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MULTIETHNIC AND MISSIONAL:
GOD'S HEART FOR AN INTEGRATED AND DIVERSE CHURCH

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE

BY
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ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA
MAY 2019

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To Elise. Your unwavering support, encouragement, and belief in me has carried me through this project. Our life together is my most treasured passion in this world. With all my heart, I love you. – Proverbs 31:10.

To my children. Your smiles and warm hearts bring me great joy. God has blessed me immeasurably by gifting you to me.

To countless friends and family. Thank you for the support, words of affirmation, and encouragement. The road has been long and at times difficult, but your support has made the load bearable.

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ABSTRACT

The American church is largely segregated and homogenous. This has not only stunted the growth of the church but led to an ineffective and limited mission vision. The contemporary American church must reclaim the biblical mandate to be both ethnically diverse and missionally minded. Through a qualitative research methodology this research project focuses on creating a healthy and sustainable multiethnic identity and leadership structure. Through interviewing and visiting some of the leading multiethnic churches of the Central Valley of California, the researcher lays out a clear understanding and argument for multiethnic churches. This paper examines the book of Acts, interviewing insights from key pastoral leaders, and provides a key table and summary of actionable next steps.

The insights from the book of Acts reveals that God's original intent for the church is to be both multiethnic and missional. Contemporary literature highlights the necessary traits and qualities for healthy and sustainable leadership. Finally, interviews with leaders engaged in ministry show the foundational attitudes and characteristics leaders must possess to lead their churches through a successful transition to multiethnic.

For leaders engaging in multiethnic ministry there are five key leadership characteristics that they must practice: humility, personal holistic health, community engagement, an intentionality in seeking out different voices, and a celebration of diversity.

CHAPTER ONE: THE NEED FOR THEOLOGICAL INNOVATION IN THE CHURCH FOR MULTIETHNIC MOVEMENTS

Statement of the Problem

North American churches, particularly those located in cities and other socially diverse contexts, display a lack of understanding about the need for innovative and multiethnic approaches to church ministry.

To raise awareness and correct the ensuing related issues, this research project was completed in four key steps. The first was to explore Scripture for principles related to innovation and multiethnic ministry. Second, it explored and examined scholarly and academic literature of the related themes. The third step was an examination of churches and leaders engaging in multiethnic ministry. Finally, it developed a set of key principles to aid churches interested in making the transition.

Delimitations

This project focused on issues directly related to church health and decline, transitional churches, multiethnic churches, and leadership. All churches surveyed and interviewed were Protestant churches.

Additionally, research within Christian scriptures was limited to New Testament texts and cities that focused on leadership in multiethnic churches, particularly the books of Acts, Ephesians, and Revelation.

Third, research focused on churches that were trying to innovate or reach their communities in new or different ways.

Assumptions

Three assumptions about ministry, church, and leadership have also been made, meaning that they will not be addressed in the research paper. First, the Bible is inspired by God and useful for teaching, correcting, and understanding theology and ministry. Second, leadership in the church is not tied to gender, with God calling equally men and women to lead, serve, and direct the church. Third, multiethnic churches will require multiethnic leadership. Without this, any transition to a desired multiethnic church is much more than limited; it is impossible.

Subproblems

Examining the main problem, the need for multiethnic churches, raises with it several smaller and integrated problems for study. First, Scripture must be studied and understood in a multicultural and innovative context, including how it relates to and shapes multiethnic ministry. Second, it is necessary relate questions of multiethnic identity to broader emerging trends in research on leadership, innovation, and multiethnic ministry. Third, there is the production of case studies for churches that desire to become multiethnic, are transitioning to become multiethnic, or have already become multiethnic. Finally, practical application of the research will require the development of principles to help guide churches and leaders that desire to be multiethnic.

Introduction to the Project

For most of the church's history, the gathered church has largely been homogenous. Sociologically, a homogenous church is any church in which there is

greater than eighty percent attendance by one dominant cultural or ethnic group.¹ Yet the Bible describes God's people as an integrated whole that is not separated by common divisions in the world (Gal. 3:28). This tension that has long plagued the church, should not be. The church that desires to be of influence into the future, must work to instill the values of equality in worship across all racial, ethnic, educational, and socio-economic lines.

The researcher has pastored in several different contexts with churches that were either preparing to make this change or had done so previously. While interning at a medium-sized congregation that had previously made the transition to being a multiethnic church, the researcher gained insight into how established multiethnic churches function.

As a lead pastor of a small, declining, established church, the researcher from September 2011 to January 2017 helped transition that church from homogenous to multiethnic. Prior to the researcher's employment, the church had been through numerous conflicts, pastoral changes, leadership infights, and church splits. During the first year of employment, the researcher experienced many of these changes as the established lead pastor resigned in leadership conflict. Assuming the interim role for three months, the researcher then became the long-term lead pastor in January of 2013.

The church's vision was focused to emphasize effective practices for community engagement and transformation. The elder board assumed more responsibility by engaging in holistic teaching, discipleship, and baptism. Realizing the expanding brokenness of the surrounding community, the church's emphasis on holistic teaching

¹ Mark DeYmaz and Harry Li, *Ethnic Blends: Mixing Diversity into Your Local Church*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 24.

included food and shelter support, prison ministry, racial reconciliation work, and educational opportunities.

New outreach events encouraged the church to engage the surrounding community in innovative ways. For example, Service Sundays were started as a chance for the church to do a volunteer project for the community. These volunteer opportunities included paint projects, home repair, landscaping, and park restoration. These opportunities gave the church a chance to be visible outside of the church walls and service times.

As the church began to experience success in some of these areas, new challenges arose. The church leadership board noticed that most of the work the church did continued to attract two primary groups of people: those who were already a part of the church and those that wanted the services the church provided like food, rental assistance, but very little of anything else.

To help tackle the growing needs, the church began to formulate ways in which the church could experience real and lasting growth while continuing to faithfully minister to both the church and the neighborhood. A decision was made to hire a second pastor. The church was predominately white in one of Denver's most quickly diversifying neighborhoods. As a result, the newly formed pastoral team worked to instill a vision for multicultural ministry. After a year of laying the groundwork for this transformation, the church began discussions with a Latino church that met just a few miles away.

The Latino church had been renting space from another congregation, but their relationship had deteriorated. They were looking for not simply another rental facility, but a place where they could be fully accepted and belong to one church. The ultimate

goal for both the researcher's church and the Latino congregation was a full and equal merger.

As discussions intensified, the elder board came in to help provide guidance and eventually a Leadership Transition Team was formed. The Leadership Transition Team included the three pastors (the lead and associate pastors of the English-speaking congregation and the Latina pastor from the Hispanic congregation). Additionally, there were three representatives of each congregation. Together, this group became the focal point of all decisions pertaining to the future direction of the church, discussing and providing decisions for issues pertaining to the Sunday worship experience and weekday ministry opportunities. After the merger process and after a successful public launch, the researcher stepped down from that ministry appointment.

Prior to the merger, the researcher's church had an average age of 70. Because of the merger, the average age dropped to 40. Similarly, the average attendance rose from 30 to 90. By January 2017 the church had fully merged with the Hispanic immigrant church, and all Sunday services along with regular activities were broadcast and communicated in two languages: English and Spanish.

The Importance to the Researcher and the Ministry Context

Having been called away from the Denver church, the researcher is currently engaging churches and businesses in leadership development, innovation, and multiethnic transitions through coaching and consulting work. Among the important characteristics and outcomes are leadership health, organizational structure, and coaching competence.

This is the ongoing culmination of a life called by God. Throughout his life, the researcher has experienced the call and imprint of God's shaping on his life. As a series

of refinements in calling, there is a clear importance now on the need to be a person that bridges the gospel to daily life in several areas of church leadership.

First, there is a call for healthy and sustainable leadership models. The researcher has seen and experienced the consequences of limited and lacking leadership. Organizations, churches specifically, suffer greatly when they split or decline because of leadership. The researcher is committed to be a voice for holistic leadership health and personal integrity.

Second, the researcher strives to be a voice calling for church renewal. The North American church is in decline because of ineffective mission results. The factors in this are many and understanding church renewal and revitalization requires a correspondingly broad understanding of these issues. The issues that will be explored within this research project include discipleship, missiology and ecclesiology, social justice, and cultural engagement.

Third, the researcher is committed to raising awareness on the issues surrounding multiethnic ministry. This includes advocating for change by acknowledging the ways in which the American church has gone astray in both theology and practice. Isolated and homogenous churches choosing to focus on comfort and ease instead of biblically mandated reconciliation are limiting their power for cultural, social, and political change.

Recent political events have dramatically shaped the conversations on race, gender, and religion in American society. As the political and racial divide grows, the church has both an enormous burden and opportunity to be a voice of hope, healing, and reconciliation. The work of this project is designed to facilitate conversations on the

issues surrounding these changes. The church has the potential to bridge the gap between the various constituent groups of the fractured American body politic.

Additionally, the growing cultural diversity of American society increases the both the urgency and the magnitude of the church's obligation to practice healthy and holistic missional engagement. This study will help create dialogue opportunities for the church to engage culture in a positive and productive manner.

By combining these three areas of passion and calling, the researcher is hoping to contribute to the relevant fields of biblical ministry, expand and enhance the discussion on church polity and mission, and equip pastors and other ministry leaders with the tools and skills necessary to be faithful in mission.

Importance to the Church at Large

The church, much like the world, is in a state of flux. The world is changing the way it communicates, processes information, and experiences community. For example, Millennials, those born between 1980 and 2000, are the largest generation in American history. They have grown up in an ethnically and economically diverse society. Younger Millennials, sometimes called Xennials, were the first generation to grow up with internet in the home and use it for educational purposes. Many of today's tech companies are led or were founded by this generation.

Millennials in general are often passionate about social justice issues like racial reconciliation, economic justice, immigration, and human rights. Additionally, the mounting evidence of a disproportionate incarceration rate for people of color is troubling to many Millennials and should be for the church as well. Many of those cultural issues lie outside the scope of this project, yet they are important to note. This group of people

has also grown up in a world largely devoid of the church. Moving forward, the church must find a way to be involved in these discussions, demonstrating and exemplifying the work of Christ as the only place to find the solution. If the church is unwilling address these pressing issues, then Millennials will continue to look elsewhere for meaning and purpose.

The researcher plans on contributing to that discussion by creating an approach to ministry that is welcoming of diversity and multiethnic expressions of faith. This brings credibility to the church's voice in the conversation. The church used to be a place of trusted authority in the community. During times of crisis, people would seek out the church to help them with the issues of life.

However, that is no longer the case. Instead the church has moved to the fringes of society. The world has been busy innovating and exploring. Meanwhile, the church has become preoccupied with maintaining buildings and internally-focused ministry programs. This preoccupation has left the world no choice but to look elsewhere for answers to its pressing questions. By situating itself at the forefront of social justice issues like racial reconciliation and cultural engagement, the church can once again become a place of influence and a respected dialogue partner.

To the Wider Academic Community

The researcher also hopes to make significant contributions to the larger academic community. Tackling issues of race, ethnicity, and reconciliation provide benefits across a variety of spectrums and disciplines. By examining and contributing to the worlds of business, education, and formal research, academic results from this project will demonstrate how case study findings can be used to understand the tensions and fears

embedded in the larger American culture. The hope is also to demonstrate how, through a Gospel perspective, those tensions and fears can be resolved and overcome.

This study will contribute to a variety of fields, giving sound research and inquiry while also providing solid interpretation and delivery of the data. By basing the theory and research in a case study model, effective practices can be shown and the disciplines of sociology, race relations, education, and religious instruction can be enhanced.

Research Methodology

This project was completed as a qualitative research study. Primary research was carried out via case study, which pulled from grounded theory and ethnography as appropriate and relevant.

Primary data collection happened through personal interviews and site visits to local churches. Interviews were conducted with leading experts in the field, as well as with local church staff and key ministry leaders. Secondary data was pulled from relevant literature in the fields of church health, multiethnic ministry, leadership, innovation, and biblical scholarship. Church and organizational websites provided additional information and insight.

Project Overview

This project focused on collecting and analyzing relevant biblical literature. Secondary sources were utilized to understand the ministry opportunities and pitfalls of the first-century church to find similarities and connections to today's culture.

Second, academic and popular literature were examined. By focusing on areas of church health, leadership, innovation, and multiethnic ministry, a framework for the engagement with primary data was created.

To create a gridwork for contemporary multiethnic leadership practices an email was sent out to relevant field experts, thought leaders, and pastors of multiethnic and innovational churches. Contained within the email were the interview questions that were also used for the interview process. This phase of the research also required the researcher to engage in relevant secondary data collections such as church websites, relevant church literature or historical documents, and church-specific cultural studies. The researcher coded the above data as it was collected.

At the conclusion of the research process, the researcher created a grid of listed experiences and repeated patterns to help readers of the study in implementing the suggested changes.

Finally, the researcher tied together relevant and applicable insights from all data streams for an outcome on the experience of multiethnic churches. The resulting synthesis will help readers of the study to create more easily the desired changes and transitions in their local ministry context.

Subproblem Treatment

The first subproblem was to examine Scripture for principles related to innovation and multiethnic ministry. In order to accomplish this, the researcher spent time examining and understanding the relevant Scripture passages, commentaries, grammatical tools, historical works, and other relevant literature pertaining to the problems of innovation and multiethnic ministry. This data was used to help the researcher understand how Scripture, its historical context, and the people named in it engaged culture and created innovative and multiethnic movements.

Subproblem two focused on the need to explore and examine relevant research related to leadership in an innovative and multiethnic ministry environment. Primarily focused on peer-reviewed works, additional attention was also given to professional material or popular material that has become so well known that it is influencing popular culture.

This data was used to enhance and clarify key issues related to structure, leadership, innovation, change, and multiethnic cultural engagement. The goal was to aid in proposing a model or theory after key understandings have been understood and clarified.

The third subproblem was an exploration of churches trying to pair together innovation and multiethnic ministry. Field research included relevant interviews with thought leaders and practitioners, surveys, site visits, and the use of secondary material from churches like websites, historical documents, and other church-specific literature. An initial list of multiethnic churches was pulled from an organizational website that focuses on promoting multiethnic churches. Additionally, authors and leaders who have been published within the relevant fields, pastors actively engaged in multiethnic ministry, and churches and leaders who are shown to be providing a new or different approach to cultural and multiethnic engagement will all be treated as relevant sources.

Data was compiled by conducting interviews, either face-to-face or via telephone, conducting in-person site visits, and collecting and analyzing data from surveys. The data was used to examine and determine if patterns, insights, or methodologies may be used to equip pastors and leaders for more effective church renewal and multiethnic ministry while avoiding pitfalls or potential dangers.

The final subproblem was to develop a set of principles to guide churches as they seek to develop a more robust multiethnic ministry. This was accomplished by compiling all previous research material and synthesizing relevant insights. By examining field notes, books, journal articles, theses, surveys, interviews, and other materials the researcher was able to accurately code, record, and analyze all appropriate data streams, sources of knowledge, and literature used. Because of this, the researcher will be able to disseminate a model to be used by churches, pastors, and other ministry leaders regarding key insights of church ministry and health, multiethnic church transitions, and leadership innovation.

CHAPTER TWO: EXAMINING NEW TESTAMENT MINISTRY AND MULTIETHNIC MOVEMENTS

Introduction

Throughout the book of Acts, early Christians experience the presence of the Holy Spirit. That presence empowers them to do great and mighty things, sermons that convert thousands of people, missionary callings to the Gentiles, racial and economic reconciliation, a redefinition of societal class structures, political engagement, and a re-exploration and redefinition of Jewish faith practices.

Issues surrounding the understanding and implementation of early church theology have huge implications for modern practices. For example, how the early church continued to participate in the Jewish religious structure while also enhancing it based on their understanding of Christ's work shapes the narrative and story of early missionary movements. Additionally, how the early church's life and faith practice facilitated and enhanced their inclusion of Gentiles can be of key importance in understanding modern ethnic and racial issues.

These two issues then help to begin an understanding of how the early church organized itself for mission, while also raising new frontiers of cultural engagement. Understanding how the early church superseded societal customs and norms to offer something new and different provides insight into Jewish and Gentile relationships. Enhancing our understanding of how the early Church facilitated multiethnic church

movements and how they may have perceived the latest chapter in God's salvation history also illuminates their writings for current ministry practices.

To understand these topics better, the researcher examined several significant passages and issues surrounding the early church from Acts where cultural engagement and cross-cultural missional practices were demonstrated. Research focused on the passages concerning Pentecost, the choosing of the seven, Philip and the Ethiopian, Peter and Cornelius, the Jerusalem Council, and Paul in Athens. Additionally, cities of cultural and religious importance are presented as examples of cross-cultural religious engagement.

Establishing the Paradigm: Pentecost and Multiethnic Ministry

The first act of public ministry recorded in the Acts is Peter's Pentecost sermon. Jesus' prophetic proclamation at the beginning of the book, to "wait for the gift my Father promised," (Acts 1:4) is about to be fulfilled in dramatic fashion. As Richard Pervo and Harold Attridge note, "Pentecost may be the most exciting and the least comprehensible episode in Acts."² The Pentecost gathering of Christian believers attracts a significant crowd. Once present, these onlookers are able to hear a message about God's works in their own language.

Layered within the narrative are several clues about the significance of the event that is unfolding. First, the Feast of Weeks itself occurs fifty days after Passover. The Jewish people celebrated Passover as a sign of God's covenant faithfulness while slaves in Egypt. After Jesus's resurrection, this festival takes on a deepened layer of significance

² Richard Pervo and Harold W. Attridge, *Acts: A Commentary*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 59.

for the early Christian community in Jerusalem. Jesus has appeared to them, taught them, and promised them what is to come (Acts 1:1-11). Now, the gathered group is experiencing the foretold promise on the first significant festival after Jesus's resurrection. N.T. Wright explains the significance as much more than just an offering of first fruits but, "about God giving to his redeemed people the way of life by which they must now carry out his purposes."³

Present and visible in the story for the early believers is God's spirit connecting and culminating in these two events that have been rooted in the story of his people for centuries. Emerging among the earliest followers of Jesus is the shaping of the narrative that is to come. By linking the events of Passover and Pentecost, Luke ties together the story of Jesus's mission and the extension of that mission to his people. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is now present in them. Peter, sensing this awakening, delivers a powerful sermon to those who came to see the unfolding events.

Luke is also intentionally making the connection between the Pentecost celebrations of the Jewish people for decades, and the culminating work that God is doing now. In a lecture transcript, Mike Moore makes the connection between the significance of Mount Sinai and the giving of the Spirit.⁴

These include: the 3,000 who died because of the golden calf in contrast with the 3,000 who repented and believed; the symbolic promise of first fruits of agricultural and

³ Tom Wright, *Acts for Everyone: Part 1: Chapters 1-12*. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 21.

⁴ Mike Moore, "Pentecost and the Plan of God." *The Reformed Theological Journal* 72, no. 3 (2013): 17.

early Christian converts; and the importance of two witnesses, which culminated in the two classes of people (Jews and Gentiles) serving as witnesses to God's plan.⁵

Luke addresses not only the content of Peter's sermon but underlying themes and theological threads of significance as well. For Luke, the story also carries a nuanced significance in its relation to the Tower of Babel. Some, such as William Willimon, are quick to dismiss the connection, arguing that there is exclusivity to the Jewish race.⁶ While it is true that eyewitnesses and the apostles may not have immediately made the connection to Babel, Luke as a later storyteller most certainly had. Yet even with that awareness, Luke's eyewitness accounts of the events and places throughout Acts convinced him that while God is giving all peoples an understanding of Jesus' salvation in their own tongue, the point is not to make them all speak the same language. The Babel account is primarily about God confounding and confusing peoples who spoke one language and wanted to make a name for themselves (Gen 11:4). Their subsequent scattering throughout the earth also enabled them to develop distinct cultures, customs, and rituals.

The Pentecost account is not a reunification of the language that divided people but a declaration about the unity they now have under the salvation of Jesus. What Luke portrays is not a singular mono-culture that people assimilate to, but a celebration of the diversity that has filled the earth. When John notes that heaven contains, "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language" (Rev

⁵ Moore, "Pentecost," 172-183.

⁶ William H Willimon, *Acts*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 32.

7:9) he is making it abundantly clear that in heaven multiple languages will be spoken. Luke is asserting the same thing in the Pentecost narrative. What God is restoring is not a singular culture but a singular people. The unity that pervades the community and people of God is not linguistic but pneumatic, that is, a distinctive movement of the Spirit. What the resurrection of Jesus has accomplished is not an individual society of assimilation but a community of people under the common lordship of Israel's God. Kathryn Wehr argues similarly when she writes, "It was a scattering so that He could unite them in His own time and plan. The people of Babel were trying to create their own unity but had left God out of that unity."⁷

This culture-reshaping identification can be seen in the nations listed by Luke in his account of the events: "Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs" (Acts 2:9-11). Luke emphasizes the first table of nations account at the end of Genesis 10, highlighting and reusing many of the same tribes and peoples. As Jud Davis points out, this not only puts Luke in line with other Jewish rabbis and their belief about eschatological promises but Josephus's work on understanding Genesis 10 within the current biblical political climate.⁸ Luke argues that previously, humanity's rebellion in favor of their own greatness is now being restored by God. Now, it is God's name which will be proclaimed as great. The table of nations and subsequent scattering of people

⁷ Kathryn Wehr, "The Pentecost Liturgy as a Call for Unity and Mission." *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (2015): 237.

⁸ Jud Davis, "Acts 2 and the Old Testament: The Pentecost Event in Light of Sinai, Babel, and the Table of Nations." *Criswell Theological Review* 7, no. 1 (2009): 36-37.

throughout the earth is being brought together. The promise of Scripture is being fulfilled. The promise of a Kingdom fully united by God with a composition of people from every tribe, tongue, and nation is being completed. “This is the constitution of a New Israel and the empowerment of her to re-include first the lost of Israel and then the whole world.”⁹

Luke has masterfully set the stage for the paradigm of future Christian missionary work. The event that is unfolding at Pentecost is not merely another holy day, but it will serve as the formative and normative work that the Christian church should be engaging in. The narrative that Luke lays out before Peter even speaks addresses the quickly culminating plan that God has for the world. Peter, now sensing the divine timing, begins to address the gathering crowd. He knows what is happening before the people is not something of human hands or of intoxication. Instead, it is a movement of the Spirit of God amongst those present and eventually the whole world.

Before the missionary work can begin the story must culminate where it first began: in Jerusalem, at the temple, on the heels of the crucifixion of Jesus. “The Gospel is about to move into the world outside Judaism, and Luke has already hinted that this will be so; but Judaism, or at least the OT, is and will remain its indispensable foundation.”¹⁰

⁹ Davis, “Acts 2,” 36.

¹⁰ Charles Kingsley Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles in Two Volumes*. (London: T & T Clark, 2004), 135. International Critical Commentary. Bloomsbury Collections. Web. 13 Aug. 2017. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781472555939.ch-006>>.

Leadership Clarity: Acts 6 and Missional Ministry

In Acts chapter six, the growing church experiences a problem in their daily operations. It comes to the apostles' attention that the non-Hebrew speaking women are being overlooked and neglected in food ministry, to the benefit of the Jewish speaking women in the community. For the early church, the issue is not a lack of provision (there wasn't enough food), nor was it a mistake (too much food was given to one individual so another one didn't receive enough). Rather, this is a complex racial, cultural, and linguistic set of problems. The local church administrators in charge of food distribution purposefully give to the native Hebrew-speaking widows while refusing to give any to the Greek-speaking widows. There is intentional favoritism of a perceived purer form of the faith over and against the perceived lesser. The distinction between Hebraic and Gentile Jewish believers will serve as a continued progression of inclusion throughout the Acts. Hellenistic and Hebraic Jews are to be treated equally in the church. Additionally, Luke is going to introduce a certain Hellenistic Jew named Paul¹¹ as a key figure. Eventually, Paul will become the key figurehead throughout Acts as well as the preeminent missionary to the Gentiles. What Luke lays down as a foundation here will reverberate through the rest of the book.

Luke's demonstration of how the early church handled this particular event is noteworthy. The twelve apostles solve the problem by appointing seven leaders of outstanding character to oversee a fair distribution of food and goods. Their response is about creating equity and justice for everyone. It expands the proper understanding for

¹¹ Harold W Mare, *New Testament Background Commentary: A New Dictionary of Words, Phrases and Situations in Bible Order*. (Ross-shire, UK: Mentor, 2004), 156.

who can be included in table fellowship by declaring that all forms of Jewish believers will be welcomed.

But within the passage, there are also other elements that must be examined. First is the usage of the phrase, waiting on tables. It could potentially be misunderstood as insensitive or derogatory, if it is framed within the context of lesser or greater tasks within a ministry. This passage is not about finding and excusing jobs that are beneath a certain position or person. Instead, it is about the belief that the Spirit of God has clearly enabled some for certain tasks and others for different ones. This passage, correctly understood, is a precursor to Paul's body metaphor in his writings. It's not that the apostles view themselves as better than a ministry of food distribution. Instead, they properly understand their gifts as ones that require them to focus on different tasks. Their job is, as they interpret, to pray and to minister in the Word. Their gifts lay in connecting with God through prayer and the spreading of his message.

In contrast to this, others are appointed to distribute food. Their gifts are not less important than those of the apostles but focus on a different outworking and function. Luke is not drawing attention to greater and lesser gifts, leadership tasks, or a lording of authority over subordinates. Instead, as J.R. Woodward reflects:

The picture given throughout Acts and the Epistles is that the undershepherds live together as a communal example, priests ministering to fellow priests, not lording it over others but recognizing the need to care for, encourage and exhort those entrusted to them by the chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. As they follow Christ and share the Word by the power of the Spirit, the people of God respond to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and more leaders (elders) are raised up to equip others. As this happens the current leaders appoint new leaders (elders) in every church, based on the Spirit's work (character, knowledge and skill development) in their lives, so that they might exercise their gifts for the common good. As a

result, the entire people of God contribute to the building up of the body of Christ and expanding the kingdom.¹²

This paradigm fulfills a model ministry commonly called APEST. Recognized by missiologists like J.R. Woodward, Alan Hirsch, and many others, the APEST leadership ministry model focuses on the five-fold gifts found in Acts. APEST leadership sees Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers as key functions of believers. Hirsch and Catchim explain the function of an APEST model of leadership in their book, *The Permanent Revolution*. In their view, apostles are sent to plant and establish new churches, prophets urge God's people to faithfulness and justice, evangelists are called to spread the Good News, a shepherd matures people's faith and provides care, and teachers promote a deepening wisdom and understanding in theology.¹³ The paradigm here in Acts 6 is now about missional giftedness, not superiority. The apostles were committed to practicing their apostleship, and appointed shepherds to do their proper work and ministry.

A second important note is the structure of the group. The newly appointed leaders are a diverse group. The text mentions that the newly designated shepherds were "Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism" (Acts 6:5). Two of these men, Stephen and Philip, are written about later by Luke. They will serve as continuing examples of the expanding paradigm shift the church embraces because of

¹² J.R. Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2012), 86.

¹³ Alan Hirsch, Tim Catchim, and Mike Breen. *The Permanent Revolution: Apostolic Imagination and Practice for the 21st Century Church*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012. Kindle Edition), Kindle Location 1071-1080.

their ministry choices. The rest are known only as recorded here but Luke intentionally establishes the council as outsiders from the offended community.¹⁴ Several of the seven leaders are considered as Hellenists, as it even includes Nicolas from Antioch. This gentleman is neither a part of the initial group nor is he even Jewish. He is a Gentile from Antioch, a city that will take center stage later in Luke's book. This early church problem, one of the first recorded, intentionally includes diversity as a core part of the solution to the problem. In a squabble between Hellenistic and Hebraic Jews, the Apostles appointed a Gentile to make sure that everyone was treated fairly.

Third, the conclusion to the story effectively summarizes the expected outcome of an APEST model of leadership. As Hirsch, Catchim, and Woodward point out, the church should expand when successfully implementing an APEST model of leadership. Acts records this happening. "So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). Luke makes clear that when the church embraces APEST leadership and intentionally solves problems throughout diversity and multiethnicity, God is honored.

Continued Expansion: Philip, multiethnic ministry, and Gentile Inclusion

Philip takes center stage in two more pivotal passages that expand the paradigm of multiethnic ministry. Acts 8 records an extended story of Philip's ministry. Luke writes of his travels to Samaria, the apostles joining him in ministry, and his evangelization of an Ethiopian eunuch.

¹⁴ Craig Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 1279.

Philip in Samaria

The first story of Philip records his ministry in Samaria, an area typically avoided by Jews. The Jewish people had deep-seated issues with Samaritans. The cultural and religious differences put them as equivalent, or perhaps worse, than their Gentile neighbors.¹⁵

This makes Philip's engagement within the region of Samaria stand out. From a Jewish perspective it is highly controversial. Yet from a post-Pentecost perspective, it shows the radical approach to inclusive ministry that the new church is having with the surrounding culture. Matthew's Gospel mentions Samaritans once negatively and Mark never writes about them. Luke, however, in both his Gospel and in Acts, spends considerable time engaging with Samaritan evangelization.¹⁶ This engagement is a radical statement of his theology. This is not just a fledgling church community doing evangelism. This is a new perspective on Jewish theology engaging with some of their most despised cultural opponents. This interaction with the region of Samaria radically separates the evolving Christian theology on missions as something drastically different than its Jewish counterpart. This Gospel ministry of inclusion, even for Samaritans, will radically redefine church history, theology, ecclesiology, and missiology. In this chapter, Luke charts a new course for church expansion. The Gospel must now include the farthest fringes and commonly outcast and despised sections of culture and politics. Indeed, that perspective will carry throughout Philip's ministry. Because Philip will reach

¹⁵ Jeremias Joachim, "Σαμάρεια, Σαμαρίτης, Σαμαρίτις," ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 90–91.

¹⁶ Joachim, "Σαμάρεια," 91.

both a Samaritan and a eunuch in this passage, his ministry brings fulfillment to two-thirds of the Acts 1 proclamation.¹⁷ Philip's ministry engagement is a precursor of the rest of the book, as his conversion of a Gentile predates even Peter's encounter with the Roman Centurion.

It is the belief of the researcher that the attendance of the apostles is to demonstrate again how APEST leadership engages culture. The arrival of Peter and John further clarifies the apostolic nature of ministry. They are not legitimatizing Philip's work, they are instead expanding on it. Philip, an evangelist, initiates the gospel proclamation to the Samaritan town. The apostles, hearing of the news, come to see it and expand on it. Upon seeing and expanding the message, what might be referred to as church planting in a modern context, they return to Jerusalem. Their trip is not one of legitimization but of establishment, expansion, and recognition of God's kingdom at work.

Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

The interaction between Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch continues to expand on Luke's expression of the gospel. "Philip's is a story about the Holy Spirit's breaking down humanly designed barriers to bring the gospel of Christ and baptism in his name to the ends of the earth. This is a story of marginality and then, through the Holy Spirit, of hospitality and welcoming into God's family."¹⁸ The difficulty then arises not in what the story is about but how it is accomplished.

¹⁷ Keener, "Acts," 1464.

¹⁸ Leopoldo Sanchez, "Can Anything Good Come Out of?: Come and See! Faithful Witness in Marginality and Hospitality." *Concordia Journal* 41, no. 2 (2015), 119.

Scott Shauf explains several of the interpretative problems of this text, including the questions raised, theological dilemmas, practical concerns, and narrative assumptions.¹⁹ The problem, as he states, is not so much that the story is included in the text, but in where it is included. It precedes Peter and Cornelius, which is the story Luke uses to establish Gentile inclusion into the Christian community. However, much less is said about it. Shauf's concludes that the story is a foreshadowing of future ministry. This story, he argues, serves as a tease to future Gospel expansion. If the Good News will come even to an Ethiopian eunuch, where else might it penetrate in Gentile culture?²⁰

The inclusion of this story signifies the advancement of the Acts 1:8 passage, without completing it fully. It allows Luke to foreshadow completion, while still using Cornelius as the central figurehead of Gentile conversion. Second, it stretches the paradigm of inclusion and cross-cultural ministry. Philip, a Hellenistic Evangelistic Jew-Christian converts and baptizes a castrated, royal, Gentile official. This is a person with little rights or recognition in the Jewish world because of his official state. Yet he is given full inclusion into the Christian community. Finally, it also serves as a continuing expansion of the role of the APEST Evangelist. Evangelists are people in touch and in communion with the Spirit. They are ready to bring the Gospel into any situation, contextualizing it for people, that they might find life and leave the encounter rejoicing at the work of Jesus (8:39).

¹⁹ Scott Shauf, "Locating the Eunuch: Characterization and Narrative Context in Acts 8:26-40." *Locating the Eunuch: Characterization and Narrative Context in Acts 8:26-40* 71, no. 4 (2009): 762-75.

²⁰ Shauf, "Locating the Eunuch," 774-75.

Full Gentile Inclusion: Peter, Cornelius, and a New Missionary Vision

Peter's ministry to Cornelius further expands and explains God's continuing work among the Gentiles. Darrell Bock emphasizes the critical nature of this passage. "From here the gospel will fan out in all directions to people across a vast array of geographical regions, something Paul's three missionary journeys will underscore."²¹

As Bock notes, the entire narrative of Acts takes a dramatic shift here. What had started in Jerusalem and spread to Judea is now reaching the fulfillment of the prophecy. What Luke will outline in the rest of the book is how the message will go to the ends of the earth as well as all peoples. If there had been any doubt about whether Jesus' message would spread to Gentiles, that question will now be answered in full force.²² Not only will the message spread to the entire Jewish Diaspora, but to the furthest reaches of the Roman Empire. What has been foreshadowed throughout the book is now going to take center stage.

The shift is sudden and dramatic. The first eight verses of chapter ten introduce Cornelius as a generous, God-fearing man of the Roman army. He is told to address a man named Peter who would tell him what to do.

Peter is staying at the house of Simon the tanner when he receives his simultaneous vision. Peter here is staying with someone who works with dead animals, a

²¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 380.

²² Willimon, *Acts*, 94.

point often overlooked. In any traditional Jewish sense, this would have been an unclean profession.²³

Peter's decision to reside in the house of Simon the tanner reveals that the apostle is receptive to Jews who are considered marginalized and unclean. This does not mean, however, that Peter is now willing to enter the home of a Gentile. Perhaps Peter's lodging with Simon the tanner serves as preparation for a more radical move, namely, to venture into a Gentile's house.²⁴

Peter is deep in prayer and meditation when a vision strikes him. Before him, sprawled out on a sheet are all the animals on the earth. After a brief exchange with God, Peter begins to see the new thing unfolding. God is changing the understanding around ceremonial laws, while using the vision as a metaphor for Kingdom inclusion (10:28, 34). God portrays the two complimenting images of table fellowship over food with Gentile fellowship. "By making unclean food clean, God is showing how table fellowship and acceptance of Gentiles are more easily accomplished in the new era. The vision symbolizes that what separated Jews from Gentiles is now removed."²⁵ Far from an overstatement, but a realization that God has done more than merely learned to tolerate Gentiles, but in fact fully included them in his Kingdom.²⁶ Barriers and divisions that have been in place for thousands of years are being instantly erased.

²³ VanThanh Nguyen, "Dismantling Cultural Boundaries: Missiological Implications of Acts 10:1-11:18." *Missiology* 40, no. 4 (2012), 457.

²⁴ Nguyen, "Dismantling Cultural Boundaries," 457.

²⁵ Bock. *Acts*, 390.

²⁶ Wright. *Acts for Everyone*, 164.

Peter's awareness and acceptance of God's message brings focused attention to the conversion of Gentiles. While he is speaking with Cornelius, the Holy Spirit descends on them. In an echoing of the Pentecost event, Peter's proclamation extends the ideas of inclusion and salvation of God's expanding Kingdom. This is the second Gentile conversion on the book and the conversion moment extends to the entire familial unit. This is the first mass conversion of Gentiles recorded in Luke's book.²⁷

After the conversion of Cornelius and his family, Peter orders them baptized. The Spirit has marked them as clean and acceptable so nothing should stand in their way of full inclusion. In a similarly dramatic fashion to Luke's other stories, the Kingdom is advancing in ways nobody could have predicted. The rules for table fellowship and willing association have changed. Jews accepting Gentiles is not a frequent occurrence, but it can be tolerated if converts accept certain dietary restrictions. However, what God has initiated here is a reversal of the social customs: a Gentile demonstrating hospitality to a Jew is radical.²⁸ What Jesus began by eating with the excluded and outcast of his society as a part of his ministry is continued with the Peter and Cornelius story. Peter faces similar criticism to what Jesus encountered.²⁹ Jewish adherence to religious traditions and cultural customs demand an explanation of Peter's actions.

Luke quickly advances past the conversion experience. While Peter and other believers stay with Cornelius and the new converts for several days, Luke skips that

²⁷ Richard and Attridge, *Acts*. 283.

²⁸ Conrad Gempf, "Acts," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 1082.

²⁹ Nguyen. "Dismantling Cultural Boundaries," 461.

period. The next event in the Cornelius story is the confrontation that Peter has with other Jewish believers. Peter's experience with his vision and with Cornelius is new information and culturally absurd. Peter must justify and explain God's new prophetic and missiological inclusion of Gentiles. The complaints come from circumcised believers. Nguyen notes that the issue is not over baptism or even circumcision at this point, but their complaint is over Peter's willingness to have table fellowship with a Gentile-Roman soldier.³⁰

Peter recounts the story not only of his own vision but also of Cornelius and his. It is this construction of the narrative that carries significant weight. Luke records the story not as narrator arguing for a position, but as a neutral storyteller. He wants Peter's own words to carry the weight, and convince the reader.³¹

Peter's recognition of the Spirit at work is enough to squelch the detractors' arguments and change their complaints to praise. "Peter's personal testimony leaves those who have accused him of breaking the law completely stunned, for they 'became silent' and even 'began to glorify God.'"³²

Acts 15: The Jerusalem Council Responds to Gentile Conversions

In Acts 15, Luke's coverage of the Jerusalem Council shows a significant shift in the development of God's expanding inclusion ministry.

Ethnic expansion or Gentile inclusion caused early Christianity to become a trans-ethnic movement. By the term "trans-ethnic" I mean that the Christian identity transcends ethnic identities. This does not imply that Christianity abrogates or

³⁰ Vanthanh Nguyen, "Luke's Point of View of the Gentile Mission: The Test Case of Acts 11:1-18." *Journal of Biblical and Pneumatological Research* 3 (2011), 96.

³¹ Nguyen, "Luke's Point of View," 85.

³² Nguyen, "Luke's Point of View," 97-98.

opposes ethnicity, but that one need not reject an existing ethnic identity or adopt another identity in order to join it. The seeds for this were sown by Philip in his mission to the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), and by Peter in the incident with the God-fearer Cornelius (Acts 10).³³

The conflict in Acts 15 brings center stage the changing traditions of Judaic law and Gentile inclusion in the kingdom. The addition of Cornelius in Acts 10 and the expansion of the church in Antioch have raised several questions about how the fledgling church will handle conflict, theological issues, and changing contemporary issues. Lyle Story notes, “Luke’s case-studies, including the lengthiest story of the Jerusalem Council, narrate how the process of conflict-resolution actually advances the witness of the gospel through the strengthening of the church and the numerical growth of believers.”³⁴ The issues addressed by the church here confirm and advance the paradigm of diversity and inclusion that Luke has previously written about.

Story outlines Luke’s analysis of the council’s decision as carrying eight elements of significance. “Acknowledge the divine initiative, Celebrate the inclusionary and saving-activity of God, Be committed to unity, Value the ‘stories’ of others, Discern the activity of the Holy Spirit, Find direction in the Scriptures, Be sensitive to the need for compromise in making decisions, Practice clear communication of decisions.”³⁵ Each of these points brings validity to the church’s inclusion of Gentiles and its leadership processes.

³³ Cornelis Bennema, “The Ethnic Conflict in Early Christianity: An Appraisal of Bauckham’s Proposal on the Antioch Crisis and the Jerusalem Council.” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 56, no. 4 (2013), 755.

³⁴ J.L. Story, “Luke’s Instructive Dynamics for Resolving Conflicts: The Jerusalem Council.” *Journal of Biblical and Pneumatological Research* 3 (2011), 99.

³⁵ Story, “Luke’s Instructive Dynamics,” 101-115.

What the church is struggling with in Acts 15 will become the final declaration of and full paradigm for Luke's writings that include Gentiles. With this definitive statement of the Jerusalem leaders, the totality of the church has heard, experienced, born witness to, and proclaimed open salvation to all. "*Precisely because God has fulfilled his covenant with Israel in sending Jesus as Messiah, the covenant family is now thrown open to all, without distinction.* It isn't a matter, it can't be a matter, of belonging to one particular ethnic group, no matter how sacred, how chosen, how blessed with God's presence and entrusted with carrying his promise to the world."³⁶

Galatians 3

Paul's writing to the church in Galatia is a critical component for multiethnic churches. This is because in large part the book is written to address ancient world ethnic conflicts. Walter Hansen notes that the initial foundation of the church as a multiethnic community then leads to tension between ethnic groups. The tension, Hansen notes, exists in the struggle of converted Gentiles finding their place in a new Jewish-Christian society, while no longer being welcome in Gentile society. Instead, they focus on being Jewish, rather than being alive in Christ.³⁷

This dramatic shift and struggle of the church creates profound relational disagreements. Paul writes the letter to the church in Galatia to help them process their new identity and status in Christ. Hansen notes the complete removal of all previously established barriers to fellowship and communion. Race, economic status, and gender

³⁶ Tom Wright. *Acts for Everyone, Part 2: Chapters 13-28*. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 41.

³⁷ Walter Hansen, *Galatians*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994).

barriers no longer matter for the Church. “Equality in Christ is the starting point for all truly biblical social ethics. The church that does not express this equality and unity in Christ in its life and ministry is not faithful to the gospel.”³⁸

This examination and realization also emerged from data collected through interviews. When asked what he thought some current issues the church might be missing regarding an understanding of multiethnic ministry one interviewee noted that one key component is an emphasis on racial and social equality.³⁹

Galatians as a whole addresses issues of ethnic and racial conflict, especially Galatians 2:26-29. This passage was frequently cited in pastoral interviews as one central to multiethnic theology. N.T. Wright observes, “Most of the great divisions in Christendom ... though understandable historically, fall under God’s judgment when considered in the light of this chapter. A passion for Paul’s gospel translates directly into a passion for the unity of the church.”⁴⁰

Church leaders engaging in multiethnic ministry saw this passage as one of key theological importance for their churches as well. One former pastor at a church in Denver, Colorado noted the need to promote and celebrate cultural differences instead of just tolerating them. She explained, “There is a difference between communicating it effectively and seeking it out and celebrating it when it happens. Be open to the change

³⁸ Hansen. *Galatians*. Ga 3:28.

³⁹ Interview with pastor, October 23, 2018.

⁴⁰ Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 42–43.

and don't resist it."⁴¹ For multiethnic churches, the ability to simultaneously celebrate diverse cultures and the singular unity of the church personifies Paul's desire in Galatians.

Paul in Athens

After the Jerusalem Council ruling, the word of God continues to spread, and the mission to the Gentiles becomes more inclusive and intentional. Careful and deliberate attention is given to a holistic mission field: the Jews of first century Palestine, God-fearers and converts to Judaism, and Gentiles. Luke has slowly revealed the fulfillment of Jesus' words that the Gospel will start in Jerusalem and progress throughout the world.

Acts 17 begins a long section of Paul's missionary work in the Greek city of Athens. The opening sections of the pericope show the growing and inclusive nature of Christian missionary efforts. Paul reasons with Jews, Jewish converts, and those in the marketplace (common, everyday Greek Hellenists). Luke writes about the impact Paul's conversations have on the Gentile philosophers in the city. Luke mentions nothing of the Jews or Jewish converts in the city and instead writes about the debate Paul has with Greek religious leaders. "When the gospel comes to Athens, it penetrates the very heartland of urban pagan culture."⁴²

Eckhard Schnabel provides an overview of the city of Athens, its religious and political importance, and how the layout of the city participates in cultural advancements

⁴¹ Interview with pastor, October 3, 2018.

⁴² Dean Flemming, "Contextualizing the Gospel in Athens: Paul's Areopagus Address as a Paradigm for Missionary Communication." *Missiology* 30, no. 2 (2002), 200.

and discussions. Paul uses this to his advantage, talking frequently with the local populace as well as philosophical and religious leaders.⁴³

The interaction that Paul has displays his education and ability to debate others as well as his willingness to adapt his presentation style to a given context. “The form and style of the Areopagus speech are ably adapted to persuade a sophisticated Gentile audience.”⁴⁴

Paul’s continual preaching and his trial (formal or otherwise) begin to make inroads with the philosophers and leaders of the city. Luke mentions several: the Epicureans, the Stoics, and the religious council. Epicureanism is a philosophical approach to life that esteems the values and morality of friendship and pleasure while encouraging a retirement from public life.⁴⁵ Stoicism teaches that happiness happens through self-control. “Its strength [lies] in offering to its adherents a systematic and all-comprehensive worldview, based on a material pantheism. Students [are] exhorted to live in accordance with nature, which was variously identified with God, the divine principle of order, fate and providence.”⁴⁶

These two groups are so impressed and perplexed by Paul’s ideas that they invite him to a formal debate in their city meeting place, the Areopagus. Wright demonstrates

⁴³ Eckhard Schnabel, “Contextualizing Paul in Athens: The Proclamation of the Gospel before Pagan Audiences in the Graeco-Roman World.” *Religion & Theology* 12, no. 2 (2005), 172-90.

⁴⁴ Flemming, “Contextualizing,” 201.

⁴⁵ N.C. Croy, “Epicureanism,” ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 325.

⁴⁶ J.C. Thom, “Stoicism,” ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 1139–1140.

how Paul, like a master chess player, can ‘play’ multiple games at once, that is, debate different theological and philosophical ideas at the same time.⁴⁷

The immediate setting for Paul’s sermon is the meeting of the Areopagus, the supreme governing council of Athens, which had responsibility for deciding religious questions. Whether or not Paul faced some kind of official trial or hearing, he was asked to explain his novel teaching to this powerful body of leading citizens. In addition, Luke’s description of the response to Paul’s address implies that there was a wider listening audience, including a woman named Damaris who became a convert. That Paul addresses not simply the philosophers, but also the council and perhaps other curious citizens is important for understanding the critique of the popular Athenian religion in his speech, especially since the Areopagus is the very group that is responsible for religious matters. Paul transforms the occasion of complete misunderstanding of his preaching and the subsequent demand for an explanation into an opportunity to proclaim the gospel afresh.⁴⁸

This interaction leads to many converts in the Greek city, including a leader of the Areopagus and a woman. Luke’s inclusion of these people is significant because of the expansion of the Kingdom into what would have been perceived as a Gentile stronghold. This is not Pentecost where 3,000 are converted in an afternoon, nor is it a eunuch or Cornelius’ conversion, both of which happened because of divine intervention or a supernatural vision. Instead, this is a conversion of a handful of Gentiles, in Athens (the heart of the ancient philosophical world), because of the faithfulness of the church’s actions. Because of Paul’s adherence to the calling on his life, a key strategic city is experiencing life in the Kingdom. Especially important are the religious leaders and women who are named. They are not just any converts, but ones who would traditionally be excluded from Jewish life. The new life in Christ is bringing in the formerly excluded

⁴⁷ Wright. *Acts for Everyone Part 2*, 86.

⁴⁸ Flemming, “Contextualizing,” 201.

and outcast to be at the center of the movement. For Luke, the list is no small matter, it is at the heart of his storytelling. In this new world of the resurrected Jesus, it is these now-included members who will be the visible representatives to the validity of the message.

The Church in Antioch

Understanding the city of Antioch and its place in the ancient world is important to understanding its relevance to multiethnic church leadership. “Roman Antioch in the mid-first century was a wonder to behold—its sculptures and architecture were on an even par with those of Rome itself, and its monuments to Augustus would have been breathtaking.”⁴⁹ This makes the location of Paul’s first missionary journey headquarters an interesting one. Given its size and location, it is vitally important to the early church. With an estimated population of 200,000 people, it was Ancient Rome’s third largest city. In addition, it carries significant connections not only to Paul and his journeys but to Peter and numerous other early church fathers.⁵⁰

Antioch’s significance can be intimated via Luke’s frequent mentions of it.⁵¹ Firstly, there is the ruling of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 and the ensuing “Antioch crisis”⁵² mentioned by Paul in Galatians 2. But Antioch is mentioned throughout Luke’s

⁴⁹ B.W.R. Pearson, “Antioch (Pisidia),” ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 32.

⁵⁰ Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald, *The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 492-493.

⁵¹ While both the Roman Antioch and Pisidian Antioch are key New Testament cities, only Roman Antioch, hereafter referred to simply as Antioch, will be examined. However, one significant mention of Pisidian Antioch is that it is the site of the first fully Gentile church. After Paul’s message to the Jews, his message was rejected, and the church was planted with Gentile believers (see Acts 13:45-52).

⁵² Bennema, “Ethnic Conflict,” 753.

book, first appearing in Acts 11, where Paul is called by Barnabas to serve the church, and where Jesus followers are first called Christians (Acts 11:26). Paul is in Antioch prior to the Acts 15 interaction in Jerusalem. He returns to Antioch following the ruling and he frequently returns to Antioch throughout his missionary journeys. Paul stops in Antioch (Acts 18) for a time before heading on to Ephesus (Acts 19) and the showdown with the Ephesian tradesmen.

Stephen Strauss explains the importance of Antioch, and Luke's frequent mentioning of the city. Antioch is set up as the second most important city to the early church, the first being Jerusalem. Antioch also served as Paul's home base for mission, is the first *ἐκκλησία* was named, "and the place where Gentiles following Jesus become the standard for the future growth of the church."⁵³ By making the leading city of the movement Antioch, he has thrust the movement to the forefront of what God is about.

Acts 11

The Antiochian church is initially introduced by Luke because of the persecution that breaks out in Jerusalem after Stephen's martyrdom. Luke records, "men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord" (Acts 11:20-21). The church, which in its infancy is predominately Jewish, becomes a hub of activity. One reason is the execution of Stephen. The second is Caligula's edict for a statue. Nicholas Taylor explains that at the same time Luke is recording his story, Emperor Caligula ordered the construction of a statue

⁵³ Stephen Strauss, "The Significance of Acts 11:26 for the Church at Antioch and Today." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168, no. 671 (2011), 283-84.

reflecting himself to be erected in the Jerusalem temple. This choice is undoubtedly an unpopular one and begins to strain the relationships of Jews and Gentiles not only in Jerusalem but the surrounding countryside and as far away as Antioch.⁵⁴ This tension fosters animosity between Jews, Gentiles, Gentile-proselytes that have converted to Judaism, and early Christians.

It is this tension that leads to the ambiguity of the “Christian” label in Acts 11. Strauss notes that a proper understanding of the verb used by Luke could be translated reflexively or passively, and that both affect the ending. It could be a self-identification by Christians to distinguish themselves from the Jewish community (and thereby differentiating themselves because of the growing tensions). The other possible interpretation is that other groups call them Christians (either Jews because of the conflict or the Romans to differentiate between the growing division in the two sects). If true, the second option could also then serve as a legal title, a basis by which the Roman Government could tax, trade, and identify a new group of people.⁵⁵ “The distinctive term surely indicates a distinct identity, and suggests that the Christian community had become recognizable apart from, even if still within, the Jewish community of Antioch.”⁵⁶ It is this distinction between Jews and Gentiles and the emerging term Christian that sets the foundation for a multi-ethnic Kingdom movement.

⁵⁴ Nicholas Taylor, “Caligula, the Church of Antioch and the Gentile Mission.” *Religion and Theology* 7, no. 1 (2000): 1–23.

⁵⁵ Strauss, “Significance,” 286-289.

⁵⁶ Taylor, “Caligula,” 10.

Acts 15 and Galatians 2 in Tension

The Jerusalem Council's ruling of Acts 15 is a response to growing issues of table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles in the early church. Debate surrounds whether or not Paul wrote Galatians 2 preceding the events of Acts 15, and thus as an instigator to its resolution; or whether he wrote after, and thus confronted Peter based on a previous decision. The scholarship is divided on the issue, and the evidence is inconclusive. However, as James Dunn points out, when scholarship points solely to deciding this issue, it misses several other key events that are happening.⁵⁷ These events - including Jew/Gentile relations, missionary works, and the importance of Jerusalem - can change the reading of the text. The point, Dunn argues, is that the early Christian sect of Christianity was viewed merely a subset of Judaism, however peculiar the new followers might be. "When Gentiles began to embrace these particular beliefs about Jesus the question raised was still only in terms of what requirements were necessary for the Gentile to join himself to the people who worshipped the one God and to whom God had sent his Messiah, Jesus."⁵⁸

This ethnic tension forms the backbone of the Antioch issue that Paul writes about in Galatians 2. Regardless of when the issue happened, and irrespective of a particular order of events, the confrontation between Paul and Peter is about the growing distinction between Judaism and Christianity. This growing distinction is spilling into the public

⁵⁷ James Dunn, "The Incident at Antioch (Gal 2:11-18)." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 18, no. 3 (1983): 3-57.

⁵⁸ Dunn, "The Incident at Antioch," 5.

sphere and shaping the perception of Jews, Christians, and Gentiles in Roman communities.

Paul's opposition to Peter is redefining those terms. As the shift away from Jerusalem is happening, and cities like Antioch are growing in popularity for diaspora Jews and early Christian communities, these passages play a pivotal role in the future development of the Jesus movement.

Most significant here is the degree to which Paul's treatment of his own relations with Jerusalem prior to the Antioch incident reinforces the impression that up until *that time he too had taken it for granted that Jerusalem had this primacy and authority*. ... In Galatians Paul is writing *after* the incident at Antioch and his exposition is heavily coloured by that later viewpoint. But in trying to assert his independence from Jerusalem, and the directness of his apostleship and gospel from Christ, he cannot escape the fact that previously he had readily acknowledged the authority of the Jerusalem apostles.⁵⁹

As the tension between Jerusalem and Antioch grows, so does the tension between Jews and Gentiles in Christian communities. These dynamics change the course of early missionary work. As Paul's continued success in Gentile portions of the world becomes more evident and normal, the traditionally Jewish centers of power and influence are reexamined. In Antioch, Jews and Gentiles not only worship side by side but eat side by side. They are becoming the leading examples of God's activity in the world. In Antioch, there is a multidimensional, multiethnic movement that becomes the clearest example of the Kingdom of God for the early church. In Antioch, Paul learns first-hand what God intends to do through his inclusion of Gentiles into the Kingdom.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Dunn, "The Incident at Antioch," 6.

⁶⁰ Dunn, "The Incident at Antioch," 5.

The Church in Ephesus

Ephesus is crucial both for the Roman Empire and the early church. It serves as a political, religious, and commercial powerhouse of the ancient world.⁶¹ As one of the ancient world's largest cities, providing key military support, banking and financial backing, and commercial trade.⁶²

In Acts 19, Paul addresses the Ephesian crowd with intensity and forthrightness. After more than two years, Paul prepares to leave the city where he has witnessed demonic possession, vibrant renewal, and public ridicule. At the end of his stay, a riot occurs in the city as local leaders are incited to try and kill him before he leaves. Demetrius levies claims against Paul and his work in disrupting goddess worship throughout the city. Demetrius explains that Paul's belief about statues being no gods at all (19:26) will destroy their livelihood. This claim, the text implies, is the worst offense of Paul during his time in Ephesus. A riot ensues, bad enough that Rome is called in to help resolve the quarrel. Behind the riot and the city itself lie several important issues about the ancient city, its significance, and the movement of the early church there.

The city location makes it a priority for Paul. Not only was his stay lengthy, but his influence during that time was vast. Acts 19 is the first explicit and intentional mention by Luke that a multiethnic church has been founded. Luke has made hints that it was coming, but it is here with Paul's lengthy stay that we see the advancement of a full-bodied, fully functional, highly influential multiethnic church. By the time Paul is ready

⁶¹ John William Drane, *Introducing the New Testament*. (Oxford: Lion Publishing plc, 2000), 320.

⁶² L.M. McDonald, "Ephesus," ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 318.

to depart Ephesus, Luke writes that “all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord” (19:10).

Paul’s advances and his strategic influence are not to be missed. From Ephesus, his message will be able to spread to all of Asia and eventually the world. But locally, Luke is also sharing the immediate effect that the Christian message is having within Ephesus. Relocated missionary-migrants like Priscilla and Aquila become Christian figureheads for expansion and a blueprint for early Church leaders.⁶³ This couple, frequent companions of Paul, help him to start the Ephesian church and serve as a home base for ministry locally.

As the church grows, the Ephesian populace notices. The local small business owners realize that it isn’t just their local temple or god that is in danger. It is also their pocketbooks. Fearful of that loss of income, and noticing the decline in temple worship, they decide to take action and incite a riot. “Luke’s account ... cleverly and subtly compares Artemis with the God of the Christians and insinuates that even Artemis’s worshipers believed that the goddess faced a serious threat from a more powerful deity.”⁶⁴ For the community, this is a life-altering challenge. Artemis, one of the most well-known, respected, and revered gods throughout the region, draws people from all walks of life, social status, and cultural background.⁶⁵ The temple of Artemis houses the

⁶³ Vanthanh Nguyen, “Migrants as Missionaries: The Case of Priscilla and Aquila.” *Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies* 30, no. 2 (2013): 194-207.

⁶⁴ C.L. Brinks, “‘Great Is Artemis of the Ephesians’: Acts 19:23-41 in Light of Goddess Worship in Ephesus.” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 71, no. 4 (2009): 776-94.

⁶⁵ Brinks, “Great is Artemis,” 781.

political, cultural, commercial, and religious lives of the city.⁶⁶ Because of the expansiveness of the Ephesian cult system, Paul's influence here draws serious criticism. The Ephesian artisans view this not just as a religious threat, but an economic and political one as well.

As important as this city is for the Roman Empire and its imperial cult, it is equally important for Paul and the early Christian communities. Here, at the crossroads of the geo-political-economic-religious world, they will lead an outpost for Kingdom life. These early communities reflect their Ephesian community in that they are diverse economically, politically, and most importantly for Luke's writing, ethnically.

As the crossroads city in Asia Minor, it also serves as a hub for Paul and his companions. Ephesus is not only Paul's base of operations frequently throughout his ministry, but also serves as a launching pad for new church plants.⁶⁷

Because of the city's importance, and in light of Paul's extended stay there, Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians has received considerable academic attention. The book has also become widely used and studied because of Paul's writing of full acceptance for Gentiles. In particular, Ephesians 2:11-3:13 has become a key theological underpinning of multiethnic churches.

The church today has moved beyond the early tensions of an exclusively Jewish-Gentile racial tension, but it still has much to learn from the Ephesian conflict. "If our

⁶⁶ Brinks, "Great is Artemis," 781-82.

⁶⁷ McDonald, "Ephesus," 320.

churches are still divided in any way along racial or cultural lines, he would say that our gospel, our very grasp of the meaning of Jesus' death, is called into question."⁶⁸

Resonating with Paul's writing, and Wright's assessment, multiethnic church leadership has taken the message to heart. Many interviewees mentioned this passage as a formative one for the congregations that they serve. For example, two interviewees in particular understood how racial dynamics can play into cultural interaction and acceptance. Both interviewees remarked how the church is often someone's first interaction with a person from a different culture. In one context this is often because of gang dynamics.⁶⁹ For the other, there are the dynamics of both gang lifestyle and fear that play an important factor in cultures isolating themselves.⁷⁰ However, both also noted the positive role the church has played in helping people from all cultures feel welcome.

Conclusion

Acts contains both prescriptive and descriptive movements for Kingdom life and growth. Luke's progressive accounts of Gentile inclusion bring the advancement of God's kingdom to the forefront of first century Judaism. By including the stories of the Ethiopian eunuch and Cornelius, and by chronicling Paul's journeys around Ancient Palestine, Luke subtly yet forcefully drives home his point. Through places like Antioch and Ephesus, the home base of Jerusalem fades into the background while God's new plan for multi-ethnic ministry takes shape. The book concludes with Paul in Rome

⁶⁸ Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone: Galatians and Thessalonians*. (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004), 27.

⁶⁹ E-mail interview by author. July 17, 2017.

⁷⁰ Interview by author. September 24, 2018.

testifying before Caesar about Jesus. Jesus' prediction that the Gospel will go throughout the whole world is accomplished and through Luke's storytelling he has blended the tapestry for ethnic expansion and inclusion. No longer will the Kingdom of God be decided along ethnic boundaries and limitations, but full inclusion is granted to the Gentiles. Luke's progressive storytelling sees not just an advancement of the Gospel, but of ethnic inclusion, geographical expansion, and radical transformation of ancient cities.

CHAPTER THREE: SEEKING CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDING

There are many things to consider when looking at issues of church decline, renewal, and innovation. Adding layers of complexity to these issues are the added challenges and opportunities of multiethnic movements. Churches wishing for both renewal and a fresh multiethnic expression of faith must now also pay particular attention to issues of cultural sensitivity and language. The foundation for this understanding exists in the recognition that ethnic diversity works to create unity and stability. As Michael Maly argues, “the data illustrate that racial change does not inevitably lead to resegregation or racial transition, and that integrated neighborhoods can stabilize in the face of institutional forces encouraging (or enforcing) racial separation.”⁷¹

It is clear that multiethnic and multicultural dynamics increase and enhance feelings of community, belonging, and sociability. Yet the church often lags behind the rest of the world in terms of cultural diversity. To understand why, seven important factors must be considered: church decline, cultural innovation, leadership, missional engagement, multi-ethnic church ministry, the convergence of themes, and contrasting views.

⁷¹ Michael Maly, *Beyond Segregation Multiracial and Multiethnic Neighborhoods*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 216.

Church Decline

All churches will face the pressures that lead to church decline. Research from Ed Stetzer⁷² estimates that upwards of 4,000 churches cease to exist each year.⁷³ “There are probably two main reasons for this. First, most churches will not admit how bad it is. Second, most churches will not make the needed changes.”⁷⁴ Because these characteristics and tendencies exist, and no church faces a completely unique situation by understanding the issues most closely related to decline, the church must continue to innovate and impact in the local community. While many factors and subthemes can be explored, church decline falls primarily into three main categories: an unbalanced view of history, the nature of ecclesiology/discipleship, and a church’s ability to adequately reflect and engage the surrounding neighborhood.

An Unbalanced View of History

The church lives in constant tension. First, the church a historically rooted movement of people. This is true of both the global and all local churches. It is also living in the present, with current work and ministry that needs to be done. It also must have an eye focused on the future: the church does not exist solely for itself but will be fully consummated as the bride of Christ. These three tensions often lead the church astray. Each of these plays an important part in the lifecycle of the church. When the church has an unbalanced view of any of its three timeframes, the church’s mission effectiveness

⁷² Taken and adapted from Win Arn, *The Pastor's Manual for Effective Ministry*. (Monrovia, CA, Church Growth, 1988), 16.

⁷³ Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson. *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too*. (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007), 23.

⁷⁴ Stetzer and Dodson, *Comeback Churches*, 23.

declines. When mission effectiveness declines because of this imbalance, so does the church as a whole.

The Past

The church is often guilty of idolizing its own past. Thom Rainer observes that many of the surveyed churches in his study have an inability to change, seeing death as preferable.⁷⁵ For churches attempting to tackle the issues of membership decline, the past will have to be acknowledged and celebrated, but not idolized.

The historicity of a church presents these issues because it is often the memories, and therefore emotions, of the members at play. For example, in the researcher's previous church experience the church was old enough to have an established identity (sixty years) while young enough to still have charter members still living. The church started as a result of an influx of young Midwestern Mennonites who moved to Denver after World War II. The church was once on the outskirts of the city but now found itself in the heart of the larger metro area. The church had two members that were on the original church roster when it launched, several that had been there for more than fifty of its sixty years of existence, and one family whose patriarch had built the facility. Any of these members knew well the history, the highs and lows of previous ministry experiences, and often made decisions based on precedence, not contemporary circumstances.

The Present

The contemporary church must also balance what it means to live in the present needs and the immediate budgetary concerns that arise on a daily basis. Churches must

⁷⁵ Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive*. (Nashville, TN. B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition). Kindle Locations 161-163.

have in place daily operating procedures and expectations for staff, leaders, key volunteers, and church members at large. With increased pressure to successfully budget and run like a business, come increased financial concerns.

Financial concerns are normal for a church, but declining churches struggle with a balance between an inward and outward focus for expenses. Rainer's observation is poignant. "In all the churches we autopsied, a financial pattern developed over time. The pattern was one where funds were used more to keep the machinery of the church moving, and to keep the members happy, than funding the Great Commission and the Great Commandment. The money, though, was symptomatic of a heart problem. The church cared more for its own needs than the community and the world."⁷⁶

Similarly, the church lost what it meant to be a part of the mission of God. As needs turned internal, mission became increasingly associated with all church activities.⁷⁷ This has been polarized and exacerbated by the concept of missions that has become solely focused on the sending of people to other parts of the world to advance the Gospel.⁷⁸

Claudio Carvalhaes points out the rise of specialized worship services that further isolate and segregate church communities. He argues that by focusing solely on individual preferences and styles we isolate ourselves from the larger community and body of Christ. "If our bodies don't experience the presence of other, different bodies as

⁷⁶ Rainer, *Autopsy*, Kindle Locations 312-315.

⁷⁷ W.F. Graham, "Declining Church Membership: Can Anything Be Done?" *Reformed Journal* 30, no. 1 (1980), 11.

⁷⁸ Claudio Carvalhaes, "Communitas: Liturgy and Identity." *International Review of Mission* 100, no. 392 (2011), 30.

we worship with them, it will be hard for us to move to a more fully missional church and to a more inclusive and strong community.”⁷⁹

Each of these concerns, from both the past and the present, are institutional. When churches continue to think internally about those that are present instead of those that aren't, decline is the natural conclusion. Congregations that are internally focused become afraid of change, failure, the unknown, or of those perceived as different or other.

These factors begin to compound. The more specialized and individualized a congregational expression becomes, the more segregation occurs. The more segregation occurs, the more that fear of the different is bred. When fear is grown, more segregation happens. This two-category system separates mainly along racial and economic lines that favor the privileged class. “Furthermore, even when minorities penetrate a sector of the upper category, whites have the power to redraw the boundaries and enforce the categories in new forms.”⁸⁰

The two-category system is one primarily of fear. Operating out of segregation, churches, especially white established churches tend to do things that reinforce their own power and position in society (intentionally or not). Despite this, there is also a plethora of evidence that the opposite is also true. The more intentionally a pastor or congregation seeks out to understand diversity and difference, the more open they become to it.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Carvalhaes, “Communitas,” 41.

⁸⁰ Roy Sano, “Ethnic Liberation Theology: Neo-Orthodoxy Reshaped--or Replaced?” *Christianity and Crisis* 35, no. 18 (1975), 259.

⁸¹ Robert W. Friedrichs, “Decline in Prejudice among Church-Goers Following Clergy-Led Open Housing Campaign.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 10, no. 2 (1971), 152-6.

This present system of segregation and uniqueness was originally championed by C. Peter Wagner and the Church Growth movement. One popular example used by Michael Emerson is that of Wilcrest Baptist Church in Houston Texas. He recounts the church meetings and discussions about whether to move to a neighborhood similar in color to their own or to stay in their own neighborhood and intentionally seek diversity. The church wrestled with the homogenous unit principle. There are three supposed benefits of the homogenous unit principle. First, the more characteristics a group shares in common leads to faster group growth. Second, the organization runs smoother. Third, members find the group more fulfilling than diversity.⁸² To combat what they see as the issues of diversity, advocates for the church growth movement argue for clarity and loyalty along theological lines. “These marks might be summarized as (1) institutional strictness, (2) religious distinctiveness, (3) theological conservatism and (4) evangelical zeal.”

These four points for church growth are not inherently racist. Instead, they tend to produce a systematically racist culture (intended or not). What institutional strictness breeds is similarity. Individuals subtly learn that they must not only act a certain way but often look a certain way. What may start out as a dress policy often leads to a cultural, economic, and racial similarity as well. Along the way, what started out as a church growth practice has become a principle that has led to further segregation and decline of American Protestant churches.

⁸² Michael Emerson, *People of the Dream: Multiracial Congregations in the United States*. “Prelude.” (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed August 11, 2018).

The Future

It is also this rootedness of fear that can cause the third possible distortion and for church decline, the future. Churches that realize the growing decline must still navigate how to handle their future endeavors. Michael Jenkins expands on the tension.

The anxiety occasioned by numerical decline and these attendant problems has led some in the church to a posture similar to that of the proverbial deer in the headlights—paralysis. Another common reaction, at the other extreme, is the hyperactivity of panic, which manifests itself in clutching for any and every programmatic solution and structural reorganization in the desperate hope that survival is just another project or organizational chart away.⁸³

It is this paradox that creates church decline for the future. A church tends to try to do nothing or do everything. In both instances, the church misses its unique and God-given calling as an embodiment of Christ for a particular community.

Ecclesiology and Discipleship

The second major reason for church decline is ecclesiology and discipleship, or how the church thinks about itself and its relationship to the community and world that surrounds it.

Barna Research Group continually produces relatable information on the current status of the church and the relationship it shares with the world. Recent studies have shown that more than half of churchgoers are unaware or unable to identify the term “Great Commission.”⁸⁴ Additionally, they have found that contemporary Christians are

⁸³ Michael Jenkins, *The Church Faces Death: Ecclesiology in a Post-modern Context*. (Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1999). Accessed August 8, 2018.

⁸⁴ "51% of Churchgoers Don't Know of the Great Commission." Barna Group. March 27, 2018. Accessed August 11, 2018. <https://www.barna.com/research/half-churchgoers-not-heard-great-commission/>.

less likely to share their faith or evangelize others than earlier counterparts.⁸⁵ Both of these studies show that the church has identity issues. The Church is unable to understand itself correctly as a corporate entity, and individual members fail to understand their necessary contributions.

Ecclesiology

In understanding how a misinformed view of ecclesiology affects church decline, Robert Jean notes, “Ecclesiology seems to be an area of perennial struggle for evangelicals. In the current Canadian context, this struggle is intensified by the crumbling of Christendom and the pressures of late modernity.”⁸⁶ What is true for the Canadian church is true for the American church as well. The church struggles with ecclesiology because for many years, ecclesiology was a neglected focus of study for the church.⁸⁷ Yet as Colberg then notes the opposite is now true. Ecclesiology is now at the forefront of many theological discussions. What he concludes must happen, though, is a pairing of ecclesiology and missiology: “The work of advancing ecclesial self-understanding and evangelization requires critical dialogue between ecclesiology and missiology. These two theological fields have much to learn from mutual engagement.”⁸⁸ So how can a church better understand its ecclesiology in relationship to church decline?

⁸⁵ "Sharing Faith Is Increasingly Optional to Christians." Barna Group. May 15, 2018. Accessed August 11, 2018. <https://www.barna.com/research/sharing-faith-increasingly-optional-christians/>.

⁸⁶ Robert Dean, “Tolkien and the Adventure of Discipleship: Imaginative Resources for a Missional Ecclesiology.” *Canadian Theological Review* 3, no. 2 (2014), 84.

⁸⁷ Kristin Colberg, “Ecclesiology Today and Its Potential to Serve a Missionary Church.” *Missiology* 46, no. 1 (2018), 24.

⁸⁸ Colberg, “Ecclesiology Today,” 24.

First, Rainer's assessment of dying churches offers some guidance. His key observations on ecclesiology are that the Great Commission is neglected, internal preferences outweigh external needs, churches in decline fail to make praying together a priority, and that the church has no clear direction or purpose.⁸⁹

Michael Frost echoes this in his understanding of ecclesiology and names some of the things the church has gotten wrong. His observation focuses on three primary functions: preaching, sacraments, and church discipline.⁹⁰

In practice, these three marks of a church are primarily internal. While preaching may be used for evangelism, it is more often done for a gathered body of believers for the sake of edification and encouragement. Similarly, sacraments are reserved for the already convinced, as well as church discipline. Rainer's assessment of churches in decline as primarily internally focused has held true for centuries, thus perpetuating the problem of underdeveloped ecclesiology.

Elsewhere, Hirsch also notes that typical ecclesiology is inward and backward focused, rather than innovative and forward focused.⁹¹ This happens because the church has been deeply influenced by consumerism.⁹² "The church, far from being immune, has drunk deeply from its wells. In fact, we have pretty much designed contemporary

⁸⁹ Rainer, *Autopsy*, Kindle Location 32-572.

⁹⁰ Michael Frost, *The Faith of Leap, Embracing a Theology of Risk, Adventure & Courage*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group. 2011). Kindle Location 2600-2608.

⁹¹ Hirsch, Catchim, and Breen. *Permanent Revolution*, Kindle Locations 4789-4792.

⁹² Alan Hirsch, *Untamed: Reactivating a Missional Form of Discipleship*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition). Kindle Locations 1942-1943.

expressions of church around consumer values.”⁹³ This limited sense of vision and commitment to consumerist values handicaps the church’s ability to fully embrace and live out its mission. The church’s ultimate ecclesiology is about movement.⁹⁴ When the church wishes to be and do all that God has planned it will be in balance of internal and external, of gathering and scattering,⁹⁵ of equipping and deploying people for mission.

Discipleship

Discipleship, properly understood, encompasses the whole of a person’s humanity. When a church declines, it is because there is an imbalance in discipleship health. People can only be a disciple when they have completely subsumed the entirety of their life under the lordship of Christ. For Jim Putman, this means that each Christian has five stages of life that they must live. The first stage is moving towards life (salvation), the second is spiritual infancy, the third is spiritual children, the fourth is spiritual adolescence and early adulthood, and the final step is spiritual parenting. It is this final step where people reproduce (disciple) the next generation through the process.⁹⁶ Throughout this process, and especially in stage five, unhealthy discipleship leads to church decline.

Discipleship affects the church too. As Bonhoeffer notes, “Everyone enters discipleship alone, but no one remains alone in discipleship. Those who dare to become

⁹³ Hirsch, *Untamed*, Kindle Locations 1955-1957.

⁹⁴ Rob Wegner and Jack Magruder. *Missional Moves: 15 Tectonic Shifts that Transform Churches, Communities, and the World*. (Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan), 85.

⁹⁵ Hugh Halter, *AND: The Gathered and Scattered Church*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010).

⁹⁶ Jim Putman, *Real-Life Discipleship: Building Churches That Make Disciples*. (Colorado Springs, CO. NavPress. Kindle Edition).

single individuals trusting in the word are given the gift of church-community.”⁹⁷ While the researcher has written extensively on this subject, seven main areas come to light as important factors.

Calling. Whole life discipleship starts with a calling. There is a call to repent, a call to follow Christ, and a call of discovery about an individual life purpose, meaning, or goal. Reclaiming a holistic understanding of discipleship starts with understanding that all Christians have been called by God to grow and share in faith, not just a professional group of elite Christians.

This ability to discern a calling happens both in the local church community and in the trial and error discernment of true ministry service. Brian Mavis and Rick Rusaw urge the church (individual and corporate) to ask, “If you left your neighborhood, would anybody care?”⁹⁸ If the church, or a person who professes to be a Christian, could move away and the neighborhood not notice their impact in the community, then calling has not been discovered and utilized. A clear and effective calling results in a tangible change for all parties involved.

The concern of living a unique and tangible calling has taken on two popular terms: missional and incarnational. Both terms argue for a cohesive presentation of the Gospel throughout the week. In short, that what happens on Monday is just as important, if not more so, than what happens on Sunday. “*Missio Dei* stems from the Triune God: the Father sends the Son, the Father and the Son send the Spirit, the Father and the Son

⁹⁷ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 99.

⁹⁸ Brian Mavis and Rick Rusaw. *The Neighboring Church: Getting Better at What Jesus Says Matters Most*. (Nashville, TN. Thomas Nelson), 7.

and the Spirit send the church into the world.”⁹⁹ Being missional emphasizes that all people are missionaries, that is, sent into culture, for the sake of redeeming it for Christ. God has a mission and the calling of his people is to participate in his mission.¹⁰⁰

The first step in this process, according to Hugh Halter, is to define the context of ministry, what he calls cultural engagement. It is during this process of dismantling assumptions and befriending the local population that people can effectively learn what’s needed for a given culture.¹⁰¹

Leopoldo Sanchez makes the following observation about the church in culture that leads to enacting a calling.

I am asking a two-way question: What can the church learn from her neighbors as she listens to and lives among them? And then, what can neighbors learn from the church as she speaks and lives out the Christian story in their midst? This is the movement of our engagement, first listening and learning, and then speaking and teaching. Faithful witness encompasses both areas.¹⁰²

Spiritual. Spiritual health is the facet of the Christian life most easily noticed and talked about. For many Christians, these are their daily habits of Bible reading, prayer, and going to church. Much more needs to be looked at here as spiritual health encompasses more of the spiritual disciplines than only these three practices.

⁹⁹ Chad Hall, “Missional Possible: Steps to Transform a Consumer Church into a Missional Church.” *Leadership* 28, no. 1 (2007), 35.

¹⁰⁰ Woodward, *Creating a Missional Culture*, 27-28.

¹⁰¹ Halter. *AND*. 54-55.

¹⁰² Sanchez. “Can anything,” 111.

Engaging in spiritual disciplines is about opening ourselves up to be able to listen to God.¹⁰³ They are practices evident throughout history that have sustained the church in difficulty, refined her calling, and connected people to the will of God. Richard Foster's distinction of inward, outward, and corporate disciplines should lead the church in this practice.¹⁰⁴ This engagement, as Dallas Willard suggests, can happen either by actively engaging in activities like prayer, or by actively eliminating areas of distraction like food and noise.¹⁰⁵ Ultimately, spiritual disciplines should, "remind us that we are human *beings*, not human *doings*, and that God is more concerned with who we become than what we accomplish."¹⁰⁶

Josh Branum sums up well the need for spiritual disciplines. They are primarily needed in the call for Christlikeness and holiness. The disciplines require active faith participation and growth.¹⁰⁷ For the Christian and the church at large, it is this adherence to spiritual disciplines that keep a church healthy. Losing sight of the disciplines leads to church decline.

¹⁰³ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*. (Downers Grove, IL. InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition). Kindle Locations 404-405.

¹⁰⁴ Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*. (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 2018).

¹⁰⁵ Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God*. (New York: HarperOne, 1997).

¹⁰⁶ Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 473.

¹⁰⁷ Josh Branum, "Personal Holiness and Evangelistic Leadership: Understanding the Relationship between Practicing Spiritual Disciplines and Effective Student Evangelism." *The Journal of Youth Ministry* 15, no. 1 (2016), 10-11.

Emotional. Growing emotional health is the hallmark of leadership. First used and established by John Mayer, Maria DiPaolo, and Peter Salovey, emotional intelligence is defined as

A type of emotional information processing that includes accurate appraisal of emotions in oneself and others, appropriate expression of emotion, and adaptive regulation of emotion in such a way as to enhance living. According to the emotional-intelligence perspective, one who possesses these abilities is considered a well-adjusted, emotionally skilled individual; one who does not may well be impaired in emotional and social functioning.¹⁰⁸

Zeno Swijtink summarizes the five components to emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, social skills.¹⁰⁹ For the Christian, this ability to auto-regulate their emotions, especially in social settings, that becomes a paramount skill for discipleship.

Emotional Intelligence and health often happen in reflection. “The product of our reflection can produce models of thought and behavior that we wish to continue following. It can also provide warnings of what we wish to avoid in the future.”¹¹⁰ This sort of idea has also been written on by Pete Scazzero. “Emotional health and spiritual maturity are inseparable. It is not possible to be spiritually mature while remaining emotionally immature.”¹¹¹ Scazzero’s work pairs together the work of emotional growth

¹⁰⁸ John D. Mayer, Maria DiPaolo, and Peter Salovey. “Perceiving Affective Content in Ambiguous Visual Stimuli: A Component of Emotional Intelligence.” *Journal of Personality Assessment* 54, no. 3 (1990), 772-73.

¹⁰⁹ Zeno Swijtink, “Daniel Goleman's Five Components of Emotional Intelligence.” Goleman’s ET. February 1, 2009. Accessed August 11, 2018. https://web.sonoma.edu/users/s/swijtink/teaching/philosophy_101/paper1/goleman.htm.

¹¹⁰ Keith E. Webb, *The Reflective Journal for Coaches: Sharpening Your Coaching Skills for Client Results*. (Bellevue, WA: Active Results LLC, 2015).

¹¹¹ Peter Scazzero and Warren Bird. *The Emotionally Healthy Church Updated and Expanded Edition: A Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives*. (Grand Rapids, MI. Zondervan), 10).

with sustainable healthy leadership and longevity. Without an awareness of emotional triggers, and responses, insecurity traps the Christ-follower.¹¹²

Emotional intelligence is a strong predictor of someone's leadership quality, the ability to navigate conflict, an individual's personal happiness, and emotional regulation. It has also been shown to have wide ranging effects on all other aspects of life. One study on emotional intelligence has shown that it has an ability to be a predictor for half-marathon finish times. In short, higher EI runners do better.¹¹³ What the research shows is that as a person's emotional health and intelligence rise, so does their social ability,¹¹⁴ leadership quality, and personal happiness. For the Christ-follower these all have a direct impact on evangelism and discipleship as religious people have been shown to have greater emotional range and emotional control when properly developed.¹¹⁵

Mental. Mental health is a growing trend in many facets of society as more is understood about the function and role of the brain. For many, it is defined in the realms of what can go wrong in mental health: bipolar disorder, depression, and anxiety to name a few. Within this realm, faith has been shown to have a positive correlation: namely, that

¹¹² Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming Your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World*. (Grand Rapids, MI. Zondervan), 25-26.

¹¹³ Enrico Rubaltelli, Sergio Agnoli, and Irene Leo. "Emotional Intelligence Impact on Half Marathon Finish Times." *Personality and Individual Differences* 128 (2018).

¹¹⁴ Daniel Goleman, *Social Intelligence: The Revolutionary New Science of Human Relationships*. (New York, NY: Bantam Books, 2006).

¹¹⁵ Pawel Lowicki and Marcin Zajenkowski. "Divine Emotions: On the Link Between Emotional Intelligence and Religious Belief." *Journal of Religion and Health* 56, no. 6 (2017): 1998–2009.

religious people suffering from these types of mental illnesses show fewer symptoms and report greater quality of life than people without religious practice.¹¹⁶

Just as necessary are conversations on positive mental health: reading, reflection, journaling, and mentally stimulating activities that keep the brain growing. Showing one such example, the authors of a study on the mental health of black males notes that, “Black males have poor health outcomes and the lowest life expectancy than any other race or gender.”¹¹⁷

The ability for black males to cope with these stressors took primary importance in their study. What they observe about the connection between mental health and spirituality is telling. “Affiliation with religion and spirituality were found to correlate with individuals that were challenged with mental health illnesses as well as those with healthy mental health. Abraham Maslow, a respected psychologist, valued and endorsed religion and spirituality in his hierarchal construct to human self-actualization.”¹¹⁸

For the modern church, mental health in all of its forms must become a central issue for church health. Inadequate recognition of mental health leads to underdeveloped disciples and weak missional engagement.

Physical. Physical health is important in discipleship and fighting church decline because it has been shown to have many benefits for both the body and the mind.

¹¹⁶ David Paine and Steven Sandage, “Religious Involvement and Depression: The Mediating Effect of Relational Spirituality.” *Journal of Religion and Health* 56, no. 1 (2017): 269-83.

¹¹⁷ M.A. Robinson, Sharon Jones-Eversley, Sharon Moore, Joseph Ravenell, and A C Adedoyin. “Black Male Mental Health and the Black Church: Advancing a Collaborative Partnership and Research Agenda.” *Journal of Religion and Health* 57, no. 3 (2018), 1096.

¹¹⁸ Robinson, Jones-Eversley, Moore, Ravenell, and Adedoyin, “Black Male,” 1096.

Physical activity increases attention and cognitive ability,¹¹⁹ heart health,¹²⁰ fights disease,¹²¹ aids in healthy digestion,¹²² and benefits people of all age brackets¹²³ and abilities.¹²⁴ The physical body is of great importance for longevity in mission.

Churches typically shy away from dealing with the physical health of members for the sake of the spiritual, without realizing the consequences. What's needed to complete and participate in the mission of the church is to have bodies able to complete the task. This makes physical health a requirement. The researcher has frequently heard references to physical health being less important than spiritual health, or even laughably unimportant. Some Christians go so far as to say that the church should enjoy its favorite sin – gluttony, and that if the body is a temple we should give the Spirit a bit more room to work.¹²⁵ “Researchers have found that clergy members suffer from hypertension,

¹¹⁹ Shirley Archer, “Health Benefits of Meditation.” *IDEA Fit Tips* 11, no. 2 (February 2013). Accessed August 12, 2018. <http://sculpt365.ideafit.com/idea-fit-tips/2013/february>.

¹²⁰ Ryan Halvorson, “Strength Training Benefits Heart Health.” *Fitness Journal* 8, no. 2 (January 11, 2011). Accessed August 12, 2018. <http://sculpt365.ideafit.com/idea-fitness-journal/2011/february>.

¹²¹ Len Kravitz, “The 25 Most Significant Health Benefits of Physical Activity & Exercise.” *Fitness Journal* 4, no. 9 (October 1, 20017). Accessed August 12, 2018. <https://sculpt365.ideafit.com/fitness-library/benefits-of-exercise>.

¹²² Joy Keller, “Does Exercise Benefit Digestive Health?” *Fitness Journal* 14, no. 3 (February 1, 2017). Accessed August 12, 2018. <https://sculpt365.ideafit.com/fitness-library/does-exercise-benefit-digestive-health>.

¹²³ Ryan Halvorson, “How Exercise Benefits Older Seniors.” *Fitness Journal* 11, no. 1 (December 12, 2013). Accessed August 12, 2018. <https://sculpt365.ideafit.com/fitness-library/how-exercise-benefits-older-seniors>.

¹²⁴ Ryan Halvorson, “Exercise Benefits Developmentally Disabled Kids.” *Fitness Journal* 6, no. 4 (May 25, 2009). Accessed August 12, 2018. <https://sculpt365.ideafit.com/fitness-library/exercise-benefits-developmentally-disabled-kids>.

¹²⁵ Kevin Caudle, “Pick up Sticks.” Speech, Christian Life Assembly First Service, Christian Life Assembly, Tehachapi, August 5, 2018.

depression, and obesity at higher rates than most people in the United States.”¹²⁶ As long as this remains the case, and as long as physical health is neglected as a process in discipleship, churches will potentially continue to face decline.

Relational. In many ways, relationships are the currency of ministry. Investing in others requires time, a precious commodity, in the hope that there is an experience and encounter with Jesus. The ultimate goal, of course, is for individuals, families, and communities to respond positively to the Gospel. In a study on relationship sizes and ministerial burnout, Candace Pickett concluded that relational influence caps at about 150 people mostly because of time constraints and the mental strain of remembering individual social cues. “It is likely that attempting to exceed this relational limit leads to distress. Therefore, relational ministers exceeding typical social network sizes were predicted to experience higher levels of burnout and lower levels of ministry effectiveness.”¹²⁷

These social-cognitive limits are important for two reasons. First, if mission and evangelism are solely contained within the pastorate or professional status, overall ministerial effectiveness is severely limited. This could potentially lead not only to ministerial burnout as Pickett suggests, but church decline as the minister tries to mentally and emotionally cope with the relational stresses.

Second, even if a church adopts a missional posture to the community, each member and family must remain conscious of their own relational capacity. For the sake

¹²⁶ Candace Coppinger Pickett, Justin Barrett, Cynthia Eriksson, and Christina Kabiri. “Social Networks among Ministry Relationships: Relational Capacity, Burnout, & Ministry Effectiveness.” *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 45, no. 2 (2017), 92.

¹²⁷ Pickett, Barrett, Eriksson, and Kabiri, “Social Networks,” 92.

of the family unit, of close friends, and of those being ministered to, the church must take relational health seriously. Failure to do so places additional stress on the individuals, increasing life dissatisfaction and job effectiveness, ultimately leading to burnout.¹²⁸

Relational health has also been shown to be true in the family unit, as shared religious experience can enhance family life.¹²⁹ Much of this is birthed in respect to Erik Erickson's idea of generativity. Generativity is the idea of passing on wisdom and tradition from one generation to the next, "including teaching, mentoring, leading, parenting, counseling, creating, and other forms of nurturance and activism. For many adults, the developmental challenges of generativity combine with the search for personal meaning and the call to social responsibility."¹³⁰ Inwardly focused churches often lose generativity. For the health of the church, this must be reclaimed as a normal and necessary part of all relationships.

Financial. To experience the capstone of holistic discipleship, the financial component of a life must be in order. As Dave Ramsey is famous for saying, "Live like no one else now so later you can *live* like no one else."¹³¹ It is a call to embrace financial stewardship, get out of debt, and get set up for financial success. In a world so often run

¹²⁸ Pickett, Barrett, Eriksson, and Kabiri, "Social Networks," 94.

¹²⁹ Loren Marks, "Religion and Family Relational Health: An Overview and Conceptual Model." *Journal of Religion and Health* 45, no. 4 (2006): 603-18.

¹³⁰ Steven Sandage, Peter C Hill, and Deanne Vaubel. "Generativity, Relational Spirituality, Gratitude, and Mental Health: Relationships and Pathways." *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 21, no. 1 (2011), 1-2.

¹³¹ "Tired of Keeping Up with the Joneses?" Daveramsey.com. July 24, 2012. Accessed August 12, 2018. <https://www.daveramsey.com/blog/tired-of-keeping-up-with-the-joneses>.

by and accustomed to debt, it is counter-cultural to embrace frugality and the limiting of pleasure now to think ahead for long-term financial success.

Because of this the financial health of the church carries with it two competing dynamics. The first is the church budget. Established church budgets often carry with them safety nets and long-term plans for tight financial periods. This can be seen most readily in larger churches that usually carry larger budgets¹³² that may not always be spent externally. It can also be seen in dying churches that often have money but refuse to spend it out of fear.¹³³

But wise financial decisions and holistic discipleship require that God's resources, including money, are stewarded correctly. Ann Fritschel urges the church to listen to an aging Millennial demographic as it presents two options for the future of the church. "The first opportunity is to develop further congregational teaching and discipling ministries around the theme of financial stewardship. The second opportunity is to review congregational mission and vision statements and move from a maintenance to a mission approach."¹³⁴

It is the second opportunity that is most relevant to the present study. As has already been seen, the shift from maintenance to mission requires a shift in ecclesiology and in the nature and function of the church. To continue the full movement and mission of God, financial decisions must be a part of that ongoing process.

¹³² Glenn Ludwig and Angela Zimmann. "Flourishing in Complexity: Training the Leaders of Large Congregations." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 44, no. 3 (2017): 9-13.

¹³³ Rainer, *Autopsy*, Kindle Location 266.

¹³⁴ Ann Fritschel, "Beyond the Mission Trip: Millennials, Financial Stewardship, and the Congregation." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 45, no. 2 (2018): 16-20.

Grace Pomroy urges a similar attitude towards Millennials, noting their openness to talk about money, generosity, and meaning. Millennials have often been misunderstood as selfish and out for themselves. Instead, as Pomroy counters, that is not the case. “They love for meaningful, integrated lives and they want to be generous with their whole selves—not just their money.”¹³⁵

The growth and mission of churches in decline will necessitate a shift in understanding financial health. Beyond encouraging younger generations, particularly Millennials, to have a seat at the table, churches looking to avoid decline must also learn to balance financial responsibility with generosity. Generosity, similar to grace, is a heart issue. It comes from an acknowledgment that God has richly blessed a person and that as a response they should bless someone else. A church in decline must learn to navigate these waters successfully: fully implementing a realized plan for health and growth, of which a part of that is financial. A church must not be afraid to explore and try something new and innovative.¹³⁶ even if it requires spending money. Similarly, individuals and family units must practice biblical commands to be financially responsible as well as generous and lavish in their gift-giving.

Community Reflection and Engagement

Finally, the church in decline must learn to acknowledge its relationship or lack thereof to the community. As Thom Rainer again notes helpfully: “The church refused to

¹³⁵ Grace Duddy Pomroy, “Stewardship: What the Church Can Learn from Millennials.” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 45, no. 2 (2018): 11-5.

¹³⁶ Hirsch, Catchim, and Breen. *Permanent Revolution*. Kindle Locations 4789-4792.

look like the community.”¹³⁷ Instead, the church often became more focused on issues relating to the ‘defense of the faith,’ rather than the embodiment of it.¹³⁸

Worldview

One way the church will need to face the problem of decline and community reflection is to deal with issues of worldview. For many that live in geographic proximity to the church, their worldview is decidedly different than those within the church walls. But fundamentally, people process issues of faith and spirituality through an already established worldview. James Sire defines worldview as

a worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions (assumptions which may be true, partially true or entirely false) which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.¹³⁹

Worldview, then, is inescapable. All people have one, whether they know it or not. What the church in decline will need to do is identify both a thoroughly Christian worldview and how to best interact with differing and competing ones. Phillips, Brown, and Stonestreet emphasize the three basic answers any worldview will provide: what someone thinks about God, what someone thinks about humanity, and what someone thinks about nature.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Rainer, *Autopsy*, Kindle Location 216.

¹³⁸ Reggie McNeal, *Missional Communities: The Rise of the Post-Congregational Church*. (San Francisco, CA. Wiley. Kindle Edition). Kindle Locations 392-394.

¹³⁹ James W. Sire, *Naming the Elephant: Worldview as a Concept*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 122.

¹⁴⁰ Gary W. Phillips, William E. Brown, and John Stonestreet. *Making Sense of Your World: A Biblical World View*. (Salem, WI: Sheffield Pub., 2008).

To be sure, there are several competing worldviews. In their helpful primer on the subject, Steve Wilkens and Mark Sanford note at least eight that are competing with Christianity: “Individualism, Consumerism, Nationalism, Moral Relativism, Scientific Naturalism, New Age, Postmodern Tribalism, and Salvation by Therapy.”¹⁴¹

To combat these, the church in decline must intentionally seek them out and try to understand them. It must not do so out of fear, hatred, or disdain, but as an act of love and service. It must, however, also pose a counterpoint: that of a well-developed and holistically-minded Christian worldview. This is often the struggling point for many Christians. A worldview that is not thought out enough or robust enough to deal with contemporary issues and prejudices will not be considered long. Kondothra George urges Christians to understand the important interplay between Christian and culture (worldview) throughout history. Removing the Christian message from its interaction with local cultures is not only foolhardy but impossible. “When communities receive the gospel from other communities, they are adhering to the gospel as a way of life (*paradosis*), which is not simply a text or some sermons. It is the whole way of life of a community centered around the worship of God in Christ.”¹⁴² In his argument, we see the tension for Christians dealing with contemporary worldviews. Between the cultural shifts of globalization and consumerism and the philosophical shifts away from colonization, the world is in tension. “It should be obvious to all of us that without true justice and

¹⁴¹ Steve Wilkens and Mark L. Sanford. *Hidden Worldviews: Eight Cultural Stories That Shape Our Lives*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009),

¹⁴² Kondothra George, “Cross-Cultural Interpretation: Some Paradigms from the Early Church.” *International Review of Mission* 85, no. 337 (1996), 218.

equality between cultural groupings any intercultural hermeneutic will produce results only in favour of the dominant culture partner.”¹⁴³

As the world wrestles with history, injustice, and previous encounters with Christianity, the church in decline will need to spend extra time developing a worldview that answers the deep longings of the world. It will also need to examine and repent of its own grave injustices and failures. Gerhard Lohfink summarizes a uniquely Christian worldview well, and what it will mean for Christian mission in the world.

What makes the church the divine contrast-society is not self-acquired holiness, not cramped efforts and moral achievements, but the saving deed of God, who justifies the godless, accepts the failures and reconciles himself with the guilty. Only in this gift of reconciliation, in the miracle of life newly won against all expectations, does what is here termed contrast-society flourish. What is meant is *not* a church without guilt, but a church in which infinite hope emerges from forgiven guilt. What is meant is *not* a church in which there are no divisions, but a church which finds reconciliation despite all gulfs. What is meant is *not* a church without conflicts, but a church in which conflicts are settled in ways different from the rest of society. What is meant, finally, is *not* a church without the cross and without passion narratives, but a church always able to celebrate Easter because it both dies and rises with Christ.¹⁴⁴

Poverty and Social Justice

A second need for churches to identify as they seek to relate to the community is the rising needs of poverty and social justice. In many areas, as cities grew, churches moved out to the suburbs. The churches that remain in the heart of the city and even a rising number of rural and suburban churches need to deal with economic injustices and poverty. The shift, though perhaps largely unconscious and unintentional, has left a gap for many churches between them and the poor and disenfranchised. “Many of us live at a

¹⁴³ Kondothra, “Cross-Cultural Interpretations,” 217-218.

¹⁴⁴ Gerhard Lohfink, *Jesus and Community*. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1982), 147.

sufficient distance from people in need that our choices about how we spend our money don't hit home..."¹⁴⁵ What the church must do is not just encounter poverty and issues of economic injustice. It must also be willing embrace them and the people struggling with them.

The first recognition is that human hearts, particularly those of Christ-followers, have been forgiven but still need growth and development in capacity to carry out God's justice. As Mark Labberton notes, the human heart is paralyzed by its position. Very rarely do people consciously will injustice, and just as infrequently do they choose to passionately enact justice unselfishly on behalf of others.¹⁴⁶

This paralysis can be broken by an expansion of what it means to practice and participate in justice. Pulling from the socioeconomic connections in the Bible, Samuel Adams offers a way forward through the idea of *mišpat* (justice). He sees the pursuit of biblical justice as the polar opposite of oppression and subjugation. "If oppression represents 'the extraction of goods and services from a vulnerable individual or social subgroup by a more powerful person or politico-economic subgroup,' *mispat* indicates the opposite of such actions, the *presence* of righteousness."¹⁴⁷

Second, this expansion of the heart towards justice must also include intentional friendships with the vulnerable, excluded, and outcast. We must intentionally seek out and form these relationships, ones that are often marked by their messiness and

¹⁴⁵ Christopher L. Heuertz and Christine D. Pohl. *Friendship at the Margins: Discovering Mutuality in Service and Mission*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2010), 56.

¹⁴⁶ Mark Labberton, *The Dangerous Act of Loving Your Neighbor: Seeing Others Through the Eyes of Jesus*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2010). 17-18.

¹⁴⁷ Samuel L. Adams, "The Justice Imperative in Scripture." *Interpretation* 69, no. 4 (2015), 402.

complicated rationales.¹⁴⁸ But it is this expansion of inclusionary relationships that is becoming increasingly necessary.¹⁴⁹ For the whole world to experience this level of inclusiveness it must be modeled first within the Church, God's counter-cultural community.

Finally, the church will only succeed if it can successfully target not just poverty and economic injustices, but the root causes and evils behind them. As Kim Lamberty argues, "Although the privileged are willing to accept the existence of poverty on a massive scale, and to build and fund agencies to mitigate it, they become resistant when faced with the causes, because looking at causes implies some personal responsibility to address the source."¹⁵⁰

The church must learn to address all aspects and issues of poverty. Discontented to deal only with the symptoms, the church must be willing to engage in combating the source of it as well. The only option for the church is to engage in this mission as God's counter-cultural economic community. The church must be willing to lead the way through the ills of society and work towards the good of everyone. This will include confronting both the intentional and unintentional acts of societal structures, focusing on both personal and systemic issues of poverty and injustice.

¹⁴⁸ Heurtz and Pohl, *Friendship*, 96.

¹⁴⁹ Thomas Wieser, "Community: Its Unity, Diversity and Universality." *Semeia* 33 (1985): 83-95.

¹⁵⁰ Kim Marie Lamberty, "Proclaiming the Reign of God in a Suffering World: The Movement from Development to Liberation." *Missiology* 45, no. 1 (2017), 93.

Hospitality

A third issue for churches in decline is that of hospitality. Stephen Graham explains the significance, “Christian hospitality requires theological students to learn how to remain faithful to the truth of their own religious convictions in the context of the diversity of beliefs and religious identity of others.”¹⁵¹ For Mavis and Rusaw, it is a similar to the term they use of neighboring. “Neighboring is about teaching, encouraging, equipping, and releasing people to love their neighbors: the guy, gal, or family next door or across the street. We believe neighboring is a value to be taught and caught rather than a new program to start.”¹⁵²

As the church embraces hospitality, it will also undoubtedly need to embrace diversity. It will also need to expand its scope of hospitality. As Brendan Byrne explains, hospitality is more than just a series of welcoming guests, eating meals, and housing someone.

Luke sees the whole life and ministry of Jesus as a ‘visitation’ on God’s part to Israel and the world. From the start this raises the question: how will this guest, this visitor be received? The crucial point is that those who do receive him find that he brings them into a much wider sphere of hospitality: the ‘hospitality of God.’ The One who comes as a visitor and guest in fact becomes the host and offers a hospitality in which human beings, and potentially, the entire world, can become truly human, be at home, and know salvation in the depths of their hearts.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Stephen R. Graham, “Christian Hospitality and Pastoral Practices in a Multifaith Society: an ATS Project, 2010-2012.” *Theological Education* 47, no. 1 (2012), 3.

¹⁵² Mavis and Rusaw. *The Neighboring Church*, xx.

¹⁵³ Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel*. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000). 4.

The church must become able to both host and receive hosting. It must be willing to invite guests in and then allow them to bring in experiences and gifts that mutually benefit all parties. David Smith exhorts the church to embrace this opportunity. “Jesus called for radical love of those whose cultural identity is different – not a facile enthusiasm for the exotic, or a patronizing pity, but a genuine attentiveness that is willing to learn *from* as well as learn *about*. This strikes to the heart of our well-laced egocentrism and ethnocentrism (the individual and the group versions of selfishness).”¹⁵⁴

How then do Christian communities overcome these biases? It must, as already shown, embrace the diversity it finds itself in. “Jesus wants our lives to be so transformed that we actually care for those around us and that the love we share for each other bubbles over into the lives of those not yet following Christ.”¹⁵⁵ For this to happen, it will require the church to embrace a new set of values in mission, a new posture of sharing their faith.

Missional Posture

Finally, a point must be made about missional posturing in the community. Alan Hirsch reminds us, “Call it a missional mode, stance, posture, or whatever; the way in which we actually incarnate the gospel among the people we are seeking to reach will implicitly communicate the meaning of Jesus’s incarnation . . . or it won’t.”¹⁵⁶ More will be explored for how missional engagement happens in a post-Christian and Postmodern

¹⁵⁴ Smith, David I. *Learning from the Stranger: Christian Faith and Cultural Diversity*. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans. 2009).

¹⁵⁵ Bryant, Eric Michael. *Not Like Me: A Field Guide for Influencing a Diverse World*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 103.

¹⁵⁶ Hirsch. *Untamed*. Kindle Locations 3278-3280.

world, but the church in decline must first learn to reorient itself in a different way.

“When we sense that our inner maps of church leadership are becoming less and less effective and the images of leadership in which we were trained are not robust enough to encompass our current reality, another inner map tells us that we have to find a way of taking control in order make things work again.”¹⁵⁷ Rather than thinking internally and the need for attractive programming, a church in decline must learn to think externally, equipping people for the sake and work of ministry.

Alan Hirsch draws attention to the need to break free from the mesmerizing past of Christian culture while reclaiming four dormant tasks of the church: a re-centering around Jesus and his movement, the essentiality of discipleship, apostolic formation of leadership and movement, and a lifestyle of missional-incarnational orientation.¹⁵⁸

“Mission precedes the church and must therefore shape the church’s imagination because it comes from God.”¹⁵⁹

This imagination shaping creates an impetus for congregational change and dynamism. The church lives within a paradoxical mission mandate from God. The need for missional engagement never changes, but the methodology does.¹⁶⁰ “These two complexities, discernment and context, encourage us to abandon our solution-oriented

¹⁵⁷ Alan Roxburgh, *Missional Map-Making: Skills for Leading in Times of Transition*. (San Francisco, CA. Wiley. Kindle Edition), 4.

¹⁵⁸ Alan Hirsch, “Reawakening a Potent Missional Ethos in the Twenty-First Century Church.” *Missiology* 38, no. 1 (2010): 5-12.

¹⁵⁹ Hirsch, “Reawakening,” 11.

¹⁶⁰ David Forney, “To the One Outside the Gate: An Missional Approach to Polity.” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 5, no. 1-2 (2006), 56.

drive and to embrace the dynamic relationality of a life of faith. We are not called to a solution but to an approach.”¹⁶¹

For the church this presents many opportunities and obstacles. First, ecclesiology needs to be properly understood, with the local church body accepting its call to mission and active faith. Next, as emphasized here, it must continually reinvent itself through new means and approaches without compromising mission and value. For Reggie McNeal, it means the shift in three primary areas of life and faith: towards an external ministry focus, towards development of individuals instead of programs, and towards a fully inclusive kingdom-leadership model.¹⁶²

For many this has meant a reclaiming of historical faith and a moving back towards the earlier experiences of Christianity. Contrasting the ecclesiology and mission minded approach of Christendom, the missional posturing of congregations in post-Christendom recalls earlier stories of faith formation. Alan Krieder’s eight marks of pre-Christendom and Christendom are becoming anomalies and many are trying to distance themselves from them.¹⁶³ Instead, as Randall notes, there are seven marks of post-Christendom mission, which churches should seek to align themselves with now.¹⁶⁴

These seven marks, stemming from an Anabaptist perspective, are increasingly growing in popularity as the realization of post-Christendom and post-modernity sets into

¹⁶¹ Forney, “To the One Outside,” 56

¹⁶² Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009).

¹⁶³ Ian Randall, “Mission in Post-Christendom: Anabaptist and Free Church Perspectives.” *Evangelical Quarterly* 79, no. 3 (2007), 233.

¹⁶⁴ Randall, “Mission in Post-Christendom,” 238.

the missional ethos of the church. This begins with a change in the perception, role, and function of leadership. “Missional leadership, then, means addressing, challenging, and subverting the paradigms that keep congregations from understanding their life together as participating in the mission of God in the world.”¹⁶⁵ For the church to be able to make the shift in its missional approach, the orientation of leadership must be decidedly different than in Christendom. And, as the shift in understanding for missional posturing happens, it will be matched by a revitalized incarnation of contextual missional engagement, as will be shown in a later section.

Leadership

The subject of leadership has emerged as one of the greatest and most influential topics of recent modern study, and as Shelly Dionne notes, “Even though leadership is implicitly and/or explicitly addressed in its relationship with both creativity and innovation, the concept of leadership is often presented with a broad brushstroke.”¹⁶⁶ Therein lies the paradox of leadership: it is often so researched and studied that broad categories of ‘best practices’ have been adopted; but without specific and applicable information it remains difficult to implement. Attempting to distill the information on leadership, Kouzes and Posner describe the five practices of exemplary leadership, long considered a hallmark of leadership structure: modeling, inspiring, challenging, enabling,

¹⁶⁵ Scott J. Hagley, “Improv in the Streets: Missional Leadership as Public Improvisational Identity Formation.” *Journal of Religious Leadership* 7, no. 2 (2008), 64.

¹⁶⁶ Samuel T. Hunter, Katrina E. Bedell-Avers, Francis J. Yammarino, Fred Dansereau, and Michael D. Mumford. *Multi-Level Issues in Creativity and Innovation*. (Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2009). 65.

and encouraging.¹⁶⁷ Other studies have shown that these five qualities lie at the heart of leadership, regardless of the professional field.¹⁶⁸

Model the Way

Companies, businesses, organizations, and nonprofits will all follow the way of the leader. As the leader goes, so goes the company. Speaking to this, Dyer et al. noted, “Innovative companies are almost always led by innovative leaders.”¹⁶⁹ This becomes the standard that everyone else in the organization must rise to meet. “The leader sets the tone for innovation and risk-taking. Effective leaders build confidence by encouraging innovation and calculated risk-taking rather than punishing or criticizing whatever is less than perfect. Leaders must be attentive to how they make people feel when they take risks and fail.”¹⁷⁰

A leader models the way by living the values and vision of the company. If the leader fails to embrace and live out the core values of the company, the rest of the employees will follow suit. Leading by positive example always works better than leading by forceful command or declaration.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁷ James Kouzes and Barry Posner. *The Leadership Challenge*. (San Francisco, CA: Josey Bass, 2012), 15.

¹⁶⁸ Carmen Mombourquette, “The Role of Vision in Effective School Leadership.” *International Studies in Educational Administration* 45, no. 1 (2017), 22.

¹⁶⁹ “Capitalizing on Complexity: Insights from the Global Chief Executive Officer Study.” May 2010, 1-76. May 2010. Accessed July 22, 2017. <https://www-01.ibm.com/common/ssi/cgi-bin/ssialias?htmlfid=GBE03297USEN>.

¹⁷⁰ Jennifer E. Wilson, “Sparkling Innovation and Creativity in Your Practice Setting: Getting Started.” *Physical Therapy*, 2010, 8.

¹⁷¹ Kouzes and Posner, *Leadership Challenge*, 17.

But what is often missed is that company vision is never enough. Instead, great leadership requires that leaders lead out of their own mission and vision.¹⁷² Great leadership requires the ability to lead out of personal conviction and morals, without being dictated upon by others. However, it must also hold in balance the need to share a vision with others. This is the dynamic relationship of leadership. Leaders must continually be influenced by the right values and morals, while resisting the wrong ones.

Inspire a Shared Vision

Great leaders bring their people into the future. “Leaders envision the future by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities.”¹⁷³ The leader creates their own compelling vision by which they live, but further enhances their leadership capabilities by creating a shared vision of the organization.¹⁷⁴ “Being forward-looking—envisioning exciting possibilities and enlisting others in a shared view of the future—is the attribute that most distinguishes leaders from nonleaders.”¹⁷⁵ This shared vision unites the team in mission, purpose, and direction. “The best leaders are able to bring their people into the future because they engage in the oldest form of research: They observe the human condition.”¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Mel Hensey, “Powerful Values.” *Journal of Management in Engineering* 13, no. 1 (1997): 9.

¹⁷³ Kouzes and Posner, *Leadership Challenge*, 18.

¹⁷⁴ Mombourquette, “Vision in School Leadership,” 28.

¹⁷⁵ James Kouzes and Barry Posner. “To Lead, Create a Shared Vision.” *Harvard Business Review* 87, no. 1 (January 2009): 20-21. January 2009. Accessed August 26, 2018. <https://hbr.org/2009/01/to-lead-create-a-shared-vision>.

¹⁷⁶ Kouzes and Posner, “To Lead,” 21.

While individual functions and implementations may vary, visionary leadership carries a common definition. Candy O'Connor synthesized the many variables of visionary leadership. She concluded that visionary leadership is about vision casting and future orientation with an ability to give direction and purpose to the plan.¹⁷⁷

Challenge the Process

Next, leaders must learn to challenge the status quo. Often, leaders are brought in or incentivized to keep an organization growing and adapting to the climate around it. Failure for a leader is often a result in changing too little. "Challenge is the crucible for greatness. Every single personal-best leadership case involved a change from the status quo. Not one person claimed to have achieved a personal best by keeping things the same."¹⁷⁸

"In this era, organizations need to restructure, and need individuals who are willing to contribute to successful change and leaders who can successfully bring about change."¹⁷⁹ For Cemal Zehir, this primarily means charismatic leadership as a positive indicator of organizational ability and ethics. Additionally, while much of the study looked at the role of charismatic leaders in creating an ethical culture, secondary research and results support the idea that by challenging the status quo they can bring change to an organization.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Candy M. O'Connor, "Women of Vision: Understanding the Ways Women Lead Change." *Christian Higher Education* 17, no. 4 (2018): 198–214.

¹⁷⁸ Kouzes and Posner, *Leadership Challenge*, 19.

¹⁷⁹ Cemal Zehir, Bursa Muceldili, Erkut Altindag, Yasin Sehitoglu, and Songul Zehir. "Charismatic Leadership and Organizational Citizenship Behavior: the Mediating Role of Ethical Climate." *Social Behavior and Personality: an International Journal* 42, no. 8 (2014), 1366.

¹⁸⁰ Zehir, Muceldili, Altindag, Sehitoglu, and Zehir, "Charismatic Leadership," 1365-75.

Finally, it must be noted about the rise of a new term, specifically in educational circles but growing and expanding to other areas. In response to a perceived unwillingness among top-level leaders to challenge the status quo, as well as a changing climate in business and education, a counter philosophy has developed. The idea of grassroots leadership, or the ability for a large group of relatively powerless individuals to change the status quo, has taken hold in many circles. Grassroots leaders are distinctive from those in positions of authority who tend to have a structure in place to enact leadership through rewards, establishing employee positions and responsibilities, and delegated authority. They also have a formal network of people that are conducting the same work.¹⁸¹

While the origin point is different, lay leaders and volunteers instead of executives, the intended result is the same: the transformation of an organization, vision or direction. In both instances, from wherever the leadership originates, it challenges the status quo and seeks to offer additional growth and opportunities to members.

Enable Others to Act

Great leadership doesn't stop with the leaders. Instead, they must empower others to develop their own leadership capacity and then act on it. "Leaders foster collaboration by building trust and facilitating relationships."¹⁸² This is of note, particularly because of the examination on charismatic-ethical leadership done by Zehir. He writes, "Charismatic leaders differ from other leaders by their ability to formulate and articulate an

¹⁸¹ Jamie Lester and Adrianna Kezar. "Faculty Grassroots Leadership: Making the Invisible Visible." *Journal of the Professoriate* 6, no. 2 (2012), 99.

¹⁸² Kouzes and Posner, *Leadership Challenge*, 21.

inspirational vision, and by behaviors and actions that foster an impression that they and their mission are extraordinary.”¹⁸³ His research concludes that as leaders show sensitivity towards others, employees are more likely to aid others and express similar sentiments.¹⁸⁴

These values hold true, despite the perception of leadership as a masculine trait and the ensuing detriment that it has had on women.¹⁸⁵ For an individual to fully embrace the call of leadership they must embody the ability to enable others to act. Leaders set the standard, live out values, challenge the process, and enable others to then do the same. This is true in both an organizational value sense, but also in ethical decisions. The only way to build trust and foster healthy relationships is through ethical leadership standards.¹⁸⁶

This happens primarily through the relationships fostered. “Restructuring and other structural solutions have had a significant effect on efficiency but minimal impact on effectiveness. In contrast, previous research has demonstrated that leadership, relationships, and trust have strong potential for increasing effectiveness.”¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Zehir, Muceldili, Altindag, Sehitoglu, and Zehir, “Charismatic Leadership,” 1366-67.

¹⁸⁴ Zehir, Muceldili, Altindag, Sehitoglu, and Zehir, “Charismatic Leadership,” 1372.

¹⁸⁵ Victoria Brescoll, Tyler Okimoto, and Andrea Vial. “You’ve Come a Long Way...Maybe: How Moral Emotions Trigger Backlash Against Women Leaders.” *Journal of Social Issues* 74, no. 1 (2018): 144–64.

¹⁸⁶ Zehir, Muceldili, Altindag, Sehitoglu, and Zehir, “Charismatic Leadership,” 1372.

¹⁸⁷ Adrianna Kezar, “What Is More Important to Effective Governance: Relationships, Trust, and Leadership, or Structures and Formal Processes?” *New Directions for Higher Education* 2004, no. 127 (2004): 35–46.

Encourage the Heart

Reggie McNeal explains the significance of blessing, encouraging and inspiring others as a leader's most vital role. "Great leaders leave people better off than they were before the leader entered their lives."¹⁸⁸ Kouzes agrees and expands on this idea: "Recognition is the most powerful currency you have, and it costs you nothing. ... Leaders ... recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence."¹⁸⁹

The goal of blessing and encouraging others should aid in the development of new and better leaders. Don Dinkmeyer explains his process for leadership development through a system he calls Leadership by Encouragement.¹⁹⁰ His fourteen-step process (Appendix A) is designed to help leaders produce more leaders by raising autonomous people capable of controlling their own emotions and responses to difficult circumstances.¹⁹¹

This process has elsewhere been called transformational leadership. In a review of the history and development of transformation leadership, White, Pearson, Bledsoe, and Hendricks note the varying forms and functions of transformational leadership. These

¹⁸⁸ Reggie McNeal, *Practicing Greatness: 7 Disciplines of Extraordinary Spiritual Leaders*. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006). Kindle Locations 219-221.

¹⁸⁹ Kouzes and Posner, *Leadership Challenge*, 23.

¹⁹⁰ Don Dinkmeyer, "Encouragement: Basis for Leader Training and Participative Management." *Individual Psychology: The Journal of Adlerian Theory, Research, and Practice* 47, no. 4 (1991), 504.

¹⁹¹ Dinkmeyer, "Encouragement," 505.

outworkings have included changing social systems, morality, teaching, motivating, and connecting people with concepts.¹⁹²

It is obvious that despite the field or preferred name, the capstone marker of a true leader is leadership development. The ability for a person to live out both personal and company core values must come first. A person cannot responsibly lead without a values system in place. Next, a leader must have the capacity to create a shared vision with coworkers and employees. Third, a leader must challenge the status quo and be willing to try new and innovative processes. Fourth, a leader must be capable of enabling others. This may take on the form of teaching others to challenge the status quo, or it may come in the form of limiting harmful beliefs, mindsets, and prejudices present in a person or organization. Finally, as has been shown, a leader must be able to develop other leaders in the same process.

Missional Engagement

Missional engagement is the idea that the church engages in a specific, localized context that is unique. The church, as the sending agency, sees its surrounding neighborhood as the mission field. The church, a collection of missionaries, practices a two-fold process of gathering and scattering. It is the scattering process that is the focus here. Scattering, as understood in the missional context, is the sending of the people each week into the field to represent Jesus to those with whom they come into contact.¹⁹³

¹⁹² Bobbie Ann Adair White, Kerri Pearson, Christie Bledsoe, and Randy Hendricks. "Transformational Leadership: The Nexus Between Faith and Classroom Leadership." *Christian Higher Education* 16, no. 5 (2017): 276–84.

¹⁹³ Mavis and Rusaw, *The Neighboring Church*.

It is the transition to missional engagement that consumes many churches. Engaging in local culture requires an in-depth understanding of cultural nuance and exegesis. For the Christian to reach others with effective communication, they must learn to read and write culture.¹⁹⁴ The idea of cultural exegesis is new to the field of missional engagement and for many years remained without definition. One attempted definition comes from David Leong who writes about urban exegesis, saying that it is, “a method of observing and interpreting urban communities that synthesizes the symbolic system of urban semiotics and missional theology of cultural exegesis in order to draw out the multifaceted meaning of complex environments in that city.”¹⁹⁵ This transition will also require new models for ministry and ministry engagement, which are owned by the individuals and communities engaging in local mission.

When people are given a place to define mission, their participation will be very evident as they offer themselves, their time, effort, and gifts. But it will not endure unless they can also assume leadership commensurate with the task. Thus, speaking concretely, participation in their own salvation means involvement in conceptualizing mission, creation of indigenous structures and programs, enlistment of new workers, implementation of governance, contribution of services, and volunteering financial support.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ David Leong, *Race and Place: How Urban Geography Shapes the Journey to Reconciliation*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2017).

¹⁹⁵ David P. Leong, *Street Signs: Toward a Missional Theology of Urban Cultural Engagement*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012.), 98.

¹⁹⁶ Roy Sano, “Mission Interaction and Ethnic Minorities in the United States.” *Occasional Bulletin of Missionary Research* 3, no. 4 (1979), 1423.

Much of the shift towards missional engagement has also necessitated a different type of language to communicate it. For decades, even unknowingly, the church often communicated through what is now called a bounded system: that is there are clearly defined categories of in and out.¹⁹⁷ “Wherever there is a cultural preference for "bounded sets," there will be a sharp distinction between Christians and non-Christians, accompanied by an effort to pinpoint observable attributes that will allow for the boundaries between the two to be clearly observed and monitored. Since one cannot directly observe the hearts of people, there will likely be a focus on beliefs and practices that ought to distinctively mark one as Christian rather than non-Christian.”¹⁹⁸

Instead, as Hiebert and contemporary authors like Hugh Halter¹⁹⁹ have noted, there is an ever-increasing desire for centered sets to become the priority in the West. The belief is that when the church begins to focus itself on Jesus, while encouraging others to do the same, real-life transformation can happen. Halter notes the many ways contemporary theologians have used this, from methods for salvation to options for community engagement.²⁰⁰

Multi-ethnic Church Ministry

Jeffery Tribble, arguing for the necessity of black leadership in the church, focuses on the shifting paradigm of church ministry leadership. “In a new urban context,

¹⁹⁷ Michael Yoder, Michael Lee, Jonathan Ro, and Robert Priest. “Understanding Christian Identity in Terms of Bounded and Centered Set Theory in the Writings of Paul G. Hiebert.” *Trinity Journal* 30, no. 2 (2009): 177–88.

¹⁹⁸ Yoder, Lee, Ro, and Priest, “Understanding Christian Identity,” 181.

¹⁹⁹ Halter, *And*, 46-47.

²⁰⁰ Halter, *And*, 185.

that I describe as post-civil rights, post-Christian, and postindustrial city, new strategies of transformation are needed.”²⁰¹ Tribble’s argument, while focused on black leadership in historically black churches and denominations, models the same paradigm as emerging multicultural ministerial leadership: multicultural churches require multicultural leadership. The congregation will only ever be as multicultural as the leadership team; and the leadership’s ability to create diversity allows it to tackle problems that homogenous leadership cannot. When each leader speaks out not just from their personhood but also their cultural perspective, both the leadership team and the congregation benefit. This happens because of the three unique perspective that culture brings to personal development. Each person is influenced by cultural uses of wisdom, historicity, and artifacts.²⁰²

Pulling from the work of W.E.B. Du Bois, Tribble notes four major characteristics of black leaders that merit special emphasis. These include intellectual and moral leadership, a catalyst for cultural change in the midst of continuing racism and oppression, ministerial education predominately focused on ethical and spiritual qualities, and practical theological education.²⁰³ Du Bois firmly believed in the power and necessity for black leadership to be at the forefront of its own movement.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Jeffery Tribble, *Transformative Pastoral Leadership in the Black Church*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005.

²⁰² Robert J. Schreiter, “Communications and Interpretation across Cultures: Problems and Prospects.” *International Review of Mission* 85, no. 337 (1996): 227–39.

²⁰³ Tribble, *Transformative Pastoral Leadership*, 4-5.

²⁰⁴ Tribble, *Transformative Pastoral Leadership*, 5.

Contemporary America is rich with diversity in culture and perspective. This diversity creates a unique opportunity for the church to engage in cultural dialogue. The church in America has many potential voices and perspectives to listen to, and the more it seeks those out, the better her service will be to the world. Laokouxiang (Kou) Seying reminds the church that there are more voices than just the ‘black’ or ‘white’ church experience that matter.²⁰⁵ Namely, in his context, there is the Hmong church, which subtly implies another important factor: immigrant and migrant churches.²⁰⁶ This, of course, necessitates the expansion to second generation churches as many of the American born youth struggle with the duality of cultural belonging.²⁰⁷

Bonganjalo Goba reflects on the need for the South African church to embrace its call for social change. It is their previous experience with marginalization that makes it especially difficult, but all the more necessary. He concludes that, “what I am hoping to achieve here is to provide an outline for a black communal Christian praxis, one that is dynamic in its orientation and passionate in its commitment to God's liberation activity in history in Jesus Christ.”²⁰⁸

In another article, Goba also explains the need for sound pastoral theology as a foundational piece of ministry. In his context, it is the intersection of pastoral theology

²⁰⁵ Laokouxiang Seying, “Diversity and Unity in a Multicultural Church: God's Dream for the Twenty-First Century.” *Concordia Journal* 42, no. 3 (2016): 193–202.

²⁰⁶ Gerrit Noort, “Emerging Migrant Churches in the Netherlands: Missiological Changes and Mission Frontiers.” *International Review of Mission* 100, no. 392 (2011): 4–16.

²⁰⁷ Rebecca Y. Kim, “Second-Generation Korean American Evangelicals: Ethnic, Multiethnic, or White Campus Ministries.” *Sociology of Religion* 65, no. 1 (2004): 19–34.

²⁰⁸ Bonganjalo Goba, “Doing Theology in South Africa: A Black Christian Perspective; an Invitation to the Church to Be Relevant.” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 31 (1980), 23.

and liberation that binds everyone together. “This understanding of pastoral theology suggests that the healing of human brokenness cannot be understood apart from the process of liberation, which God has revealed in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ. Black theology is a pastoral theology for it seeks to liberate blacks, even whites for that matter, from the oppression of human brokenness.”²⁰⁹

These theologies of varying cultures must be not merely tolerated in the church at large, but respected and given a proper seat at the table. For many in the church it is these experiences that have shaped and guided them, and will continue to do so. For many who are not a part of the dominant culture, it is these realizations from the margins that have most shaped their theology. Reflecting on his experiences Orlando Costas writes, “I came to realize that there was a need in the United States for the interpretation of the Christian mission from the periphery - the perspective of the great absentees of the American missionary movement (oppressed American ethnic minorities: Asians, Blacks, Hispanics and Native Americans).”²¹⁰ It is this expansion of ministry from the dominant culture that will allow the church to truly flourish and fully embrace the mission as a multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-dynamic people of God.

Convergent Themes

Combining the above sources, we can see how the various related themes converge. At the intersection of these themes is the realization of an expanded sense of community, belonging, and ministry. For the leader, this means that they need to remain

²⁰⁹ Bonganjalo Goba, “The Role of the Black Church in the Process of Healing Human Brokenness: a Perspective in Pastoral Theology.” *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 28 (1979), 8.

²¹⁰ Orlando E. Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom*. (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1982). 64.

grounded in their sense of purpose and calling. “Humility derives from the leader’s awareness of where his or her source of strength lies. The ambition to become a great spiritual leader actually frees the spirit from the idolatry of self-centeredness, because greatness in the spiritual world cannot be pursued without cultivating God-consciousness.”²¹¹

Noel Castellanos advances the notion of great spiritual leadership by urging Christians to adopt a new matrix for ministry. “If we are going to be faithful witnesses to the message and mission of Jesus in vulnerable neighborhoods, we must expand our current paradigm of gospel-centered ministry to make certain that it puts the millions of people surviving on the fringes of our world at the center of our concern, because the margins are at the center of God’s concern.”²¹²

Noel emphasizes the intersection for multicultural churches that intentionally choose to live out of their diversity and the goals they aim to accomplish. “In order to effectively minister in a vulnerable neighborhood in a way that is truly biblical, our ministry has to include the following components of ministry: incarnation, proclamation and formation, demonstration of compassion, restoration and development, and the confrontation of injustice.”²¹³

²¹¹ McNeal, *Practicing Greatness*, Kindle Locations 172-174.

²¹² Noel Castellanos, *Where the Cross Meets the Street: What Happens to the Neighborhood When God Is at the Center*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press). Kindle Locations 95-141.

²¹³ Castellanos, *Where the Cross*, Kindle Locations 900-902.

Incarnation

The first step at the intersection is that of an incarnation, the indwelling of God's people in a particular place for a particular purpose. What the multicultural church realizes is that this opens up more opportunities for mission, that as diversity expands so do missional opportunities.²¹⁴ Yet what is often missed here is, as David Balch notes, the mixing of various groups that leads to the true embodiment of the Gospel.²¹⁵ It is this embodiment of the ministry of Jesus that is the most profound for Balch. "Dialogue with different others, whether individual or religious/political, generates transformation, change, 'mixing.' Such change/mixing in political contexts often involves tragedy; nevertheless, in this dialogue both partners, each with their own past, constructed histories, lean into the future as they are transformed and transform others."²¹⁶

At this intersection of incarnation and multiethnic ministry lies the seedbed for the church's discipleship efforts. "Small group discussions on spirituality that promote culture sharing provide a safe context to understand ethnic differences and guide individuals towards a biblical perspective of union. These relationship settings foster a respectful and supportive environment that is color-conscious allowing for dialogue and discipleship on genuine spirituality."²¹⁷ As the people of God embrace the call for

²¹⁴ Daniel Romero, "The Church's Struggle with Diversity." *International Review of Mission* 85, no. 337 (1996), 190.

²¹⁵ David Balch and Adam Pryor. "Jesus' Creation Theology and Multiethnic Practice." *Currents in Theology and Mission* 39, no. 4 (2012), 288.

²¹⁶ Balch and Pryor, "Jesus' Creation," 288.

²¹⁷ Kevin Gushiken, "Spiritual Formation and Multiethnic Congregations." *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 42 (2011), 188.

diversity and commit to enacting an incarnational and multiethnic approach, their communal witness expands and is validated.

Proclamation and Formation

Another key component of churches ministering at the convergence of themes is that of the proclamation and formation of the Gospel and gospel communities. This happens once a community has committed to the incarnational presence of God. As Castellanos notes, this must happen at the margins of society. Similarly, Leopold Sanchez makes the same point. For him, it is the church's embrace of the margins that enables faithful proclamation, unification through solidarity, and true repentance.²¹⁸

It is important also to note that the nature of this proclamation and formation is not an erasure of culture or heritage, but an enhancement of it. The goal of Christian community formation is a fulfillment and celebration of cultural perspective, not the redaction of it. "Pauline transformation in Christ does not mean the creation of a new group without ethnic identity but rather the transformation of those who are Greeks into transformed Greeks, and of Judeans into transformed Judeans in Christ."²¹⁹

And while the church may give verbal assent to the need for unity amid diverse cultural expression, it has often struggled to implement it. Ioan Sauca notes the tension: "As we attempt to advance on the path towards mutual acceptance and full recognition in the visible ecclesial unity, the rediscovery of that ancient and efficient golden rule and criteria could be very fruitful. Very often we are not able to recognize the same message

²¹⁸ Sanchez, "Can anything," 122.

²¹⁹ William Sydney Campbell, "Unity and Diversity in the Church: Transformed Identities and the Peace of Christ in Ephesus." *Transformation* 25, no. 1 (2008), 15.

of the gospel in the expression of the other as his or her cultural context is different from our own. Many times, the theological expressions of the other seem to us heretical as the terminologies that we use come from different cultural backgrounds. There are times when the liturgical expressions of the other seem to us blasphemous, syncretistic and pagan just because they are not identical to ours or to our way of understanding worship. And still, at the end of the day, we have to discover with perplexity that despite all differences we share the same faith, are led by the same ethos and live with the same hope.”²²⁰ Because of this, the church must learn to embrace both its unity and diversity in the proclamation and formation of Gospel communities.

It is this formation of diverse communities that begins to clearly represent the heart of God. “To experience diversity as a gift of God, communities of faith should develop the environment that encourages the development of this ‘sense of kinship’...”²²¹ It is also apparent to those practicing this level of diversity that it extends beyond cultural or ethnic lines, but socioeconomic ones as well.²²²

Demonstration of Compassion

This diversity should also lead to an expansion of the church’s compassion ministry. Donald Kraybill notes five key areas of what he calls upside-down giving, a demonstration of the Gospel at work in God’s people. These five areas provide timely examples for how compassion works in the Kingdom of God. Kraybill lists economics

²²⁰ Ioan Sauca, “One Gospel--Diverse Expressions.” *International Review of Mission* 85, no. 337 (1996), 254.

²²¹ Romero, “The Church's Struggle with Diversity,” 189.

²²² Angel Santiago-Vendrell, “Practicing Evangelism from the Belly of the Beast: Transcendence and transgression in the Missiologies of M. R. Shaull and O. E. Costas.” *International Review of Mission* 97, no. 386-387 (2008), 299.

justice, full inclusion for everyone in decision making processes, refusing to participate in greed or theft, non-monetary gifts, and selfless acts of love as main keys for compassion and generosity.²²³

This demonstration of compassion, or as Kraybill puts it Jubilee giving expands how the church engages in social justice ministry. John Perkins critiques the ‘quick fix’ mindset of caring and compassion among Christians and instead calls them to take a long view of the problem and solution.²²⁴ Since Kraybill’s poignant words in 2003, the situation has only grown worse. “The frightening reality today is that the wave of poverty and weight of oppression are growing in intensity and spreading laterally. Communities that are crushed are joined by others that are moving towards them.”²²⁵ In fact, Clarke shows that almost one-sixth of the US population lives below the poverty line.²²⁶ As this growing wave of poverty and injustice spreads, what is the church to do?

Clarke continues, demonstrating the clarity found in Christ that the church should find resonant. “If the Creator is conceptualized as the God of life then we might interpret Jesus Christ as the God in life. Jesus Christ came from God to be resident with human beings in their struggle to fall forward into the momentum of God’s vision for all of

²²³ Donald B. Kraybill, *Upside-down Kingdom*. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2003), 138.

²²⁴ John M. Perkins, *Beyond Charity: The Call to Christian Community Development*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1993).

²²⁵ Sathianathan Clarke, “God of Life, God in Life, and God for Life: Lead All of Us through the Wisdom of the Crushed Ones to Justice and Peace.” *The Ecumenical Review* 64, no. 4 (2012), 441.

²²⁶ Clarke, “God of Life,” 441.

creation. This vision of hope is captured in the phrase ‘βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ,’ which is often translated as the kingdom or reign of God.”²²⁷

Deenahandhu Manchala focuses on something similar in his editorial piece on justice. For Manchala the ability for someone or some community to attain both life and peace only happens in the context of biblical justice.²²⁸ Manchala then provides four mindsets for the church to adopt. First is the realization that faith and justice are intertwined and cannot be separated. Second is that justice from the margins is the overall ethical mindset of the people and those looking for redemptive systems and attitudes. Third is the all-encompassing need for justice and its ability to redeem the social, economic, and political components of living. Finally, there is the ability for biblical justice to promote economic advances for those on the margin.²²⁹

For the church then, the implications of justice and compassion are clear. They are inextricably tied to the Gospel and Gospel proclamation. Without an expansion of compassion, justice, and generosity to those outside of the church walls, the church will never be living at its full potential.

Restoration and Development

The church, having expanded on compassion ministry, must then engage in the restoration and development of the community: both the neighborhood and the church. Restoration and development will look different across cultures. For many in white

²²⁷ Clarke, “God of Life,” 448.

²²⁸ Theodore Gill and Deenabandhu Manchala. “God of Life and Peace, Grant Us Courage to Struggle for Justice.” *The Ecumenical Review* 64, no. 4 (2012), 424.

²²⁹ Gill and Manchala, “God of Life,” 425-426.

congregations, this will mean a posture of humility, and a willingness to learn. It will, in many instances, also necessitate quiet submission as the dominant culture learns from the minority culture. White culture has long been the dominant and often acceptable form of Christian culture. Mauricio Usher explains the black theological experience as being similar to that of the Hebrew faith experience.²³⁰ It is the full integration of life and faith that stands unique. In his context God is not a rational argument but a personal experience.²³¹ Yet even within that tension, Usher acknowledges the multi-faceted answer that must be reached, “if our Christianity is to be acceptable to God it must be neither ‘Black’ nor ‘White.’”²³²

As Christian communities engage their neighborhoods, many have realized that they are on the front lines for community development and restoration. In one study, they not only accepted that broad spectrum, but had given it considerable theological reflection.²³³ What then is the church to do as they expand community development and restoration? Wayne Bragg’s critique lies in the idea of development. His challenge to churches is to shift from development and towards transformation. For Bragg, holistic transformation invites participants to fully receive and be changed by God, in “a process

²³⁰ Mauricio Usher, “Redemption and the Rise of the Black Church.” *Perkins Journal* 36, no. 2 (1983), 26.

²³¹ Usher, “Redemption,” quoted from: E. Franklin Frazier and C. Eric Lincoln, *The Negro Church in America—The Black Church Since Frazier* (New York: Schocken Books, 1974), 149.

²³² Usher, “Redemption,” 34.

²³³ Greg Smith, “Implicit Religion and Faith-Based Urban Regeneration.” *Implicit Religion* 7, no. 2 (2004): 152–82.

that moves actively and creatively toward the future, through the mission of the church.”²³⁴

Confrontation of Injustice

This encapsulates the church’s ultimate goal. It is not merely about societal change but change that is both internal and external. It cares about poverty and injustice, not because there are programs to create, but because the God the church serves hates injustice. The Christian community is not solely about developing something, but seeing it transformed, redeemed, and completed in the work of Jesus.

This embrace of justice happens internally, interpersonally, and culturally. Jin Kim urges the church to abandon all forms of violence. “This liberates us to relate to God and to other people out of a hermeneutic of trust, not concerned about our own safety and security but instead able to transform suffering and betrayal into new life.”²³⁵

This is important to the church because at the heart of injustice is violence. It is evidence that God’s shalom, God’s peace, has been destroyed and things are not as they should be. Because violence is so often the default human mode of being,²³⁶ a

²³⁴ Wayne Bragg, “Beyond Development to Transformation.” *International Review of Mission* 73, no. 290 (1984), 156-157.

²³⁵ Kim Jin, “New Church Rising.” *International Review of Mission* 100, no. 392 (2011), 34.

²³⁶ Patricia McDonald, *God and Violence: Biblical Resources for Living in a Small World*. (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2004), 24.

reimagination of Jesus' work in the world is needed.²³⁷ To aid in this, Judith Brady gives the church three skills for living: compassion, support, and justice.²³⁸

Contrasting View

Before concluding discussion on the convergence of these themes, there is one major opposing body of research that should be acknowledged. Prior to the contemporary "missional" approach to ministry, "church growth" was the standard. "Church growth as a discipline of missiology investigates the nature, expansion, planting, multiplication, function, and health of Christian churches in relation to the effective fulfillment of the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations."²³⁹

C. Peter Wagner, building on Donald McGavran's work, defines the goal of the church growth movement. "Church Growth is that science which investigates the planting, multiplication, function and health of Christian churches as they relate specifically to the effective implementation of God's commission to 'make disciples of all nations.'"²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Alan Kreider, Eleanor Kreider, and Paulus Widjaja. *A Culture of Peace: God's Vision for the Church*. (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2005).

²³⁸ Judith Ann Brady, "A Burning Desire for Social Justice." *Religious Education* 105, no. 1 (2010), 8.

²³⁹ DeLonn Rance. "Church Growth Movement." In *The Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization*, by George Thomas Kurian. Wiley, 2012.
http://ezproxy.bethel.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/wileyenchci/church_growth_movement/0?institutionId=712

²⁴⁰ C.P Wagner, "Recent Development in Church Growth Understandings." *Review and Expositor* 77, no. 4 (1980), 509.

The theology of the church growth movement works to create an environment for people to cross as few thresholds as necessary (like lingual, ethnic, or social)²⁴¹ to engage with the Christian story. What it cares about is the effectiveness of certain programmatic efforts for outreach. When individuals can easily and efficiently hear the Gospel presentation in a manner or style similar to their own culture, they are likely to accept it. Expanding on this McGavran stated, “We must make sure that we ask people to become Christians where they don’t have to cross barriers of language and culture and class and wealth and style of life. Every man should be able to become a Christian with his own kind of people ... [it is a] normal, natural, innocent fact that people like to be with other people of their own kind.”²⁴²

The church growth movement was started by Donald McGavran, a missionary to India. “His concern was to develop evangelism as a priority of world mission in such a way as to realize rapid growth of Christian faith around the world.”²⁴³ As such, he explains three main factors that will either contribute or inhibit church growth. The first issue to be aware of deals with factors that pertain to each particular church or group, such as, “political, sociological, cultural, and environmental factors over which the church or the mission has no control.”²⁴⁴ Secondly, there are those issues that the local congregation does have control over. Noting declines in church membership rosters from

²⁴¹ Donald McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*. 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans, 1990). 163.

²⁴² Donald McGavran and George G. Hunter, *Church Growth: Strategies That Work*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1980).

²⁴³ Larry McSwain, “A Critical Appraisal of the Church Growth Movement.” *Review and Expositor* 77, no. 4 (1980): 521–38.

²⁴⁴ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 19.

the sixties through the eighties, McGavran notes, “This was due, at least to a significant degree, to a national institutional factor: in the mid-1960’s their national leaders decided to prioritize social ministries over evangelism and church planting.”²⁴⁵ Finally there are non-human factors to consider. “The Holy Spirit is sovereign, and he is not subject to contextual or institutional factors. He frequently acts in surprising, nontraditional ways, and it is up to those Christian leaders who want to be effective in growth to have an ear to hear to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.”²⁴⁶ Once the barriers of human division have been removed, churches practicing church growth tactics engage in the four different evangelistic missions of internal growth: like bible reading and prayer, expansion growth by evangelizing, extension growth by church planting, and bridging growth by missionary sending.²⁴⁷

Because of its significant contribution to the understanding of evangelism, missions, and church life over the past fifty years, the church growth movement has been one of the most influential fields of Christian research and study. Its history, not without critique and shortcomings, has been one of great influence for the rise of modern evangelical life.

Conclusion

Currently, only around ten percent of American churches are multi-cultural in any relevant way²⁴⁸ yet it has always been a historical fact of Christian relationships. As

²⁴⁵ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 19.

²⁴⁶ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 19.

²⁴⁷ McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth*, 19.

²⁴⁸ Laokouang Seying, “Diversity and Unity,” 194.

Gordon Mikoski notes, “Theology today needs to be an exercise in traditional innovation. It will have to probe deeply its traditional sources in order to appropriate critically the treasures of the past while seeking continually to reinterpret them creatively in ways that make sense to varied contexts about contemporary issues and problems.”²⁴⁹ May the church embrace the call and challenge to live justly, welcome the margins, and embrace holistic leadership.

²⁴⁹ Gordon Mikoski, “Traditioned Innovation.” *Theology Today* 68, no. 2 (2011), 113.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCHING MULTIETHNIC CHURCHES

Review of Project Research

The project was designed by the researcher to help small, declining urban churches revitalize and find new life in multiethnic ministry. To collect relevant information and data, research was conducted via several methods. Research was collected using a qualitative method. Collecting information in this manner, and through a variety of sources allowed the researcher to establish the development of the key attributes and characteristics of churches and leaders that embrace innovation and multiethnic ministry as core expressions of their personalities.

Explaining Benefits of Qualitative Research Method

The mixed method nature of qualitative research lends itself well to the study of innovation and multiethnic church movements. “Qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews, observations, and documents, rather than rely on a single data source. Then they review all of the data and make sense of it, organizing it into categories or themes that cut across all of the data sources.”²⁵⁰ As Creswell later explains, “We conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to

²⁵⁰ John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*. 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2018). 43.

share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study.”²⁵¹

The researcher carried out the study in several different steps. First, the researcher chose to examine contemporary churches that were engaging in multiethnic ministry. The second part of the research involved interviews conducted with pastors and ministry leader influencers.

The first part of the research focused on contemporary churches. To accomplish research here, the researcher emailed a list of interview questions found in Appendix A to churches in California that are engaged in the defined scope of multiethnic ministry. The churches fell into two categories. The first group were churches already considered to be multiethnic. This means that there is no more than eighty percent of the majority ethnic group. The second group contained churches that are intentionally looking to diversify and expand ministry into multiethnic dimensions. This could be through intentional church planting, leadership cultivation, or strategic community engagement.

The second component to the research process included church visits. The researcher attended several local churches intentionally practicing a vision of multiethnicity. The researcher attended five different churches throughout the central valley of California to examine how each handled the issues surrounding multiethnicity and leadership. The goals were to see how the vision of each church encompasses and impacts their mission and helps community engagement in a diverse neighborhood. Additionally, the researcher wanted to discover the effectiveness they are having in

²⁵¹ Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 45.

breaking down racial barriers, and the problems they are encountering in that regard. Finally, the researcher wanted to know how the church handles conflicts and cultural differences in ministry. Churches studied were: Butler Church of Fresno, California as well as Hi-Def Church, The Garden Church, The Oaks Community Church, and Renaissance Church all of Bakersfield, California.

The third component to the field research focused on having interviews with practitioners in a variety of fields that were engaged in multiethnic ministry. These were leaders that were not currently pastoring in a local church context. Included in this group was an author and speaker on racial issues, a denominational leader who has dealt with growing the church planting and cross-cultural component of the denomination, and a parachurch organizer teaching at a Christian college.

By gaining insights from pastoral leaders, by visiting innovative and multiethnic churches, and by reviewing related and contemporary literature, the researcher was able to identify and create a pastoral ministry matrix for multiethnic ministry.

Field Research

Field research and the development of a relevant and applicable coding system emerged from this qualitative method as a way to develop applicable steps for ministry leaders. The field research began as a way to tie together the biblical and academic research done by the researcher and to provide a bridge forward for contemporary application. The field research was done in five primary areas.

Interviews with Ministry Leaders

One of the main areas for research focused on interviews with contemporary ministry leaders: pastors and members of leadership teams that were engaging in

multiethnic ministry. The location and the position of the pastors varied, though most were lead pastors located in California. Ethnicity varied as well, as the researcher was attempting to provide a more robust view of pastoral leadership, values, and perspective.

These interviews sought to discover if a baseline set of characteristics could be identified in three critical areas of church ministry: leadership, multiethnic transition, and innovation. Each interviewee was given a series of twelve questions to answer (Appendix B). The goal was to examine how a variety of churches, led from different ethnicities, examined issues surrounding multiethnic ministry.

While all church leaders, with the exception of one, were based in California, the varying ethnicities, genders, and location gave a good overview of contemporary issues. The hope was to see if there were key leadership characteristics that could transplant to any ministry context. By providing a baseline framework for multiethnic ministry, the goal was to build parameters for churches in transition to help ease the inevitable disruption caused by transition while simultaneously shortening the transition period.

Site Visits to churches

Site visits to churches in Bakersfield and Fresno, California were also conducted. In the summer of 2017 and fall of 2018 the researcher visited four churches: Hi-Def church, Garden Community Church, the Oaks Community Church, and Renaissance Church. In the summer of 2018, the researcher attended Butler Church of Fresno, California. The goal of these site visits was to see what innovative and multiethnic churches were doing that was similar or different than traditionally homogenous churches. Additionally, information was pulled from the researcher's previous ministry

experience as Lead Pastor of Garden Park Church in Denver, Colorado as it transitioned from a homogenous church to a multiethnic one.

In each instance, intentionality was made about the churches surveyed. Three of the churches surveyed were chosen because they were established as homogenous churches yet successfully made the transition to multiethnic churches. Their diversity was established throughout their leadership structure both on the stage in worship gatherings and in their leadership team. The fourth church that was visited was intentionally established as a multiethnic church with an explicit and foundational view to promote diversity. The fifth church researched, the researcher's home church, is homogenous but leadership has expressed desire to move towards greater levels of diversity and multiethnic ministry and put forth some actionable ideas.

Interviews with Auxiliary leaders.

The third part of the project research focused on interviewing auxiliary leaders of multiethnic movements. Auxiliary leaders were defined as those with leadership positions in church leadership or education that were not pastors. This research consisted of interviews with a denominational leader of the United States Mennonite Brethren Conference, attending a conference from an educator that focuses on diversity and multiethnicity in the church, and a college professor.

Review of Related Literature

During the interview process interviewees frequently mentioned similar books, authors, or perspectives that became relevant for the further research. Related literature included books, ministry journals, conferences, and key ministry practitioners that were repeatedly identified as being at the forefront of multiethnic ministry.

Changes to the Project

Since embarking on the project, a couple of changes were made. One was the addition of interviewing non-ministry leadership. While the research from pastoral practitioners provided great insight into contemporary practices, the addition of non-ministry practitioners (business leaders and denominational executives) provided the opportunity to gain additional insight and contemporary relevance. The goal of denominational leaders was to examine the relevant issues from a larger perspective. While local ministry leaders like pastors were able to give a sense of immediacy to decisions related to multiethnic ministry; denominational leaders were able to provide a larger context for a growing set of multiethnic ministry-related endeavors.

A second major change was the addition of theological themes that emerged out of the research. Initially, the focus was solely on the book of Acts, however the frequency of themes that emerged out of the interviews necessitated a change to include new passages, themes, and ideas.

After engaging in the interview process, several key biblical passages came to light as foundational to multiethnic churches. While each church leader also provided some unique or context-specific examples, three passages were given as foundational and influential in multiethnic thought. Given the significance of the expanded texts, these passages were added to the biblical exploration section of the research project.

CHAPTER 5: EMERGING THEMES AND TRENDS

Analysis and Findings

By developing a coding system and analyzing the gathered data, clear trends for successful multiethnic ministry began to emerge. Similarly, visiting churches allowed for visual representations to be made as a way to establish trends in multiethnic ministry.

Development of the Coding System.

The coding system emerged out of the data as a way to track repeated themes and ideas. In many cases exact words, like humility, were used. In other instances, ideas emerged that created a similar though pattern or direction of intent. Throughout the research collection process, these repeated phrases were distilled down for simplicity of thought. During the interviews and related research, repeated themes were categorized. Based on the literature review, categories were explored around significant themes including the internal health of the leader, external and spatial recognition, and visions for future growth. Additionally, given the nature of the research, quadrants were included to develop a solidly robust Christian perspective. These themes of theological concepts and ministry expansion provided additional support and insight into the research process.

Across the spectrum of biblical research, interviews, relevant literature, and site visits there were five key themes that continued to emerge. These trends focused on internal qualities of leadership, external characteristics, a vision of success, the key theological concepts needed, and avenues to expand into future multiethnic ministry.

The following table condenses the information gathered into the themes that emerged after reviewing the recorded transcripts or emailed responses. It divides the themed responses into each of the different areas studied in the field research: biblical examinations, pastoral interviews, auxiliary leaders, site visits, and related literature.

It should be noted that not all recorded themes emerged in all interviews or in equal portion. The easiest and most readily available trends emerged in personal interviews. For example, nearly all respondents mentioned something about the importance of humility in leadership. Without it, not only is any sort of leadership difficult and ineffective, but especially multicultural leadership.

More difficult to discern were the trends in site visits. Some churches openly addressed diversity and culture as a part of their worship gathering. Others did not. Similarly, some made clear claims at aiming for diversity and inclusion, while others implied it. The ability to code site visits effectively became crucial with such a variety of feel, style, and function.

Auxiliary interviews proved to be valuable with their diversity. These leaders are respected in their fields but live outside many of the day-to-day demands of a specific church context. Yet their involvement in multiethnic movements and desire to see diversity expand in the church both lend credibility to their message. Their diversity and location helped expand influence and reach as well. Included were people of color, both males and females, and individuals from different educational, religious, political, and theological backgrounds.

Table 1 – Coding of Themes

<i>Emerging Themes</i>	<i>Biblical Examination</i>	<i>Pastoral Interviews</i>	<i>Auxiliary Interviews</i>	<i>Site Visits</i>	<i>Related Literature</i>
Internal Characteristics	Humility Sense of Calling	Humility	Humility	Humility Diversity is embedded in DNA.	Humility. Sense of Calling.
External Characteristics	Genuine love for others. Inclusion and celebration.	Value of Diversity Ability to Listen	Awareness of own cultural competencies and deficiencies.	Diversity in stage presence and leadership teams.	Celebrate Diversity Love
Vision of Success	Unity of believers Worshipping together.	Raising awareness of issues on race and religion. Successful transitions to celebrate.	More diversity in key leadership positions. More teams following 80/20 rule.	More diversity present at all levels of church leadership.	Inclusion Growth
Key Theological Concepts	Unity	A vision beyond personal preference of genuine love, empathy, and Kingdom expansion for others.	Empathy Celebration of diversity	Prayer	Prayer
Expanding Multiethnic Ministry	Apostolic expansion Awareness of Spirit movement.	Intentional equipping and calling of diverse members of community into leadership.	Deployment of culturally aware leaders. POC in leadership positions.	Intentionally seeking diversity Celebrate culture.	Seek diversity Celebrate culture.

Exploring Themes

Interviews with Pastors and Ministry Leaders

Interviews with pastoral ministry leaders were conducted in two formats, either via email or recorded phone conversation. Each interviewee was given the same form (Appendix B) and given the option of either responding either in writing or by scheduling a phone interview at their convenience.

Evident from table one are several elements critical to churches engaging in multiethnic ministry. As mentioned above, multiethnic churches and leadership teams repeatedly stressed the theme of humility. There are several aspects of this theme. First, church leaders wanting to engage effectively in multiethnic ministry must have a sense of rootedness in the mission that God has called them to. Respondent D noted several things of critical importance for humble leaders including: a willingness to listen and learn from people of different cultural backgrounds, a realization of personal bias and understanding, increased cultural awareness, and a distinguishing of difference without an assignment of labels like good or bad.²⁵²

Similarly, he also noted the need for individuals to spend time listening to other cultures. This is particularly true of the dominant culture listening to marginalized peoples.²⁵³ Interviewee B noted something similar by saying, “Until those in power are sufficiently humble and aware of their historical oppression, they will never fully

²⁵² Interview by author. September 24, 2018.

²⁵³ Interview by author. September 24, 2018.

empower those different than themselves.”²⁵⁴ It is this ability to listen that continues to keep the leadership humble.

Second, there was the emergence of what might best be described in Bill Hybels’ book as a “holy discontent.”²⁵⁵ For many leaders in multiethnic contexts there was a recognition and celebration of what had already happened, but also a sense of urgency to see even more progress made. Pastoral interviewees commented that after the initial awareness of discrepancy was noticed, there were intentional steps made to change. One pastor commented that it was during a prayer walk of the neighborhood with a prayer to, “look like our neighborhood” that things began to change. And while that change has been celebrated, it is not enough. When asked what a five-year success might look like, he responded by saying that they wanted to reflect a ten-mile radius of their community while adding more languages.²⁵⁶

This desire for continued growth in diversity is a hallmark of multiethnic churches. A female pastor from Los Angeles notes that while issues surrounding race, ethnicity, and diversity are spoken about regularly, multiethnic congregations are also aware of their own weaknesses.

Our main area of weakness is in our outreach and retention of African American neighbors. There are so many more barriers for black folks to join a mixed-race church. Trust takes much longer to build. And some of our folks have their racism towards black folks. We have taken some initial steps to try to address racism against the black community with some of our Latino congregants, but more is certainly needed. And in some cases with our white and Asian American congregants, there is more unconscious discomfort and lack of familiarity with the black community. We are working with various leadership groups in our church

²⁵⁴ E-mail interview by author. July 17, 2017.

²⁵⁵ Bill Hybels, *Holy Discontent*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007).

²⁵⁶ Hybels, *Holy Discontent*.

about this and are praying that the Spirit will break the spiritual strongholds of racism in our own church.²⁵⁷

Multiethnic churches are aware of their deficiencies, as she notes, but also realize that in many ways it is just a part of who the church is. The realization of being in an ethnically diverse neighborhood often leads churches to engage multiethnic ministry because it is what faithful Gospel proclamation looks like. A Chinese pastor from San Jose acknowledges that their church is diverse, but attributes it largely to the neighborhood and the workplace being diverse. “It’s relational and built through relationships that people have with one another. It helps because the neighborhood and community are very diverse. Whenever we’re talking about sharing your faith with your coworker, with your neighbor, with your classmate, that’s implied and specifically talked about in the multiethnic relationship.”²⁵⁸

A third theme emerging out of the data was a repeated focus on how leadership reflects the desired result. This is true not just in on-stage presence, but as fully integrated cultures. Frequently, church leadership also passed this value on to the congregation. One interviewee from Hayward, California responded, “If they don’t have multiethnic friends, they won’t have them at church.”²⁵⁹ All respondents noted at least one key aspect of a leader’s influence and how it contributes to the overall health and goal of the church’s direction. Pastor D noted that each leader must first understand and value the need for ethnic diversity. Moving a church towards ethnic diversity will fail if it is just a head

²⁵⁷ E-mail interview by author. July 17, 2017.

²⁵⁸ Telephone interview by author. October 31, 2018.

²⁵⁹ E-mail interview by author. July 17, 2017.

knowledge test. Instead, it is something that must be experienced in relationship and lived out on a daily basis.²⁶⁰

For many leaders, this is seen as one of their ultimate quests. Interviewee A, a pastor in California, noted that having leadership is one key component to multiethnic ministry, but that there must be more. A success for his church in the next five to ten years would be a transition of senior leadership to not include a Caucasian lead pastor.²⁶¹ Similarly, many other pastors noted the degree to which the church must pursue multiethnic ministry in the here and now. For many church leaders interviewed, the ability for the church to integrate people of color (POC) into key leadership positions is a key sign of progress.

A final key point that emerged from the research was the repeated observation of how embracing a vision of multiethnic ministry for the church also benefits the neighborhood surrounding the church. For churches engaging in multiethnic ministry, it awakens their capability to recognize, confront, and fight against abuses, injustices, and societal biases. Understanding how race plays a role in the direction of society at large changes a congregation. Vanessa Guzman noted that it awakens congregation to white privilege and how to best soften hearts to make progress among Caucasians.²⁶² Pastor F, during his interview, explained that when churches engage in multiethnic ministry, it gives the surrounding neighborhood a real sense of what Jesus is all about by breaking

²⁶⁰ Interview by author. September 24, 2018.

²⁶¹ E-mail interview by author. July 5, 2017.

²⁶² Telephone interview by author. October 3, 2018.

stereotypes.²⁶³ Similarly, one interviewee, a leader of a college-level non-profit aimed at diversifying the pastorate commented that when a church successfully engages its diverse neighborhoods, it will become, “more aware of the injustice in the community and active in combating it.”²⁶⁴

Site Visits

In addition to interviews with pastors and other ministry leaders, site visits to churches were conducted to help understand how visual representation of multiethnic churches might differ from homogenous ones. To begin the research process, the researcher spent time looking for churches listed on the Mosaix directory website.²⁶⁵ This directory is based on churches who have self-reported a multiethnic status as attained by the 80/20 rule set forth by Michael Emerson.

This exploration served two primary research objectives. The first was to compile an initial list of churches to contact for interview opportunities. The second was to see if multiethnic churches designed their websites to engage target audiences differently than ethnically homogenous churches.

After some email exchanges, not all churches qualified or met certain criteria. Some churches did not feel as though they met multiethnic requirements and withdrew from consideration. Others acknowledged that they met the criteria but were unwilling to be interviewed about their ministry engagement.

²⁶³ Telephone interview by author. October 31, 2018.

²⁶⁴ Telephone interview by author. September 12, 2018.

²⁶⁵ "Directory." Directory. Accessed April 01, 2017. <https://www.mosaix.info/directory>.

The second goal of the online research was to see how multiethnic churches engaged in online ministry, though after some exploration insufficient data were available. Most websites revealed that there was nothing decidedly different about a multiethnic church's website when compared to a homogenous church's website. While some multiethnic churches had different language options available, not all churches did. Much of this depended on the structure of the church and how 'multiethnic' was understood and defined. In some cases, it was one church with multiple nationalities present in a worship service, while in others there were services given for each language or people group represented.

Over the course of this research though, it became apparent that on-site visits would be important to understanding the culture created in multiethnic churches. Online ministry presence is not a great indicator of culture, though in-person visits can be. The researcher narrowed down the site visits to The Oaks Community Church, Hi Definition Church, and The Garden Community Church, all of Bakersfield, California. Additionally, a site visit was conducted to Butler Church in Fresno, California in conjunction with a multiethnic ministry conference. Finally, experience was pulled from the researcher's previous ministry context pastoring a homogenous church that was in transition to being a multiethnic church.

What emerged out of the site visits was a clearer understanding of how the spaces and places of ministry can greatly affect and influence multiethnic ministry. While most churches would undoubtedly spend time on design and function of a worship space, churches seeking out an intentional multiethnic level of diversity spent considerably more effort designing the space and flow of the worship area. For example, one site-visit

church in Bakersfield, California hangs a flag representing each country of origin of their members. As their missions' program, both local and global, works to expand the Kingdom, their worship space changes to provide a physical reminder of the work being done.

Additionally, multiethnic churches embrace their diversity and display it on stage. Diversity is engrained in the life of the church and is something that is celebrated throughout the gathered community. Both the site-visit churches and the pastoral interviews emphasized this point, saying that diversity can only truly be realized and celebrated when it is presented on stage.

These issues of leadership presence are of critical importance in the multiethnic church. Every church visited demonstrated attention to this issue. Pastoral interviews confirmed that on-stage presentation of diversity is a major issue in multiethnic churches. Non-verbal communication cues, like those present on stage for preaching, music leading, and prayer provide emphasis and direction for the multi-ethnic church.

One church visited used joint services as times of intentional multiethnic ministry. Their model used separate congregations on Sunday mornings except for a number of services throughout the year where they merged. Under the model of, "Many congregations, one church" each church was empowered with its own budget, pastoral team, and outreach opportunities. These focused on the three main demographics of the current church: Hispanic, Laotian, and English. Once a quarter however, these congregations all come together to worship as one congregation. Throughout the service, elements of each nationality, ethnicity, and language are celebrated through prayer, art, dramatic readings, preaching, and song. Additionally, joint service opportunities like

Halloween, monthly community gatherings, and Advent are split amongst the congregations so that culture and heritage can be fully embraced, shared, and celebrated.

Transitional Church in Denver, Colorado

One of the researcher's previous ministry experiences was a transitional church in Denver, Colorado. This church, transitioning from years of decline as an ethnically homogenous church, intentionally began to seek out diversity and transition to a multiethnic church in 2016.

The church, having realized its ineffectiveness in reaching and reflecting the neighborhood, sought to more intentionally experience worship outside of its comfort zone. What emerged was a full merger with another local, entirely Hispanic/Latino congregation comprised largely of immigrants. The pastor, a female, underwent a full immersion into the pastoral team and denominational polity.

After months of talks, interviews, and board decisions, a full merger was accomplished in January of 2017. Throughout the process, issues of cultural interpretation, political issues, and hidden perspectives of race and class were uncovered. For many in the established, white congregation, issues of power also came into play. The congregation was led through issues of diversity, immigrant law, and race relations in ways that moved out of theoretical discussions and into the real and everyday situations of life.

Equal representation in leadership, public service, preaching, and missions became paramount. Additionally, issues of language had to be addressed. The Hispanic congregation, largely immigrant or first-generation, were not fluent in English.

Presenting the Gospel in a way that engaged both languages simultaneously became a critical focus of the leadership team.

One example of this was the need to reformulate the pastoral model. The Caucasian church had previously employed a lead and associate role. The fear was that if the merging church came under this model, it would cause further issues of power imbalance. For the merging congregation, there was nothing ‘associate’ about their pastor. She had been the lead pastor from the start. There was a strong realization that the traditional model would perpetuate white power dynamics and cause a rift in the newly merged churches. Ultimately what emerged was a pastoral model based on giftedness and calling that moved away from a lead/associate role and instead focused on full inclusion and directional power from all three pastors on staff.

One pastor would focus primarily on areas of discipleship and spiritual growth for those within the church. Their oversight would be given to preaching, teaching, and Christian education. While this pastor was not ultimately responsible for completing all of the duties, volunteers engaging in these activities would report directly to them. This role was given to the Latina pastor of the merging congregation.

A second position was reformatted to focus on areas of outreach and community engagement. This person’s job would be to oversee all outreach and mission events that engaged the community outside of normal church life. This was given to one of the two pastors of the merger church.

The third revised job description focused on areas of administration and organization. This person would be involved in the day-to-day scheduling of activities

and volunteer coordination, as well as service planning, worship, and payer teams. This role was given to the second person on the merger church.

The hope in this process was to bring about a clear and organized approach to the pastoral ministry of the new church format that freed people from conceptions of a lead and associate dynamic. Realizing that both congregations would have notions about how power was exerted, careful attention to dynamics of race, leadership, and visible presence was expressed throughout the model.

Christena Cleveland Conference

Fresno Pacific Biblical Seminary held a Believer's Church Lecture Presentation with speaker Christena Cleveland on September 24, 2018. The goal of the day-long conference was to examine ways the church could bridge the racial divide. The researcher attended the conference to further examine issues of race and theology in the church today.

During the presentation, Cleveland presented the stages of racial awareness that people go through based on their ethnic identity. According to Cleveland, there are six stages for white people and five stages for people of color. For white culture the stages are: contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independence, immersion, and autonomy.²⁶⁶ Each of these stages is marked by distinct characteristics, and individuals can shift, enter, and exit a stage multiple times and in any order. At each of these stages, an individual is presented with new or troubling information that must be processed and

²⁶⁶ Christena Cleveland. *Community Forum: "Spirituality & Racial Reconciliation."* Butler Church, Fresno, September 24, 2018. <https://vimeo.com/291994422>.

acted upon. Depending on how the individual resolves the new information they will shift in or out of a stage, and either toward or away from racial equality.

For people of color there are five stages of racial awareness: pre-encounter, encounter, immersion, internalization, and internalized commitment. Similar to white people facing decisions in their own racial awareness, people of color encounter issues of systematic and institutionalized racism and must decide how to process and evolve with the new information.

Throughout the conference, issues intersecting with the multiethnic church surfaced. For example, Cleveland noted that she frequently receives emails from white pastors seeking her help in getting black people to attend their church. Her response is usually, “What have you done to deserve black people?” She demonstrates that there is a difference between, “a space that is not just welcoming, but equitable for everyone... Not just treating everyone the same but privileging the folks who have been marginalized in the past.”²⁶⁷

Related Literature

In many respects, popular literature is just beginning for the multiethnic church. Because a relatively small percentage of churches meet the requirements to be labeled multiethnic, there is little broad-spectrum data available to pull from. What is available, however, can be helpful in seeing the dynamics that multiethnic churches face. Most churches engaging in multiethnic ministry learn from the information coming out of the Mosaix Global Network. Officially established in 2004 by Mark DeYmaz and George

²⁶⁷ Cleveland, *Community Forum*.

Yancy, Mosaix “is a relational network of pastors and planters, denominational and network leaders, educators, authors, and researchers alike, that exists to establish healthy multiethnic and economically diverse churches for the sake of the gospel in an increasingly diverse and cynical society, throughout North America and beyond.”²⁶⁸ Additionally, Mosaix has been responsible for much of the growth seen in the multiethnic church. “Throughout that time, since 2001, the percentage of churches having at least 20% diversity in their attending membership has risen from 7.5% to 13.7%, and to 14.4% among Protestant Evangelical churches. According to sociologist Michael O. Emerson, author of the seminal work, *Divided By Faith*, Mosaix has played a preeminent role in driving such statistical change.”²⁶⁹

Given this substantial influence, it is no surprise that the number one answer for pastoral influences in the interviews conducted included Mark DeYmaz and Mosaix. Mosaix’s influence has been far reaching, including DeYmaz’s own personal efforts as a pastor and theologian, as well as books, articles, and a national conference for the last four years.

DeYmaz’s passionate words have shaped much of the conversation on race, religion, and the church. He explains his realization as one that carries a major implication for the church. “If the kingdom of heaven is not segregated, why on earth is the church?”²⁷⁰ He starts his book *re:Mix* by offering the following critique of the American Church.

²⁶⁸ “Welcome to Mosaix.” Mosaix. Accessed November 11, 2018. <http://www.mosaix.info/>.

²⁶⁹ “Welcome to Mosaix.” Mosaix. Accessed November 11, 2018. <http://www.mosaix.info/>.

²⁷⁰ DeYmaz and Li, *Ethnic Blends*, 19.

According to the latest research, churches today are ten times more segregated than the neighborhoods in which they exist, and twenty times more segregated than nearby public schools...To date, however, the inability, unwillingness, or lack of intentionality on the part of local church pastors in seeking to bring diverse people together as one in the church has rendered us, collectively, impotent in the eyes of society on matters of race, class, and injustice. In other words, people instinctively look elsewhere for answers; they do not look to the local church.²⁷¹

Mosaix's goal is to call attention to this discrepancy and lead the church to the forefront of all multiethnic movements. Harry Li, Senior Pastor at Mosaic Church spoke on the growing multiethnic trends of US culture at the 2016 Mosaix Conference. According to Li, 18-39-year-olds will be 40 percent nonwhite by the year 2020. Additionally, by the same year Caucasians will be a minority in the US.²⁷² Li's engagement with issues surrounding multiethnic churches seeks to engage all aspects of a church's humanity. He hopes to engage their hearts and their heads. He concluded his presentation by saying, "The best multiethnic churches are the ones who intentionally bring about and talk about issues related to gender, socio-economic, and racial issues... Socio-economically diverse churches are doing the best statistically. This must be promoted." For Li and his church, this has become a continued cry of biblical faithfulness: multiethnic diversity also requires economic diversity.

As the Mosaix network continues to expand its message and influence, it continues to shape both the current and future conversations around multiethnic movements. Because of this, many, if not most, of the multiethnic churches and

²⁷¹ Mark DeYmaz and Barry Whitesel. *re:MIX: Transitioning Your Church to Living Color*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. Kindle Edition). Kindle Locations 283-299.

²⁷² Harry Li, "The Greatest Leadership Opportunity of Our Lifetime." Speech, Mosaix 2016 National Conference, Northwood Church, Keller, November 1, 2016.

leadership teams have associated themselves with the movement. Previous conference speakers include: Albert Tate, Alex Diaz, Bob Roberts, Oneya Okuwobi, Daniel Im, Dave Gibbons, Ed Stetzer, Efrem Smith, John Perkins, Larry Walkemeyer, Noemi Chavez, and Derwin Gray. Many of these speakers have emerged at the forefront of church-race relations.

Derwin's book *The High Definition Leader* was used as a founding document for one of the churches on the site visit rotation. Derwin's book is written to encourage and develop leaders to lead multiethnic churches and to encourage churches that are interested in or going through a transition to being multiethnic. "In a multiethnic America, we need a new kind of pastor-leader who desires to be an agent of reconciliation and to build multiethnic local churches because reconciliation is at the heart of the gospel."²⁷³ Gray's own assessment of the homogenous church echoes Cleveland's stages of racial awareness. He writes, "If we know only people like ourselves, our hearts shrink and concerns for others and their struggles never teach us to carry one another's burdens. Homogeneous local churches can perpetuate the sin of economic injustice."²⁷⁴

"Pursuit of a multiethnic church and, likewise, a multiethnic Christian life, must be firmly rooted in God's Word; racism is ultimately a spiritual problem."²⁷⁵ Because of

²⁷³ Derwin Gray, *The High Definition Leader: Building Multiethnic Churches in a Multiethnic World*. (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 6.

²⁷⁴ Gray, *The High Definition Leader*, 7.

²⁷⁵ Mark DeYmaz and Okuwobi, Oneya Fennell. *Multiethnic Conversations: an eight-week journey toward unity in your church*. (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House. 2016. Kindle Edition). Kindle Locations 149-150.

the influence of Mosaix, the growth of popular literature on multiethnic movements continues to change the landscape of church ministry. It is calling to light issues of race, injustice, and poverty in its many forms and functions of American society. By attending a Mosaix conference, interviewing pastoral leaders, and visiting site churches, it has been easy for the researcher to see the influence that Mosaix has had on multiethnic churches.

Conclusion

Throughout the research phase of this project, various media were used to explore the intersections of leadership, innovation, and multiethnic movements. Through interviews with ministry leaders, site visits to churches, an examination of biblical literature, and a review of popular literature, multiethnic churches have been shown to not only be on the rise but engaging in new and innovative ways with the community around them. Multiethnic churches place a high emphasis on leadership, public diversity, and call out systemic racism and class injustice at higher rates than homogenous churches.

CHAPTER 6: EVALUATION FOR FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Multiethnic churches and leaders engaging in diversity is something embedded in the heart of God. Seeking and proclaiming diversity in the church is not something to be hunted for or read into Scripture, it is something written in to every page. In many instances, the pastors and ministry leaders interviewed saw a multiethnic church as vital to the expression of the church as Jesus is to salvation. Throughout the interview process, there were several emerging trends and platforms for future case studies and research processes that were discovered.

There are three primary trends that are important for observation. These include two trends that emerged out of the research and one that surprised the researcher. Additionally, the implications for future ministry will be examined. So will additional ways for research to be expanded in future studies.

Evaluation of Research Methodology

Strengths

There were several strengths and benefits to this project. Each one provided the researcher with the ability to gain insight and develop key theological concepts to help church leaders on a path of multi-cultural ministry.

The first strength was the attendance of two multi-cultural conferences at the beginning and end phases of the project. The first conference attended by the researcher was the Mosaix 2016 conference in Texas. Spending time to listening to pastors and

leaders of color gave the researcher the ability to help frame and clarify problems in homogenous and predominately white churches.

The second conference in Fresno, California and led by Christena Cleveland provided a good synopsis and refocusing of core values. This event, two years after the first Mosaix conference, continued to refine the researchers thinking, methodology, and importance of key issues.

Both of these events were led by people color and taught the importance of listening and humility that's needed not only in research but pastoral ministry, especially ministry in diverse neighborhoods.

A second key strength of the research project was the intentionality of seeking out diversity. It was apparent early on in the research process that this would be a necessary requirement for a successful project. Listening to and promoting diversity in this project lends credibility to the argument. There are many books, particularly within the white evangelical sub-culture, on mergers, church growth, and leadership. Listening only to these voices will only further perpetuate the notion that these are the only voices in the movement. This is far from true. One intentional research focus was to seek out not just diverse voices and perspectives, but ideas and thoughts that challenged the researchers own thinking and understanding. The goal was to sharpen the researcher's own thinking and understanding along the way. By making an explicit focus to put the researcher in different, and at times uncomfortable situations, it aided the final product.

A third strength to the project was the diversity present in the research and interview processes. Looking at churches, businesses, and ministry leaders from a variety of backgrounds and at different places along the transition process gave a fuller picture of

the work needed. A potentially limiting factor could have been to just focus on only one aspect of the change to multiethnic. For example, had the researcher only focused on already successful multiethnic churches, or on those wanting to transition, the final picture would have been more limited. Instead, by finding not just diverse perspectives and people, but on places in the transitional process, a more robust theology and final implementation process was developed.

A fourth strength of the project was the delimitations and foundational work done by the researcher. The ability to claim the validity for both men and women to be in leadership positions, and not have to argue that perspective saved valuable research time for issues of transition, health, and multi-cultural ministry success.

A final strength of the project is was the focus on the holistic health of the pastor and ministry leader. The difficulty of pastoral ministry is well known, and any undertaking of revitalization and transition compounds that. During the research and interview process, the author of this paper developed a metaphor to help other pastors and ministry leaders understand the significant battle facing established homogenous churches. For churches that started as multiethnic, establishing a multiethnic identity is relatively easy. It's akin to visiting the dentist for a routine cleaning. While there may be some challenges and minor discomfort, there is relatively little pain or change needed. For homogenous churches the work needed is much closer to a root canal. There will be extensive work, deep pain, and lasting change required.

That extensive work has the potential to drain the life of those in ministry. Long hours and frustrating setbacks can be all too common. Pastors and ministry leaders would do well to examine their whole self and set intentional time aside for holistic growth and

health. Including how these factors impact ministry can help stem the troubling rise in ministerial burnout.

Weaknesses

Having completed the research process, there are several weaknesses that emerged. Had these issues been avoided the process, outcome, and insights could have been even greater.

The first significant weakness was the relatively small research response rate. While the diversity and ministerial location were good, the research process could have been enhanced had a greater number of people been contacted to participate in the research process. Part of this emerged from the limiting scope of multiethnic churches in the geographic area. Choosing to focus on the researcher's own immediate setting meant that churches in the central valley were the only responses sought. While the response and engagement was good, it was also a limiting factor in seeing how multiethnic churches are engaging their neighborhoods in other contexts.

A second weakness in the research process was the researcher's own inability to focus on key issues. As the research and literature grew, so did potential issues that needed to be addressed. This at times slowed the research process, detracted from core insights, wasted time, and muddied the final research process. Had the researcher better been able to focus and keep core theological and practical issues at hand, the final product would have been stronger. One example of this was a focus on innovation as key personality trait in multi-cultural leaders. The researcher began with a belief that this would emerge out of the research process. It failed to do so. Spending time researching

innovation failed to produce any measurable or significant results for the research project as it was designed.

A third weakness of the project was the coding system. While research was coded effectively and clearly, more could have been done to enhance not only the time management of the researcher, but in clearly communicating major themes. One example of this is the expansion of biblical themes in chapter two. Because of the emerging research, which biblical texts needed to be included and explored expanded. The researcher failed to account for this possibility, and it led to major revisions, rewrites, and a clouded coding system. Clearly being able to anticipate these future changes and being able to adapt more quickly to emerging data would have helped provided clearer and a more refined coding and presentation system.

Future Modifications

There are several potential places for future study and the development of a deeper understanding of multiethnic ministry. One potential option would be the development of a leadership ministry profile. The development of this sort of profile could help identify and cultivate more theologically sound multicultural leaders. For example, understanding how humility is cultivated and fostered in diverse contexts would be a fruitful study.

Additionally, a profile may be created that identifies certain character traits of leaders. Identifying what character traits or experiences might lead to multiethnic leaders could help raise up future leaders. Perhaps there are significant almost Damascus Road experiences like Paul had, or a pre-disposition to risk taking. Knowing if there are consistent catalytic moments that aid in the development of multiethnic leadership lay

outside the scope of this paper but could make significant advances in the development of multiethnic churches.

A second potential area for research and study could be a more in depth look at transitional churches. Understanding more the common pitfalls and how churches successfully overcame those could help not only limit church decline in general but provide forward momentum to churches transitioning to multiethnic. By focusing exclusively on transitional churches additional time can be spent on the successful news of healthy transitioning churches, a source that is often hard to find.

A third source of future study that could benefit the church is that of diverse expressions of faith communities in terms of multicultural effectiveness and reach. The recent growth of house churches, small groups, intentional communities, and non-profits all extend the Kingdom of God in ways drastically different than institutional churches. Each of the churches surveyed in this study were institutional, meaning they had a localized space that the church owned and operated out of. Most were associated with a denominational heritage. Those that did not belong to a denomination were still influenced by that model of ministry. Finding and exploring other, more non-traditional church expressions could further aid and advance the message and ministry that multicultural churches are trying to advocate for.

Emerging Trends

Humility

There is little doubt that humility would be an important theme in any pastoral interview of essential characteristics. Pulling from a variety of biblical stories and characters, humility is clearly visible throughout Scripture. Additionally, it is frequently

the source of leadership studies. “Nothing in the research hints that leaders should be perfect. Leaders aren’t saints. They’re human beings, full of flaws and failings like everyone else. They make mistakes. Perhaps the very best advice for all aspiring leaders is to remain humble and unassuming— to always remain open and full of wonder.”²⁷⁶

However, it was surprising how frequently it was repeated in the interview process.

What made its appearance remarkable was how often for leaders looking intentionally towards multiethnic ministry paired humility with actions towards others. Frequently repeated were ideas that expressed that humility must intentionally lead to seeking out feedback and direction from others, especially those of different ethnic backgrounds. It appears that for multiethnic leaders, not only is humility cultivated but it is practiced and grown by submitting to others for guidance.

Celebration of Culture

Churches advancing in multiethnic ministry promote and celebrate diversity instead of just tolerating or being open to it. This appears to be an outworking of the humility of the leadership. Expanding the diversity of the church never happened on accident. In the interviews conducted, it was always a conscious and intentional thought of the leadership. This was also always paired with the realization that the culture reached must first be understood, valued, and celebrated. This is similar to the answer espoused by Christena Cleveland during her presentation.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ Kouzes and Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 342.

²⁷⁷ Cleveland, *Community Forum*.

This parallel was also seen in the attention given to the marginalized people surrounding the churches. Both Christena Cleveland and the pastors interviewed noted how important it is for the church to embrace marginalized peoples and those who have experienced injustice. For the churches surveyed, this was not ministry to be done outside of the church or as a budget line item, but as an integral part of the welcoming nature of the Church. This ability for the surveyed churches to embrace and welcome diversity while celebrating the culture of those it welcomed stood out as significant.

This seems to be a significant shift from churches that started homogenous and were attempting to make a transition towards multiethnic. What became apparent is that with transitional churches there was an added level of discourse and attention needed. Churches that began or were intentionally founded with a multiethnic mindset were able to better project and sustain multiethnic movements. This appears to be tied to the idea that for many homogenous churches not only had a previous routine and way of doing things been established, but so had a dominant culture. In both the personal experience of the author and the interviews conducted, this was observed as perhaps the leading limiting factor for a successful transition.

A Missing Innovative Leadership Quality

A final observation on the research conducted was the surprising lack of innovation mentioned during the interview process. The researcher expected innovation to be a key understanding to emerge from the interviewees. Instead, not a single interviewee mentioned anything about innovation being a key part of their understanding or framework. For the individuals interviewed, the multiethnic church was not a new

innovation but a key theological concept as old as the story embedded in Scripture. The goal, in their estimation, has always been a fully integrated and diverse church.

Implications for Contemporary Ministry

Successfully transitioning to and practicing a ministerial life that fully embraces diversity in the church requires a change in many facets of contemporary ministry. First, an understanding and shift needs to be made in the educational process. Much of how contemporary seminaries educate is based on a mastering of the best practices of church ministry. The problem in many circumstances is that the modality is often limited. Classroom lectures are still the dominant form of ministry, and for most the emphasis will be on pastoring in established churches. The current educational system is built for continuing to develop homogenous churches but will have to change to facilitate the growth of multiethnic ones.

Additionally, an examination of the relationship between the mastering of knowledge and the cultivation of humility will need to be examined. While humility will be difficult to teach in an academic setting, providing the space for ministry leaders to develop the tension of mastering information and developing humility through an exploration of the unknown will need to happen. Reformatting educational experiences and exposing ministerial leaders to cultures, celebrations, and ethnicities different than their own opens them to live in a tension of growing their own mental maturity while remaining humble.

For pastors already in established churches, especially those in homogenous ones, ministry will need to change as well. Far beyond how future pastors are educated, there needs to be a shift in how already educated pastors reformat their own thinking. These

issues seem to be more necessary for white pastors, many of whom have never had to wrestle with issues of race, being a minority, or of social inequality. Creating a space for them to hear from their brothers and sisters of color gives them an opportunity to grow and develop more competently as a leader. Through attending conferences, organizing forums, or simply by intentionally creating friendships outside of one's ethnic heritage, ministry leadership capacity will change and expand.

This raises an important understanding towards leadership health. Too often, pastors read from authors that they know, like, or find comfortable. While encouragement in this way is necessary for pastors, substantially more growth happens outside of comfort zones. Find ways for pastors and ministry leaders to read and examine the perspectives of those outside of their normal wheel house, theological background, or ethnic heritage will similarly expand and change current ministerial practices. This sort of intersectional thinking is common in innovative practices. In this way, the thinking of the participants is both refined and expanded as they wrestle with new ideas, terms, and perspectives. For pastors and leaders who wish to fully embrace a holistic perspective of kingdom living, this will be a foundational element of inclusion.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PERSONAL REFLECTION

Theological and Practical Reflections

As stated in chapter six, the researcher was surprised at the lack of focus on innovation. For churches engaging in multiethnic ministry, this was not something new to be innovated, but something old and established in the heart of God. From the earliest conceptions of the church, God's desire has been for humanity to be united as one. This insight has provided additional reflection for the researcher.

Ethnic Tensions

While examining and reflecting on the biblical reflections of the study, it seems important to note the ethnic tensions present in the early church. For many in the early church it was a daily reality. Jewish and Gentile relationships created a major hurdle for early converts, yet they also served as an impetus for advancement in the Gospel. A large part of the early church's testimony was its ability to unite traditionally divergent groups.

It is the opinion of the researcher that this must be brought to light for the contemporary American church. The majority of American churches live a life of segregation, and heartbreakingly, most are happy with the separation. The researcher's own time in Denver helped bring this to clarity for him. One of the most commonly cited concerns among congregants was that they might have to give up personal preferences. For many, maintaining segregation in the name of personal preferences was more important than demonstrating the uniting work of Christ.

The American church, much like the American political scene, seems to be stuck in one of two worlds. One is the belief that there is no problem. For this group, racism died out or became a nonfactor decades ago. The plight and cry of injustice from people of color is seen as nothing more than victim mentality. For the second group, there is most certainly a problem, but reconciliation is rarely, if ever, the answer.

This is the world that the church lives in, and one where it must learn to exercise a prophetic voice. The church must lead the discussion well. It must acknowledge that there is a racism problem in our society and seek to reconcile under the atoning work of Christ.

Much like the early church's struggle with including outsiders, foreigners, and Gentiles, the contemporary church must learn what it means to unite people of different ethnic backgrounds today. Paul's work in unifying people around the work of Christ is helpful and enlightening but all too often missed because of contemporary theological interpretations. The church, often swimming in its own ignorance of racism, fails to see how Paul has called and challenged racist structures and components of society. The American church must repent, learn to hear from brothers and sisters in the margin of society, and implement true and heartfelt change.

Leadership Health

This sort of change undoubtedly begins at the leadership level. Out of the data came a strong trend for leaders to be humble. If the church is to bring widespread change, first to itself and later to society, it will be on the character and inspiration of its leadership.

Leaders must do more than seek out self-affirming views. Part of the challenge of the researcher in this process was to intentionally seek out voices, perspectives, authors, and experiences that fell outside of his wheelhouse. Leaders in churches would be wise to do the same thing, and then share their experiences and insights with their congregations. When leaders are better able to lead their congregation through these experiences, by sharing both the victories and insecurities, the church will more fully and readily be able to accept the needed change.

This process must also be rooted in a leader's own desire for personal health and longevity. Change is usually a hard and tiresome task. It will be important for leaders to remain rooted in their calling as peacemakers, monitor their own internal health, and seek help and support when necessary.

Contextual Recommendations

It is necessary to point out the lack of specific recommendations present within the paper. This is perhaps both frustrating and disappointing to the reader. It is, however, done quite intentionally. Specific recommendations make presumptions and assumptions about local church ministry that cannot and should not be made. The location of ministry will always be the determining factor in significant steps that must be made. Knowing and exegeting the culture around the church will be of first importance and must be done by each church in each instance of multicultural ministry.

Generalized recommendations and guidelines can be offered to help aid readers of this paper, church leaders, and ministry practitioners as they seek to implement a heart for multicultural ministry in their community.

First there is the required leadership characteristic of humility. It has been stated frequently throughout the paper but bears repeating, every aspect of successful multicultural ministry must be rooted in humility. The overriding assumption of the leaders is that they are first and foremost a learner. Develop an inquisitive nature about culture, neighborhood history, societal demographics, and the untold stories of a neighborhood. When leaders humbly approach others with a desire to learn instead of to teach, they model the compassion of Christ to others.

Second, we can point to the need for pastors and other leaders to surround themselves with people of different background, races, and ethnic heritage. They must be willing to intentionally seek diversity. It would be impossible for a homogenous church to transition to a multiethnic one if everyone on staff continued to look the same. Leaders must be willing to not just extend the table for additional leaders, but at key times may need to excuse themselves from the table for the sake of others. This requires great humility and great sacrifice. Yet leadership is primarily about service, and service to Christ and his kingdom sometimes requires great sacrifice.

Finally, everything must be held together with prayer and fellowship. Change happens slowly over time. The researcher often remarked in his own context that change should happen as quickly as possible, but not any quicker. Moving too quickly can be isolating and frustrating to those being asked to change. With love and compassion, they must be encouraged to know that the changes, though hard, will ultimately be worth it. Similarly, the presence of change can lead to fear and stagnation. Change should be encouraged, and sometimes forced, if the risk is no change or motion at all. This is a delicate balance, and one the leader will need sort through.

This makes prayer and fellowship the vital components to lasting change. Remembering that this change is not rooted in the pastor's preference but in the heart of God should cause people to pray that God's heart be made manifest in the lives of his people. Prayer for wisdom, direction, and opportunity are vitally important.

Similarly, fellowship will be vital. The passion to see a united church will fail if it only lives in board meetings and church discussions. Seeking out times to eat meals together, enjoy hobbies, or build friendship are not secondary tasks but vital to the success of building multiethnic churches. These should not be seen as occasional reliefs from the real work of ministry, but as the vital components to success.

Pastor and leaders willing to pursue diversity, engage in fellowship and prayer, and remain health and humble will be able to unite people in the heart and mission of God. For leaders of cultural and emotional competence, the task is great. Fortunately, so is the promise and reward of a life and ministry well done.

Researcher Reflections

Engaging in any project of significant and substantive work requires great sacrifice. This has been true of this project and the researcher's own understanding of pastoral and personal health. During the early stages of the writing process, the researcher sensed an impending conclusion to pastoral work in Denver. A growing sense of restlessness and familial health issues, the researcher and his family rather abruptly ended their pastoral time in Denver and relocated to California. This meant new adventures, a new career path, and new questions about how everything ties together.

Currently working in the health and wellness field, this is the first non-church position the researcher has had since age seventeen. For the first year, there was a strong

sense of identity crisis. The researcher had to learn to rediscover what it meant to be a person, leader, and follower of Christ outside of a paid professional role. Because of this, the researcher spent much of the last year learning afresh what it means to have an identity in Christ above all else. What emerged was a new way of understanding personal and professional calling. The researcher is now able to see the many ways identity was beginning to be placed into a role as pastor, and not as a called person in Christ. The researcher's main source of growth since stepping away from paid ministry has been to understand how Christ desires to work in someone, no matter the career field. There has been a new discovery into the sacredness of all professions when dedicated to God.

Additionally, the researcher has also learned how to apply previous knowledge and experiences in new ways. The researcher's coaching and leadership development capacities have grown. One main new source of joy is helping people outside of a church setting. Much of what the researcher knows and believes is the same, but he has discovered a new application and deeper appreciation for it.

One example of this is the researcher's role as a personal trainer. The researcher spends much of the time counseling and advising clients. What may start out as a workout becomes something more as they look for ways to process what is going on in other areas of life. Being able to open and expose them to God's work in their life is as much of a pastoral role as any paid ministry experience.

Similarly, there was a growing awareness of leadership style, limitations, biases, and misunderstandings that needed to be addressed. As a pastor, the researcher was often trusted to have the right answer. Stepping into a new field, this is not the case. Instead, the researcher had to learn and grow in new ways. That has been a big benefit. The trend

examined in chapter six of needing to balance humility and education is one the researcher has had to live after the move and career change. On the one hand, the researcher is well educated. Yet on the other hand, he is working in a field where everything is new. Both knowledge and experience are limited. The researcher has had to learn to ask questions, listen intently, and seek the input of others. Much of what was advocated for in chapter six for pastors are spaces that the researcher has had to live in the last two years.

Finally, this experience has expanded the researcher's ability to parent. Raising four children who love and honor God is not an easy task, and not to be assumed arrogantly. What has been learned however is that there is value in helping them wrestle with these issues at a young age. Just as the researcher was raised by parents who took the good and abandoned the bad of the parenting they received, so too has the researcher needed to do the same. The researcher is thankful for the work of his parents, and also knows that he has been called to go one step farther. Exposing his own children early to questions of race, injustice, and inclusion has helped provide them a foundation for understanding their role as students, peacemakers, and participants in God's kingdom.

APPENDIX A: DON DINKMEYER'S 14 STEP "LEADERSHIP BY
ENCOURAGEMENT" PROCESS

- 1.) Listening
- 2.) Responding Emphatically
- 3.) Respect and Confidence
- 4.) Genuine Enthusiasm
- 5.) Focus on strengths, assists, resources
- 6.) Develop perceptual alternatives
- 7.) Humor
- 8.) Identifying Similarities
- 9.) Focus on efforts and contributions
- 10.) Identify and combat discouraging fictional beliefs
- 11.) Encourage commitment
- 12.) Self-encouragement
- 13.) The courageous person
- 14.) Dealing with your own discouragement.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE TO PASTORS AND MINISTRY LEADERS

Introduction: Please state your name, location, and current place of ministry leadership

Leadership

- 1.) Who (or what) have been significant influences or experiences for you on this subject?
- 2.) How do leadership roles play a critical part in leading churches to multiethnicity?
- 3.) How might church leaders more effectively communicate the need for ethnic diversity?
- 4.) What would you consider a “success” for the church in the next five to ten years?

Multiethnic Ministry

- 1.) What was the impetus behind your church moving towards multiethnic ministry?
- 2.) What are the current issues that the church at large is missing in this conversation?
- 3.) In what ways does the conversation on race and religion need to change in today’s church?
- 4.) In your estimation, how could a homogenous church experiencing decline capture a vision for renewal around transitioning to a multiethnic church?

Innovation and Future Growth

- 1.) What are some key biblical passages that have influenced your and your church’s thinking on multiethnic ministry?
- 2.) How is multiethnic ministry encouraged in your church?
- 3.) What are your plans for greater levels of multiethnic ministry in your church?

- 4.) How does a multiethnic church benefit not only the church body, but the surrounding neighborhood?

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