculturalism will not happen overnight. It is not an overnight success. It is a slow move. People are moving away from the all-white and all-black churches and as a result, these congregations are shrinking in size from a lack of attendance, lack of finances, and lack of relevancy. These people generally young are looking for something different. That difference may be the multicultural church.

For young adults their view of the church and the world is different. They do not want the worship style of the traditional church. They belong to the fast-paced technological age. Young adults have different experiences in growing up from their parents. Today these young adults grow up in a mindset and an environment that is completely different from their parents. They seek out new worship styles and new faith traditions even if they do not remain with them.

To follow up on the last point the multicultural church offers the opportunity for the young millennials to embrace what they see as a strict stiffness in the traditional church. They can attend church service in a relaxed dress code without being criticized. They can express themselves in a hip-hop style of praise and worship. It is an environment where the Pastor who in their eyes is preferably young, delivers the message or preaches from the floor rather than from a lectern or sacred desk. They say it makes them not only feel more at ease but on an equal footing with the Pastor. In other words, they do not feel like they are being talked down to.

Very often there is a lot of ostracism in the monocultural church and people are severely criticized for how they conduct themselves, the lifestyles they choose to live, and who their life partners are. Another positive compelling reason is found in the Korie Edwards book. She provides that “people from interracial families explained that the churches diversity provided them

with a level of comfort that they often did not experience in other churches.” For these families’ interracial churches were a refuge from a racially segregated world. “No one stared at us. We felt very welcome. We saw other interracial couples. We felt at home. We did not have to explain anything or like when you go to the grocery store, and they ask if [my wife and I] are together—that happens a lot. So, we felt welcomed.”⁹⁰

In my conversation with millennials and adults alike, they commented that the compelling reason in their opinion for a multicultural church is that this church offers the opportunity for openness and dialogue. It is the opportunity for people to say what is on their mind, freely discuss their views on scripture, to comment on the Sermon right after it is delivered or during the week. It allows space for meetings and more discussions of diversity. A comment was made that in the monocultural black and white church there is little or no time for the Pastor to set aside for openness and dialogue. There is a reluctance to be open-minded about most topics. People very often do not feel free to discuss scripture. There is a reluctance to discuss the sermon for fear the Pastor may view it as criticism and there is very little time in the monocultural church for space and time for meetings to discuss diversity. Pastors in the monoculture churches are viewed as Sunday accessible or strictly by appointment during the week. The multicultural church is viewed as more compelling because of its openness and its ability to deal with diversity.

There is another side to the multicultural church that makes it compelling and appealing. It is viewed as a place of social justice that has a basic public theology and is active in the public arena. The trained public theologian who is the head of a multicultural church, because the white church is a dormant or reluctant body and the black church is asleep, unaware, or afraid to take

⁹⁰ Edwards, Korie, L., *the elusive Dream. The Power of Race In Interracial Churches*, Oxford University Press, Inc., 2008, p.110.

action, public theologians can form alliances and make partnerships in the community to affect change in the public arena.

America is a nation still divided by its number one problem, racism. Racism pervades all sectors, corporate, financial neighborhoods, and family life in society. In the socio-political context, the negative underlying hostility that fueled the January 6 2021 domestic terrorism, is still interwoven in the minds of many in this country. But many still refuse to recognize it. The thousands of people who participated in this domestic terrorism afterward scattered all over this country. Many today are sitting in their living rooms wondering why they took such action. The nation on many levels needs healing. This one instance alone underscores the reason why there is a need to bring people together. In the case of this specific research project, there can be nothing more valuable to society and the community than multiculturalism.

The recent multiple police killings of a black woman and black men since the George Floyd murder and attacks against various other sectors, Hispanics, LGBTQ, and now Asians have brought us to the realization of how divided we are as a nation. Despite the conviction of ex-police officer Derrick Chauvin, the killing of black men at the hands of white policemen, a Hispanic in California, and assault on Asians continues. We are in a place where people of all colors, races, and ethnicities in the face of racism need to find reconciliation, forgiveness, and acceptance of the moral truth of who we are in our broken historic society. Legislation helps but it will not resolve issues of bias and racism that reside and the heart of the individual. The compelling reason for the multicultural church is that this is the place where “there can be a well-balanced theological message with a definite public theology in the public arena whose sole purpose is to give a message of hope for the telling of stories to “exercise the formative attitudes of race and culture.”⁹¹ Within

⁹¹ Lewis, Jacqueline, J., and John Janka, *The Pentecost Paradigm, Ten Strategies for Becoming a Multicultural Congregation* Westminster John Knox Press, 2018, p.4.

the confines of this church through workshops, community talks on social justice and racism, this can be the vehicle that brings people together, that destroys myths, distortions, and negatives, and presents moral truths so that it presents blacks, Hispanic, Asians in a more truthful light. It can be the place where seminars and discussions are held where whites can learn a new history about blacks, Hispanics, Asians, etc. and the human cost they paid in this country.

The Multicultural Church “could possibly lead to the need to form various partnerships with others in order to address concerns for the common good of the community.”⁹² It can be instrumental in conducting and attending public meetings to affect community change, work with local and governmental officials, the school system, etc.

As with most monocultural churches the multicultural church cannot become compelled to alienation and become “hunkered down in fear and anger, disoriented by the social upheaval challenging the assumptions of white privilege. Reading the climate in their congregations, many clergy chose to steer clear of a prophetic role in favor of maintaining a comfortable relationship with their congregations.”⁹³ The multicultural church is not compelled to do this.

I believe that there is no other compelling reason for the establishment and justification for the multicultural church than the following statement. In making this statement, it is not to imply that African Americans have the best view and understanding of the Biblical scripture or God. We are still learning and have much to learn. However, I passionately believe that multiculturalism was God’s intention at the time of Pentecost. I believe that Dr. King briefly articulated it and I believe that it is the way that church should be today, but the church has deviated from it. I firmly believe that white control, white superiority, and supremacy and white exceptionalism has been a major factor in distorting the teachings of the Bible to support, justify and defend racism.

⁹² Ibid, p.4

⁹³ Ibid, p.7

I think whites need serious repentance, examination of their faith, what faith means, and who God is. When I look at the negative actions of the U.S. Congress, the January 6th domestic terrorism, white nationalism and groups like Oath Keepers and the Proud Boys, the Mass shootings at Fed Ex, the killings of people in a prayer meeting at Mother Emmanuel Church, Breonna Taylor, Sandra Bland, Ahmad Rashad, Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, and George Floyd, the conscience of white America is at stake. These incidents and more are compelling reasons for and why multiculturalism and other interventions are needed and now.

This notion of moving this African American Church toward Multiculturalism, located in a White Community is reflective of this African American church's God-inspired desire for Table Worship and Koinonia, embracing whites and others with welcoming transformative arms of love and opening its doors to the white neighborhood. It is an invitation to whosoever will, let them come involuntarily. They can come to worship together in a divine spirit, with a heart of God, in love, to eventually evolve into a multicultural church with a God-based divinely inspired Black Pastor leading the charge.

Section Four: Demographics

In addition to compelling reasons, there is demographic data that indicates there is support for and attendance at a multicultural church when the demographics and the socio-economic profile of various population groups in the area are looked at.

The city of Bayonne is approximately situated near the cities of Jersey City; Elizabeth, New Jersey; Staten Island; and Brooklyn, New York. These are some of the characteristics of the subject area and the constituent people: This information was obtained from the Internet., Bayonne New Jersey (NJ 07002) profile, population, maps, www.city data.com⁹⁴

1. The Land area is approximately 11 Miles
2. Population: The population of the city is 65, 839. The Median Age is 39 years of age. The population breakdown is 52% Female or women.
3. The Median Income is \$60,529 with a per capita income of \$32, 151. Median Household Income is approximately \$63,947.00.

Real Estate Statistics

1. The Median Real Estate Taxes are \$10,001.00.
2. The (approximate) Real Estate Values of properties in the City area:
 - a. Single Family Detached Homes average sale price was: \$359,070.00
 - b. Townhouse Homes sold at an average of \$384,387.00
 - c. 2 Family Homes sold at an average of \$363,095.00
 - d. 3-4 Family Small Multi Dwellings sold at an average of \$455, 663
 - e. The dwelling of 5 or more units sold for \$522, 691.00
 - f. New Home Single Family Construction was between \$137,400 to \$550,000

⁹⁴ Bayonne New Jersey (NJ 07002) profile, population, maps, www.city data.com

3. Rental Housing Units

- a. Average Monthly Rentals are approximately \$1,238.00

4. Those living in poverty is 14.6% whose breakdown is:

- a. 12.1 % White (non- Hispanic)
 b. 15.7 % Black
 c. 20.2% Hispanic/Latino
 d. 43.8 % American Indian
 e. 16.8 % Other

5. Crime Rates in Bayonne are as follows:

Murders	0	Robberies	49	Auto Thefts	71
Rapes	11	Burglaries	115	Arson	4
Assaults	80	Thefts	6.24		

Police Officers and Full-Time Law Enforcement Employees total: 248

6. Ancestries in Bayonne

- a. Italian 10.2%
 b. Polish 9%
 c. Egyptian 9%
 d. Irish 7.3%
 e. German 1.2%

7. The most common occupations are centered around the following:

- a. Office & Administrative Support Workers 6.5%
 b. Secretaries & Administrative Assistants 4.8%
 c. Material Recording, Dispatcher & Distributing Workers 4.1%

- d. Management Occupations 3.6%
- e. Pre-School, Kindergarten, Elementary & High School Teachers 3.5%
- f. Sales & Related Occupations 3.4%
- g. Production Occupations 2.9%

8. Presidential Election

- a. In 2020 78% voted Democratic
30% voted Republican
- b. In 2016 74.6% voted Democratic (Clinton)
22.3% voted Republican (Trump)

9. Neighborhoods in Bayonne:

Bergen Point

Centreville

Constable Hook

Pamrapo (Salterville) Neighborhood

10. Religion Statistics		<u>Adherents</u>	<u>Congregations</u>
Catholics	43%	280,930	53
Evangelical Protestants	3.1%	19,890	133
Mainline Protestants	2.0%	12,853	93
Black Protestant	1.9%	12,308	26
Orthodox	1.0%	6,318	12
Other	6.0%	38,322	63

11. Race Makeup in Bayonne		Study Target Area State		
		<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
White	48.7 % (32,742)	7,019	8,758	15,597
Asian	6.1% (4,111)	740	909	1,644
Hispanic	37.3% (25, 055)	3,378	4,128	7,506
Black	5. 5% (3,680)	1,014	1,240	2,254
American Indian	0.3% (201)	314	385	699

The following information was obtained from data Mission Insite.⁹⁵ The area consisting of a 2-mile radius in and around Faith and Victory Deliverance Church has been selected as the test area. The analysis from which this data was derived was taken from Mission InSite, which provides religious neighborhood statistical data for Churches.

Inclusive of this neighborhood which is the Target Area in and around this proposed Multicultural Church, there is an estimated 1,035 Female Households with children but no husband. It is estimated that 109 Male households exist with no wife. In addition, there is an estimated 841 female household with no children and no husband and an estimated 420 male households with no wife and no children. Using this statistical data this is the likely pool which will serve as the reservoir from which the proposed future membership of the envisioned Multicultural Church will be drawn.

It is believed that there is a healthy trend for potential growth and development of a new faith community. People are looking for spiritual enrichment and those seeking a new form of worship like multiculturalism. It is believed that the move for the establishment of a Multicultural Church has untold potential.

⁹⁵ Mission Insite Community Engagement Specialists For Faith and Nonprofit Groups

The key demographic features of this area surrounding the Church from an outsider's perspective its suburban type living style. The residents would appear to have a comfortable spending style. They seem financially informed. Given the number of backyard swimming pools, skateboards, and school-age children between the ages of 13 to 18 and younger these families enjoy activity-filled vacations. The type of property in the neighborhood is predominantly Homeowner (95%) Single Family. The household age group ranges between 46-50. The estimated household income range is between \$50,000 – \$74,999. The general attitude of the residents of the could be characterized as a middle-class melting pot of sensible people within the neighborhood. There has been a recent boom in high-rise multifamily new construction Bayonne. Many new structures have been completed and are currently leasing. I mention this because I view it as target groups that would be a focal point for recruitment of the Multicultural Church.

Below is a description of at least three groups that are characteristic of the available pool of residents that could be considered as potential members.

The first is the Middle-Class Melting Pot Group. This is the age group that ranges between 35 and 50 years of age. They are white single-family homeowners in the area. They have children that range in the age of 13 to 18 years of age. Most of their children gone off to college and they are empty nesters. They may be multi-cultural or accepting of multicultural groups. They spend comfortably. They are financially comfortable and actively vacation. The parents have some high school and some college and a small amount of graduate school experience. The value of their homes ranges from \$50, 000 to \$300,000.

As a middle-class melting pot group have well-maintained homes situated on one quarter-acre lot. Their neighborhoods are stable with overgrown trees. The dream of a comfortable retirement lifestyle. They live unpretentious lifestyles consisting of simple things like bowling,

reading books, and watching TV. They shop at Costco, Target, Sears, and /or Macy's. They favor the traditional news media and reading newspapers.

Politically these middle-class melting pot residents vote democratic in elections. They worry about the environment and air pollution. They are very upfront and forthright about the fact that they were one-time activists who will march in a protest if they feel strongly about an issue like Black Lives Matter. They may be modestly involved in community organizations. A portion of this group are likely unchurched or ex-Catholics and ex-Protestants who for a variety of reasons have left or come into disagreement with church doctrine. This group would likely be open to multicultural church worship.

A second group can be described as the Young City Solos. These are white single people between the ages of 25 and 30 years of age, who are commuters to and from work. These are rental apartment dwellers who are concerned about the environment and politically liberal. They have an estimated average income between \$50,000 -\$75,000. Although they are single some may have a child between 3 and 5 years of age. They have active lifestyles. Educationally, this group may have an educational level ranging from high school to some college or a minimum amount of bachelor's degrees and a minor number of graduate degrees. The income range is between \$50,000 to \$150,000. In this group those young city solos who own homes, have homes that are of a lower value ranging from \$50,000 to mid \$100,000 in value. They are unmarried and enjoy their unattached status. They work at a mix of professional, technical, sales, and service-sector jobs. Specifically, they work in government, university, hospital, or a large company. They enjoy their active fast-paced middle-class lifestyle. That lifestyle consists of jogging, nightclubs, plays and dances, the gym, and yoga classes. Financially they are set. They enjoy jazz, reggae, rock, and

traditional soul music. They do not watch TV or read newspapers. They are informed by the internet and social media.

These young city solos are staunch left-leaning liberals who volunteer for social causes. This is the group of young urban professionals who not only work and associate with blacks and Hispanics freely in the professional worksite environment but have lasting intimate relationships with blacks on a social basis. They relish and understand diversity. They are open to interracial dating and interracial marriage. They vote primarily democratic. They march in protests to protect the environment. They belong to art groups that support dance, symphonic music, and opera. They are global-minded. They are interested in other cultures. They champion domestic and international human rights causes. This is the group that has questioned Catholic religious doctrine, especially as it relates to the inclusion of LGBTQ within the church and its leadership. They are most likely to be the ex-Catholics and ex-Protestants who have left the church for this and other reasons. They have become unchurch and maybe somewhat disillusioned. These are the faith seekers and church jumpers in the community looking for an alternative to their religious experience. This is a prime group that would be in favor of attendance at a multicultural church.

A third group can be described as Promising Families. This is the age group whose ages range from 25-35 years old. These are two-person households who are single-family homeowners. This is the child-rearing group that has started families. They are raising families and are new to the workforce. They have children in the average age range of seven to nine years of age and younger. A substantial portion of their children is preschoolers. This is the elementary school group that will eventually move into middle school. It is anticipated that this is the group that will cause the need for more elementary, middle schools and in the future the need for building a second high school within the next 5 to 10 years. Their income range is from \$75,000 to 100,000.00.

Since they are people in the childbearing stage, they are concerned with early childhood education. They are concerned with child-rearing activities. This the computer age group who moves around in the SUV and bikes. They do not have a problem with spending money freely. They are status-conscious and keenly aware of their credit rating status. Needless to say, they live comfortable lifestyles. The education level of this group ranged from those who have received a high school diploma to those having attended two or more years of college or received a bachelor's degree. A few have obtained graduate degrees.

Their occupations range from business, technology to science and homemaking. This group is young and enjoys sports of all kinds (basketball, baseball, hockey) music, bowling, museums, and nightlife. They are avid vacationers. They stretch their dollars by shopping at stores like Costco and involve their kids in many extracurricular activities. For them childrearing and parenting are key. This is not only the group that consists of ex-Catholics and ex-Protestants who have questioned the doctrine of the church but they questioned the church's lack of inclusion of the LGBTQ attendance, membership and leadership within the church.

These are people who are unsettled church jumpers and faith seekers. This is one of the primary groups that would be attracted to a multicultural church setting.

Politically, these families are conservative and support family values. They belong to the PTA and while they loosely describe themselves as Republicans, these families are open to attend churches in the area.

Based on the data the assumption is that a significant number of these people are unchurched and will be seeking a faith community in which to worship a need for which the existing Catholic Church may not be providing. The projection is that these single male and female individuals and family households will serve as a potential pool for recruitment and membership.

It is anticipated that the Multicultural Church will meet that need. The upshot of this research is that there is an available resource of potential attendees within this community and the city of Bayonne to validate the move to a multicultural church.

Section Five: Conclusion

Multiculturalism, in the final analysis, requires a careful weighing of thought in the public arena. The public theological ethical frame within the multicultural model of thinking says it is incumbent upon the theologian that he or she must have a basic fundamental ecclesiology. It is a theology that begins with the premise that the church's mission is to teach social justice. It is the church's mission to transform society."⁹⁶ Public Theologians are the new transformative factors in society. It is incumbent upon the theologian to let our voices be heard and to affect major change on all levels of society. The urgent question we face is where will the courage and wisdom come from to heal the wounds, distortions, and myths of the past and how can we build a better future with our neighbors? Where is the source of the solution? Does it lie within the government, society, the Wall Street Corporate sector, the Educators, or the Church? In my opinion the urgent question we face comes from all five of these sources working together, especially the leadership of the Public Theologian.

Despite the dismal existence of blacks in this country, the African American church has always represented the good conscience, the heart, and the religious soul of America. The United States is terribly divided as a country especially along racial, economic, wealth and ethnic lines. Multiculturalism offers the opportunity to restore that hope and faith in this nation that is so sorely divided, under the Acts 2 model of a house of prayer for a nation and as a people who have gotten away from that today. My personal feeling is that it is the job of every public theologian to create this new theological vehicle to push whites and those complacent blacks, to do more to bring the various sectors of society together in faith for a better tomorrow. The public theologian must directly intervene in the public realm, from police shootings to revamping police departments to

⁹⁶ Phelps, Jamie, T., O.P., Black and Catholic, The Challenge and Gift of Black Folk, p.48

the equitable restructuring of capital markets, economic structures, religious issues to creation of a national public dialogue for radical change. That radical human and social change can start in two places: the home and the great and various promises offered by the multicultural church.

There are benefits to the creation and development of the Multicultural church. It brings the races together under the same ecclesiastical roof. It is the one spiritual vehicle that can promote harmony and peace. It has the potential to heal the nation. Multiculturalism fosters a mutual dialogue and understanding of and between the races. Additionally, the multiplication of the multicultural church across the nation can bring about the biblical Acts Chapter 2 church where all races, colors, creeds and ethnicities can pray and worship together as one church on one accord as God intended as evidenced by the early church. On a local community level the multicultural church promotes interfaith gatherings and worship services to bring the faith community together. Multiculturalism allows for facilitation of community organizing. In addition, it makes easy social mixing and integration. The Public theologian can be both community and local political king maker. The Multicultural church is also the place where there is acceptance of interracial marriage and interracial dating. In so doing there may be no more George Floyd, Brianna Taylor or Ahmed Aubrey murders and we could theoretically see racism stamped out in this nation. The multicultural church working through the Public Theologian could provide a theology that would eradicate inequality and promote a system of equal sharing, so that there would be an equal distribution of goods in society to wipe out hunger, poverty, homelessness, and violence among humankind. Finally, it could eradicate the disparity of a have and have not society to do away with this huge wealth gap and revamp the system so that there would be some semblance of fairness in government and the economy.

It is my belief that we have to push more whites to give a greater voice to the common interest and the common good of all humankind. It is then that we can move to prick the conscience of America to “see then that you walk circumspectly not as fools but as wise redeeming the time because the days are evil”⁹⁷ Ephesians 5:15. to completely revamp this capitalist system and totally change America; that racism and prejudice by one race toward another is ended.

For these reasons stated above and more, I believe in my soul that it starts with multiculturalism and the move to the multicultural church, therefore, is a matter of biblical urgency.

The implied task of this ministry setting is to be a public theologian whose public theology and whose life in the public square serves as a radical catalyst for social change and social justice in our current society. This is a unique move for an African American church to move toward a Multicultural church. There was both an attractiveness and a disappointment to this task. There was no blueprint to follow. Researching the move of an African American Church to becoming a multicultural church, became a nuanced subject completely open and available for exploration. However, the disappointment lay in the fact that there is not a great deal of written reference material from which to draw or to rely upon to do research.

Unlike what we know as the Church, multiculturalism offers the Public Theologian and the community not only a new methodology of “doing church” but offers the opportunity for development of a new, bold, different kind of leadership in the secular and religious arena. “Multicultural ministry does not come through a multi-colored worship team, leadership team or

⁹⁷ King James Version of the Holy Bible, Ephesians 5:15.

congregation. While each of these is important, the most essential task for a church desiring to create a ministry of reconciliation is to change the mindset of the people within the church.”⁹⁸

Multiculturalism provides for the introduction of a new type of theology with a new voice of public theology where the public theologian can at once both become a radical change agent in the church and a leader in the public square of society. Multiculturalism breeds new leaders. It must create the new public theologian willing to get into “good trouble”. It offers itself as a vehicle of change which can impact a wider audience for bringing about the common good of the community. He or she must be multifaceted and multitalented. “The spiritual leader is both a teacher and student reaching beyond the most common expectations for clergy leaders as “Bible study teacher.”⁹⁹ In other words the public theologian must position him or herself as a unifying force for good as a leader, teacher, and educator of the people within the community.

In the development of the multicultural church there will be challenges and conflicts of mixing of faith and belief systems, culture and ethnic misunderstandings and possibly clergy and administrative conflicts. Some of those challenges are: The issue of race and racism is the major obstacle to multiculturalism. In order to combat this issue the public theologian is required to develop multiracial and multicultural communities of faith. In advocating multiculturalism, we must bring back the Acts chapter 2 model of the church which welcomes the Church to all who would worship God. It is my belief that this is what we are called to adhere to today. The author

⁹⁸ Anderson, David, A., Margaret R. Cabellon, *Multicultural Ministry Handbook, Connecting Creativity in a Diverse World*. P. 123

⁹⁹ Lewis, Jacqueline, J., John Janka, *The Pentecost Paradigm, Ten Strategies for Becoming a Multiracial Congregation*. P.47

of United By Faith, Curtiss DeYoung states that “our congregations must be racially and culturally diverse in order to be faithful to the word of God.”¹⁰⁰

In addition, there is the challenge of the acceptance of and willingness to serve under a Black Pastor as senior minister of the church. There are a number of whites who find that prospect uncomfortable. There is the issue of crossing over and entry into a predominantly African American church striving to become multicultural. There is the difficult task of subverting the ego and the white supremacy mentality. There is the ability to deal with the fact that whites may now realize that within this multi-ethnic/multiracial congregation they are the minority and come to grips with this less than majority status. One of the greatest fears among parents is the fear that their children will be exposed and open to interracial dating and even worse marriage. The consequence of which is that they may become grandparents of interracial children.

Needless to say there is not a church that is not presented with challenges from time to time. In a risk-benefit analysis the benefits outweigh the risks. It is my belief that the multicultural setting brings with it an ability wherein these challenges can be resolved by well-planned diversity staffing and staff training, monitoring and management of conflict, skills and seminars in congregational dynamics, intentionality and staging.

The public theologian and the multicultural church must have a voice for justice, equality, racial diversity, and inclusion. He or she must examine the secular order and set a new direction. The public theologian must be true to his/her calling to advocate for those in the shadows, the least

¹⁰⁰ DeYoung, Curtiss, P. Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, Karen C. Kim, United By Faith, The Multicultural Congregation: An Answer To The Problem of Race, Oxford University Press, 2003.

of these in the public square, those on the margins of society, the poor, homeless and those unjustly convicted of crimes.

The faith community must be the place of hope in this time of despair. We must advocate for God's radical vision of a new society, The Beloved Community. The public theologian must engage with moral and social issues which affect the local and national community. This public ministry must speak truth to power and get involved in issues such as the January 6th Insurrection. We have to always remember that without a vision the people perish.

To paraphrase, my rationale for the development of the multicultural church is that: some men see things as they are and ask why, I dream things as they could be and ask why not. Creating an inclusive faith community that is welcoming, loving and safe is our high calling.

Healing across borders of ethnicity, dealing with different cultural norms, building trust, and setting norms for sharing power is difficult. Is this the way to offer God's people the opportunity to build community to dismantle racism and xenophobia as we model the radical love of Christ to a broken world? Is this urgent work? Is this what God is calling us to do? Does this Pandemic and George Floyd's killing raise the question: Are we now a nation against itself? The challenging questions are these:

Can the Church, the multicultural church, become a real source of healing? In this Pandemic, in the face of racism and the murder of black men, can the church, the multicultural church in particular, become a real source for change? Will the Church, the multicultural church, muster the courage to bring people together across ethnic, class, cultural differences and model the God-like community both in the sanctuary and in the Public Square? Is public theology viable in the public square? Can such a transformation like this happen in the context of public theological ministry?

To all this I answer Yes. An Astounding Yes. Why? Because the God I serve is an awesome powerful, infallible God and Jesus is a divine catalyst for change. His Bible is a roadmap for eternal development of his Kingdom and peace here on Earth. The topic of this paper intrigued my ministry, directly impacted my Christian spirit, and inspired me to actively pursue public theology in the public arena for positive change.

What then is the Problem with the Church? The Church has aligned itself closely with America. It is in a state of anguish and confusion. The Church does not know how to address racism both within the country and within its own pews. Second, it is in a state of fear. That fear is borne out of the fact that it too sees that the population is changing and its white supremacy stance that it quietly supported is coming to an end. The quiet realization is that there may soon be a non-white Pope of the Roman Catholic Church in Rome. I wonder what will that do to the Church that has been dominated for so long by a white man. Third, whites are gradually becoming disenchanted with the message that is being provided in the white church, due to its hypocrisy, dissatisfaction with truthfulness of its moral leadership and not speaking to their daily basic bread and butter issues and needs in a realistic and substantive way.

The Church has to establish a new identity. Truly reflect moral honesty, love and compassion. Seek racial justice. Have a heart for the oppressed and the issues of the oppressed. Speak truth to Power on the issues of the day like Gun violence, racism and voter suppression. It must challenge the system and work toward bringing about relief for the needs of poor people. Christian leaders must bring about change to make this world what God intended it to be: more loving, just and caring for the least of these amongst us. The Church and its leadership are being called to come out from four walls of the church and embrace the ministry of Jesus which called for meeting people where they are, in the highways and the byways. To go to the people on the

margins who are sick, in need of healing, to feed the hungry and give clothing to those who have none.

We, the African American Church operate a Food bank that we realize is not enough because the need is greater than that which we see. This however for me is what being a Public theologian engaging in the public arena is about as part of prophetic ministry. Serving and addressing the plight and the needs of the poor, the downtrodden and those who survive at the very bare existence at the margins of society. We intend to speak truth to power to bring about change in our society and bring a glimpse of the Kingdom of God on Earth the way God intended for it to be. The twenty first century holds the potential to be the century of the multiracial congregation and strive for awakening of the Church, despite the relatively small percentage such churches represented among total congregations.

The broad population shifts taking place in the United States are expected by the midpoint of the century to produce a country with a racial demographic that is very diverse and without a numeric majority. Such demographic changes can produce favorable settings for the increased possibility for multicultural congregations. A movement toward creation of more multicultural congregations must be the cutting edge for the growth of ministry in this century.

Again, I say as I stated in my abstract that we as public theologians are called by God to provide that prophetic voice and the vision of a different world especially in this multicultural church setting where everyone is free to worship in diversity to promote the common good of society. This is the public theologians' role of be active, committed, in communication and to be a participant in all aspects of justice: social, political, economic, psychological, and spiritual in his or her interaction within the public arena in the public square.

This African American Church and its move to inclusion is a beacon of forgiveness calling this Bayonne community and the nation to look to faith in God and to look into its soul for transformation to a New World order. As a beacon of Divine Faith, the work of this Church in extending and promoting the opening of its doors in Christian faith and love to the community is a demonstration of how we feel multiculturalism can positively impact the ministry setting in the community in which we find ourselves.

I think that it is incumbent, that as a matter of public theology the voice of the Black theologian is heard in terms of bringing about the badly needed transformative change in society. If this opportunity is missed for this white community not to embrace this multicultural offer it could be a monumental setback from which we may never recover within the church, this community, as a people, and as a society. The work of the multicultural church must open its doors and its heart in Christian love and faith and embrace social justice. It must speak in one voice and speak the truth of God's word in its desire to bring about a new community of Christian faith.

We are faced with a herculean problem as public theologians. We must understand that the nation will not go back to business as usual following the pandemic. The nation and the world need new bold, bright, innovative public theologians, with a new innovative ecclesiology that will peaceably disrupt the public arena to speak God's word in power and truth to the government and to leaders in various sectors of society to effect new and positive change. That starts with multiculturalism. I am under no illusion that the mission and concept of multiculturalism is and will be a hard field and this study area in and around Bayonne is no exception. It may take a while for this concept to come to fruition. However, I believe multiculturalism will work and I anxiously look forward to its implementation and success.

I really would like to give a huge thank you and a sincere amount of gratitude to John Janka and Jacqui Lewis for their support, insistence, encouragement and guidance along this path of study. From my heart to yours, “With Sincerity. Thank you very much.”

Ronald J. Sullivan

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Appendix A

This is a compilation of interviews with a local Bayonne City official and four Pastors whose churches have undergone the multicultural church experience. The underlying question being queried is what is the feasibility of establishment of a multicultural church. It is felt that each one of these individuals interviewed supports the supposition that the multicultural church is a viable church and is the direction and model of the church of the future.

January 16, 2021

Interview with: Joe Ryan
Chief of Staff to the Mayor of Bayonne

Introduction:

During my interview with Joe Ryan, I asked questions about the history of the city and the religious, ethnic and economic condition of the city. The interview revealed significant information about the religious, economic, ethnic, and racial demographics of the city. In this paper, I relay some of the information given to me in that interview.

About the Interviewee:

Highlights from the Interview:

Religious Demographics:

Economic Demographics:

Ethnic and Racial Demographics:

About the Interviewee:

Joe Ryan is the Chief of Staff and the Advisor to the Mayor of Bayonne, New Jersey. Mr. Ryan characterizes the city of Bayonne as a conservative to moderate stance of municipality. It has become, in his words, more tolerant and more accepting town of democratic local and national issues. As an indicator of that he points to its election of a democratic Mayor and city council over the last three election cycles. Formerly he noted that the city was a strictly Republican city. Joe Ryan is a lifelong resident of Bayonne and is often referred to as the city historian. Historically, he related that the city was primarily inhabited by the Dutch as noted by a few mansion-like Dutch houses and a few streets named after four prominent Dutch families.

Religious Demographics:

His estimate was that there are approximately 50 Houses of Worship in the City of Bayonne of different faiths. With at least four six African American houses of worship including Faith and Victory Church of God.

Of note he stated that the property currently occupied by the Faith and Victory Church was formerly inhabited by a German American Protestant congregation, then by Arabic Assembly of Egyptian Group. The street on which the Church is located, Lord Ave, was so named because of the many Churches that were located along the street and in the area. Practically all these buildings have been torn down.

The area is primarily White Catholic. The residents mostly attend St. Andrews Roman Catholic Church. However, he has indications that church attendance has declined prior to the pandemic.

Economic Demographics:

The area in which the Church is located is known as the 1st Ward. It is Primarily populated by the following ethnic groups: Italian Irish/Dutch English, German Americans, Blacks and

Hispanics. By population percentages he indicated that Blacks comprise approximately 8-10% of the area of Bayonne. In the area around the Church, that percentage probably declines to approximately half or 4-5% in the area. White and/or Hispanics comprise the major % of the Bayonne area. The Hispanic population consists of Puerto Rican, Dominicans, some Ecuadorians, and Mexicans.

His assessment of the area is that it is characterized as a predominantly moderate to Middle Income white neighborhood. The housing stock is primarily one- and two-bedroom generational housing. Generational housing is customary in Bayonne meaning that there may be one or two and maybe up to three generations of families living in the same house. Therefore, the housing stays in the family for years. There are also a limited number of small apartment buildings. Highrise apartment buildings are a recent phenomenon to Bayonne residents and high-rise development is not welcomed and is frowned upon by the residents. It in fact breaks up their suburban mentality.

Ethnic and Racial Demographics:

Bayonne Population stats:

Whites: 69.2%

Hispanic/Latino: 25.79%

Blacks: 8.86%

Native American: 0.31%

Asian: 7.71%

Filipino: 10%

Others: 3.8%

He indicated that there is an increasing immigrant population coming into Bayonne consists of Egyptians, Coptic Christians, and Europeans from Poland.

His feeling is that the city is open to Multiculturalism and the establishment of a Multicultural Church. He felt that this idea of a Multicultural Church would be embraced by the community.

He also noted that there is a good segment of Protestant Church Jumpers. These are people who stay at an up-and-coming church for a while and then experiment or jump to another church which could be a source for our church. There are also a substantial number of dissatisfied Catholics particularly young church goers and divorced people who he felt would be a good source pool for a multicultural church. He cautioned that these people are not located in one area but would have to be sought out because they are located all over Bayonne.

His feeling is that the city is open to Multiculturalism and the establishment of a Multicultural Church and that it would be cordially embraced by the community in and around the church. In fact, he felt enthusiastically that this idea of a Multicultural Church would be embraced by the city at large.

He also noted that there is a good segment of Protestant Church Jumpers. These are people who stay at an up-and-coming church for a while and then experiment or jump to another church which could be a source for our church. There are also a substantial number of dissatisfied Catholics particularly young church goers and divorced people who he felt would be a good source pool for a multicultural church. He cautioned that these people are not located in one area but would have to be sought out because they are located all over Bayonne.

Economic Demographics:

The Chief of Staff to the Mayor cited these as Challenges for the Bayonne community:

One of the major challenges he saw was maintaining Property Taxes consistent with the rate of inflation

Parking is a major issue throughout the city and high-rise development will cause an additional the lack of available space throughout the city.

Halting or restricting the control of development forces. He cited the restricting of aggressive High Rise. Development and maintaining the status quo.

He also saw the halting the Loss of Industry as a major problem for commercial ratables.

It was pointed out that while high rise development is and looks good it is good for generating revenue but bad because there is a loss of taxes. Again, he stressed people in Bayonne are not in favor of high-rise development.

When asked if there was one thing that you would like to see changed: his answer was solve the existing public housing issue in the town. More is needed while maintenance and upkeep of the existing housing stock is a constant problem.

When asked if there is a hidden race problem in Bayonne, the answer was a definite yes.

When asked who do you need to partner with to address this issue the answer was: that the city was actively working with non-profits, civic leaders and clergy to address the issues of race within the city.

His assessment is that BAYONNE is becoming a mix of economic classes, including public housing and working-class groups.

November 6,2020

Interview with: Holy Christian Church
Minneapolis, Minnesota
Archbishop Wayne Felton, Pastor

About the Interviewee:

. The Pastor indicated that he did a radio Podcast in which he along with other Pastors discussed what makes a sound church and the caring of a Pastor. He indicated that one of the topics discussed was the Mission of The Church which he described as making Disciples of All Believers regardless of race, creed, or color. He says he took a dare and said all people are welcome regardless of race creed or color. He also indicated that the Church was moving from its suburban location to an inner-city neighborhood in St. Paul Minnesota and he says things changed. As a result of the Podcast to his amazement people of all colors, shapes and sizes to use his term “overran his church.” He indicated that people came from out of nowhere to worship and eventually join the church.

The Pastor has a firm belief that Fellowship cements membership relationships. His belief is that members produce after their kind. The Pastor becomes the Shepherd of the Church and the elders are there as support to him. The Pastor described his staff as wide and varied. His administrative staff consists of eight (8) ministers: four (4) white and (4) four black.

He has a staff as he states consists of approximately 24 ministers.

Ethnic and Racial Demographic

The Church started out as a Black Church but could not attract blacks. Initially the Church was located in a suburban community of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Church started out as 85%

white, 11% Mexican and 4% Black. However, it has changed. Upon a locational move from the suburban location to inner city Minneapolis the church became 30% white and 70% Black. He related that the church is located one- and one-half blocks from where George Floyd was murdered. As a result of the move people left, membership fell off drastically and then there was an influx of new people. When he inquired about where these people had come from the overwhelming response was that they had come in response to his radio podcast discussion. He said as a result of his getting on the radio to his surprise whites showed up.

Religious Demographics

The Church has a membership roll of 1,200 members which represents about 400 households. The Pastor goes on Television and Radio to evangelize every Sunday. He feels that 85% of the people who come to the Church are born again Christians.

Ethnic and Racial Demographics

It is estimated by the Pastor that 65-75% is college educated, with 70% lower middle to higher income and 25-35% lower income to poor people in the church membership. The Pastor estimates that members attending the Church come from as far as 40 miles away from the Church.

Now, the dynamics of the Church membership fluctuates and is now comprised of the following percentages:

66% White

16% Black

10% Hispanic

14% Asian

Religious Demographics

He did a Survey of who these people were and found that most of these new members were unchurched, the ex-churched, the disgruntled with religion, the Church seekers, attendees but not committed members. There are estimated 600-700 members in attendance at Sunday service.

The Church is Pentecostal in Tradition. As described, they are weekly Sacramental, weekly Scriptural, weekly Spiritual and weekly Social.

The Church started out in a suburban white neighborhood and then moved to the City of St. Paul Minnesota. In this neighborhood things really surprised Him as Pastor and the Church.

The neighborhood was a gang dominated community. The community also constantly complained and called the local police because the members on Sunday morning double parked and took up all the available parking spaces around the Church and the neighborhood. Along with the Church the Gangs were noisy, they were obnoxious and presented crime problems for the neighborhood.

The Pastor and the Church members adopted and got directly involved with the leading gang members and then the members of the gang. They held meetings, invited the church leaders into the church. They had dialogues on personal fears, community violence as well as how the Bible related to activities of the gang activities. Consequently, some of the leaders of the gangs became members of the Church and this led to the church becoming closely aligned with the gang members and their activities in the community. There was a Church/Gang Christian Partnership and various alliances formed.

Consequently, things changed. The Pastor related that the noise and the violence was diminished in the neighborhood. Crime went down due to the Church. The residential property values and business values went up. It is now a desirable neighborhood to come in to. The Police now refer problems in the neighborhood for resolution by the Church. Unofficially and quietly the

Police has relaxed its patrol and policing to the Church. It would rather that the neighborhood refers the initial problems to the Church for initial resolution before the Police steps in for official resolution. Now both the Police and the neighborhood residents are happy the Church has moved into the neighborhood. The Church quelled crime in the neighborhood. This is Public Theology at work. This is evidence of the positive impact the multicultural church can have on a neighborhood and transformation of a community.

February 18, 2021

INTERVIEW: Father Phillip Sanders
 St. Andrews Roman Church
 Bayonne, New Jersey

About Interviewee:

Father Phillip Sanders has been Pastor of the Church since 2014. He is not a native of Bayonne. Therefore, not being intimately connected he could only make limited observations having only been there for the past seven years.

Father Phillip as he is referred to, claims to have a congregation of 1,000 members

On Sunday he alleges that his experience with the COVID Virus has resulted in the congregation size that has averaged between 700 to 800 congregants.

He describes the congregation and the neighborhood to be bread and butter, meat and potatoes working class people who could be described as Middle Income.

He noted that there is a very hidden but quite small to medium size group of wealthy residents in the city who would like to remain incognito. The frustration and particularly his is that they do not want to provide needed help and relief to the community where it is needed and they are aware of. These wealthy people are self-sufficient. They have no need for God. They have the material resources but they push God aside and do not want to help the Church or those suffering.

His profile of the community is one where people are born here, live here

and die here. He says his view is that people are interconnected, are a strong community and they know each other's business.

Economic Demographic:

While he indicated that Bayonne considered itself a safe city, a cordial and somewhat welcoming community he offered that they were not welcoming of the high-rise construction currently taking place in the city and the community was a little wary of the influx of Latinos coming. In his words it would like to think of itself as a closed community.

Ethnic and Racial Demographic:

Father Phillips says he conducts five (5) services per Sunday, one of which is a 4 p.m. Latino Service for the varied Hispanic community. That varied community he describes as follows

The Hispanic Community he says is a low income, hard-working, very closely knit community. The Latino population in the Church consists of Mexicans, Dominicans, Ecuadorians and Hispanics. They are faithful attendees of worship service. He stated the reason for this is that in their respective country's attendance as individuals and families at Church worship service is almost mandatory. The parents bring their families and their kids with them. When asked why this is so. Father Phillip stated that it is cultural for the Latino population. As a cultural norm back in their respective cultures, it was expected that the parents and the family members attend church together because this is what they did in their respective countries before coming to the United States. That cultural condition has been continued.

He also acknowledged that there is a growing Egyptian population within the City of Bayonne who attend the Coptic Catholic and Orthodox Church who at times use the Church for events but do not attend masses.

The Pastor cautioned that the community seems to be exclusively Catholic with a growing Latino community. He indicated that the number of small families he guessed was the leading factor in the closure of some churches. He also observed that the area was comprised of a number of multigenerational homes where the housing has handed down from one generation to another

Religious Demographic:

The St. Andrews Roman Catholic Church has existed in the Bayonne community since 1915. It began as a congregation of Italian, Irish, Polish, Lithuanian and Russian Immigrants. The Church belongs to a consortium of Churches that consists of St. Mary's Church which is primarily Irish, St. Vincent Church primarily Lithuanian, St. Henry Church primarily Italian and St. Andrews Church which is primarily Irish and Italian.

In terms of the idea of faith sharing, participation in an inter faith service and his church partnering in a joint community activity Father Phillip was non-committal and neutral in response. When asked about the possibility of speaking during our Church service he offered it would be "difficult" in that he conducts five services on Sunday morning. Asked for an opinion regarding establishment of a multicultural church he was inordinately silent but seemed relieved when he was assured there would be no competition with his Church.

In talking with some people who were very familiar with the operation of the Church, they indicated that the parishioners have expressed some discontent with the Pastor, attendance numbers were grossly overstated and fell far short of what I was told. That the information given should be taken with a grain of salt. The conversation ended by stating that things are not as they appear.

December 3, 2020

Interview with: Pasadena Church

Pasadena California

Pastor Kerwin Manning, Pastor

About the Interviewee:

Pastor Kerwin Manning and his wife are relatively young Pastors of Pasadena Church located in Pasadena California. Pasadena Church has been in the neighborhood for twenty years. The neighborhood in which the Church is located was originally black but it has transitioned into a somewhat mixed Hispanic, black and white neighborhood.

The Church Mission is to Walk with God and One Another in Love for the Community and the World. He indicated that when he arrived at the Church twenty years ago it was very institutional. It was very traditional, very strait laced, highly Baptist, with men in suits with ladies with the Big Hats on. The church was a predominant mix of elderly and some young people with children. The songs sang were traditional old-line hymns. He said his attitude upon arrival was a Big "No".

He indicated that there was Intentionality in his taking over the Ministry. He intentionally wanted to attract whites and young people. He says he immediately adopted a Come as You Are Policy. He Came Out of His Robe, in part he wanted to demonstrate Change and in part it was due to that California Heat. He says he directly encouraged the members to do the same especially in view of the California heat.

Ethnic and Racial Demographic:

His ministry is now in what he categorizes as not only mixed with Hispanics but a neighborhood containing a fair number of members of the Bloods. The members of his church relate to themselves as a church family interlaced in gangs. His congregation is satisfied with this

association and membership. He sees his ministry as a ministry operating without walls in the street. The Pastor characterizes his Church as non-denominational.

When asked about the breakdown of his Church membership Pastor Kerwin indicated that it is 75% Black, 15% White, with the rest comprising Asians, Hispanics and Pacific Islanders. He likes to think of his Church as being the Church without Walls. Again, he wanted to emphasize that his church is built on faith and the belief that the mission of this Mission is to Walk with God and One Another in Love for the Community and the World in all facets of racial religious, economics and social inequities.

Economic Demographic:

Another Challenge he ran onto was the fact that when the church was located in this neighborhood, he felt he would lose a good portion of his members. However, what he found was that a good segment of the Church membership did not come from within the neighborhood but came primarily from outside the Pasadena area to his surprise. And they continue to come to the Church. Pastor Kerwin indicated that his church membership population ranged from individuals and families who are low income to upper middle people. He describes this as a transient to a stable neighborhood. He described the neighborhood as economically stable.

Religious Demographic:

He indicated that he moved from the Old-Line Traditional style of worship to Contemporary Music intentionally reaching out to college students. He especially recruited those students with a music background as worship leaders. A musical person who could move from the traditional line music to He got on a first name basis with the staff and church membership.

His church service is usually 300 at regular Sunday Worship Service. His total membership is approximately 600.

On the other hand, he found that some whites could not accept Black Pastoral leadership and so they left. However new people filled that void.

To attract new members Pastor Kerwin says that he does some Marketing. He seeks out musicians who Love the Lord. He has to see they have a connection to the Lord. He also has to be convinced that they trust his Leadership

His intention was in his words to get other generations in the church while at the same time keeping the older members to stay. His worship team is 20-25 years old. He says that he was intentional in his staff make-up. He said he intentionally put a white male on his ministry team staff.

The Presentation of his message to a Multicultural Church is a message for all in attendance which is one of redemption and salvation lead with love. The intention is to create a church where you have to let go of some things to become the Church of God. The goal is to create the basic African American Church that moves to multiculturalism which makes room to celebrate diversity of the community while reminding leadership what we are all about.

According to Pastor Kerwin the Challenge is to: keep people from congregating, whites with whites, Asians with Asians, blacks with blacks, to maintain and celebrate diversity.

There is a twist to his ministry. Pastor Kerwin and the Church works with Gangs in the Neighborhood. He has a number of programs such as:

Food For Faith: in which he provides hot meals for gang members three times a week.

The commitment of Ministry in the Church specifically involves the following programs for Gang Members:

It operates a Community Food Bank every week

The church administers a Gang Impacted Youth Program: This is where the kingpin of the Gangs come into Church to discuss Social Justice components and a and community education Dress to Impress Program for Youth in Community. It also administers a program that is aimed at demonstrating to the gang members How to Conduct a Job Interview.

The bottom line is that Pastor Kerwin states that the Multicultural Church is a successful way of providing social, economic and educational services to actively engage the community in the public arena. This he describes is the new way of doing church and serving God as the Bible Theologically mandates. He states that he would not go back to the traditional way of doing Church. In the final analysis he stated the multiculturalism is the divine manner of embracing the community with the Multicultural church at the center of that activity.

March 10, 2021

Interview with: Tapestry Church
 Jersey City, New Jersey
 Pastor Anthony Langston

About the Interviewee:

Pastor Anthony Langston is a White Pastor of Tapestry Church a Multicultural Church located in Jersey City, New Jersey. The Church has been in existence for some 17 years. The Pastor says he is originally from Louisiana but had the intention of moving to New York. However, he wound up in Jersey City quite by accident. His intention from a young man was a discerning vision to begin a multicultural church. He began the Church seventeen years ago in his living room and it became a mobile church having services in pizza parlors, in school gymnasiums and rental of

hotel breakout rooms. He finally was able to financially purchase a permanent location three years ago as a stable Church in a building in Jersey City.

The Church is built on Prayer and Fasting as prescribed by Jesus he says.

He says in his experience it was easier back then to begin a multicultural church than it is today.

You have to be cognizant of everything you say today because people are very judgmental. And because he is white, he has to be very careful about what he says.

Ethnic and Racial Demographic:

The demographics of his Church are that the Church is:

White 15%

Black 15%

Hispanic 55% (They come from veery Latin American Country)

Asian 10%

Africans 5%

His Ministry Staff make-up is as follows:

He is The Senior Pastor

Black Executive Pastor

Asian Philippine Pastor

A Hispanic/ A Dominican Pastor

The Congregation Size prior to the Pandemic numbered between 550 to 750 members per Sunday worship service. That number has diminished due to the Pandemic but it is steadily growing to its pre-Pandemic size. The congregation members are representative of 70% from Jersey City, Harrison, Kearney, New Jersey, and the balance traveling from the 5 Boroughs of New York City,

When the Church moved into the community the residents in the community were very welcoming and received them well. They placed door knockers introducing the Church to the community and it recruited some members to the Church. The Church is located down from Urban University in a modest neighborhood very near a major heavily travelled thoroughfare. It is the Pastors belief that there are a number of factors that have attracted people to the Church. Among those factors are:

Authenticity

The authenticity of the Pastor which he says is not intentional but natural is evident with all people. He does not believe in putting on airs with people but he tries to be real and down to earth in his preaching and with everyone, members as well as people in the community. He believes that authenticity attracts real people.

People feel free and come as the area to the Church for worship. He noted that on one Sunday a person came to Church dressed in the style of a lady of the evening. He felt that that might have been on purpose to see if anyone would give her an ostracizing look or the possibility that she might be asked to leave. He stated that no one gave any attention to the person. She soon after became a member of the Church. He indicated that it was the typical manner people react to anyone entering the Church. You are welcomed as you are.

A Safe Place

The Pastor indicated that people see the Church as a safe place in which to come. That they do not have to have any fears. He emphasized that the Sunday morning service is tailored to be suitable and comfortable as a place to worship for newcomers, people who initially walk in the door.

People have to see people who look like them. That is, they have to see themselves in the make-up of the members of the congregation. This puts people at ease and gives them a sense of comfort and welcome. You have to find a common ground and meet people where they are

As a Multicultural church did you have to make any adjustments to music or worship style to accommodate various groups in the church? His answer was yes. You cannot have a style of music that is tailored to one group in the church. He had to train people to lead worship service with a different style. He had to hire young people with both a familiarity of classical and modern era gospel Christian culture sound of music that he eventually turned into the Church Band that appealed to everyone's taste. He had to also be open to criticism of his music and worship style to get it right.

He mentioned that the challenges he faced included people bringing strange political agendas into the Church by the younger people. Belief in these extreme (trump) narratives by the young people who could not be convinced of the truth.

Young people who found it difficult to hang their biased opinions aside, those who could not lay their prejudices aside, the inability to say I'm sorry when they were wrong and could not stay focused on love and the teachings of Jesus Christ. He says it took a good deal of time to win some of them over. A majority of them are now working members in the church.

When asked if he saw Multiculturalism as the wave of the future in terms of a new church organization his answer was as follows. He stated there is hope. He offered that while it is much easier to remain a black or a white traditional church, he sees the wave of the future as the move to the Multicultural church. The multicultural church requires in his opinion a lot patience, humility, learning and love his belief is in the Multicultural Church. He indicated that anyone entering into this endeavor must have the Vision from God to do this. There is nothing more

influential than the Multicultural Church because this is where you can get at the real heart of the people and the issues of society in this diverse setting in the eyes of God. Once you get the creative development of Multiculturalism it produces itself. Regarding the Multicultural Church once you believe in God the answer must be yes.

Appendix B

Community Survey

November 4, 2019

I am a doctoral student at a local college conducting a survey for a project in this neighborhood. For purposes of this project. I have been asked to collect data in this neighborhood. I am requesting that you take a few minutes to complete the survey. **The survey is anonymous.** It is not required that you provide your name on it. The data will not be used in any other matter than to serve as back-up material to substantiate that the project was completed. It is requested that the answers be marked in an honest manner. (I need your assistance. This will be a graded assignment.)

Please return the survey on or before November 22, 2019 in the stamped self-addressed envelope or place it in the mailbox at the rear of the Church. **Thank you for your participation.**

- 1.) With regard to the African American Church, Faith and Victory Deliverance Church (hereinafter referred to as "the Church") what was your initial reaction when it first moved into your neighborhood in 2004? (Please circle one)
 - a. Fearful and negative
 - b. Welcoming
 - c. Neutral

- 2.) What has been the impact of the Church in your neighborhood. (Please circle one)
 - a. Positive
 - b. Negative
 - c. Neutral

- 3.) What is your perception of the Church and its presence to date? (Please circle one)
 - a. Good for the neighborhood
 - b. A nuisance presence
 - c. Neither good nor bad

- 4.) Are you inclined to hold a conversation with members of the Church? (Please circle one)
 - a. Yes, I would
 - b. No, I would not
 - c. I would rather stay to myself

- 5.) Would you be willing to attend a Church service at that Church? (Please circle one)
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

c. Maybe

6.) If an invitation was extended for you to attend the Church, would you attend? (Please circle one)

- a. Yes, I would if invited
- b. Yes, I would but I do not want to be the first to attend from the neighborhood
- c. No, I would not
- d. I have my own Church that I attend

7.) Do you favor or enjoy having the Church as a neighbor? (Please circle one)

- a. Yes, I do
- b. No, I do not
- c. Yes, because they are helpful
- d. No, I view them as a problem

8.) What is the one thing you like about the Church? (Please circle one)

- a. Its music
- b. Its members
- c. Its connection to the neighborhood
- d. None of the above

9.) How do you presently view the Church in your neighborhood? (Please circle one)

- a. As a positive asset
- b. As a negative
- c. Neither positive nor negative

10.) What is your opinion and the utilization of the Food Bank?

- a. You or a family member personally has benefited from its services
- b. It is a favorable asset to the neighborhood and community
- c. You perceive it as a negative in the neighborhood
- d. I have no opinion

Thank you.

R. Sullivan

Comments: Please feel free to comment on any of the above questions or anything not covered which interests or concerns you. Comments are welcomed. You may also use the back or a separate sheet of paper if necessary. Thank you again.

Appendix C

December 29, 2019

Church

Project Questionnaire

I am in the midst of completing a Project for a course I am taking. It is both imaginary and real. One of the goals of the Church meeting that was discussed is the Church going out into the Community. The reason in part for this project is because this could result in Faith and Victory moving to eventually becoming a multicultural church. There are people in the community who have indicated that **“if invited they would accept an invitation to attend Faith and Victory Church.”** We need to prepare in many ways to do that. As you may be aware, going out into the community where we are located means talking to everybody around and beyond the Church. The question that was asked at the December 29th Church meeting was “Can you make a case for Christ?” Christ accepted everyone regardless of gender, race, color, income status, creed, immigrant status, etc.

One use of this questionnaire is to ask what you understand about yourself and the Church: meaning what is our purpose inside the Church? That is how do you think we see ourselves in the Church at Faith and Victory. What do we Spiritually stand for? What is our readiness for newcomers? How well do we feel we are prepared as a church to take in new people? How would we feel about attracting people from the surrounding community into our Church? Are we in a position to make the necessary adjustments, changes, and accommodations to our current worship style for people voluntarily wanting to come in to worship with us? And what would that mean to you as a member? The bottom line being that if we attract people from various streets and neighborhoods around us into our church are we ready to change, modify, or alter the way we do Worship Service? And keep in mind these questions would be relevant even if the people who were attracted into the church were African-American or all people of color.

These are just a few of the issues surrounding the project. In completing the questions there may be some questions or issues not covered here that you may want to raise. Please feel free to write them on another sheet of paper. The important thing is I need your feedback and honest answers to these questions. **You may place your name on this questionnaire or you may answer it anonymously.**

If there is a question that you do not understand or you need clarity on a question or you simply do not understand it is asking, please call me at 862-520-8775 anytime. I am not asking you to rush completion of this questionnaire but I would like it back as soon as possible.

Thank you very much

Minister Sullivan

The Project/Church Questionnaire

- 1.) How do you as a member view your personal Pentecostal Christian Foundation?
 - a.) Open
 - b.) Strong Religious Conservative
 - c.) Religious Moderate
 - d.) Very Liberal

- 2.) What are the main aspects of the Worship Service that you particularly like? (Circle three)
 - a.) The music
 - b.) The people
 - c.) The Preaching
 - d.) Just coming in the Sanctuary

- 3.) What are the aspects of worship service you feel you do not particularly like? Please list three.
 - a.)
 - b.)

- 4.) Please list 3 Values (Christian or Secular) you see lived out in the Church.
 - a.)

 - b.)

 - c.)

- 5.) What is your vision for this Church? In other words what do you think God is calling us to do in such a time as this? Please answer.
- 6.) Similarly, in terms of the vision of the Church, what do you think God is calling you to do as a member of the Church as such a time as this? Please answer.
- 7.) What Bible verse says who we are as a Church in your opinion?
- 8.) Where do you feel areas of improvement are needed in this Church? Please list three.
- a.)
- b.)
- c.)
- 9.) How would you define Faith and Victory Church?
- a.) As a Christ centered Church
- b.) As a God centered Church
- c.) As a Holy Spirit centered Church
- 10.) How do you view Faith and Victory as a Church?
- a.) As an African-American church
- b.) As a Church that sees no color
- c.) As a non-African American Church
- d.) As a Multicultural/Multiracial church

- 11.) What is your opinion about inviting people from the surrounding community to a worship service?
- a.) You welcome it
 - b.) Not in favor of it
 - c.) You would be neutral toward it
 - d.) Other opinion please express
- 12.) What is your feeling regarding 25 people or more from the community be they white, Hispanic or Asian coming to the Church and requesting membership in the Church?
- a.) You would welcome it
 - b.) You would oppose it
 - c.) It would not matter
 - d.) Other opinion please express
- 13.) Pastor has said that his vision is that Faith and Victory would attract members from this and other communities, how would you react to the Church moving from what it is to becoming a Multicultural Church where everyone from all cultures worshipped? In other words what is your opinion?
- 14.) Faith and Victory has been used to a traditional Pentecostal African American style of worship. How would you adapt to a style of worship that new members may slightly from a traditional African American style worship as a result of accommodating new membership?
- a.) I am ok with it
 - b.) I would not like it
 - c.) I would be willing to give it a try
 - d.) Other:
- 15.) As a result of new (white, African, Hispanic or Indian) people from the community becoming members of the church how would you feel about the order of service changing?
- 16.) With the influx of new members, be they white, Hispanic, or Asia, etc. how would you feel if the quality of music changed from the traditional music sang at Faith and Victory Church?
- a.) I could adapt to it

- b.) I would welcome it
- c.) I would not like it
- d.) Other

17.) How would you react to someone other than the Pastor, be it Hispanic, white or Asian delivering the Sunday morning message?

- a.) I'm ok with that
- b.) I would not like that
- c.) I would have to see

Please write an answer to the following questions:

18.) Nothing stays the same forever, in your opinion Where will our members come from in the future?

19.) In your opinion, what do we need to do to attract new members into the Church?

20.) What do we need to do if anything to change about ourselves and the focus of our ministry?

21.) How do you think that the larger community around us describe who we are?

22.) In your opinion who are we as a Church aspiring to become?

23.) Where do you feel God is calling us to go right now?

- 24.) Is it our Mission to know our neighbors?
- 25.) Are we/you afraid of strangers: people who do not look like you, speak and worship like us?
- 26.) Are we a close Church or do we feel isolated from one another?
- 27.) In your opinion are we a welcoming, diverse and inclusive faith filled Church?
- 28.) Given the location of the Church in the Bayonne community, can you see Faith and Victory changing?
- 29.) Finally, given the potential for an influx of members from the surrounding the community into the Church, can you as an individual faithful member rooted in the Pentecostal Spirit of Faith and Victory adapt to change in the order of service, worship style, tradition of African American worship, prayer, preaching style that currently exists can we do as Christ commands to Love Thy Neighbor and worship as One Lord, One God, One Body, One Faith and on one accord. Can you do that?