

A MODEL FOR BRIDGING THE DIVIDE
BETWEEN MULTI CULTURAL
CONGREGATIONS

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ABSTRACT

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The context is Salem United Methodist Church in Ladue, Missouri. The problem statement is that eleven o'clock on Sunday mornings remains the most segregated hour in America. The project is designed to enhance, education, dialogue, and create interactions within the church by providing multicultural events that will facilitate attitudinal change in race relations, by opening the doors, minds, spirits and opportunities for new relationships. A model for bridging the divide between multicultural congregations will bring people of all backgrounds into the church. A qualitative research model with questionnaires and surveys will be used to measure attitudes pre and post events.

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I appreciate the unending support received from my husband Cliff Sledge Jr., my family, friends, church communities and advocates during the evolution of this project on diversity. My sincere thanks to my faculty mentors Leroy Cothran, Lester A. Mc Corn, Jamison. H. Hunter, and Dr. Anthony Le Donne serving as my faculty consultant as well my professional, peer, and context associates. Thank you to Rev. Dr. Linda Settles, Dr. Velma La Point, Dr. Theresa Stearns, Judge Judy P. Draper, Barbara Dressel, Editor Paulette Black, Rabbi Brigitte Rosenbergh, Patricia Bosman, Cantor/Rabbi Ron Eichaker, Judy Drake, Patricia Florian, Veronica Johnson, Monica Bailey, Danielle Darling, Alice Lancaster, Kim Davidson, Alderman Kevin Roach and context associate Joy Greene. Finally, to the Gardner C. Taylor Fellows, thank you for modeling the process and program as I learned through dialogue and observations.

Gracious thanks to both my childhood and adult congregations, both in St. Louis, Missouri, Washington Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church, and Salem United Methodist Church respectively. Both Methodist churches are of different contexts, yet their pertinent contextual teaching environments developed my natural ability to produce a project and a product of diversity and unity which touches the hearts of many.

It is no coincident that the AME Zion Church, whose history exploded when racial human dignity was denied God's children inside God's church, gave me my life's foundation. Such an embedded history taught me that the church failed to holistically

embrace race and culture, for each person has unique qualities as an individual and creation of God. Generalizations about people cause us to lose the specialty piece that God designed in all of us. I believe those specialties reveal themselves in our differences.

This African Methodist Episcopal Church trained my eyes to read each person and understand their story when looking and listening to them, hence, knowing how their gifts and fruits can be shared with the church. It was a congregation that supported education in every realm of Christianity and prepared all of its youth for the day the doors would “open,” and African American would have an opportunity for full participation in American society. Both my home and the AME Zion church fit together like a well-fit glove training and developing skill sets of ownership and follow through. It was at this church where I received the greatest gift of all, the cornerstone of my life, Jesus, my Lord and Savior. Jesus, a servant who moved against all the odds and touched lives with love and inspiration, in spite of hierarchy. A human who denied death and channeled horrific incidences into Kingdom victories, answering the question, why and not who, what, when, where and how.

Again, it is no coincidence that I, would join a church in my married life whose history also reflects its people’s relocation to these shores, migration of new church locations, generational growth, a MEC church history that denotes splinters, divisions, schisms and challenges of race and culture from the 1864 Civil War to the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. God’s call on my life to join Salem UMC and then a calling into ministry was a matching of my experiences with a church that was called to become more diverse. I came to be where God called me. I am sure Salem UMC desired to alter the course of this church history through my appointment as the first African American

pastor in its 175-year history of European pastors. I was not looking for a career when I joined Salem at fifty-five years of age and at age sixty in seminary. I am gracious to those who followed God's instructions as they supported my seminarian and ministerial journey. The Salem United Methodist Church taught me to seek and find the pattern in the maze. In this context of love and change, I perfected the identification of selecting the path to walk, and many members walked with me.

DEDICATION

Dedication of this project is given to all of those who shaped and formed my autobiography which focused my attention on the issue of diversity and the church, and how the Christian church can be the catalyst for bridging that which divides humankind most: race, and cultural heritage.

To my Grandmother, Bishop Elder Emma Withers, an African American female church planter from Mississippi, thanks to her strength and entrepreneurial spirit which flows to me from my parents. St. Louis Assistant Fire Chief, Preston. L. Bouie, deceased, and Stella May Bouie (Mosby). Through my parent's employment histories and their relentless love of God's church, I came to see what purpose God had for my life in this diversity project. To my husband, Clifford Sledge, thank you again, for always being there for me and supporting my goals.

INTRODUCTION

The anticipated trend is that more than half of the American children will be a part of a minority group by 2020, which means that the trend will be young people under eighteen years of age are leading the census numbers, while the remaining population will follow. Such a shift means that eventually the U. S. population will not be dominated by any one racial or ethnic group. The church has a significant role to play, to holistically embrace race and culture, since we know of these population shifts are on the horizon. Former President Barack Obama addressed racial tensions in the United Nations speech in 2018. He stated that racial tensions plaque our culture and that the United States had its own racial and ethnic tensions, referring to the killing in August 2014, of an unarmed black teenager by a white police officer in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson which led to nightly protests and prompted a national debate about race and law enforcement. He further indicated that America needs to address the issues of her borders.

The problem cited in this writing is that the church does not holistically embrace race and culture. The church has not holistically accepted the responsibility to teach and preach the truth about race and culture. Biblical scriptures that can be used for life applications about race and culture were taught in the lens of biblical storytelling without real life application. This story telling use of scripture is unacceptable and does not support Christian beliefs and hence is a sin because it violates the first and second commandments to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind and to love your neighbor

as God has loved you respectively. Failure to holistically embrace race and culture blocks our relationship of love with God. Racism is defined as the power to dominate by one race over other races and a value system that assumes that the dominate race is superior to others. Such behavior leads to racial discrimination which is the disparate treatment that blocks full access and equity in resources, opportunities, and participation in the church and society based on race ethnicity."¹ Rather racism is personal and upheld by individuals who benefit from the system or if racism is institutional whereas supported by social patterns that lifts up implicitly or explicitly racist value system, racism contradict the gospel. When the church speaks liturgy and sings hymnals of love, peace, harmony and unity, yet refuses to teach and preach the evil and wickedness of racism, it leaves racism at the heart of the racial tensions in our world. The lack of love, peace, harmony and unity caused many people to migrate from other countries and travelled to America in the early sixteenth century. These individuals brought with them their systems of beliefs, old rules, lifestyles hierarchy, arrogance, discrimination and separatism. Even though they fled from the monarch rulers, and hatred of every kind because either they did not conform with the government or they were different. Hence, a new country was shaped by persons who fled oppression, discrimination, persecution, chaos, feudal system and slavery. After reaching these shores, the oppressed became the oppressor. They had a chance to build a new country for themselves, regardless of their differences. They failed. They failed to make a difference in the new world. Instead, they replicated the cultural, racial, ethnic, ancestral oppression that caused them to flee to a new homeland.

¹ United Methodist Church, "Social Principles of the United Methodist Church 2017-2020" (Washington, DC: United Methodist Publishing House and the General Board of Church and Society, 2017), 35.

The church of today does not holistically embrace race and culture, it allows racism and racial discrimination to persist, which causes a downward momentum of life until civilization will cease to exist.² The next chapter will discuss the impact of the changing population trends and this researcher's concerns are that the church has not used the wide variety of literature that is contained in the Bible, such as letters, poems, hymns and stories to help us to "...make disciples of all nations." Disciples will not be racially or culturally similar to our present day society and nor will those whom we will baptize and bring into God's Kingdom.

The majority non-Hispanic white population group is projected to remain the largest single group in America but no one group will have the majority share of the total population due to majority-minority crossover that continues. The U. S. population will become more diverse. Data suggests that America will become known as a "plurality" society. According to *Merriam-Webster* Dictionary, this is a group that has the largest numbers than any other group but no one group has greater than 50% share of the total. There is no majority. This societal change for adults is projected for year 2044 but the projection for children under eighteen years of age is the year 2020.

The Census Bureau reports that, "The Two or More Races population is projected to be the fastest growing over the next 46 years, with its population expected to triple in size (an increase of 226 percent). This group is projected to increase from 8 million to 26 million between 2014 and 2060. Its share of the total population is projected to increase from 2.5 percent in 2014 to 6.2 percent in 2060."³ While the two or more race population

² United Methodist Church, "Social Principles of the United Methodist Church 2017-2020," 35.

³ Sandra L. Colby and Jennifer M. Ortman, "Projections of the Size and Composition of the U. S. Population: 2014 to 2020," U.S. Census Bureau, *Current Population Reports*, March 2015, P25-1143, 9.

is the fastest growing group, the second largest is the Asian population and the third is the Hispanic population. Following are the Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders, African American, American Indian and Alaskan Native.

The international migrations provide population increases in America while the aging Baby Boomers' population decreases in fertility rates, creating increased foreign-born numbers exceeding native born. This change in diversity is challenging and ongoing. For the first time in history, people could select more than one race, which happened in the 2000 Census. Americans had sixty-three racial categories to select from, which is up from five categories in the 1990 Census. A summary of the 2000 Census cited in the *USA Today*, March 2001 edition, titled "Racial Diversity," indicated that:

6.8 million of the country's 281 million people checked off more than one race. Some chose combinations of black and white, or white and Asian, while the Hispanic population rose 58% from 1990 to 2000. What that means is that in 2000, for every 100 people you would meet, 75 of them could be non-Hispanic white. Hispanic is classified as an ethnicity and not a race. Hispanic ethnicity can be of any race. With the visibility, complexity and widespread of diversity, the church has an opportunity to reach non-believers and fulfill the great Commission, as people come to communities where there are resources and opportunity for a better life. The church is no longer the center of the American lifestyle, the formation of culture, the center of influence of our values.⁴

Chapter one will reveal the ministry journey and the context of the project development and implementation. This in-depth analysis examines the context internally and externally and how the interest of diversity skill sets and the contexts for diversity shaped this project. This chapter establishes both the theme and hypothesis for the project. This chapter relates the writer's understanding of the need for this study at this particular time and in the life of the context.

⁴ Eric Law, *Sacred Acts, Holy Change: Faithful Diversity and Practical Transformation* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2002), 9-12.

Chapter two examines the biblical foundations of the project from an Old Testament text that builds the foundation of the project. The exegetical text of Ruth 1:16 and 17, will explore how she resembles the church when it embraces race and culture through relationship and fellowship with others, and to expose laws, rituals and attitudes that prevailed in Israel's culture that perpetuated division, barriers, separation, hatred and war. The format for this chapter will include an introduction of the selected text, close examination of the literary, historical, social, and cultural contexts. Also, there will be word search for deeper biblical understanding, analysis of form, movement, sentence structure and themes according to *Gorman's Elements of Biblical Exegesis*.⁵

Chapter three, examines the historical contributions of the United Methodist Church as a part of the historical Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, and how their contributions created divisions according to race. This chapter will provide history of the denomination and the history of the Social Gospel, Social Creed and the Social Principles for the purpose of highlighting contributions of the denomination to the Social Gospel Movement and the denominations emphasis on the biblical commandments to love your neighbor as God loves you: embracing race and culture.

Chapter four provides two theologies that are pertinent to the project, liberation theology and han theology. The chapter will show how these theologies contribute to the understanding of why the church is commanded to embrace race and culture in order to bridge the divide. This chapter will further discuss the Social Gospel in lieu of embracing race and culture and then discuss liberation and han theologies and the evolvement of

⁵ Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 63-139.

attitudes related to race and culture. Holistically embracing race and culture is embracing diversity which is divine, and the church's responsibility is to proclaim it and live it! Let the truth set you free as scripture rises above false social constructs of superiority, domination, and oppression. The church's responsibility is to preach and teach race and cultures divinity through small groups, class meetings and a curriculums called "My Diversity Circle."

Chapter five focuses on the theoretical foundation showing the practical approaches that are used in the church and other disciplines that change attitudes about race and culture in all societies. These variety of approaches that embraces race and culture are part of an evaluation of current attitudes and positive changes that evolved. These approaches demonstrate how diversity is changing and teaching us to "live it," which can eliminate racial tensions.

Chapter six outlines the research methodology for the race and culture project, detailing systems used to collect qualitative data through questionnaires and surveys used to measure attitudes pre and post events. An explanation of the sequence of the implementation of the project, the tools used, the analyses of the data and connected activities are included. A summary analysis of what was learned from the experience, recommendations for further study, and proven hypothesis is shared in this chapter.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

This chapter acknowledges the ways that my ministry skills, abilities and knowledge connect with the diversity needs of the Salem United Methodist Church in Ladue, Missouri which is my context and where I serve. The Doctor of Ministry project is fulfilled by the needs of the context and the culmination of my skill set. The conclusion of this chapter will provide a theme statement and hypothesis for the project.

Salem United Methodist Church (UMC) was organized in gatherings and assemblies documented in the writings and compilations of a chronology of Salem's church history, authored and compiled by Robert S. Appel. The well-written book tells us that, Salem-in-Ladue United Methodist Church has a history that dates back to 1841.

There have been six locations from the first one located near the riverfront (downtown Mississippi River) at Wabash and 11th Street. The church, parsonage, and a school were built at the first site. The history of the church shows that it was not called by the name "Salem" and this has remained a mystery to this date. Many documents and conversations reveal the church was called by various names such as: North St. Louis Station, First German Methodist Episcopal Church West of the Mississippi, Central Church, and The Wabash Church. The absence of the name Salem is a mystery, but suddenly the "Salem" name began to appear more frequently about 1860. The question

about the naming of the church and the use of the name Salem is still out there, and so is the answer.

The church is currently in the city of Ladue, its sixth location, which is one of the wealthiest cities in the state of Missouri. The ecological frame is a city that has local residences, schools, country clubs, and top retail shops and malls. The city of Ladue is known for its upscale boutiques, restaurants, menswear stores, jewelry stores and, European and American antique stores. Sometimes, Ladue is referred to as an inner ring city because it is encircled by these eight St. Louis counties: Frontenac, Warson Woods, Rock Hill, Huntleigh, Brentwood, Olivette, Clayton and Westwood.

“Residents twenty-five years and over, possess the following education profile: high school and post high school graduation 99.1%, bachelor degree and higher 83.1%, graduate or professional degree 44.1%. Only 2.6% are unemployed and for those who are employed, their commute travel time is only seventeen minutes.”¹

The definition of human ecology is the way institutions and people are situated toward one another. It reminds me of how stock markets around the world impact each other, for no man is an island. However, when I look at my context, I see the spacing of people, groups and institutions and how they affect one another. Here is some general information about the ecological frame.

The Salem UMC congregation refuses to allow its profile or boundary counties from being a hindrance of helping and supporting those who are in economic or spiritual need. The social position has not deterred this church from going beyond the church walls and physically engaging in another church community to expand God's kingdom.

¹ “Ladue, Missouri,” City-Data, accessed August 22, 2018, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Ladue-Missouri.html>.

At first the checks, then the hands and feet followed. We have learned to touch hearts and hug each other while some of us "rock babies" while single moms work fulltime. This environment that the congregation provides resources is called Kingdom House, a community center affiliated with the Missouri United Methodist Church.

Going out in other communities does not cause worries or concerns because we are doing what God has called us to do. In Dr. Stoop's book, *You Are What You Think*, the author tells us that to worry is to strangle, block or choke the path to creativity that gives our lives energy.²

"The City of Ladue, Missouri was incorporated in 1936. To-date, the city has approximately 9000 residence representing 91.6% ownership rate, 3,200 households and 2,600 families.³ The racial makeup based on the 2010 census was reported as 93.0% Caucasian, 1.0% African-American, 1.4% Hispanic or Latino, 0.9% Native American, 3.1% Asian, 0.9% Pacific Islander, 0.1% other races and 1.3% two or more races.

In 2012 Race and ethnicity was reported by the populations of Ladue, Missouri and the United States. It was reported that populations in Ladue, Missouri and the U.S. by race was:

White:	93.81%	81.91%	71.71%
Black/African American:	1.13%	12.13%	12.86%
American Indian/Alaskan:	0.09%	0.47%	0.96%
Asian:	3.26%	1.91%	5.30%

² David Stoop, *You Are What You Think* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revel, 1996), 132.

³ "Ladue, Missouri," City-Data, accessed August 22, 2018, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Ladue-Missouri.html>.

Multi Racial:	1.47%	2.20%	3.13%
Other:	0.23%	1.39%	6.05%

Out of the 3,100 households, it was reported that 36% of children are under the age of eighteen; 72% married couples; 6% females with no husband present; 2% male with no wife present; and 20% were non-families. The average family size is 3.6%. The median age in the city is forty-six years old. The institution of marriage dominates the lifestyle of Ladue.

Daytime changes in the racial and economic community are due to the commuting of 3,326 workers (39.0%), and workers who both live and work in this city 613 (17%). The employment institutions are positioned so that people who cannot afford to live in the area are workers in the area. Businesses are situated as clusters, malls, corporate campuses and food chains that need lower paid workers who travel to these locations daily. Crime collected data shows that theft and burglaries are the largest incidences of crime while assault, rape, murder, etc. are almost non-existent. The institution of law enforcement has theft and burglaries as their greatest concern in protecting this community.

Education institutions are positioned strongly in the community and have a huge profile in this city. Obviously, education plays a major role in earning and receiving income and wealth. "There are seven universities with over 2000 students located some four to eight miles from the city of Ladue. The religious statistics for Ladue residents reveal that 48% are non-affiliates (483,000), Catholic 23% (231,000), Evangelical

Protestant 16% (163,000), Mainline Protestant 7% (74,000), Black Protestant 0.9% (9,000), Orthodox 0.2% (2,000) and other (37,000).”⁴

Salem UMC serves a dual function for its members, both a religious and social institution with a history that dates back to its founders, Ludwig Sigismund Jacoby.

Jacoby, born in Mecklenburg Germany of Jewish parents. A German Jewish boy, baptized by the Lutheran church as a young boy who later married a German Catholic girl. The congregation is proud of its German heritage and the original founders who seemed to be more religious as they possess great faith taking a journey to America and finding a "gathering" that they could share and remember their music and culture. In 1841 when the church was founded, the church's first location was in downtown St. Louis and has moved six times since the first location.⁵

Migration from the riverfront to Ladue has been confirmed as wealthier populations moving away from urban and city dwellers for more space and safe areas. This confirmation was triangulated through verbal documentation of members interviewed as part of my Commissioning Pastor Project. Those who were interviewed as part of my commissioning project, stated that the church moved while they were members because the “Blacks” were moving in the area.

The church continues to be comprised largely of members who are of Caucasian German heritage. Although the church has members that represent twenty-four zip codes, because it is located near a major highway, its population and or membership reflects a small number of the many faces of Jesus. However, this congregation has made a commitment to diversity and since 2010 there has been great progress and diverse growth. Both a female senior pastor and an African American associate pastor were a

⁴ “Ladue, Missouri,” City-Data, accessed August 22, 2018, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Ladue-Missouri.html>.

⁵ Appel, *Salem*, 2

first for this congregation since its beginning in 1841. We have four services, and Modern services (9:30 and 10:45) are continuously growing. Modern services consist mainly of a population of young families with parents in their forties.

The immediate residences in the surrounding neighborhoods are not a major part of the congregation, even though mailings and door-to-door contacts yielded very little results. Our social media generates many visitors from various parts of the city. On another note, it is clear that educational institutions and business organizations are the greatest influence on this community. As mentioned earlier, there are seven universities with more than 2000 students less than two miles near the city. One of the most noticeable features of this community is the concentration of public places in one area while homes and residences are in another area. The City of Ladue reported in 2013 that a median house or condo is valued at \$695,435 and median gross rent \$1,879.00. Interestingly enough, the median household income was reported at an estimate of \$177,507.⁶ This clearly indicates the difference between money and wealth.

The cultural frame allows us to understand the way this congregation has lived its life together. It starts with their constant verbal reminders that the majority of them have German, Irish or English roots. They articulate this information that implies perhaps ownership or status among those who do not have a history with the church. The unique rituals include ice cream socials, annual coffee house, members playing Blue Grass music at the traditional services, and singing a verse of “Silent Night” in German at the Christmas Eve candlelight service. The youth is often at Sunday School while the parents

⁶ Lindsay Toler, “Three of America’s 25 Wealthiest Suburbs Are in St. Louis,” accessed June 30, 2018, <https://www.riverfronttimes.com/newsblog/2014/12/02/three-of-americas-25-wealthiest-suburbs-are-in-st-louis>.

are at worship service. The infants and toddlers are at the nursery; the pre-school children are in the chapel at "church" school. Early in my worship at Salem, this culture did not have their children in regular worship services. The experience of hearing and seeing adults' worship is missed and not imprinted in their minds that church is for adult life too. Perhaps the 483,000 non-affiliates in the contextual area are those who have not been taught that the church lives through witnessing and conferencing as Christians of all ages. Another cultural aspect worth mentioning is the absence of bending knees of this congregation except on Communion Sunday. The positions of sitting and standing dominate the movements throughout modern and traditional services. While praying positions are numerous, it is almost always limited to the sitting position. The traditional service sanctuary has an altar around the chancel, but the modern service does not have an altar or a place to kneel and pray if the pastor made an altar call or if someone wanted to kneel and pray. While my observations reveal that kneeling is important to my way of worshipping; I must also comment that sitting and praying is a sign of a "calm" natured congregation. There is appropriate behavior that resembles a solid ship on a stormy sea. The sounds of "Amen" are few and the sounds of emotions are non-existent. This calmness illuminates what the Apostle Paul told the Philippians in chapter four verse nine when he said, "Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of Peace will be with you."⁷ There are established groups that hold Adult Sunday school classes and have a history that reaches far back to times of

⁷ Bernhard W. Anderson, Bruce Manning Metzger, and Roland E. Murphy, *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocryphal Deuterocanonical Books* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991), 283.

raising their children. Time has given them a distinct identity while newcomers form new groups.

The accounts of the church and its culture which delineates the stories and heroes can be found in an archive room that is structure to preserve documents and photographs. The room is temperature controlled, and all visitors must wear white gloves when handling papers. Every location from 1841 is documented, and those who are fourth and fifth generation do not hesitate to make that piece of history known. There is also a compilation of all of these documents in a book authored by a church member who is a fourth-generation member. This helps the documents to be preserved, so they are reproduced in the book, *Salem - Congregations of the Faithful: A History of Salem Methodist Church*, by Robert A. Appel.

The various groups had relationships over a long period of time continue to be a close-knit group at church and in their communities. They hold up patterns and strategies that they have created which tell the world who they are by heritage and not who they are as children of God. The songs are a set number of hymns that we use often. Maybe all congregations have their favorites but familiarity breeds content. The traditional services lean toward high church with "procession in" with pastors and choir members and only the preaching pastor recessions out after giving the benediction. In addition to the choir and congregational hymn singing, there is a twelve piece orchestra that plays music at a given time during the service and joins in when the choir sings. Even though I think I am at the symphony when I hear them play, I sometimes find the sound complimentary when played with hymns. Through the music ministry, we embrace and increase diversity in the congregation. Special music comes to us from a local and well-known artist from

jazz, opera, and the Muny opera, who make appearances eight times a year. Our goal is to use music as a spiritual vehicle to reach and bring in persons who will enjoy traditional worship styles.

The modern service consists of band instruments used with Christian “rock” music. This millennial age group dresses very casually and uses technology extensively. Mostly everything is on a screen or phone, so there are no Bibles, hymnals, altars or a cross in this worship space. The attendance fluctuates from 100-150 worshipers. We are engaged as a congregation in local, national and international missions to expand God's kingdom. With an operating annual budget of nearly 1.2 million dollars, our members, are working in the local community center, national mission trips and the Costa Rica mission trip bi-annually. Our resources are healthy because they are based on a congregation that is strong in resources, education, employment, and community contacts. The church pays an annual apportionment in addition to dedicating the Easter Sunday offering of four services to another church or a community missions project.

In 2017, Salem UMC became more diverse through a merger with another church that was not sustainable based on a context located in a community of lesser means. "The Connection UMC" prior to the merger previously received Salem's Easter offerings and blessings so that they could end their years in the black. Our relationships have increased through children and youth programs that we shared with their community. Our diversity numbers increased mainly because of this merger. The theme is one church, two locations.

Through Salem UMC sharing many of their resources through summer programs, we live out the mission statement, "Reaching out in extravagant love to fulfill God's

mission in the world." Our relationship turned into a merger, and we are now combined as a church that has a second location. It is amazing that we have returned to an area in the city where Salem established and moved away from, downtown/south side, near its first site 175 years ago.

Salem is now sharing its Ladue community resources with the Carondelet community. The plan is to have the leadership and administrative teams such as Staff Parish, Ad Council, Trustees, and Finance Committee combined from both sites and become one. This structure eliminated more participation with a greater number of people of various ethnic background down to twelve to speak for a larger congregation. While the two sites have diagonally different worship styles, the conversation is that they will continue to function as usual. Church business meetings declared the purpose of the merger is not to change the identity of the churches but to share resources. Scripture tells us in Luke 12:48, "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required..." and with our resources, we can expand God's kingdom with new opportunities for mission and discipleship.

There are indeed multiple congregational theologies at Salem UMC. These theologies range from the members who have longevity with the history and past generations, to the newest member who brings diversity to Salem. In the past five years the diversity of every kind has made a change in a church that is nearly a 175-years-old. A church recognized as the oldest German Methodist church west of the Mississippi River now finds diversity in worship, prayer, music, dress code, and attendance. The stories that are told are a mixture of the older generation and the new generation. Clearly the theology is varied according to the five generations that worship in four different

services and there are those who do not come to the church to worship but to fellowship and attend classes.

A theology that is connected to a denominational larger body, as Salem UMC is connected to the United Methodist doctrines and polity, is the result of the many kinds of implicit theologies. With a large congregation with many services, the theology for the traditional services is that God is close to humans and the modern services believe God is distant from humankind.

Ministry Journey

Race and culture have been a major component of my life. I am often told about the first house we lived in which was located in an all-black community in the fifties, and how hard my parents worked to make ends meet. A little cottage with a white picket fence was a dream come true for my mother. Dad at that time was employed by Wabash Railroads as a manual laborer, and mama was a stay at home mom. When election time came around, mama decided to be a poll worker just to earn a few dollars. Even though the community was all black, only white political candidates were running for office to represent our community and to be our voice regarding matters that affected us. Race and culture were often discussed at the dinner table because our black community and black families were upset to have “taxation without representation.” I realized that some white people believed their opinions were so much better than anyone else and that no other voices should not be allowed to be heard. The implied thoughts that black people are not smart enough to think for themselves was upsetting the black community. However, my mother found a way to be a voice for her husband and family when she approached a

political candidate and spoke highly of my Dad's abilities and determination to care for his family. She asked if the candidate would remember her family if he won his election. She particularly wanted Dad to be hired in a civil service job as a thank you from the government for serving in the U. S. Navy. The candidate won his election and returned to our home to meet Dad and encouraged him to apply for a position with the fire department.

Dad, Preston Lee Bouie, began his lifelong career with the St. Louis Fire Department in 1952 and I experienced many of his racial and cultural battles in his thirty-four- year career. His career path serves as a lens, backdrop and training ground as my Dad established black history in the St. Louis City Fire Department. I followed in my Dad's footsteps in Human Relation Resources. Race and culture were transmitted to me through the racial tensions my Dad endured as he progressed through the St. Louis Fire department making historical milestones as the first black officer in many officer positions after joining the fire department in 1952 and being assigned to an all-black firehouse, Engine House 28 on Enright Avenue and later transferred to Engine 10 on Kennerly Avenue. "The Fire Department became integrated in 1961 where he was the first black to be promoted to Captain in 1963. This assignment marked the first time a black officer ever worked in South St. Louis Fire Station in a command position. Thirteen years later, in 1976, he was promoted and became the first black Battalion Chief since the Fire Department's inception in 1867; the first in one hundred and nineteen (119) years history of the St. Louis Fire department. In August 1978, Preston, my dad, was promoted to the rank of Deputy Fire Chief, the first time a black man had ever become a Deputy Chief in the St Louis Fire Department. His platoons composed of thirty engine houses,

fifty-four fire companies and two hundred and eighty-four men (284) and citywide duties and responsibilities. In 1983 Preston was promoted to the rank of Assistant Fire Chief is marking the first time a black man had ever become an Assistant Fire Chief in the fire department.⁸

As witnessed by Charles E. Coyle, Deputy Fire Chief/ Fire Marshall of St. Louis

City:

It was in this early stage of my career that I had the fortunate opportunity of coming into contact with (then) Assistant Fire Chief Preston L. Bouie. Chief Bouie was the first African American manger in the department's 100-plus-year history, and he quickly rose through the ranks. . . .Chief Bouie was truly an effective manager was an even greater leader. To witness how he addressed the day-to-day problems within the department (which other managers seem to struggle with) and how employees on both sides of an issue believed that he had theirs and the department's best interests in mind when addressing these tasks or problems as like a carrot dangling in the sky for me. I wanted that. At the time I did not know what it was, but I knew I wanted it. I watched how he carried himself, followed all decisions he made, and wanted to know his thinking process in making those decisions, and I listened to every word he said. *The impact he made on me was one I wanted to have on others.*⁹

My educational background equipped me with skills, abilities and knowledge so that I could pursue a project related to race and culture in the church. I have a clear memory of Bates Elementary School which was crowded and mostly all black children. The school so crew, the school board built temporary classrooms that consumed our playground area. They looked like shot-gun houses. I did not learn the required curriculum for those grade levels as witnessed by my report card grades. As a result, I spent much of the summer going to a tutor and being indoors learning the material that I had not learned. My parents

⁸ Preston Lee Bouie, "Pioneer in the St. Louis Fire Service," *St. Louis American*, accessed March 11, 2019, http://www.stlamERICAN.com/black_history/preston-lee-bouie-pioneer-in-the-st-lou.

⁹ Galen Bingham, *Impact: Your Power to Make a Lasting Difference* (Leadership Residue LLC, 2017), 167.

knew they had to provide a better education for their children; so we moved to a new neighborhood where the schools had plenty of room in each classroom. I noticed there were more white children than there were black children and the all white teaching staff seemed calmer and more visible to me. This new school opened my eyes to differences in skin color, eye color and hair texture. My sisters and I walked home from school with these new friends only to see their parents show unhappiness with our presence as we walked pass their houses every day until they eventually moved out of the neighborhood. I came to know and understand “white flight” and the ugly implications of racial biases, prejudice and discrimination.

Years later, I was slated to attend a newly built high school in an all-white neighborhood. The bus ride was long and tiring and sometimes painful when angry whites threw eggs and rocks at our buses as we were leaving the neighborhood. When I asked my parents why there was so much hatred toward black children being there, they proceeded to remind me of the 1954 *Brown versus Board of Education of Topeka*. This historical landmark court case challenged segregation of black and white students within school systems and in public schools.

These conversations prepared me for this project because I experienced first-hand my high school transitioning from an all-white school and the all-white neighborhood where the school was embedded. I became aware that I was segregated. My school was segregated. My neighborhood was segregated. That there were laws that established these segregation patterns. These patterns were created to foster a false sense of superiority by the perpetrators of these laws. These laws created less than opportunities like the over-crowded all-black school that my parents moved me from so I could have a

chance to benefit from the American Dream. I was personally and emotionally involved as a recipient of legal battles that were fought and victoriously won.

As a beneficiary of an overturned Plessey vs. Ferguson 1896 which allowed states to segregate within school systems. The message from the overturned law was, "separate but equal was inherently unequal." This life experience gave me an understanding of what it meant when people said that education is the key to a "better life." A better life through with education meant better employment, career, income and lifestyle. This case was the doorway to the Civil Rights movement and the integration of America. It was this case that prompted many to set their sights on a life in America because of vast opportunities.

Brown v. Board entitled students to receive a quality education regardless of their racial status. It also allowed for African American teachers to teach in any public school they chose, a privilege that was not granted before the Supreme Court ruling in 1954. The ruling set the foundation for the civil rights movement and gave African American's hope that "separate, but equal" on all fronts would be changed. Unfortunately, however, desegregation was not that easy and is a project that has not been finished, even today.¹⁰

America is known as the land of opportunity where people of other races and cultures came to find in America? Why do they have to travel to America to find this better life and I am already here and cannot find it? My focus became clear that I needed to read and research laws that had derailed access to a better life for many black children and adults who looked like me.

As I graduated from high school and began my college education at Missouri State University, I encountered issues of race and culture. Attending a college in a city

¹⁰ Derrick Meador, "How Brown v. Board of Education Changed Public Education for the Better," ThoughtCo, accessed August 2018, <https://www.thoughtco.com/brown-v-board-of-education-summary-3194665>.

that was the third largest in Missouri, there were no shopping malls at that time, no black beauty salons or barber shops even though there were black people living in Springfield Missouri.

Most black girls felt that the absence of these services was a statement that our beauty needs were not important to a city that had colleges and universities with black enrollment and outstanding black athletes who were the drawing cards that filled sports stadiums. It was difficult to believe that there was not even a black person from the Springfield community that could serve us. We were forced to use our study time to care for each other's beauty concerns inside the dorm rooms or be content with poor appearance throughout the school year because we lacked the skills and training for beauty self-service. These educational experiences were not part of a book curriculum but real-life moments while learning simultaneously from textbooks. I learned to discern what I was being told and compared it to what I was studying and what I was experiencing.

I earned a bachelor's degree in Political Science in 1972 from Missouri State University that equipped me with the skill to conduct primary research, analyze, decision making, and proposing solutions to social problems. These skill skills will be beneficial to my research. My Master's degree in Human Resources from St. Louis University in 1975, provided me with strong communication and interpersonal skills and identifying and resolving people concerns while creating a satisfying work environment for all people.

My project involves bringing people of different races and cultures together to embrace the many faces of race and culture to break down the dividing walls in our

culture. The master class in human resources focused on gaining knowledge of building relationships with diverse groups, diverse talents, gifts, degrees and professional training. I intentionally created events that encouraged interaction with diverse groups, sought all diverse groups representatives to participate, and demonstrated interaction with people from all walks of life showing tolerance, openness, and versatility.

The master program project involved being a member of a diverse organization that would utilize relationship building with a diverse population. This activity exposed me to a diversity of members, programs, and program presenters. The organization's membership consists of more than 200 members and companies which represented national and international company cultures. I worked on many committees to gain a working knowledge of the core groups and eventually became president of this group years later (Missouri Division of Society of Human Resources). I learned to embrace races and cultures and to incorporate all ideas to create out of the box programs which received awards and recognition.

My studies at Eden Theological Seminary and United Theological Seminary have given me different perspectives of scripture that many others may not have. Both seminaries have provided me with exegetical and hermeneutical skills that give me the ability to make critical inquiry and produce biblically and theologically sound projects. Both Eden and United placed emphasis on liberation and social justice issues. The traditional foundation was set but always with opposing and alternate ways of viewing the other theologies liberation and Afrocentrism feminism and being able to approach scripture in various ways allows for the use of different theologies. My experiences at United has helped me to visualize theology and race and culture issues differently. I have

gained a broader understanding of what the biblical writer 's concerns were about racial and cultural diversity as witnessed by the texts. My project will be enhanced because of these new insights.

In addition to education being of the essence in developing and preparing me for this project, I have had career responsibilities that have given me skills that have prepared me for this project. I have functioned as a human resources executive for thirty-two years in the St. Louis Bi-State Region. This function not only included the traditional recruiting, hiring training, development, and benefits but also affirmative action plan requirements and equal opportunity laws for minority, women, veterans and disabled in an effort to create a multicultural employment settings. This constant documentation while adjusting and increasing representation of these individuals equalized the distribution of federal dollars through federal contract awards. Previously these groups did not receive educational and employment opportunities equal to the white male counterparts.

As the Affirmative Action (AA) officer for more than 3000 employees that worked in service programs and retail stores throughout the region, I had to learn how to be audit ready at all times. Contracts held by my agency established a relationship with the Federal Contract Compliance Program (OFCCP) where good jobs are to be within the grasp of everyone. I was responsible for the hiring, firing and promotion audits reviews with actions plans attached. According to OFCCP, contract holders were to make sure no one was discriminated on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, national origin, disability, or veteran. This was just one of many my strategies for the overall human resources department. Full compliance meant maintaining federal

contracts dollars. I was the voice in management meetings that updated the executive team of the alignment of the AA plan to corporate goals and evidence of adverse impact. This function for eighteen years kept me saturated in grievance complaints that often touched on social justice issues and caused me to be an advocate for employees more often than the management team.

Through this work I learned to be an advocate for those who are considered the marginalized, down trodden, voiceless, devalued and oppressed. Those who believed in their rights but feared retaliation. After many years on the job and representing these employees on community committees, I have become sensitive to their plight of being ostracized and excluded. I have accepted God's message that I am to be the fighter for those persons so that they are to be in full participation in our society. Full participation, not just invited to the party but asked to dance while at that party.

As a Coro Foundation Fellowship recipient, I received national leadership training skills on how to empower communities. The program offered training experience in government, business, labor and non-profit organizations along with community and political processes. The greatest feature of this program was the training on how to network with leaders across geographical and political regions and to build consensus, solutions and coalitions. I gained firsthand knowledge as an intern and project participant on how to collaborate with a diverse range of stakeholders and leaders creating change, building social capital and closing gaps in a city where the Mississippi River and Missouri Rivers converge. Both diversity and inclusion skills in this program demonstrated to me how to break down complex problems and to create unique solutions through diverse lifestyles, worldviews, and opinions. In such activities I learned how

differences can be a futile ground for powerful and impactful decisions for communities that are complex more than ever before.

Attached to this conversation regarding diversity and inclusion, is a lesson that I learned from my mother on how to be the voice of others as she maintained relationships different from herself for the sake of the common good. Mom never realized that she touched many black families when she spoke up for daddy. Her obedience to God's command was used to open doors of economic and political opportunities for many over a period of twenty years. Their battles were held up and strengthen by many who helped to prove that the civil service exam for firemen's appointments and promotions were racially biased.

Mom highlighted many of her life stories as a participant in a book titled, *That's The Way It Was: Stories of Struggle, Survival, and Self- Respect in Twentieth-Century Black St. Louis*. This book was a collection of, "oral history of thirteen Blacks who were born in St Louis in the first half of the twentieth century. They told how it was to live in the 'most southern city in the north', the climate of the city of St. Louis, the laws that were written and unwritten, the customs of the city that governed every aspect of their lives including where they were born, lived, educated, worked, worshipped, vacationed and buried."¹¹ My mother's personal stories taught me how she worked to protect me while preparing me for a world of daily racism. She took it upon herself to teach me the harsh lessons and trained me as to how I am to respond. Now I realize why self-respect is a large part of my life. When the outside world has not and does not acknowledge

¹¹ Vida Goldman Prince, *That's the Way it Was: Stories of Survival, Struggles and Self-Respect* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2013), 207-220.

respectability of your family's life long generations, then constant and consistent skills of determination and resiliency are inevitable.

Vida 'Sister' Goldman Prince, the author of the book was *Chairman of the Oral History Project of the Holocaust Museum and Learning Center in St. Louis*. Her collection of work includes interviews of survivors, liberators, rescuers and witnesses. She has served as a consultant to establish oral history projects in other states.

So much of who we are has been shaped by the unintentional and intention passing of information from love ones who tried to make sense out of a distorted truth called racism. The belief that one group is superior over another. As Debby Irving states in her book, *Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race*,

Racism is taught, and racism is learned. Racism invented and perpetuated white superiority which allows white children to believe that they are exceptional and entitled while children of color believe they are inferior and less deserving. Neither is true; both distorts and stunts development. racism divides and strangles groups of people who come into the world full of goodness, with a desire to connect, and with a boundless capacity to learn and grow... understanding how and why our beliefs developed along racial lines hold the promise of healing, liberation, and the unleashing of America's vast human potential.¹²

In my current role as Community Outreach and Justice Ministry, I have found ways to open the doors of the church through diverse programs inside and outside the walls. As I participate in hospitality endeavors, I intentionally search for the interests of new and current members and find a way to stimulate their desires. Our diversity of age and worship style along with race and gender drives my search for different ways we can fellowship and be in a relationship. My appointment as the chair of the Values Team gives me a statewide perspective on how to diversify our influences. The Missouri State

¹² Debby Irving, *Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Elephant Room Press, 2014), xiii.

Conference Values Team is sponsoring a "unity" trip from St. Louis, Missouri to Memphis, Tennessee to tour the Civil Rights Museum at The Lorraine Motel where Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated fifty years ago. On the local church level, I have been responsible for the coordination of Interfaith Partnership joint tours and events through the Arts and Faith Committee, such as musicals and museum tours. I have developed a skill set of cultural competencies that encourages relationship building that supports many types of community engagement.

My spiritual journey and the church context meet at the intersection of race and culture. All of my experiences, education, and professional endeavors leads me to projects that call Christians to expand the ministry of Jesus Christ by "making disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you and remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"¹³ *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2012*, tells us that our "Mission to the World" commits to "crossing boundaries of language, culture, and social or economic status... to be in ministry with all people, as we in faithfulness to the gospel, seek to grow in mutual love and trust."¹⁴

My journey continues to reflect a significant presence of how Jesus embraced and loved all people in both the AME Zion and the UMC congregations. My family's history has been the number one factor that has impacted me. My education and professional skills have led me to lead people of all racial and cultural backgrounds. Both race and

¹³ Brian K. Milford, *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), 125.

¹⁴ Milford, *The Book of Discipline*, 125.

culture increased their presence in my life as a futile training ground for a world to come. A world where unity does not indicate a loss of identity or differences but a world where we are called to minister and to be in a relationship with people of all walks of life, as Jesus showed us.

As our neighborhoods become communities of the world, we are to teach the “Good News” and be the disciples of Jesus Christ. At the end of the day, we seek the same goal, to love and to be loved. The project will seek to change the church's attitude so that it embraces race and culture in every aspect of its activities and presence in order to transform racial and cultural tensions in our communities.

As mentioned before, the scope of this project is to challenge the church to stand in the gap by embracing race and culture through churches, mosque, synagogues and other religious settings for dialogue, relationships, fellowship and *"hesed"* as we understand differences while being who you are created to be. Race and cultural differences are strongly pulling America apart as witnessed by recent riots, and violence in America's communities. A recent Gallup Poll reports that both race and culture are among America's top fifteen issues that Americans worry about.¹⁵

The research question will be, what can I do to change attitudes of race and culture of members who are in not in a relationship with each other. This project will be a model that can be used in other churches and industries to transform attitudes that perpetuate racial and cultural tensions in our communities. The project includes: my diversity circle friendship, the many faces of fashion, understanding social principles for social justice, and interfaith dialogue and relationships. All of the components can be

¹⁵ A. J. Feather, "Top 15 Issues That Have Americans Worried," ABC News, accessed March 27, 2018, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/top-15-issues-americans-worried/story?id=29758744>.

intergenerational as well as theological. This project will seek to address attitudinal barriers to the beloved community that is promised to us.

Conclusion

The proposed title of the project is "My Diversity Circle" which is to invite, maintain and sustain a diverse variety of relationships in our lifetime. Because it is important to recognize the uniqueness of each other. Hence, we are not reactive in times when race relations are in the headline news and we want to have conversations but have not done the hard work of being in a relationship with those who reflect the many faces of Jesus. This program purpose is to encourage others to create and form their own diversity circle transforming their race and cultural biases from negative to positive attitudes and behaviors. I assume that 1.) all of us struggle with negative thoughts, feelings attitudes and behaviors imprinted in us from the secular world, and 2.) the church, scripture and divine leadership can change and re-enforce change.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

There are two passages in the Book of Ruth (1:16 and 17) that are powerful affirmations of loyal love often expressed by the Hebrew word, “hesed” which is translated as a love of faith, faithfulness, commitment and devotion to the God of Israel. Verses 16-17, shows Ruth’s faith and faithfulness are evidence throughout the book, as expressed here in her commitment to Naomi’s “God” as her own. Ruth’s own concern for Naomi is bound by a strong oath made before the “Lord” Himself. Ruth recited her hallmark expression of loyalty to Naomi and commitment to the family she married into. In Ruth 1:16, Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, [or] to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people [shall be] my people, and thy God my God. In Ruth 1:17 she states “Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, [if ought] but death part thee and me.” Ruth had set her mind on going with Naomi, and nothing Naomi could say would discourage her. Perhaps Ruth had learned to love God through the teachings of Naomi, since she speaks of God as Naomi’s God. Ruth makes the strongest statement of all, when she says that she wants to be buried where Naomi is buried. She seals her statement by making God a witness of her statement” (Ruth 1:17).

These passages are in the Protestant Canon that represents God’s message of breaking down racial and cultural barriers and showing love to all, including those who

have been labeled poor, stranger, outcast, foreigner, wanderer and sojourner. When one is marked and stigmatized with these labels it is usually because their race and culture have not been embraced by the majority. God's love for everyone, reminds us of the prodigal son who left home and moved away from fellowship with the father and returned empty but found the father waiting to receive him with open arms. So, it is with this story of Naomi who returns empty to Bethlehem with her daughter in law, Ruth, a Moabite. She left full with her husband and two sons, but returned empty and bitter but God received her and blessed her when she returned. God loves all of us and this story teaches us that we must make a loyal decision to be in a relationship with God forever whether we are full or empty. Loyal relationship with God shows when Ruth is mentioned in the first chapter of the New Testament and in the genealogy of Christ. Unlike her sister Oprah who did not make a loyal decision for God and returned back to a life of idolatry in Moab and never was heard of or mentioned ever again.

The time and the place are given in the first verse, "during the days when the judges ruled, there a famine in the land." (Ruth 1:1, CES) the Book of Judges is a dark story of departure from God. These were the children of the Israelites who fled Egyptian slavery of Pharaoh. Children who knew what their families endured and how God saved them because their parents served and believed in the one true living God. Even though they witnessed God bringing them through the wilderness and delivering them to the promise land, they turned to idolatry and corrupt living. When life became hard for them they cried out to God and God sent judges to bring them out of misery. The Book of Ruth comes from the period of the judges which is known for corruption, confusion and compromise.

The exegetical exercise, as described by Gorman's, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, begins with the text and an introductory passage of the Ruth passages taken from the *Common English Bible*. The thesis statement will be part of the introduction. The discussion will continue and examine the literary context to understand the canon and rhetorical context along with the larger understanding. Then the social, cultural and history and their contributions to the text will be explored. Next, the structure, form, rhythm and movement of the text will be examined, followed by the form and genre. In addition, there will be a word study, sentences, phrases and themes. When all of these topics are blended, the meaning of the text will be detected in the time period in which it was spoken. This combination will yield a better understanding of what the original speakers and listeners said and heard, giving authentic knowledge to the meaning of the text along with its function and purpose for being spoken. While the research will give understanding and will enlighten the reader, other translations and their commentaries will be included that will compare and contrast the findings. Finally, the biblical and theological points in the text that lends itself to current events as a result of contemporary thoughts, practices, beliefs and behaviors will be examined.¹

Old Testament

The Old Testament scripture is Ruth 1::6-17 and it states:

Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited his people in giving them bread. Wherefore she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return unto the land of Judah. And Naomi said unto her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each to her mother's house: the Lord deal kindly with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me. The Lord grant you that ye may find rest, each of you

¹ Michael J. Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis: A Basic Guide for Students and Ministers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 63-139.

in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. And they said unto her, surely we would return with thee unto thy people. And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say, I have hope, If I should say, I have hope, if I should have a husband also to-night, and should also bear sons. Would you tarry for them till they were grown? Would ye stay for them from having husbands? Nay my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord is gone out against me. Any they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth clave unto her. And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.

The Book of Ruth begins with the death of a husband, but it ends with the birth of a baby.

Ruth's tears are turned into triumph. The four chapters illustrate how Christians are to live their lives and fulfill God's purposes. Christians live by faith, live by God's grace and live in hope. In the English translation of the original Hebrew, these verses show the strength of Ruth who refuses to give up on life. Ruth would not obey Naomi's instructions to go back home. All the men in Ruth's life were now dead, her father-in-law, husband and her brother-in-law. She is now among three widows who were trying to decide what to do next with their lives after living in Moab for ten years. Naomi had heard that her home in Bethlehem no longer had a famine, which is referred to as disobedience, moral and spiritual decay and lack of leadership, and decided to return home. Since Ruth became acquainted with the God of Israel through the admired life of Naomi and her family, she wanted more and thus decided to have the people of the God of Israel around her. Ruth was not ashamed to call the God of Israel her God. Her life had many pitfalls but she trusted the God who brought her through those tough times. Her pitfalls came with being a Moabite who worshipped the god of Chemosh (Numbers 21:29

Kings 11:7 and 33). Chemosh was a god of human sacrifices and immortality. The period of the Judges according to judges 21:25 (King James version) is a time when, “no King in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.”

Literary, Canon and Rhetorical

A literary device is how the writer uses time, space and situations to tell the story. The Book of Ruth is mostly written in a story book form which gives us a narrative in the communication style used.² This narrative does not present characters and their actions but presents them in action. This story uses, “artistic and elevated prose containing rhythmic elements which are poetic,” takes an interest in typical people, and seeks to both entertain and instruct.³ There is happiness, sadness, joy and seriousness in the various poetic prose throughout the story. The poetic prose shows up in different speeches such as the text where Ruth speaks loyal love and faith about the God and the people of Israel (Ruth 1:16-17) as Naomi shifts from emptiness to fullness through "hesed" when Ruth finds Boaz. The harvest time is when the land is full and plentiful and we see Ruth leaving the fields everyday with grain from Boaz's fields. The contrasts are striking as they begin by showing the disobedience of the time period of the Judges when Naomi's family turns their backs on the promise land while. Another contrast we see is a young poor foreign widow with a mature well to do Israelite who is established in his community. God loves all people, of all races, ethnicity, heritage, culture and position in

² Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide to Interpreting the Literary Genres of the Old Testament*, ed. D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese Jr. (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1995), 71.

³ S. de Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance*, vol. 2, trans. H. Evan Runner and Elisabeth Wichers Runner (St. Catherine's, Canada: Paideia, 1977), 62.

society. God does not discriminate that which God has created for His purposes. No one is less than, unimportant, or unwanted in God's eyesight. All people have value.

Plot

Ruth, like many Old Testament stories center around tragedy, comedy, romance or the absence of romance. This story of romance is intended to give us hope and inspiration during times of trouble. We are to be encouraged by faith when all odds are stacked against us and accept challenges as the “first step on stairs when we cannot see the staircase.”⁴ Although there is a villain in our midst, as Ruth’s position is an outcast, the plot changes to a beautiful finale where she is victorious through faith and loyalty to God.

The plot starts with a famine yet it ends with fullness. the proposal of Boaz to Ruth takes place on the threshing floor where grain symbolizes food and nourishment that is our provision. Where grain is created to provide, so is the relationship created to establishes the future. The use of the harvest cycle symbolizes plenty versus barren times as seasons come and go, death verses rebirth, hopelessness and hopefulness, childlike immaturity to spiritual adulthood. Although the story starts with death and dying, it ends with marriage and birth of a child. The story is truly about the redemption of Naomi and can be used to bring people into God’s Kingdom and understand the grace of God and the gift of redemption.

⁴ Manning Marable and Leith Mullings, eds., *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices on Resistance, Reform and Renewal on African American Anthology* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009).

Social, Cultural and Historical

Understanding the Bible means you must understand the Hebrew culture of those times. As when you understand the culture, you become knowledgeable of their mindset and get a better understanding of the Bible. The Hebrew mindset is not passive and knowing the mindset keeps us from false conclusions. The culture of the Hebrews is connected to God's laws. Culturally the book is named after one of its main characters, Ruth, a Moabite and one of the two books in the Bible named after a woman. No one is sure of the author of the book of Ruth, but it has been identified as a setting in the times of the judges where there was no unity or moral decency, while the story of Ruth reflects a peace time between Israel and Moab (Judges 3:12-30). This picture of the culture shows how private life was of faith and piety.

One of the great themes is love and faithfulness to one another, for love reveals who God is because God is love. Ruth shows selfless love to Naomi (1:16-17, 2:11-12, 3:10, 4:15), Boaz shows love according to the laws of God (Leviticus 19:18), and Naomi shows returning to love and being welcomed back home (Luke 15:11-32). because of their love, they were blessed to be a blessing.

The story of Ruth is a strong message of the theology of loving another and all others regardless of culture, race, and ethnicity for she loved an Israelite family with loyalty and devotion which led to marriage, placing her as a daughter of Israel in the genealogy of King David. She represents that being a member of God's Kingdom does not depend on a person's birth or bloodline but on obedience and faith, as stated in Romans 1:5. If the scholars were correct in dating this book between the time period of 1011-931 B.C, then the Old Testament tells us that people of all nations are part of God's

Kingdom through the life and position of Ruth in the Davidic lineage. Another great theme is redemption. Although we know the story focuses on the transformation of the life of Naomi from empty to the fullness of hope and security, so was Israel being transformed from desperate to the prosperity of the days of Solomon (1 Kings 4:20-34) flowing through to David who is a descendant of Ruth and Boaz.

Structure, Form, Rhythm and Movement

The structure of the book of Ruth consists of six units and a coda. There is a beginning and ending known as the prologue and epilogue. Then there are four chapters that tell the story. The prologue tells the setting and the situation. The male figures of Judah died in Moab, leaving Naomi as the main character. Naomi does not have anyone to take care of her so in Act One, Naomi and her daughters-in-law are discussing what to do with their lives and finally one of her daughters-in-law returns with her to Bethlehem. In Act Two, Ruth meets Boaz, gleans the fields and Boaz are one of the family's redeemers and kinsman. In Act Three shows a relationship between Ruth and Boaz, Naomi's plan is revealed to Ruth and Boaz offers to be the redeemer and kinsman. Act Four Boaz becomes the redeemer. Epilogue narrates Boaz and Ruth having a son which restores life in Naomi. There is a coda - a genealogy of ten generations from Perez to David (Ruth 4:18-22).

Some scholars note that the beginning of the scripture Ruth 1:1-5 mirrors the end, Ruth 4:18-22 where the story begins with tragedy and ends with names associated with triumph.⁵ Another scholar, Porten in his book, *The Scroll of Ruth: A Rhetorical Study*

⁵ Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *The Book of Ruth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1988), 17.

indicates that the book opens in the Judges and Elimelech, “My God is King” and ends with God’s appointed King David.⁶

Clearly God shows that ordinary people reach higher goals when they are not selfish toward each other. The movement that is most significant is, ‘initiative’ that the characters used. Ruth seizes the moment when she goes to glean in the fields. Naomi initiative is revealed when she designs a plan to connect her daughter-in-law with Boaz. Boaz initiative showed up when he got the rights to become the redeemer kinsman for Ruth. All three movements come as a result of the influence that *hesed* has on them. “*Hesed* is from a based word on relationship and mostly on a previous contact. Because of this it is inherently tied to the concept of covenant and is expressive of the deep and abiding loyalty and commitment between the parties of that covenant.”⁷ Some people think it is going beyond the call of duty to help others. This is because it your option to act on another’s behalf or not to act at all. Since there has to be a previous relationship for *hesed* to take place, there is a clear responsibility to act. This is a divine characteristic rather than human. More importantly, it is based on the faithfulness of God to help and restore the poor with a reassurance that God will not fail us. Human *hesed* is the bond that families and communities have with each other. Even though it is voluntary without legal obligations, failure to reciprocate is taken seriously.⁸

⁶ B. Porten, “The Scroll of Ruth Study: A Rhetorical Study,” *Gratz College Annual* 7 (1978): 24-25.

⁷ Gordon R. Lark, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 192.

⁸ Robin Routledge, *Hesed As Obligation: A Re-examination* (Downers Grover, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2008), 179-96.

Genre and Purpose

Many scholars have stated that the genre and purpose of the Book of Ruth are about diversity, love, devotion, faithfulness, genealogy and redemption. The genre is associated with folklore, short story-telling. The Old Testament stories are difficult since there are no stories similar. While there are short stories in the literature of the Ancient Near East but none have a woman as the major character. According to Ruth Bush in her book, *Ruth*, classified this narrative as an “edifying short story because it gets didactic or instructional aspects of the book.”⁹

The purpose of the book is difficult to establish especially since she is in the genealogy line stated in verse seventeen, “he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.” The Book of Ruth creates a bridge with the coming of Christ Jesus. Showing the connection of David to the House of Judah. It is stories like this one that moves history from the Book of Genesis where Jesus was born in Bethlehem, to Via Dolorosa, the path that is believed to be where Christ carried His Cross. Biblical scholars claim that the doctrine of redemption is the primary purpose of the Book of Ruth. The only way to have redemption is through a kinsman. God provides someone to be the vessel through which God redeems. Boaz becomes that person and we see a love story that reflects the divine love that God has for you and me.

Another theme is how the people stayed together and stayed connected to the patriarchal narratives.¹⁰ Based on the final section of the book, it serves as a statement on the monarch of David. Perhaps the purpose is to show how all three of the main

⁹ Frederick Bush, *Ruth, Esther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1996), 30-47.

¹⁰ A. Berlin, “Big Theme, Little Book,” *B Rev* 12 (1996): 40-43, 47-48.

characters received the Lord as their God. Naomi received God when she returned to Bethlehem. Ruth received God when she refused to go back to Moab and Boaz received God when he obeyed God laws and became Ruth's kinsman-redeemer.

The Book of Ruth has a genre of the narrative of actual facts which makes it historical. These historical facts are designed for the purpose of showing the family line of Jesus Christ which begins with Perez and delineates the family line and fulfills God's promises of the descendants of Judah. It is important to realize that the birth of Jesus could not have happened in Bethlehem-Judah if the facts of the Book of Ruth had not previously taken place there.

Contemporary Significance - Literary

The passage Ruth 1:16 was critically analyzed in its literary context. The etymology of the words will show the origin of the words in the verses and what their meanings were in biblical times. Further, it will reveal how that meaning has changed throughout time and how it connects to the previous passage and the following passage. The historical context of the passage will be interpreted. The time period that the verses were written will include thoughts on the social, political, economic and cultural influences at that time as well as a comparison to the present day.

This passage clearly tells us that God is a God for all, regardless of race, ethnicity, background or status. Although there are many verses in the Bible that discuss race, culture, and inter-culturalism that describes that no one person or group is above or over another's and we can find God in each other despite differences.

Biblical interpretations of this verse will be taken from the original language that it was written in to the English language. The Greek and Hebrew languages are more specific while the English language can use several words to give the same meaning of expression. The Greek and the Hebrew language are strongly connected to spiritual thoughts whereas the English language does not always bring spiritual thoughts.¹¹

The meaning of the words in the verse will be considered in regard to the content and context in the period in which they were written. Translation of the Bible verses into the English language is an issue since the Bible was not written in English. Another issue is that the languages of Hebrew and Greek may have words that the English language may not adequately or equally match since the English language does not have words of multiple spiritual meanings.¹²

Historical

The whole Bible context shows the people of God established in the Promise Land but living among the Canaanites. God's people were unfaithful, disobedient and insecure in that land and God could not redeem them. They became more and more like the Canaanites. Ruth was significant in the base of First Samuel that leads to King David being the redemptive person for God. As a result, Ruth, Israel and the world came to know the offspring of Jesus Christ.

¹¹ Dennis Bratcher, "Understanding Words in Scripture: Words for Biblical Studies," *The Voice Article*, accessed August 2017, <http://www.crivoice.org/terms/wordmeaning.html>.

¹² Bruce M. Metzger, "Persistent Problems Confronting Bible Translations," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (July - September 1993), 273-84, accessed May 1, 2014, http://focus.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/new_testament_greek/text/metzger-translationproblems03-bs.pdf.

Under the leadership of king David, God's people returned to God, became secure and prospered in the land. The significance of king David is a foreshadowing of the coming of Jesus. Others who are mentioned in the Old Testament who were indicators that Jesus was coming. Moses was an example of a prophet and deliverer. It is important to understand previous books in the Old Testaments and the history of the people, in order to understand the Book of Ruth. A deeper understanding of the Book of Ruth can be found in the promises in Genesis, the blessings, and curses of Deuteronomy.

In Genesis 12:3, Abrahams descendants were recipients of land and blessings but the descendants were not necessarily physically connected but can be spiritually connected. Those who believed and trusted in God were also descendants, no matter their nationality. In Deuteronomy 28, God's people were cursed for unfaithfulness with famine and they left Bethlehem moving to Moab which was forbidden territory for Israelites. Blessings in Deuteronomy the twenty- fourth and twenty-fifth chapters speak of God's laws of protection of the poor and widowers and the role of the kinsman-redeemer who saved members of his family and protected the existence and longevity of the family. Ruth was mentioned in the genealogy because God showed that the outsider was accepted through the love and mercy. He shows all of us, and that we are of a promise and not of a race.

The literary context was that Ruth is a narrative of real historical events. It tells a story from a specific perspective with a purpose intended. The book does not just tell facts, so it must be read in totality. The conclusion was the reason for the book and the author wants to show the family line and how it continued. As the story unfolds, the author explains the meanings, God promises are fulfilled toward the descendants of

Judah. Another literary context to note is how the book uses the Hebrew literary form known as chiastic elements, where the story's climax is in the center of the story.

What a reversal theme for the story to show that all nations are not blessed by Israel but Israel is being blessed by a gentile nation. Another sub-theme is where we expect God to care for Naomi because she is an Israelite widow but is surprised how God takes care of the unexpected person in Ruth who is a Moab. Also, how God surprises us by allowing someone who is different from ourselves to be used as an instrument in saving us. Many themes in the Old Testament reveal God's characteristics. Example of this is the character of God who is faithful to the poor and helpless.¹³

Social, Cultural and History

Culturally all of the Bible was written in Hebrew and to thoroughly know the Bible is to know the Hebrew culture and mindset. The mindset and thinking of the Hebrew people are being in action as opposed to being reserved. It is not about who you are but what you are doing. In Ruth 2:13 when Ruth says, "May I continue to find favors," is not her hearing but her actions that are motivated by what she heard.

The longing for a relationship as humans is satisfied through covenants. A covenant creates a new identity making a family out of unrelated individuals. A covenant expects faithfulness but also the possibility for love. According to "Living the Covenant," there are covenants that are commonplace in Israel's social life, which shows the relationship between the people and God. Therefore, the Book of Ruth is one of several Bible stories that show this level of commitment in a relationship. This story emphasizes

¹³ Richard L. Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student's Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P and R Publishing, 1990), 30.

marriage as an example of God's covenant love, for marriage makes a new identity out of unrelated persons. That makes covenants different from contracts is the requirement and expectation of faithfulness, sometimes including love. Marriage relationships that include loyalty and love provide insights into the biblical society. Although biblical society is known as a male dominated society with power, authority and prestige, these women are seen around those men as also strong with moral character, and self-respect. As we will see, the future of their people depended on these qualities that they possessed.

The narrative of family destruction and reconstruction takes place when Israel was in exile and suffering from national destruction. While Israel was concerned for its identity and longevity, a foreign woman helps the family to survive and come into a new identity. It is pertinent to realize that the God we serve does not have a covenant relationship for only Israel, not just for some, but for all of humanity.

One form of covenant relationship is known as "levirate" marriage which is used for redemption, i.e., buying back that which is lost. "This marriage allows the closest relative to marry a "childless" widow. This provides a family member of the deceased to inherit for his surviving family members."¹⁴ Ruth was married at a time when there was famine but re-marries in a season of harvest. Ruth's faithfulness resembles the never-ending love God has for his people, which she has for the people of God.

This is a story of a prodigal family that ran off to Moab at a time of famine which many thought was a judgment from God. Like the prodigal son, this family suffered for the move they made to leave the father and believe in the unfamiliar and unknown for

¹⁴ Tikva Frymer-Kensky, "Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia," accessed August 15, 2016, <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&q=Tikva+Frymer-Kensky%2C+Jewish+Women%3A+A+Comprehensive+Historical+Encyclopedia>.

they had broken the Mosaic Law, which is to love the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind, not run from God. They lost connection with God and then they married foreign women. They were so sure that God could not feed them in the city of Bethlehem, the place where the story of Ruth begins and ends and where Jesus was born.

Without this story there is no Christmas for this story connects King David to Judah's tribe and the city where Jesus was born, Bethlehem, whose name means "house of bread." The name of the father who led his family to Moab was Elimelech, which means "My God Is King." This is a name that has true meaning but sadly enough, the person's actions in a time of challenge is not a testimony that his God is King. The name of his wife is Naomi which means "pleasant." Their two sons were named Mahlon meaning "unhealthy" and Chilion meaning "puny." Both boys were always sick and the family endured trouble as they lived far from God. The father dies and then the sons took Moab women as wives: Oprah, meaning fawn, deer or athletic. Ruth, meaning beautiful, personality and smart. She is so smart she becomes an ancestor of Jesus Christ which means that in the humanity of Jesus Christ, Jesus had the blood of Ruth flowing through His veins.

The sons die after the passing of ten years and Naomi has no family except the two daughters-in-law. The famine of Bethlehem was gone, and everyone had bread to eat in the "House of Bread." Like the prodigal son, this prodigal family craved for their homeland. Naomi tells her daughters-in-laws what they would be experiencing if they returned to Bethlehem-Judah with her. The Israelites had no dealings with the Moabites or the Samaritans. If they went with Naomi they would be widows in poverty for life. They would be outcasts and would never marry again. Oprah made her decision to return

to Moab where she could possibly remarry and re-connect with idolatry. Ruth decided for the God of Israel. Naomi tries her and test her decision and tells her to go back with her sister-in-law and go back to her gods. The test is whether or not she is genuine.

Ruth decided for the living God of Israel and to go with Naomi and to lodge wherever Naomi lodged which means she accepts the poverty. When Ruth states your people will be my people, she was saying that she rejected the Moabites and idolatry. It is pertinent to realize that she understands that she cannot identify herself with God if she did not identify herself with God's people. Even though Naomi would be an outcast, she declared that your people would be my people. When she said your God would be my God, she was referring to the living and true God who was introduced to her when she married Naomi's son. She understood that, "where thou diest, will I die," would include her being raised from the dead to live in that land just as Abraham believed he would be raised from the dead on earth and not in heaven. Ruth is genuine and repents by going in one direction and changing her direction and going in another direction. She accepts all that it takes to stand for God and then she returns with Naomi.

The strongest theme that in this book is how God providentially orders the steps of the characters and they received blessings as long as they trusted and obeyed God's command. Individuals cannot run from problems is one of the messages found in the first chapter. As a society that has a shifting ground as to who is the minority and who is the majority in race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age and etc., one cannot ignore the changes, nor resist the world that God places before us.

The period of the Judges was a time indicative of the separated tribes where there was no King in Israel and "every man did what was right in his own eyes," (Judges 17:6).

Every person for himself as they were divided, harsh, cruel, unbelief and disobedient. But despise their inability to understand “*hesed*” which transcends all line that separate, the twelve tribes joined forces understand threats of outside forces that could eliminate them as tribes and became an entity formed as territorial and not tribal. Sometimes a crisis like famine and deaths in the Book of Ruth can force individuals to join forces and collectively defeat their enemies.

As a result of being disobedient and leaving Bethlehem and going to Moab, Naomi had to leave her sin and go back to the Lord. Just like Abraham (Genesis 13:1-4 and Jacob (35:1), Naomi knew what she must do but she was doing it for all the wrong reasons. She was being motivated by the existence of food and not the opportunity to be with her God. She was not asking for forgiveness, just going back home to her land, not her God. Not only was her motivation to return home a wrong driving force, but she also did not encourage her daughters-in-law to join her and worship the God of Israel. She did not want them to be with her on the journey back to Bethlehem. The true and living God is not just for Naomi, an Israelite it is also for Ruth and Orpah, Moabites. Just as Moses spoke these words to his father in law, “Come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel” (Num. 10:29). Instead of being encouraging Naomi tries to redirect them toward their false gods. Perhaps Naomi did not want all of Bethlehem to see that she and her family were living outside of the covenant and the daughters-in-laws were living proof of this sin.

All of Ruth’s life and circumstances presented her with barriers to a better life especially since her ethnicity was Moabite who worshipped the god Chemosh, (Number 21:29 and 1 Kings 11:7,33 who received sacrifices (2 Kings 3:26-27). She

believed in the living God even though her father-in-law dies, her husband died, her brother in law dies and she is left with no one to support her.

Ruth's statement to Naomi has been considered the most outstanding confession of love anywhere in scripture. She confesses her faith, her willingness to forsake all others, and her determination to travel to Bethlehem. However, there was a law that established exclusion of any, "Ammonite or Moabite to enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation they and their descendants shall not enter the assembly of the Lord (Deut. 23:3). Even though laws excluded her from God's family, God's grace and mercy included her." This inclusion is possible because "in the beginning all people were created in God's image, becoming God's children" (Gen. 1:26-31).

It is here that Ruth is more than diversity, she is also a symbol of inclusion. She represents a "different voice, perspective, ideas and experiences being acknowledged. She does not just invite herself to the party, but she expects to have full participation in the life she is about to endure. As they arrived in Bethlehem the people did not recognize Naomi and the foreign girl.

Ruth had a change of heart as a result of her circumstances and the environment with the Israelites family. Since her heart was changed, God changed her circumstances. A changed church will receive a changed society because God wants us to possess Christ like characteristics as His children. The life and story of Ruth is the fulfillment of the promise that God made to Abraham that his descendants would be a blessing to all the world (Gen 12:1-3).

Ruth's Christ-like characteristic begins with the faith she had in the Lord. Her faith was so strong that when she arrived with Naomi she asked to go to the fields and

glean. She knew that her promise to go wherever Naomi went was to be fulfilled by finding provisions for both of them to survive. Her faith was based on the law of God found in Leviticus 19:9 where God instructs that no one is to harvest to the edge of their fields, no one is to stripe their vineyard even to the community was being taught to treat the poor with dignity and equity. This law proved God's love for the poor, for Ruth was not only poor but also a widower and an alien. She must have known God's promises from being with Naomi and therefore she believed God's word and acted upon it. She really showed an act of faith to walk to a field and find work where there were no markers for family name on each parcel of land. She had to be very careful in the fields for she was vulnerable because she was a widow, woman and outcast. Following this faith of not only returning to Bethlehem with Naomi, but finding a place to gather food for the two widowers, God's providence rewards her faith as she meets Boaz whose name stands for "a man of standing." With her faith God has ordered her steps (Gen. 24:27).

When Ruth stated that "my God is thy God" reveals that she lives by the grace of God. Grace is when you receive favor from God that was not earned or deserved. She had to live by grace since she was at the lowest point and position on the latter. Through Ruth Christians can teach others that living by grace is the path that proves successful for Ruth and will be successful for them. Through embracing all of God people, the church can teach the beautiful life of those who live by God's grace. Even if at the lowest rung of the societies' social latter, God has a Boaz for everyone. Witness how God works when God sends Ruth to the field and then Boaz to be at the field at the same time. The church in its diversity must realize that this intersection is not by accident but an assignment from God. As the church, Christians are to bring people of all backgrounds into the fields of

Boaz so that God can revamp their situations. This inclusion of all of God's people going into the mission fields help one to find those who God had directed to that place at that time for that season. The story of Boaz and Ruth is the story of the church and the creation of the people of God.

Diversity and inclusion at its best are that Ruth is an outsider of the chosen people of God and also, God, a God who created diversity and inclusion, opens a path into the family line of Jesus Christ through faith (Eph. 2:10-22). In the ways that Boaz interacted with Ruth, we see the grace of God from the very beginning for God made the first move based on His love for what He has created. The first move was speaking to Ruth because of his position in the community, Ruth did not dare speak to him but he asked his workers to give him information about Ruth. Ruth was shown that God never forgets us or forsaken us. She knew that the living God took Naomi back and loved her, have her salvation and guidance. Boaz spoke to Ruth and gave her words of wisdom so she would be protected in the field and most importantly, she would glean and gather plenty because of the given directions. Just as Boaz is considered the "Lord of the harvest" so is our God, The Lord of harvest in our lives, and gives directions as to where to go in the mission field to teach others and where and how to glean in His Name. That is the necessary guidance for everyday lives.

God is a provider and does so through those who could help the poor by not reaping the harvest by clearing the corners of the fields, and in the vineyard. Humanity is expected to collect all the grapes, and to leave some for the strangers, wanderers and the sojourners. In Leviticus 19:9-10, God commanded humanity to take care of the poor the natural way opposing government programs.

God never instructed to have a poor people's campaign, a food pantry, a clothes re-sale shop, food stamps, EBT card or a welfare program and give people whatever they wanted. God created a process of work. God made provisions for those who were ignored (2:3). Ruth qualified for God's marvelous plan because she was poor and a stranger. She was never afraid to follow Naomi wherever Naomi went, she had no fear as she found a field to work in. Only God could have sent her to Boaz's field for if not, there would be no connection through Ruth to the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

Christ tells humanity that he will never leave or forsake them is the same dialogue that Boaz speaks when he tells Ruth that he will protect and provide for her. As our heavenly Father calls us His children, Boaz calls out to Ruth and calls her daughter. Maybe because he understood the responsibility of a man with his stature and the people whose families depended upon him so he treats all who come to him as a family member, or she is younger than him or it was a term of endearment? In this story and other stories in the Bible God chooses to turn curses into blessings. Ruth sat at the table to eat with the reapers and not the gleaners.

Comparatively speaking, is the story of Mephibosheth where God takes the difficult times and later turns them into blessings. Scripture says "all things work together for the good of those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). Mephibosheth remembered the death of her father, Jonathan, and grandfather, Saul, and that horrific day when they all were running for their lives to evacuate the palace because they were to be killed so that others could rule the kingdom. When Mephibosheth's nurse picked him up because his little five- year-old legs could not run fast enough in their attempt to leave the palace before the enemy found them to kill

them, the nurse fell and Mephibosheth became air borne and landed on his back. He could not walk or run afterwards, his legs were useless and he had to learn to be carried by others, tend to his sores from lack of circulation and hide under a new name in a far-away city called Lo Bar.

As Mephibosheth came to understand the reason for the awful things, he learned that grandfather King Saul tried to kill David many times because God had chosen him to be king. As a result, King Saul and Prince Jonathan dies and he was left to survive for many years with his nurse, until King David finds him and claims, “for the kindness of your father Jonathan I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather, Saul and you will always eat at my table,” (2 Samuel 9:7).

God takes a curse and turns it into a blessing. Ruth had a situation that was changed by the love of a God that she came to know just as Mephibosheth found that same love of a God who worked through God’s chosen king, David. Mephibosheth’s father, Jonathan had a friendship in David just as Ruth had a friendship in Naomi. Through these relationships we see God being a blessing to the ones who appear to be cursed, and they learn that they are looked upon with God’s favor and became a member of the royal family.

Ruth’s faith in the living God of Israel taught Ruth to look to God and not to her circumstances. She teaches us that fixing her eyes on God reveals His riches, and His perfections. She had left her god and her family and put all her faith in Jehovah. She had become a witness for all to see that having faith can move you to Bethlehem and can draw you into the family of Israel. Her faith gave her hope, a desire and expectation that this kinsman, Boaz would have a heart for a widow. As stated in Leviticus 25:25-34, a

kinsman is the one who saves relatives from poverty, shows interest in their situation and gives kindness.

It is faith and hope that the church can and must show in everyone's situation, save them from poverty and speak up for them. This is for all nationalities and backgrounds because God wants humanity to trust in His promises. Both Ruth and Naomi became very excited over Boaz's interest in Ruth and Naomi. Then Naomi explained to Ruth that his interest could come and go but not the principle of redemption. Naomi knows that Boaz the nearest relative will honor God's Word and rescue the family property that was mortgaged when they went to Moab. Even though Naomi could not afford to redeem the property, she knew that Boaz was able to buy it back and keep her husband's property in the family.

In addition to the principle of redemption, Naomi knew that the "levirate marriage" was also in her favor. The word 'levir' means "a husband's brother" and found in Deuteronomy 25:5-10, it says that the wife of the man who is deceased goes with their property being sold. So, the kinsman-redeemer would need to marry the wife of the deceased and raise her children with the family name, therefore the property and the name would remain and be inherited by the children. Ruth father-in-law's property ties Ruth to the sale and or inheritance through her marriage to Malon. Therefore, Ruth is connected to the purchase. The Jewish people combined the kinsman-redeemer and levirate marriage laws as their custom. The church can celebrate diversity and inclusion by teaching the history of these and other laws that honor differences and preservation of racial, religious and cultural histories while embracing the laws of all ethnic groups. To

embrace diversity and inclusion is to share and support the historical knowledge while teaching the acceptance of plurality.

Naomi, who changed her name to “Myra” which means bitterness because she was bitter upon her return to Bethlehem, is now an excited and happy woman who has expectations of the relationship of Boaz and Ruth. She recognizes God’s providence of how He moved them from Moab to Bethlehem and then directed to her to the field of Boaz. Naomi was in unbelief and changed to hope and faith through the obedience of Ruth. Can one person transform this world that is in conflict because we focus on the differences and not the commonality of humankind? Due to Ruth’s trust and obedience in Jehovah, her situation became victorious, and Boaz saw those values in Ruth and released all that he had for her. She was not deserving but God’s love changed her night into day.

Naomi is transformed from grief to happiness because of Ruth’s faithfulness and obedience. She has changed her focus and now has her attention on Ruth and Boaz. She is a different person as she tries to support Ruth’s future. Just as Jesus Christ who was known as the “man for others,” and directed His attention on helping others, so is the church to find happiness and fulfillment in serving others, while transforming people of all cultures into a position of living peacefully with one another. When the church does not embrace diversity and inclusion, it is fostering a world of oneness that misses a wide range of abilities, experiences and knowledge based on heterogeneity of age, background, ethnicity, physical abilities, beliefs, sex and other attributes. Philippians 2:3-4 reminds us to be “humble and think of others rather than self. WE are not to just think of ourselves but to be interested in others.” Boaz began to go to work for his position in Ruth’s life as her redeemer with the same spirit and commitment that Ruth showed when she was

determined to be with Naomi in the return journey to Bethlehem. That is the way it should be as the church is in the life of God's people as a redeemer with a determination to walk before, with and behind them. Ruth stood still and waited for Boaz to clear the path of another possible kinsman that had a higher position than Boaz. Boaz's spirit was relentless just like Ruth's was with Naomi in her decision to journey back to Bethlehem. Boaz knew that with Ruth lying at his feet she was asking him to be her kinsman-redeemer and he then knew that he must approach another kinsman who was first in line for Ruth and the family property.

Only God could have helped Ruth to find Boaz in the first place. She probably walked down the hill from the city of Bethlehem noticing how many people were gleaning in the fields. She thought that the limited number of poor people in a field meant that the owner was not very giving. On the other hand, the field that was full of people meant that the owner was a generous man and God sent her to the right field.

Ruth knew that she was an outcast and never expected anyone to give her any attention in Bethlehem even when the Mosaic laws allowed food and protection for people like her. The Jews did not have dealings with the Moabites and would not allow them into the assembly of God. The people had a very low standing in these times however this book of the Holy Bible broke down racial barriers.¹⁵ The God of Israel loves all of His children and especially those who have been stigmatized. This kind of love that our Lord showed Ruth was unheard of in those times because Moabites were prohibited as they were marked as those who were so different in their lifestyle that others stayed away from them so as to not become like them.

¹⁵ J. Vernon McGee, *History of Israel: Ruth* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1991), 43.

When God shows the kind of Divine love he has for humanity, Christians often find it hard to believe that such love can rise above all the flaws of the world. Verse 2:10 states, "Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said to him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou should take notice of me, seeing that I am a stranger?" She carried with her all the statements that Naomi made to her when she was being discouraged from making the trip to Bethlehem with Naomi. Therefore, she could not understand why anyone would show feelings toward her that would not reinforce the outcast, poverty, widow and one who would be ostracized. Naomi told her that she would not ever get married again and Ruth believed all these things because she was in a status that was low.

After Ruth saw that Boaz was protective of her, she gave him the signal that she wanted him to be her kinsman-redeemer. Boaz then began to eliminate the possibility of another person becoming the kinsman-redeemer. The word kinsman in Hebrew is "goel" which means he is the one who will recover Ruth's property that she would inherit her deceased husband's portion. Verse 3:14, "she lays at his feet until morning: and she rose before anyone would know. And he said to her, let it not be known that a woman came into the floor."

Originally Ruth did not want to go and find Boaz because she unfortunately, continued to believe all the negative things that Naomi stated to her. Ruth was reluctant but Naomi had changed her opinion because she could see that Boaz was interested in Ruth. She insisted that Ruth follow her instruction for she was convinced that Boaz loved Ruth and wanted to marry her. If she can be changed in predicting outcomes in her

life and in Ruth's life then God can transform our thinking and we can live a joyous life in harmony with others who have once denounced us.

The church teaches humanity to move away from bitterness and unforgiveness in order to become the loving Christians that God calls them to be in scripture. Just like Naomi's spirit was changed when she saw that Ruth's circumstances did not matter to Boaz, humanity is to teach others this vitally important act of love. A person's circumstances such as: where they were born, their heritage, skin color, nationality or past history should not be a negative brand that is placed on them for a lifetime or from generation to generation. If the church embraces diversity, then the message of receiving all people is to be taught and proclaimed each Sabbath day and throughout each day.

Boaz's spirit impacted Naomi when she came alive because she saw hope in the relationship that Ruth was building with Boaz. The ambassador's position for the Lord is to create hope and new life in others. More importantly, the church is to always teach God's providential ways and that we never see what plans God has in the future but must see the beauty in each other as a creation of the same God. In God's plans He used Ruth to show that racial barriers have no place in our lives and that a well-established Hebrew gentleman selected a woman who was divorced, not from that region, poor and a stranger from a place that was prohibited to them. God's plans were for Ruth to be in Bethlehem so she would meet and marry Boaz. Perhaps many lessons of diversity are shown in how God connected Naomi's family with Ruth, how Ruth loved Naomi enough to follow her back to Bethlehem, and the words spoken at a time of hard ship helps humanity to know that God's church is there for people of all racial backgrounds at a time of racial and

cultural hardship. If the church does not view this as their role, then God's people are disobedient to His commands.

Chapter four teaches that love prevails and that God can love us when we freely allow Him into our lives. God is always looking for a way to enter into our hearts and lives as the redeemer. "Behold I stand at the door knocking, if any man should hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Revelations 3:20). It is clear that Christians are the ones who must open the door and reach for God's love. The church is to implement a similar practice by embracing diversity and stands at the door of racism separatism, hatred and etc. To change hate into love among God's people, means that the church must be ready to stand and receive each person as they look for Divine love and support.

Boaz works to be her kinsman-redeemer defy Deuteronomy the seventh chapter where the Lord "commanded its people to Israel not to intermarry with certain nations because entering into a covenant relationship with these nations would present significant problems. Solomon's heart was lead astray to other Gods because of his marriage to women from other nations who did not regard the one true God. Ultimately his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord."¹⁶

It was obvious that God was waiting on Naomi and Ruth in Bethlehem as this story unfolds. Boaz was in Bethlehem and the bloodline of Jesus grows in Bethlehem where Jesus was born. Even though Naomi did not want her daughter-in-laws to return with her because others would know they married a Moabite, so she wanted to return home alone while Boaz was at home alone and wanted everyone to know that he had

¹⁶ Kelly Minter, *The Living Room Series: Ruth, Loss Love and Legacy* (Nashville, TN: Lifeway Press Publisher, 2016), 16.

fallen in love with a Moabite who he calls daughter, and a stranger in Bethlehem. Just as Ruth's words to Naomi showed determination, strength, love, support, humility a spiritual conviction so did the words and actions of Boaz as he worked to become her kinsman-redeemer. Boaz was like the Redeemer that we have in Jesus who is a member of the Triune God. For Naomi and Ruth, the three in one is very obvious as there were three funerals at the beginning and one wedding at the end. One wedding that connects a "different kind of human being" to the Son of God and all of the world. God used this diversity to tell the story of his everlasting love for all of us and to show our lineage is to Him and each other for it is the content and not the container that is valuable. A homeless destitute person finds a home and eternal love because Ruth and Boaz agree that God's people are their people; they stay where God stays; they go where God goes, and that our father is everyone's father in heaven.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

This chapter will explore the American history that separated people based on differences of race, culture, and background and the separation's impact it had on America's inability to embrace one another for centuries. Moab was known for the sins of Lot and his oldest daughter, (Genesis 19:37) which marked them as individuals not to be associated with, according to the instructions from the scripture. Deuteronomy 23:3, tells us that Moab descendants could not enter the assembly of God not even to the tenth generation. Slaves were also individuals who were not allowed to enter into the assembly of society or to be associated with because of a class system designed by a man. This robbed slaves of their place in society and treated them as less than human for the sake of profit, property and power.

Additionally, this chapter will examine laws concerning interracial marriage from the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) compared to early American slavery laws that mandated, restricted and outlawed personal activity and relationships between outcasts such as African slaves, Indians, and other slaves/servants. A historical review of the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) is also included to chronicle the similarities in religious practices that encouraged separation, restrictions, and outlaw of people who were slaves or servants. The focus will be on the tenets of the church and the application of policy and doctrine to serve those who were not in perpetual servitude. Christianity

would rather accept the many schisms of God's church which contributed to the continuation of racism in America, even though the church is called to be set apart. Finally, the Civil Rights Movement of 1964 reveals how enslaved people found their redeemer and moved this one nation under God toward reconciliation through desegregation in 1954, Affirmative Action in 1961, and diversity and inclusion beginning in 1980 to the present.

The history of classifying people in America and keeping them separated from each other has strongly been tied to the racial enslavement of black people from Africa. "For economic purposes, slavery was used for the production of tobacco crops followed by cotton. American slavery, of mostly people from Africa, started in the seventeenth century, continued for more than 250 years, and included both the colonies and states. Slavery was instrumental in the making of America. With this hideous institution came slave auctions that separated children from their parents, and husbands from wives. It also forced a new religion with a new God, and stripped slaves of their culture, language, names, and identity. Tactics used to solidify this institution included torture, oppression, imprisonment, personal and institutional discrimination, and laws that maintained systemic discrimination. The slaves became the South's economic machine according to the Library of Congress which states that approximately 600,000 enslaved African Americans were sold and purchased in 1830 which was many decades before the Civil War.¹

¹ Borgna Brunner and Infoplease Staff, "American History," accessed August 15, 2016, <http://americanhistory.si.edu/changing-america-emancipation-proclamation-1863-and-march-washington-1963/1863/slavery-america>.

Slavery

Prior to the Civil War, "slaves and indenture servants were personal property, and their descendants inherited this position, and were managed by individual state laws. Many immigrants came to America as indentured servants in exchange for their life in the new world known as America. All laws initially effected both groups, but in the seventeenth century the laws began to address them as separate groups according to race and particularly, persons of African descent with a "servitude for life" notation."² Slaves were not considered citizens of America and did not have any legal rights prior to the fourteenth amendment of the Constitution. White people controlled all politics and laws and used these systems to keep slaves and free blacks in a low societal classification. Moabites were considered so low that a person was not allowed to have anything to do with them.

Slaves had no head in the state, no name , no title, no register; nor could they take by purchase or descent; they had no heir and could not make a will; whatever they acquired was their master's: they could not plead or be pleaded for , but was excluded from all civil concerns whatsoever : they were not considered or entitled to the rights of matrimony , and, therefore, had no relief in the case of adultery : they could be sold, transferred, pawned as goods of a personal estate.³

"Early government of America established laws that separated, discriminated, dehumanized and demonized the African person and soul, even when whites in servitude committed the same crime: Three indentured servants—John Punch, James Gregory, and Victor —ran away and were recaptured. James Gregory and Victor, both white, were

² Helen Tunnicliff Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*, 5 vols. (reprint, New York, NY: Octagon Books, 1968), 1:77.

³ George M. Stroud, *A Sketch of the Laws Relating to Slavery*, 31-32, accessed July 25, 2018, <https://www.bowdoin.edu/~prael/projects/gsonnen/page3.html>.

given “thirty stripes” and an additional four years of servitude, whereas John Punch, a Negro, was sentenced to serve the remainder of his life.”⁴

"The following are historical moves to set a class system created by whites that enforced racial tensions in the sixteenth century and emphasizes status change: In the year of 1640 Blacks were not allowed to own fire arms. In 1642 Black women became taxable, which created a difference between black and white women. Following that, Blacks were declared to have a life of servitude whereby the general assembly declared any child born of an enslaved woman as also enslaved. If there was doubt as to whether the child has an English father, then it was declared by the grand assembly that all children born in the country were bond or free depending on the condition of the mother. If any Christian committed fornication with a negro man or woman, the offending party would pay double the fines imposed by the former act.”⁵

African ascendants suffered change and then curtails freedom of movement. For example:

The law in 1667 specifically stated that a negro being baptized does not make them free. The purpose of passing the statute is because in 1640 and 1650 Negroes argued the point that baptism meant that they were free, and so were their baptized children. the legislature wanted to be sure that masters Christianized their enslaved men, women, and children but did not think that this was a sign of freedom. The tithable tax was created in 1668 which established a tax on Freed Black women and slaves making a tax. This means that freedom does not exempt a free woman from taxation. The next year, in 1669, the law stated that if a slave is killed while the slave is in opposition to his master, mistress or overseer, then the act is labeled prepense malice which means it was an accident for no master would destroy his own property or induced to destroy his own estate. Therefore, the master or the person appointed by the master to

⁴ “The John Punch Court Decision and the Advent of Slavery in Virginia: John Punch Court Decision Transcript (1640),” accessed November 3, 2018, <https://www.americanrevolution2019.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/PDF-The-John-Punch-Court-Decisions-and-the-Advent-of-Slavery-in-Virginia-Full-Lesson.pdf>.

⁵ Catterall, *Judicial Cases Concerning American Slavery and the Negro*.

give punishment is acquitted of molestation, which is, to annoy, disturb and persecute with hostile intent. Then the laws declared in 1670 and 1672 respectively, that A free black or native American who has been baptized cannot buy Christian servants and if an enslaved person resists arrest it is legal to wound or kill him. The legislation offers financial compensation for the owner's loss, and native Indians were paid an award by the government for the capturing of escaped slaves. Then the laws shift to blatant racism and forms of racial separation of blacks and whites. The color of the skin becomes a dominant factor in the life of Americans while enforcing controlling and policing the activities of slaves. For example, the Virginia general assembly forbids slaves from gathering or assembling which includes church and funerals. It is legal for a white person to kill an escaped slave who resists returning. Slaves are punished...20 lashes on bare back for the possession of arms, leaving the plantation without permission or lift their hands against a Christian. Marriage laws regarding slaves began in 1691 stating that a person who is married to a black or mulatto is not accepted in the society. Both judicial and governmental laws regarding slaves initiated during the period of 1692 - 1705. A slave cannot have a trial by jury. A slave could not own cattle, horses, hogs, could not hold a public office, or testify in a court of law. Blacks, Mullatos, Indians slaves are real property. A minister who marries a white person to a Negro will be fined 10,000 pounds of tobacco.⁶

These are some of the laws that forced a degrading, cruel and inhumane treatment of black slaves economically, socially, politically and physically. It is apparent that power and strength to defend oneself and others was minimal and sent the message to slaves to avoid creating a problem with the master and overseer. These laws built a system that offered not freedom only slavery at every turn. Similarly, Ruth was trapped in a system of laws created to keep her outside of the Israelite society so that she could never improve her situation or have an opportunity of a better life. It was up to God to send Naomi and her family to rescue Ruth and break down laws that are sinful, wicked and painful for those who are not accepted. How could Ruth ever learn about a better life if she was not able to observe or visit another culture? How could she find a man who would love her and what she represented in her heritage if laws forbid her from being near other people?

⁶ Stroud, "Laws Pertaining to Slavery," accessed July 25, 2018, <https://www.bowdoin.edu/~prael/projects/gsonnen/page3.html>.

"Prior to 1700, there was legalized slavery until 1860 when the Civil War began and ended in 1865. Then a period known as Reconstruction took place where Negroes were terrorized when they exercised their voting rights and hence, their living conditions did not improve from life in slavery.

In 1877, Reconstruction ended, and the Jim Crow laws maintained and enforced segregation of blacks from whites. Many blacks migrated north, during the 1900s, creating a nation focused on race relations in America. From 1930-1950, discrimination was being challenged as blacks increased their education for better and more opportunities. Thereafter and in today's social life, we continue to experience racism which is a social construct which means we just put a higher value on the whiteness of skin of color. We as people made it up! As we have already discussed, racism was designed for white economic purposes for the control of resources including land. White Europeans forced natives off of their land due to their greed, need for wealth and power, hence they enslaved millions of Africans for cheap labor."⁷

Slavery has been in many forms for thousands of years, even in ancient years but slavery in America was different for it focused on race. It is this slavery where one race of people were slaves for life, as well as their children which never before was this the situation. History has never known this kind of slavery where whites declared themselves more human and justified their oppressor position and how they claimed black slaves to be less than human.

Unlike earlier slaveries, children of African American slaves would be slaves forever and could never achieve freedom through intermarriage with the owning class. The rationale of this differential treatment was racism. As Montesquieu, the French social philosopher who had such a profound influence on American

⁷ Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law* (New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017), 17-93.

democracy, ironically observed in 1748: 'it is impossible for us to suppose these creatures to be men, because, allowing them to be men, a suspicion would follow that we ourselves are not Christian.'⁸

Alan G. Johnson in his book *Privilege, Power, and Difference* explains the historical and current issues of racism when he states that:

To justify such forms of imperialism and oppression, whites developed the idea of whiteness to define a privilege social category elevated above everyone who wasn't included in it. This made it possible to reconcile conquest, treachery, slavery and genocide with the nation's newly professed ideals of democracy, freedom, and human dignity. If whiteness defined what it meant to be human, then it was seen as an offense against the constitution (not to mention God) to dominate and oppress those who happened to fall outside that definition the United States marched onward toward what was popularly perceived as its manifest destiny.⁹

This is the kind of superiority, whiteness, white privilege that blacks are living with today. Black people continue to struggle with the image of social and economic inferiority which is slavery's current day legacy.

Anti-Miscegenation Laws

Anti-Miscegenation is commonly known as interracial marriage or interracial sex. Interracial marriage became legal in the United States in 1967 with the U. S. Supreme Court case decision of *Loving vs. Virginia*. States that had deemed interracial marriage as illegal, or states that it was never addressed in state law, now had to declare anti-miscegenation as unconstitutional. This case is an indicator of how racism pervades the legal system as the trial judge wrote that, 'Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay and red, and he placed them on separate continents. And but for the interference with his arrangement, there would be no cause for such marriages. The fact that he separated the races show that he did not intend for the races to mix.'¹⁰

⁸ James Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1996), 143.

⁹ Alan G. Johnson, *Privilege, Power, and Difference* (Mountainview, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company, 2001), 49.

¹⁰ Peter Wallenstein, *Race, Sex and the Freedom to Marry: Loving v. Virginia* (Kansas, MO: University Press of Kansas, 2014), 118.

Perhaps the trial judge,

Leon Brazile, was like many other conservative Christians who believed that God made all of us, and we all are descendants of Adam and Eve, but that at some point in history, God separated us and created different races and placed these races at different locations on the continent. Therefore we are to remain separated. This may have been the thinking behind the 1924 Act to preserve racial integrity which made the interracial marriage a criminal offense. After many court battles and relocation to other states to live in order to avoid imprisonment, the U. S. Supreme Court removed the Virginia Commonwealth statutes because it violated the due process clause in the U.S. Constitution that embodies a system of rights based on moral principles.¹¹

The due process principle states that the government must respect all of the legal rights that are owed to a person according to the law. The fourteenth amendment clause, which tells us that no state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws was racist as it purports to promote white supremacy.¹²

The number of interracial marriages in the United States, “increased by 15% after the landmark case and in the year 2000 increased to 80%. Most within the younger generation find interracial marriage acceptable while traditionalist does not.”¹³

The history of anti-miscegenation started in 1863 after the Civil War which was a longstanding war over slavery and the potential of interracial marriage that would take place after the war. The abolitionist movement, which was to cease the Atlantic slave trade and free slaves, stirred fears of marriage along with race mixing. Just the thought of interracial marriage caused endless fear and disturbances.¹⁴

¹¹ Leon Brazile, “Indictment for Felony,” March 30, 2018, Library of Virginia, <https://lba.omeka.net/items/show/54>.

¹² Justia US Law, “Due Process of Law,” accessed October 8, 2018, <https://law.justia.com/constitution/us/amendment-14/04-due-process-of-law.html>.

¹³ Evan Garcia, “Study: Intermarriages on the Rise 50 Years after Loving v. Virginia,” WTTW, accessed November 17, 2018, <https://news.wttw.com/2017/05/24/study-intermarriages-rise-50-years-after-loving-v-virginia>.

¹⁴ George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 172.

Miscegenation was considered a felony and prohibited weddings between persons of different races and the officiating of these weddings. Laws that banned interracial marriages carried the same evil of racial prejudice that was embedded deeply into the roots of slavery. The abolitionists argued against the laws based on the fact that they used complexion to distinguish between citizens and that was a violation of the constitution to treat people with equality.¹⁵

The abolitionist's battles were the Jim Crow laws which were local and state laws that segregated people based on race in the south and formed and enforced racial segregation.

Racial segregation is the grouping of people by race or ethnicity in daily life.

The Jim Crow laws mainly separated blacks from whites. "This act of separation was just a continuation of what slaves endured during slavery; they were separated from people of other races, particularly whites. There was no difference or closeness of equality after the war. About four million blacks were slaves before the war, and so they saw no change after the war with the Jim Crow Laws."¹⁶ These laws dictated where they could walk, talk, drink, eat and sleep. This was the harsh feature of slavery which set barriers between people who wanted to love one another. The slaves who were separated from their blood relatives were devastated with repeated separations. After slavery was abolished, we find that the right to love who you chose is not of your choosing even after the passing of the Civil Rights Laws. It took a separate case to eliminate the government or any other authority out of mandating personal love.

Ruth lived in a time period where laws and social customs dictated who could be in a relationship with who and who you were allowed to marry. The Mosaic laws given to

¹⁵ Kyle G. Volk, *Moral Minorities and the Making of American Democracy* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 104-116.

¹⁶ Leon Litwack, "Jim Crow Blues," *Magazine of History* (Bloomington, IN: OAH Publications, 2004).

Moses by God, included the Ten Commandments and rules and observances of the five first books of the Torah.

Many scholars argued that the following Scriptures that are anti-miscegenation are not about interracial marriage, but rather a ban on interreligious marriage. Therefore, the racial and non-racial interpretations are up to each person to decide what the readings are saying to God's people. "The common man tends to use these scriptures as an understanding of race separation while some scholars, who understand language translations and histories of other cultures do not agree that these scriptures are about race but are about religion."¹⁷ Here are several scriptures: Genesis 28:1 indicates, "And Isaac called Jacob, and blessed him, and charged him, and said unto him, Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan." This statement suggests that:

Hebrews and Canaanites were of different races which their marriages to each other were against the laws of the culture but it has been discovered that Hebrews, according to their DNA are a subculture of the Canaanites and thus there are no different races involved. Hence, the comment was meant to be about religious beliefs and warning Hebrews not to become involved in pagan ways, i.e., beliefs and religion. Many people now believe this rule was based on religion and not race because one is changing their ways after marrying outside of their religion which is closely tied to race, heritage, and culture. That means you are turning away from the God of Israel.¹⁸

Leviticus 19:19 is God informing us that we are to keep God's rules. Not to crossbreed livestock, not to plant fields with two kinds of seeds and not wear clothing of two types of material. This is another discussion among scholars discerning that this is a metaphor about race and culture versus religion only. "Ye shalt keep my statutes. Thou shalt not let

¹⁷ "Religious Tolerance," accessed July 30, 2018, <http://www.religioustolerance.org/marracbib.htm>.

¹⁸ "Were the Ancient Israelites Only Canaanites?" accessed October 6, 2018, <http://www.apxaioc.com/article/were-ancient-israelites-only-canaanites>.

my cattle gender with a diverse kind.” Gender refers to “mate” while kind specifies a certain species of an animal. and diverse kind refers to those that are of a different breed.” This is referring to no interbreeding according to, “Holsteins and Guerneys which is part of the Holiness Code which dictated the behavior of the Hebrew community, so they stayed separate from the other communities. It is a term used in biblical criticism to refer to Leviticus chapters seventeen to twenty-six, and is so called due to its highly repeated use of the word Holy.¹⁹

Deuteronomy 7:2-3 speaks of when God provides the Israelites with the land God has promised after recovering all others, God warns the Israelites not to intermarry because they will turn away from the God of Israel. “And when thy Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.” Scholars state again that, “this is not a statement of anti-miscegenation but a concern for the tribes close by the Hebrews and the possibilities that marriage will pull God’s people away from God. Apostle Paul tells believers not to marry unbeliever’s.”²⁰

Deuteronomy 23:2 indicates, “A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD.” Anti-miscegenation believers feel this law says that a child of mixed races is considered a bastard and cannot enter the Hebrew temple up to the tenth generation.

¹⁹ J. Paul Nyquist, *Today in the Word: Leviticus Holiness for God's People Today*, vol. 24, no. 5, (Chicago, IL: Moody Bible Institute, 2012).

²⁰ “What Does the Bible Say about Interracial Marriage and Interracial Dating?” accessed October 6, 2018, https://www.christianbiblereference.org/faq_interracialMarriage.htm.

However, theologians define “a bastard as a child born before marriage and has no relationship to the child’s race or multi races, but Concordance states that a bastard is a heathen and refers to a different race and not religion.”²¹

Unfortunately, white supremacy groups continue to use Scripture to validate racial hatred. An internet author, J. D. Self, author of an Internet site “Interracial Marriage is against God’s Law” concludes that God created the different races after the incident at the Tower of Babel. Genesis records that at that time, humans showed their arrogance towards God by trying to build a structure so tall that it would reach God. He writes that:

God created the different races and dispersed them because of man's arrogance. It is clearly evident that God purposely made the different races. Does that mean that we hate each other? No. It does mean that was His plan and we show our arrogance again in the face of God when we say: 'We know You made the different races, God, but we have decided we don't like that and we are going to try and have all the races intermarry again to get it back the way it was because You messed it up God.' This is ultimate arrogance to God and His plan. Pure arrogance in the face and to the plan of God.²²

Another way to interpret the story of the Tower of Babel in Genesis is to see that the people would not spread and cover the earth as commanded but remained in homogeneity group. Then they built a tower that demonstrated their ability and autonomy from God. Hence, they would not fulfill God’s command. The behavior of self-protection resulted in God scattering the people and continuing the diversification and spread of humanity and cultures. However, the powerful message is that when all groups realize that God speaks their language; they will come to know that diversity is valued because no one is without

²¹ “Bastard: Strong’s Concordance,” Watchman Willie Martin Archive, accessed November 18, 2018, <https://israelect.com/reference/WillieMartin/Bastard> [A].htm.

²² J. D. Self, “Interracial Marriage is Against God’s Law,” All Points South, accessed June 16, 2018, <http://allpointssouth.com/>.

God recognizing them and being in communication with them.²³ The above interpretation of the Tower of Babel emphasizes that humanity is not to make themselves the center of identity, but that God is the central part of humanity and is the primary identity in life. The relationship with God and the family of God is most important. While many scriptures can be used to argue against interracial marriages, one could positively find the many ways God created the world with a diversity of all species which speaks to God's desire to have humanity respect everything created. "The Tower of Babel was not to segregate people by language or race but to eliminate humankind from exalting self by reaching God, making a name for self, seeking to replace God's authority, and glorifying self."²⁴ When God spoke of "humankind in His image" in Genesis 1:27-28, a command to multiply in that Image was given. If humanity obeys God's command; they will create networks of kinship that will touch diverse cultures of various nations, which means they will have racial differences as they spread and diversify. God intended to design the beautiful variety of God's image on earth. No matter how much work humanity does, they must realize that God created in His mind and from His heart, race, culture. and ethnicity.

Methodist Episcopal Church

The Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC):

Founded in 1784 remains to be the oldest and largest Methodist denomination in the United States and its history tells us that it is the first denomination to be nationally based. The Christmas Conference of 1784 in Baltimore, a man name

²³ Brenda Salter McNeil and Rick Richardson, *How Soul Change Leads to Social Change: The Heart of Racial Justice* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 36.

²⁴ Ed Vitagliano, "Ethnicity and the Tower of Babel," accessed December 2, 2018, <https://www.afa.net/the-stand/culture/2017/12/ethnicity-and-the-tower-of-babel/>.

Harry Hosier worked to inform all about the upcoming conference and as a slave he received his preaching license in 1785 and became a circuit rider. During the 1790's slaves and free blacks were drawn to MEC. They were 20% of 60,000 Methodists at that time. As segregation tensions increased, Richard Allen, Civil Rights activist led blacks in a walk out of the John Street Church in New York, to form the Bethel AME Church in Philadelphia. He became the first Black Bishop in 1816. In 1844, the General Conference insists that Bishop James O. Andrew stop working as Bishop until he released the slaves that his wife had inherited.²⁵

The church has a history of devaluing and dehumanizing people of African descent creating full exclusion and often no participation in the life of the church. It is apparent that the church's interpretation of many scriptures was self-serving for they failed to advocate for the oppressed, abandoned, rejected, and marginalized. When the establishment of the black church came into being, they became extremely important to the stabilization of the communities as they were a platform where African Americans could speak to the contextual concerns of economics, politics, and social problems which included, poverty, illiteracy, and legal discrimination. "Wesley had good thoughts and feelings about mission activities with Blacks in America as they were all trying to "convert the Negro slaves." Wesley was in contact with several slaves at Charleston church and found that the slaves did not have much direction and knowledge of faith. He was known to provide catechizing to those he thought were able to receive the training. He took an interest in a female slave and taught her that "if she were good, her body would be with God after she dies, and no one will be able to hurt her." Wesley continued to work with the slaves and eventually he designed a program of itinerancy for American Negroes.

²⁵ Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013), Kindle.

Wesley opposed any inhumane treatments to slaves by white enslavers, particularly Captain Williams, a plantation owner who caused his slaves, who were mistreated, to committed suicide. John Wesley records in his dairy that after he read “Gustavus Vasa” the life of a former slave from Barbados he was inspired to write words of encouragement to William Wilberforce who was a member of Parliaments who was fighting against slavery and the slave trade. Wesley’s words were, “Go on in the name of God and in the power of His might, till even American slavery (the vilest that ever saw the sun) shall vanish away before it.” As early as 1758 John Wesley baptized two negro slaves signaling that God receives black and white people in the church. Then the John Street Methodist church was built in 1768 and several black names were on the building who were founding members.”²⁶

Black Methodist South asked the General Conference to dismiss them from that church and then founded the Colored MEC. In 1939 then MEC, MEC-S, and the Methodist protestant Church combined and became the Methodist Church. Blacks were segregated into a separate Central Jurisdiction. Wesley understood the Bible and its application to the many people of color and particularly to non-Jewish. He understood the message of the first church where the Gospel was about the salvation of people and reconciling all nations. Just as today it is important, we all move away from our ethnocentrism, meaning how we evaluate other cultures according to preconceptions originating in the standards and customs of one’s own culture, in order to move the world forward and close the divide in this world. Wesley was known to take time and give instructions to a Negro young boy about Christianity on a voyage from America to

²⁶ Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, location 1311, 5863, Kindle.

England. Many believe he understood God's creations and early in his life he did not believe slavery was morally right for the humanity of Africans.

Wesley opposed the slave trade early in his life, "Ever since I heard of it first, he wrote to Granville Sharp in October 1787, I felt a terrible detestation of the horrid Slave Trade."²⁷ Years later he wrote letters, pamphlets and journals to support for the abolition movement. In his sentimental arguments against slavery, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, Wesley searches and finds answers in regard to the African slave and how and why they became enslaved in American colonies. He did not find anything hostile, threatening or negative in the life or communities of the slaves in their homeland, as he stated:

Concerning the first, the *Senegal-Coast*, Mons. *Brue*, who lived there sixteen years, after describing its fruitfulness near the sea, says, "The farther you go from the sea, the more fruitful and well-improved is the country, abounding in pulse, Indian corn, and various fruits. Here are vast meadows, which feed large herds of great and small cattle. And the villages which lie thick, shew the country is well peopled." And again: "I was surprised, to see the land so well cultivated; scarce a spot lay unimproved: The low lands divided by small canals, were all sowed with rice: The higher grounds were planted with Indian corn, and peas of different sorts. Their beef is excellent; poultry plenty and very cheap, as are all the necessaries of life."²⁸

As to the *Grain* and *Ivory Coast*, we learn from eye witnesses, that the soil is in general fertile, producing abundance of rice and roots. Indigo and cotton thrive without cultivation. Fish is in great plenty; the flocks and herds are numerous, and the trees loaded with fruit. The *Gold-Coast* and *Slave-Coast*, all who have seen it agree, is exceeding fruitful and pleasant, producing vast quantities of rice and other grain, plenty of fruit and roots, palm-wine, and oil, and fish in great abundance, with many tame and wild cattle. The very same account is given us of the soil and produce of the kingdoms of *Benin*, *Congo* and *Angola*--From all which it appears, That *Guinea* in general, far from being a horrid, dreary, barren country, is one of the most fruitful, as well as the most pleasant countries in the known world. It is said indeed to be unhealthy. And so, it is to strangers, but perfectly healthy to the native inhabitants. Wesley states that, we have now seen,

²⁷ John Telford, *Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (London, UK: The Epworth Press, 1931), viii, 17.

²⁸ John Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of NC at Chapel Hill, 1999), 7.

what kind of country it is, from which the negroes are brought: And what sort of men (even white men being the judges) they were in their own country. Enquire we, Thirdly, in what manner are they generally procured, carried to, and treated in *America*. First, in what manner are they procured? Part of them by fraud. Captains of ships from time to time, have invited Negroes to come on board, and then carried them away. But far more have been procured by force. The Christians landing upon their coasts, seized as many as they found, men, women and children, and transported them to *America*. It was about 1551, that the *English* began trading to *Guinea*: At first, for gold and elephant teeth, but soon after, for men. In 1566, Sir *John Hawkins* sailed with two ships to *Cape Verd*, where he sent eighty men on shore to catch Negroes. But the natives flying, they fell farther down, and there set the men on shore, to burn their towns and take the inhabitants.²⁹

Wesley came to realize that the British economy was functioning on greed and violence for its prosperity. He wrote of the African cultures as peaceful character that is interrupted by the slave trade which caused cruelty and injustice. He shares the capturing of slaves, the The Middle Passage which is the horrible conditions of transporting slaves, and the disgusting level of suffering for the sake of the merchants' profits.

Civil Rights Movement 1960

America has a long history of providing all Americans liberty and the pursuit of happiness as stated in the U.S. Constitution and American principles. Liberty and equality for all continues to be an ongoing journey.

At the celebration of the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation in Washington D.C., the largest demonstration known to American History, more than 1 million watched on television while 250,000 people of all backgrounds came together to march for social justice for all. This is the modern-day threshing floor where Washington DC is the place where the separation from the grain and sheaves takes place. Literally, the grain is loosen from the sheaves meaning the need for change and the strategy for the change is politically correct yet demanding. The demonstrators were the grain, and the sheaves were the

²⁹ Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, 7.

antiquated laws or lack of correct laws and those who continue to hold them in place.³⁰

Stop racial discrimination was the battle cry of 1963 demonstrations, 100 years since the Emancipation Proclamation. "Six National, Civil Rights leaders, came together to announce a national demonstration demanding jobs and freedom; they were John R. Lewis of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Whitney Young, National Urban League, A. Phillip Randolph, Negro American Labor Council, James L. Farmer Jr., Congress on Racial Equality, Roy Wilkins, National Association for the Advancement of Color People, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Southern Christian Leadership Council. The two significant organizers were A. Phillip Randolph and Bayard Rustin. In that year there were demonstrations for the right to vote, access for jobs, access for education, and a change from segregated public accommodations. The U. S. Justice Department documented that there were 109 cities with 978 demonstrations, more than 2000 arrest, and four death which included the death of Medgar Evers. President Kennedy introduces the Civil Rights Bill that ended segregated schools, segregated public accommodations and voter protection after much racial tension and violence. The president tried to reason with the organizers in an effort to stop the plans for the march but was not successful. They came from all walks of life creating the greatest diverse population of race, class, political lines, to come together and change America. They came in cars, buses, trains, planes, trucks and on foot. Naomi's family was on foot. Famine was in their country and they traveled as God had them to find Ruth

³⁰ "The Emancipation Proclamation at 150: From Civil War to Civil Rights," The Guardian Weekly, accessed December 26, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/sep/18/emancipation-proclamation-150-civil-war-rights>.

to bring her back with them to Bethlehem. Ruth's diversity as she traveled to Bethlehem created one of the greatest changes in Christian history.

Before the march, all six leaders met behind the Lincoln statue where John Lewis was told that his speech was too confrontational. This was a turning point for him because he was married to his speech which criticized the Civil Rights Bill. He changed his speech for the sake of the group and experienced a transformation at that moment.³¹ Naomi too had a transformational moment when she saw hope in her situation and believed that Ruth might engage Boaz in a relationship of marriage and become a standing member of the Israel community.

The most eloquent speaker closes the march with the most memorable speech ever spoken on a social justice platform in America. At the end of the day:

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's speech incorporated thoughts from the Bible, the Constitution, Lincoln and the National Anthem. King's speech created a new document with the backdrop being the American History with tapestry woven throughout that shared injustice, segregation, void promises and hope of what could become of our country. Through the renowned "I Have A Dream Speech" we hear the request for an America to be true to her word.³²

Ruth individually makes a compelling love confession to another individual as a result of her love and admiration of the God that shaped and formed Naomi. The presence of these two people is the powerful statements that they made for others who have come to know their compassion and faithfulness. They marked history with fearless speeches that showed bravery, commitment to what they believed in, what they stood for in their time, as the result of knowing the same God at a different time in history.

³¹ Gary Young, "1963: The Defining Year of the Civil Rights Movement," accessed January 6, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/07/1963-defining-year-civil-rights>.

³² "I've Been to the Mountain Top," The Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute, accessed January 6, 2018, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/i-have-dream>.

The speeches have been recorded and replayed for many years and are part of our hope for a better life for all who believe.

MLK and Ruth believed in the God who taught them 'hesed.' and showed a vision of God's kingdom on earth. When they left to return home only, the grain remained for the chaff was blown away, President Kennedy, the Civil Rights Bill, was pending. The march has a spiritual meaning similar to the threshing floor, 'separation of good and evil. The Civil Rights Bill finally passed after the assassination of President Kennedy in 1964 and the Voter's Right Bill passed in 1965.³³

The success of a large nonviolent demonstration set a frame for other American groups and issues in the social justice arena who fight for access of their rights regardless of race, age, gender, religion, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. This portion of the historical foundation paper explains the context of my ministry and the history of the locale where I served for eight years. This locale is reflective of the history of slavery, Methodism and Civil Rights, as they find ways to embrace diversity and do their part in eliminating racial.

The context study was conducted in June 2016 at Congregation of Salem UMC in Ladue, Missouri. According to, *Studying Congregations*, by Ammerman, Carroll, Dudley, and McKinney, "congregations are at the heart of religious history both as an individual and collective."³⁴ Many of the world's religions worship and share collectively or as a gathering. Both as a gathering of individuals or collectively have been my religious experiences throughout my childhood and adulthood. As I continue to study and

³³ "The Civil Rights Movement," John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, accessed January 12, 2018, <https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/jfk-in-history/civil-rights-movement>.

³⁴ Carlos Gupton, "Life and Leadership: Helping Church Leaders Live and Lead Effectively," accessed July 7, 2018, <http://www.lifeandleadership.com/book-summaries/ammerman-carroll-dudley-and-mckinney-studying-congregations.html>.

learn more about Methodism, I come to realize that the campfire meetings, town hall meetings, and small assemblies have been at the root of the religious history.

Such gatherings and assemblies are documented in the writings and compilations of a chronology of Salem's church history authored and compiled by Robert S. Appel. The well written book tells us that, Salem-in-Ladue United Methodist Church has a history that dates back to 1841. At that time, "22 charter members established the First German Methodist Church west of the Mississippi. The German name translation was 'Salem Membership of the Faithful.'"³⁵ "There have been six locations from the first one located near the riverfront (downtown Mississippi River) at Wabash and 11th Street. The church, parsonage, and a school were built at the first site. The history of the church shows that it was not originally called by the name "Salem" and this has remained a mystery to this date. Many documents and conversations reveal the church called by various names such as: "North St. Louis Station," "First German Methodist Episcopal Church west of the Mississippi," The Central Church, and The Wabash Church. The absence of the name is a mystery, but suddenly the Salem name began to appear more frequently about 1860. The question about the naming of the church and the use of the name is still out there, and so is the answer."³⁶

The church is currently in the City of Ladue, its sixth location, which is the wealthiest city in the State of Missouri. The ecological frame is a city that has local residences, schools, country clubs, and top retail shops and malls. The city of Ladue is known for its upscale boutiques, restaurants, menswear stores, jewelry stores and, European and American antique stores. Sometimes, Ladue is referred to as an inner ring city because it is encircled by these eight St. Louis counties:

³⁵ Robert S. Appel, *Salem: Congregations of the Faithful* (St. Louis, MO: Salem-in Ladue United Methodist Church, 1991), 13.

³⁶ "Ladue, Missouri," City-Data, accessed May 23, 2018, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Ladue-Missouri.html>.

Frontenac, Warson Woods, Rock Hill, Huntleigh, Brentwood, Olivette, Clayton and Westwood. Residents twenty-five years and over, possess the following education profile: High School and higher 99.1%, Bachelor degree and higher 83.1%, Graduate or professional degree 44.1%. Only 2.6% are unemployed and for those who are employed, their commute travel time is only seventeen minutes.³⁷

The Salem UMC congregation refuses to allow its profile or boundary counties from being a hindrance of helping and supporting those who are in economic or spiritual need. The social position has not deterred this church from going beyond the church walls and physically engaging in another church community to expand God's kingdom. At first the checks, then the hands and feet followed. We have learned to touch hearts and hug each other while some of us "rock babies" while single moms work fulltime. This environment that the congregation provides resources is called Kingdom House, a community center affiliated with the Missouri United Methodist Church. Going out in other communities does not cause worries or concerns because we are doing what God has called us to do. In Dr. Stoop's book, *You Are What You Think*, the author tells us that to worry is to strangle, block or choke the path to creativity that gives our lives energy.³⁸

The definition of human ecology is the way institutions and people are situated toward one another. It reminds me of how stock markets around the world impact each other, for no man is an island. However, when I look at my context, I see the spacing of people, groups and institutions and how they affect one another. Here is some general information about the ecological frame.

The City of Ladue, Missouri was incorporated in 1936. To date, the city has approximately 9000 residence representing 91.6% ownership rate, 3,200 households and 2,600 families. The racial makeup based on the 2010 census was

³⁷ "Ladue, Missouri," City-Data, accessed May 23, 2018, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Ladue-Missouri.html>.

³⁸ David Stoop, *You Are What You Think* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revel, 1996), 132.

reported as 93.0 % Caucasian, 1.0% African-American, 1.4% Hispanic or Latino, 0.9% Native American, 3.1% Asian, 0.9% Pacific Islander, 0.1% other races and 1.3% two or more races. Out of the 3,100 households, it was reported that 36% of children living in them are under the age of eighteen; 72% married couples; 6% females with no husband present; 2% male with no wife present; and 20% were non-families. The average family size is 3.6%. The median age in the city is 46 years old. The institution of marriage dominates the lifestyle of Ladue. Daytime changes in the racial and economic community are due to the commuting of 3,326 workers (39.0%), and workers who both live and work in this city 613 (17%). The employment institutions are positioned so that people who cannot afford to live in the area are workers in the area. Businesses are situated as clusters, malls, corporate campuses and food chains that need lower paid workers who travel to these locations daily.³⁹

Crime collected data shows that theft and burglaries are the largest incidences of crime while assault, rape, murder, etc. are almost non-existent. The institution of law enforcement has theft and burglaries as their greatest concern in protecting this community. Education institutions are positioned strongly in the community and have a huge profile in this city. Obviously, education plays a major role in earning and receiving income and wealth. "There are seven universities with over 2000 students located some 4-8 miles from the City of Ladue. The religious statistics for Ladue residents reveal that 48% are non-affiliates (483,000), Catholic 23% (231,000), Evangelical Protestant 16% (163,000), Mainline Protestant 7% (74,000), Black protestant 0.9% (9,000), Orthodox 0.2% (2,000) and other (37,000)."⁴⁰

Salem UMC serves a dual function for its members, both a religious and social institution with a history that dates back to its founders, "Ludwig Sigismund Jacoby. Jacoby, born in Mecklenburg Germany of Jewish parents. A German Jewish boy baptized by the Lutheran church as a young boy who later married a German Catholic girl. The congregation is proud of its German heritage and the original founders who seemed to be more religious as they possess great faith taking a journey to America and finding a "gathering" that they could share and remember their music and culture. In 1841 when

³⁹ "Ladue, Missouri," City-Data, accessed August 15, 2017, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Ladue-Missouri.html>.

⁴⁰ "Ladue, Missouri," City-Data, accessed August 15, 2017, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Ladue-Missouri.html>.

the church was founded, the church's first location was in downtown St. Louis and has moved six times since the first location.”⁴¹

Concerning the above statistics, you can see that the church continues to be comprised largely of members who are of Caucasian German heritage. Although the church has members that represent twenty-four zip codes, because it is located near a major highway, its population/membership reflects a small number of the many faces of Jesus. However, this congregation has made a commitment to diversity and since 2010 there has been great progress and diverse growth. Both a female senior pastor and an African American associate pastor were a first for this congregation since its beginning in 1841. We have four services, the Modern services (9:30 and 10:45) are continuously growing. Modern services consist mainly of a population of young families with parents in their forties. The traditional services (8:30 and 10:45). the service has mainly baby boomers and older in membership.

The immediate residences in the surrounding neighborhoods are not a major part of the congregation, even though mailings and door-to-door contacts had yields very little results. Our social media generates many visitors from various parts of the city. On another note, it is clear that:

Educational institutions and business organizations are the greatest influence on this community. As mentioned earlier, there are seven universities with more than 2000 students less than two miles near the city. One of the most noticeable features of this community is the concentration of public places in one area while homes/residences are in another area. The City of Ladue reported in 2013 that a median house or condo is valued at \$695,435 and median gross rent \$1,879.00. Interesting enough, the median household income was reported at an estimate of \$177,507.⁴²

⁴¹ Appel, *Salem*, 1-12.

⁴² “Ladue, Missouri,” City-Data, accessed August 15, 2017, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Ladue-Missouri.html>.

This clearly indicates the difference between money and wealth.

The culture frame allows us to understand the way this congregation has lived its life together. It starts with their constant verbal reminders that the majority of them have German, Irish or English roots. They articulate this information that implies perhaps ownership or status among those who do not have a history with the church. The unique rituals include ice cream socials, annual coffee house, members playing Blue Grass music at the traditional services, and singing a verse of “Silent Night” in German at the Christmas Eve candlelight service. The youth is often at Sunday School while the parents are at worship service. The infants and toddlers are at the nursery; the pre-school children are in the chapel at church school, and the youth is at Sunday School. This culture does seem to have their children in regular worship as other congregations. The experience of hearing and seeing adults’ worship is missed and not imprinted in their minds that church is for adult life too. Perhaps the 483,000 non-affiliates are those who have not been taught that the church lives through our witnessing and conferencing as Christians of all ages.

Another cultural aspect worth mentioning is the absence of bending knees of this congregation except on Communion Sunday. The positions of sitting and standing dominate the movements throughout modern and traditional services. While praying positions are numerous, it is almost always limited to the sitting position. The traditional service sanctuary has an altar around the chancel, but the modern service does not have an altar or a place to kneel and pray if the pastor made an altar call or if someone wanted to kneel and pray. While my observations reveal that kneeling is important to my way of worshipping, I must also comment that sitting and praying is a sign of a calm natured

congregation. There is appropriate behavior that resembles a solid ship on a stormy sea. The sounds of "Amen" are few and the sounds of emotions are non-existent. This calmness illuminates what the Apostle Paul told the Philippians in when he said, "Those things that ye have both learned and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 4:9).

There are established groups that hold Adult Sunday school classes and have a history that reaches far back to times of raising their children. Time has given them a distinct identity while newcomers form new groups.

The accounts of the church and its culture which delineates the stories and heroes can be found in an archive room that is structure to preserve documents and photographs. The room is temperature controlled, and all visitors must wear white gloves when handling papers. Every location from 1841 is documented, and those who are fourth and fifth generation do not hesitate to make that piece of history known. There is also a compilation of all of these documents in a book authored by a church member who is a fourth-generation member. This helps the documents to be preserved, so they are reproduced in the book, *Salem - Congregations of the Faithful: A History of Salem Methodist Church*, by Robert A. Appel.

The various groups that have had relationships over a period continue to be a group at church and in their communities. They hold up patterns and strategies that they have created which tell the world who they are by heritage. The songs are a set number of hymns that we use often. Maybe all congregations have their favorites, but familiar songs breed content. The traditional services lean toward high church with a procession of pastors and choir members and only the preaching pastor participate in the recession after

giving the benediction. In addition to the choir and congregational hymn singing, there is a twelve piece orchestra that plays music at a given time during the service and joins in when the choir sings.

Special music comes to us from a local and well-known artist from jazz, opera, and the Muny, who make appearances eight times a year. Our goal is to use music as a spiritual vehicle to reach and bring in persons who will enjoy traditional worship style. The modern service consists of band instruments used with Christian rock music. This millennial age group dresses very casually and uses technology extensively. Mostly everything is on a screen or phone, so there is no Bible, hymnals, altars or cross in this worship space. The attendance fluctuates from 150-200 in attendance.

This conversation regarding resources is easy because Salem in Ladue is a congregation that overflows with both hard and soft resources. These resources provide potentials are great according to the mission statement which reads: "Reaching out in Extravagant Love to do God's Mission Around the World." That is what our mission teams and activities look like to those outside the church. We are engaged as a congregation in local, national and international missions to expand God's kingdom. With an operating annual budget of nearly 1.2 million dollars, our members, are working in the local community center, national mission trips and the Costa Rica mission trip bi-annually.

Our resources are healthy because they are based on a congregation that is strong in resources, education, employment, and community contacts. The church pays an annual apportionment in addition to dedicating the Easter Sunday offering of four services to another church or a community missions project.

Recently we have combined/merged with The Connection UMC that has previously received our Easter offerings and blessings so that they could end the year in the black. Our relationships have increased through children and youth programs that we shared with the community. By sharing many of our resources through summer programs, we were living our mission statement.

Our relationship turned into a merger, and we are now combined as a church that has a second location. It is amazing that we have returned to an area in the city where Salem established its first site 175 years ago.

Salem is now sharing its Ladue community resources with the Carondelet community. The plan is to have the leadership and administrative teams such as Staff Parish, Ad Council, Trustees, and Finance Committee combine from both sites and become one. While the two sites have diagonally different worship styles, they will continue to function as usual. The purpose of the merger is not to change the identity of the churches but to share resources.

Scripture tells us that, “To whom much that is given, much is required” and with our resources, we can expand God's kingdom with new opportunities for mission and discipleship. Making disciples for Jesus Christ will be addressed from both contexts. We can learn from each other while we continue to be the church for our congregations through radical hospitality, passionate worship, Intentional faith development, Risk-Taking Mission, and Service, and Extravagant Generosity.

Resources of sacred spaces are quite generous at the Ladue site. There are three worship spaces and a library. The conference rooms are plentiful but are not designed

with religious services in mind. Many activities take place in these areas such as prayer, Christian conferencing, lectures, small group meetings, and Bible study.

The process frame for Salem consists of multiple frames because the core groups have both formal and informal structures that maintain their strong feelings in Salem congregational life. Behavior is linked to beliefs which are clearly seen in the many ways the congregation Works beyond the wall of the church buildings. Their beliefs are that they have more than enough, and they are to share through physical involvement.

It is amazing how the number of part-time employees hired to cover shifts while the employees are receiving training and development. How did this action get started? How did it mobilize? The answers are part of a team of members who have the greatest years of history. They utilize the committee structure to drive to city public schools and tutor students in reading and math. Also, there is a group who supports the Kingdom House community center through weekly, on-site interactions with infants and toddlers while the employees are in training classes and meetings. This involvement reduces but afterward, there is a meeting after the meeting. This is how things get done. Sometimes a favorite few meet before the church committee meeting as well as afterward. I believe this process speaks to the need of some to feel as though they are in total control. There is usually a need to avoid confrontation or opposition at all costs, and this is how avoidance is done. A conversation that evaluates the upcoming vote or conversation and the identity of any person who is not in agreement. The lines are drawn, and people take sides in normal settings but in this setting, the lines may be drawn, but usually there are one group on one side. If there are bad feelings or ugly behaviors, it is not known to many people.

The informal process is to solve problems before the formal meeting which is always a landslide.

There are indeed multiple congregational theologies at Salem UMC. These theologies range from the members who have longevity with the history and past generations, to the newest member who brings diversity to Salem. In the past five years the diversity of every kind has made a change in a church that is nearly a 175-year-old church. A church recognized as the oldest German Methodist church west of the Mississippi River now finds diversity in worship, prayer, music, dress code, and attendance. The stories that are told are a mixture of the older generation and the new generation. Clearly the theology is varied according to the five generations that worship in four different services. And there are those who do not come to the church to worship but to fellowship and attend classes.

A theology that is connected to a denominational larger body, as Salem UMC is connected to the United Methodist doctrines and polity, is the result of the many kinds of implicit theologies. With a large congregation and many services, the theology ranges from God is close to God is distant, even though we preach that God is near. We formally and informally teach and believe that our responsibility to one another is to show love. Collectively, we respond to catastrophe as a family checking on each other and running to the aid of anyone in need. A good example of that is when Joplin, Missouri was devastated by a tornado that wiped out most of the city. Our congregation took a mission team to the site and worked to rebuild that community. Sin is discussed as part of sermons and congregants are part of a listening audience. This is a subject that is discussed in small group settings through curriculum studies. A popular activity of the

theological content in congregational life is baptism and marriages. This says that the congregation believes in the young celebrations that happen in life. They enjoy being reminded of those times in life where families pull together to receive blessings.

It is clear to me that Salem UMC implicit and explicit theologies match. This study has given me a new and different way of seeing the congregation.

Summary

If the church would fully embrace diversity and inclusion, then the tensions of racial turmoil would cease to exist. However, the church has had a struggle with the exegesis of Scripture by many who want to maintain a life of profit, property and power. The church has a lot of work to do to lead people to peaceful relationships. The organizations of the church offer many programs and structures to pull people from all backgrounds around the tables to discuss teach and model successful interracial living. However, the church must loudly profess the broken society that we have due to autonomy, self-determination, racism and discriminatory practices and eliminate the oppression over the population. We must celebrate all heritages so that there are no negative biases, stereotypes or discrimination as Scripture supports celebrations. We are to be the promoters of justice and advocates of inclusion of all of God's creations.

The many forms of slavery, the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s are connected and sustains the difficulty this country has in building bridges that closes the divide between multi cultural congregations. The church had and continues to have the greatest opportunity to proclaim God's creation of a diverse world but struggles to take the hard stand that it is called to take. Instead the

church finds and implements strategies that work at diversity and inclusion such as the “Megachurches that have quadruple minority participation in the worship of white churches from 6% to 25% from 1998 to 2007.”⁴³ While this is movement in the right direction, it only pertains to church goers and not all of God’s creation. The business secular world is out pacing the church with its establishment of Diversity and Inclusion departments at corporate headquarters and a major participant in strategic planning for corporate growth.

Martin Luther King, Jr. remarked that the most segregated hour of Christian America is 11:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings. More than fifty years later, the majority of churches are predominantly Black or White, which means churches are racially divided and less than 10 % are diverse. According to Chris Rice, co-author of, *More Than Equals: Racial Healing for the Sake of The Gospel*, He states that now more than ever before we live in racial fragmentation and do not think that it is a problem.

From the days of slavery to the Methodist denomination's bout with slave inheritance to church splits and schisms to desegregation of the 1964 Civil Rights Laws we continue to strive to live the truth of our Social Creed to be one in divine love and “embracing all hues of humanity, because God delights in diversity and differences, favors solidarity that transforms strangers into friends”⁴⁴ as recorded in the United Methodist Social Creed.

⁴³ Nedra Kareem Nittle, “5 Ways to Make Your Racially Segregated Church More Diverse,” Thought Co, January 2016, accessed August 15, 2017, <https://www.thoughtco.com/diversify-your-racially-segregated-church-2834542>.

⁴⁴ United Methodist Church, *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), 141.

Ruth was a stranger in the land of Bethlehem and was governed by laws that were designed as a barrier to a better life stating that she was outside of the chosen people. While African slaves also were strangers in the land of the new America and were governed by laws of lifetime servitude as barriers to a better life and designated as an outsider. Both were considered less than the people who created laws that garnered privilege for those in the majority. However, they both served and worshipped the same God of Israel who set them free from manmade laws and forged a path that led them to their place in the family of God. Ruth's path was through marriage while the African slaves' path was through the justification of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, stated in 1Corinthians 12:13, "For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The theological foundation chapter will explore two themes, Liberation theology and Han theology to capture what they provide for the church concerning embracing diversity and inclusion to eliminate racial tension. First, an exploration of Liberation theology will include a summary of the Social Gospel Movement which is its foundation. Next, Liberation and Hans theologies will be examined according to each theory's originators and how they were regarded in forming and shaping attitudes and behaviors toward racial diversity.

The church has been accused of causing suffering in communities of color through its interpretations of and proclamations of Scriptures describing how we are to live with each other and ourselves. It is important to examine the theologies that supports the basis of the church's thinking which creates thinking patterns, feelings, attitudes, and actions toward racial diversity. The belief is that there is a strong connection to what the church teaches, and the attitudes congregants have regarding racial diversity.

The history of Calvinists and non-Calvinists generates a need to examine theology and slavery (race relations) in the thoughts and life of the Methodist founder, John Wesley. As indicated in the historical foundation chapter, "Wesley was the founder of the largest protestant denomination in America. In his writings, *Thoughts on Slavery*, he clearly communicated the false conversations about Africans and the slave for life system

that was designed because of greed and economic prosperity of the South,” and continues to have an impact on the church and its inability to embrace diversity and eliminate racial tensions in America.¹

Those who supported slavery emphasized “God’s sovereignty, which means that God made the world the way that it is and the way God intended it to be. Since God has supreme power and control, God rules over everything and can allow or cause events to take place because God is in control of the past, present and future and therefore slavery is part of Gods plan and approves slavery.”²

Wesley was among the group called Armenians who practiced “Armenian theology. They were not supporters of slavery and historically known as abolitionists. They believed that God loves all of God’s creation which includes all creatures including human beings. Human beings are all made in the image of God and therefore all humans have great value because they are made in the likeness of God the Creator. Therefore, if you are created in the likeness of God, loved by God and have great value then you believe and advocate freedom for all humans.”³

In his writings, “Wesley used Armenian theological concepts when arguing against slavery. The concepts are related to how Armenians view God: God is love; God has mercy for all; Jesus purchased all with His blood (including slaves); Jesus is

¹ John A. M. Wesley, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, Google Books, accessed October 3, 2018, <https://books.google.com/books?id=iTdcAAAAQAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=transporting+slaves,+and+the+disgusting+level+of+suffering+for+the+sake+of+the+merchants%E2%80%99+profits.%E2%80%9D&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj255Kn9qLhAhVESq0KHXPtDH0Q6AEIOjAD#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

² John Calvin, “The Institutes of the Christian Religion,” *Christian History*, accessed August 18, 2018, christianhistoryinstitute.org/study/module/calvin-on-gods-sovereignty.

³ Joseph Visconti, *The Waldensian Way to God* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press Christian Publishing, 2003), 253.

everyone's Savior; and Jesus wants us all to be free.⁴ Wesley believed that the first move toward being saved comes by the grace of God.⁵ Wesley also believed that God's grace shows up in all of our lives. This grace is known as prevenient grace, which pulls us toward the Gospel, salvation, and eventually faith. Grace comes to us and we can receive it, or we do not have to receive it.⁶

Wesley's Arminian theology emphasized additional areas, "the strongest additions being atonement, apostasy, and Christian Perfection. Wesley's belief regarding atonement is a mix of the moral government theory, by Hugo Grotius, where Christ dies for our sins so we did not have to suffer as God maintains divine justice and that Jesus' death was for all people and all people have a chance for salvation through faith."⁷ Finally, with regard to Christian Perfection," Wesley states that Christian perfection is when one is being restored to God and the mind of Christ. It is not absolute perfection but the perfection of love. The Arminian theology support the perfection of love and supports the down trodden and Wesley showed this in his teachings because he believes we should love others the way God loves us. We should keep these teachings in mind when we are with others and show kindness, compassionate, to those who are lost, poor, downtrodden, prisoners, women and race issues. "A current example of Calvinist theology in Apartheid in South Africa where the race issue has divided South Africa for more than 100 years.

⁴ Roger Olson, "Wesley Arminian: Theology and the Slave Trade," Wesley Anarminian, accessed September 1, 2018, wesleyanarminian.blogspot.com/2008/03/theology-and-slave-trade.html.

⁵ Leroy F. Forlines, *Classical Arminianism: A Theology of salvation* (Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications, 2011), 20-24.

⁶ Leroy F. Forlines, Matthew J. Pinson, and Stephen M. Ashby, *The Quest for Truth: Answering Life's Inescapable Questions* (Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications, 2001), 313-321.

⁷ James Aminius, *The Writings of James Aminius* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishers, 1956), 1:316.

Where Calvinist theology justified and encouraged racial divide. In the early 1600 a large number of Europeans moved to South Africa. They created Apartheid and used their theology to justify it.”⁸

“The Father of the Social Gospel Movement is known as Walter Rauschenbusch who contributed to Christian thought on critical social justice issues. He supported the expansion of traditional Christian Theology so the ideas of Social Gospel Movement could prevail.”⁹ In the writings of Rauschenbusch we find his deep concern for social justice issues especially when there is a huge gap and inequities of racial and ethnic minorities who are being marginalized, poor and disenfranchised. As noted in Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Gospel and A Theology for the Social Justice*, he writes:

The Social Gospel Movement is the way Christians respond to the challenges of social issues that are spiritual and ethical. While Rauschenbusch did not think that there was a need for a Social Gospel Movement because he saw it in the preaching and the various ministries, he did note that there was incompatibility between the movement and Orthodox Christianity theology, so he advocated for an expansion of theology to allow space for Social Gospel and provide flexibility for times when change is a reality.¹⁰

He knew that a suggestion for flexibility would be hard to accomplish because Christian theology is set in policy and doctrine which gives meaning to the religion as is. “He insists that the expansion will increase and broaden yielding a better understanding of salvation and the ability to speak truth to power.”¹¹

⁸ Frederick Hale, “South Africa: Defending the Laager,” *Current History* 84 (April 1985): 157.

⁹ Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York, NY: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 1.

¹⁰ Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 1-3.

¹¹ Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 10-11.

“A person who stood in opposition to Rauschenbusch was Reinhold Niebuhr who wanted social justice to be approached by acknowledgement of, “Christian realism” and to take a slower pace in changes in social policies and practices.”¹² The difference between “liberation theology and Christian realism are: 1) the social historical situation in which they speak 2.) their views toward power, and 3.) their expectations about the possibilities for human beings in history. They may not be the same, but they desire the same dialogue. Niebuhr and other liberation theologians such as Boff do not think that the church should be the primary conduit for the fight for justice in our society. However, they agree that the church has the highest responsibility to make significant contributions and to be the example.”¹³

The Social Gospel Movement started with the premises that Christian principles ought to be applied to social concerns and problems. The basis for this idea is that many believed that it was the responsibility of the church as a moral obligation to address social injustice. The response from the church was the creation of job training classes, libraries, counseling, public kindergarten and other social services. In the second half of the nineteenth century, protestant preachers called for the demand of social reforms that focused on safe working conditions and child labor laws. Christians in the new industrial economy witnessed the world changing and they spoke up and they said something in return. These preachers fought against alcoholic beverages and supported the philosophy that we are to help the less fortunate. This religious movement wanted to improve the lives and conditions in the cities. Today there are those who hold protest signs reminding us of the moral obligation we have such as, poverty, environmental, equal protection under the law, voting rights good health care, education and peace.¹⁴

¹² Niebuhr Reinhold and D. B. Robertson, *Love and Justice: Selections from the Shorter Writings of Reinhold Niebuhr* (Cleveland, OH: The World Publishing Company, 1967), 43.

¹³ Bill Walker, “Christian Realism or Liberation Theology? A Comparison and Short Reflection on the Social Thought of Reinhold Niebuhr and Leonardo Boff,” accessed September 22, 2018, <https://billwalker.wordpress.com/2011/07/11/christian-realism-or-liberation-theology-a-comparison-and-short-reflection-on-the-social-thought-of-reinhold-niebuhr-and-leonardo-boff/>.

¹⁴ Lisa Marder, “A Deep Dive into the History of Social Gospel Movement,” Thought Co, accessed December 27, 2017, <https://www.thoughtco.com/social-gospel-movement-4136473>.

“The Paradox Center for Incarnational Christianity states that Rauschenbusch, Riis, and Galdden are prophetic voices and witnesses of the Social Movement. They say we are called by God to love, show kindness and do justice.”¹⁵ That we are to follow in the footsteps of these society reformers and model their faithfulness of the Gospel and tend to the poor and work to change the awful communities.

Apostles Paul writes in Galatians 6:10 that we are to “do good to all people.” This means that in addition to preaching the Word we are to work for better social conditions. We should continue to focus on the repentance of individuals but also include helping people in actual work and activities and not just preach to them.

The Book of John tells us that:

For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me” (John 12:8). The Book of Luke (6:20) says, ‘Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God’. “The church has a responsibility to challenge and oppose forces of oppression so that they can address human, social, political economical issues that the church is confronting. As the body of Christ, we are to advocate for the end of control and influence of one group over another and pursue radical change even when it requires interest and opinions that conflict. That means that we are not to be complacent to the point that we permit political, social and economical pressures, oppress others; we might find conflict in order to find peace.”¹⁶

Liberation Theology and Race

The Black Liberation Theology founder, the Rev. James Cone created a theology where he believes, " God is concern for the poor and the weak. Cone believes that the gospel has a real-life application for the black man who lives in a white society that views

¹⁵ Ken Howard, *The Paradox Center for Incarnational Christianity* (Los Angeles, CA: Spiritual Publishing, 2014).

¹⁶ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 30-33.

him as evil. He thinks we must learn as black people to not be apologetic about being black while being a Christian at the same time.¹⁷ At the beginning of the Black Liberation Movement in 1966, pastors declared an aggressive approach to eradicating racism. They used the framework of the Black Power Movement with the enlivening verses of the Bible.

Dwight Hopkins, Professor at the University of Chicago Divinity School claims that Jesus was a brown skinned revolutionary, called to make a change, as stated in the fourth chapter of the Book of Luke where we find in verse eighteen, 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the good news to the poor: He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, And recovering of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are bruised, To proclaim the acceptable year of our Lord. 'Jesus understood His mission was to eradicate poverty and to bring about freedom and liberation for the oppressed. American history has believed in racism and slavery through ideas found in verses of the Bible.¹⁸

On June of 1995, a “declaration of repentance was adopted and declared racism deplorable in every form or shape. The declaration “lamented on a national scale and is also repudiated in history as an act of evil from which a continued bitter harvest unfortunately is reaped.”¹⁹ The Southern Baptist Convention offered an apology for

¹⁷ Andrea C. White, “James Cone Looked Evil in the Face and Refused to Let it Crush his Hope,” accessed May 16, 2018, <https://www.christiancentury.org/article/critical-essay/james-cone-looked-evil-face-and-refused-let-it-crush-his-hope>.

¹⁸ Terry Matthews, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Wake Forest, NC: Wake Forest University Publishers, 2008).

¹⁹ Gustav Niebuhr, “Baptist Group Votes to Repent Stand on Slaves,” accessed June 3, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/06/21/us/baptist-group-votes-to-repent-stand-on-slaves.html>.

“condoning and perpetuating individual and systemic racism in our lifetime.”²⁰ And repentance for "racism" by many whether consciously or unconsciously.”²¹ Therefore, Christianity and racism are linked. Black theology gives the black community a Christianity that is real for them. It purports liberation as we live now and not later, after we have transitioned beyond.

According to Cone, “the New Testament shows Jesus as one who identifies with people who are suffering and oppressed, cultural outcasts and marginalized. Now that the social construct of racism is defined by oppressor (white) and the oppressed (blacks). Cone comments that Jesus presented Himself as black so as to shake up and break down white oppression.”²² Cone states that, “the dominant culture has destroyed Christianity with corruption and does not serve God but served themselves. Cone believes that God values justice and the victims are to be liberated and if God does not value justice, then we do not need God in our lives. A God who provides whites, privileges is a false God because a true God empowers the oppressed to be self-determined, self-defined and self-affirmed which is the core to black theology.”²³

The theologies that existed before Cone did not see and understand what blacks and other marginalized groups were facing every day in their lives. They did not understand what it was like to face the western culture and church, God and scripture that was not true to its Word. “He states that theology cannot develop while being

²⁰ Niebuhr, “Baptist Group Votes to Repent Stand on Slaves,” accessed June 3, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/06/21/us/baptist-group-votes-to-repent-stand-on-slaves.html>.

²¹ Jennifer Ludden, “Southern Baptist Convention Denounces Racist Past,” *Christian Century*, 112, no. 21 (July 5, 1995): 671-672.

²² Sarah Posner, “Wright's Theology Not ‘New or Radical,’” *Salon*, May 3, 2005.

²³ James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 64-67.

disconnected with these human conditions. While many white theologians define theology by first seeing the problem, Cone says the first place to start is with the issue of the evil of racism that perpetuates oppression. So, Black Liberation Theology begins with the experiences of blacks.”²⁴

Cone complains that, “Jesus suffering on the cross was to make people of color passive. This suffering can be found in the scripture, preached Word, songs and prayers. The passive acceptance of suffering has been used to exploit. This type of preaching and worship service encourages persons to passively accept sufferings. Cone mentions white preachers who have used this tactic with blacks and how white preachers celebrated both Jesus and Martin Luther King, Jr. because they were the symbols of non-violence and love. According to Cone, it was black preachers who developed black liberation theology in response to the white preachers' teachings.”²⁵

James H. Cone believes that:

The thinking of slaves about the Cross and suffering has a double meaning. As a child he saw the faith in adults who were against all the odds, they held on to the faith that Jesus had on the Cross. They believed that His suffering and death was for their salvation. Their salvation was not connected to what whites said about them or what they did to them but what Jesus said about the poor and what He did for them on the Cross. Jesus' death was about solidarity with the poor and the little person who is now very human in every way. This faith gave them an identity that no white person could take from them for they were empowered.²⁶

We all have different experiences which means our theology is different. White

²⁴ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), xvi-xviii.

²⁵ Marvin A. McMickle, “A Look at James Cone and Black Theology,” *The Christian Citizen*, accessed June 24, 2018, http://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-1-d&channel=cus&q=Marvin+A.+McMickle,+%22A+Look+At+James+Cone+and+Black+Theology,%22+The+Christian+Citizen,+accessed+June+24,2018,&spell=1&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjf5zqg3_3hAhVPeawKHRY1Bk4QBQgpKAA&biw=1268&bih=671.

²⁶ Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 182.

colleagues have not experienced being born black in America, or what it means to have a membership in a black church, and the black spiritual life where God comes down while we sing, He brought me a mighty long way. More importantly, they do not understand the power of black prayer because they are not invested in the culture."²⁷ The black prayer Cone remembers from the black church of his childhood:

Once more and again, O Lawd, we come to thee, with bowed heads and humble hearts, thankin' thee for watchin' over us last night as we slept and slumbered, and gave us the strength to get up and come to church this mornin'. I thank thee that my last night's sleepin' couch was not my coolin' board and my cover was not my windin' sheet. I thank thee, Lawd, because you have been with me from the earliest rockin' of my cradle up to this present moment. You know my heart, and you know the range of our deceitful minds. And if you find anything that shouldn't be, I ask you to pluck it out and cast it into the sea of forgetfulness where it will never rise to harm us in this world.²⁸

Cone states that he is a black theologian and must approach theology according to his black church and what it means in a white society.

Cone expresses that whites introduced Jesus to the slaves so as to make a docile person of the slaves creating a faithful servant, but the slaves refused that image of Jesus because it did not match with scripture. This is when Richard Allen and other blacks walked out of St. George Methodist Episcopal Church to protest segregated worship service.

Throughout black history Scripture was used for a definition of God and Jesus that was consistent with the black struggle for liberation. Further examples are found in Henry M. Turner's affirmation that "God is a Negro," Howard Thurman's association of Jesus with the disinherited, and Martin Luther King, Jr., view that political struggle was consistent with the gospel of Jesus.³⁵ Scripture established limits to white people's use of Jesus Christ as a confirmation of black oppression.²⁹

²⁷ Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 3.

²⁸ Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 3-4.

²⁹ Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 29.

Without the Social Gospel Movement, Liberation Theology would not exist. Professor T. Howland Sanks reveals a connection between social gospel movement and the Latin American liberation theology by carefully looking at the fathers of each one, Gustavo Gutierrez and Rauschenbusch. He found that Rauschenbusch dated before Gutierrez nearly fifty years and found that some of his thoughts were already in the writings of Rauschenbusch. However, both seem to have identical social context as they both approached themes that were similar such as oppression, poverty, and social injustices.³⁰

Additional themes includes, “the relationship between salvation and freedom from systems and structures that are barriers to people having full humanity; the church and its missions must live out liberation in all areas of life i.e., social, political, and economical contexts; and that sin is the foundation of every and all oppression and injustice.”³¹

Another theologian that agrees with Cone is Albert Rabouteau who agrees, “that no theology that deals with oppression, poverty, marginalized and disenfranchised people existed before liberation theology. He states that Cone’s black liberation theology is questioning the relevance of Christianity to African American and black people’s experiences in the world. He agrees that “God identifies Himself in human history with the struggle of black people and has promised the ultimate liberation of the oppressed through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.”³² This theology applies to racial diversity and the history of those who are generationally unable to embrace others. The church has been a participant in the lives of people to whom they proclaimed God’s Word. It is time for the church to sermonize this message all over the world. Not to accept this as a godly mission is to not believe in the Son of God.

³⁰ T. Howland Sanks, “Liberation Theology and the Social Gospel: Variations on A Theme,” *Theological Studies* 41, no. 4 (December 1, 1980): 668-673.

³¹ Sanks, “Liberation Theology and the Social Gospel,” 668-673.

³² Albert J. Raboteau, *Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 120.

Both J. Deotis Roberts and Cone agree that “western theology is biased and is the result of ‘colonial mentality’ and a superiority complex.” Christian missionaries colonizing third world countries and Africa disrespected the peoples’ culture and regarded them as heathens, barbaric and uncivilized and used propaganda that Europeans needed to rescue them and therefore enslave them.”³³ Cone says that, “the church has a responsibility to exact the truth and speak it in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. To be who the church is called to be, is to de-justify barriers and injustices that flourish in our world by dismantling untruths and create a theology that has new boundaries and a truth light on God’s people and racism. Roberts, however, suggested that some degree of separation can possibly take place with liberation theology. We must work to be sure that liberation theology reconciles, and not create a gap between blacks and whites. It is important that communication takes place between the two groups which are critical for reconciliation to take place. Roberts states that blacks and whites have been “living and unauthentic Christianity. Whites have been hypocritical, neglected love and justice while blacks have been passive in demanding this form of Christianity. He states that blacks and whites must find reconciliation to have an authentic life. This means that whites must embrace ‘humanness’ and blacks must embrace liberation.”³⁴ If “the whites have not practiced the ethical requirements that are in the scripture then the church has surely failed to do the same. Various forms of liberation theology have

³³ Roberts, *Black Religion, Black Theology*, 146-149.

³⁴ J. Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology*, 2nd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 5-7.

developed all over the world seeking freedom as they reclaim their human rights for the masses who has experienced oppression.”³⁵

Han Theology and Diversity

Han theology is rooted in the “Minjung theology which is the exploitation of the people who are commoners and outcasts by the upper class. The word Min means the people, and jung means the masses. This word represents most of the people, who happen to be poor and exploited.”³⁶ The remaining people are the “elite and the word that represents them is, yangban which means elite. It has similarities to the liberation theology movement with less emphasis on economic oppression and more on institutional oppression which stems from colonialism and systems where people are ranked above others based on status or authority. Of the two features of minjung, there is Han and Dan.”³⁷

“Han is the feeling of despair. where there is anger and sadness turned inward, hardened and stuck to the hearts. It is where a person's out going is blocked and pressed for a long period of time by outside oppression and exploitation. It is human suffering that has been internalized.”³⁸

³⁵ J. Deotis Roberts, "Liberation Theologies: A Critical Essay," *The Journal of the Interdenominational Theological Center* 36 (September 2001): 45-46, accessed April 10, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLA Serials*, EBSCOhost.

³⁶ Margaret Kane, “Minjung Theology,” *Theology* 90, no. 737 (September 1987): 351–56.

³⁷ Kane, “Minjung Theology,” 351–56.

³⁸ Luke I. C. Kim, *Beyond the Battle Line: The Korean War and My Life* (Bloomington, IN: Xlibris, 2012), 234.

This expresses the emotions of those who have been a victim of foreign military powers where many people share feelings of pain, tragedy, and subordination. Below is how Kim describe Han:

Korean scholars believe that Han is not simply a private emotion of a person who has suffered a lot; rather it is:

A pervasive “collective” emotional state among Koreans who historically have experienced an abundance of tragedies and pains in their lives. Theologian, D. Bannon writes that he believes that the Korean people’s Han is sorrow caused by extreme suffering and persecution that resides in the soul for a lifetime. This lifetime sorrow and sadness continue to exist as a blend. He sees Han as being saturated with bitterness and determination to wait for a time of retribution and or retaliation.³⁹

Yet another theologian, Andrew Park, states that “Han is a term associated with pain and hurt of those who have been sinned against. Park sees it as a slow death that turns into hopelessness, despair and sadness.”⁴⁰

Han theology comes from Asian and Korean theology that is directed toward those who are deeply wounded. Parks says that, “there are two components to sin; one is the perpetrator and the other is the wounded, the oppressed and the oppressor, the sinner and the sinned against. Most churches and preachers proclaim God’s Word without addressing the pain and hurt of the past. To be saved, a person must repent which is what helps the sinner however it does not help the person who has been sinned against and needs healing.”⁴¹ Parks says, “that God is angry with the way we neglect people who are hurting and are living with it. He tells us that the repent message is not enough for the

³⁹ D. Bannon, “Unique Korean Cultural Concepts in Interpersonal Relations,” *Translation Journal* 12, no. 1 (January 2008): 3.

⁴⁰ Andrew Sung Park, *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), 10.

⁴¹ Park, *From Hurt to Healing*, 1-6.

victim. Parks wants to have a theology that addresses both the oppressor and the oppressed. He offers a way to set an oath for the salvation of the oppressor and a path of healing for the person who has been hurt abused, victimized or wounded.”⁴²

This helps the reader to see three women who are part of a society that does not regard them as full humans because their husbands are deceased, and they have no male partner to speak on their behalf. They are hurt by a culture that alters its relationship with women once their marital situation changes which has nothing to do with them as a person. A society of oppressors who can ask God for forgiveness of their sins while the recipients of their cruel treatment at a time of grief can only ask God to help them. When Oprah decided to return to her Moab family she had no path of healing from the loss of her husband and status. When Naomi and Ruth were shunned by the Bethlehem society upon their return, they had no path for the healing of their losses. They must have shared their pain through tears and anger for now their lives will forever be depressing and subservient to a system that once respected Naomi and her family. Parks discusses shame and guilt and states that, “shame is associated with the person who has been offended while guilt is connected to the offender. Shame shows up in the behavior of embarrassment, helplessness and humiliation while guilt shows up as knowing that you have violated a moral value. Both shame and guilt can be individually or collectively experienced. An example of shame is how African Americans have collectively experienced the humiliation of the effects of slavery and German people feel guilt regarding the atrocities of Nazis and Hitler.”⁴³

⁴² Park, *From Hurt to Healing*, 1-7.

⁴³ Park, *From Hurt to Healing*, 35-49.

Ruth and Naomi dealt with shame as they return back to Bethlehem empty after having a life of avoiding famine. The famine caught up with them and in that process the death of Naomi's husband and two sons took place. Naomi was going back to where the people once knew her and her life when it was full and happy. She arrives back home with sadness and shame and decides to change her name from Naomi which means pleasant and delight to Mara which means bitter because she felt her name no longer described her (Ruth 1:20).

Another issue for Naomi is the guilt of leaving Bethlehem when there was a famine in the land. Was this the time to run from home and travel to a foreign land and live among pagans when your God commanded that you never intermingle with pagans? How does Naomi explain that both of her sons violated God's commands of no intermarriage with those who serve other gods. When they left Bethlehem, did they not have faith in the God they served, God of Israel, would provide their needs.

Another conversation that Parks brings to the table is that, "anger is another consequence of sin. Parks says that the offended should use assertive anger as a tool to work towards resolving wrongs committed by the offender, recognizing the anger and show compassion toward those who caused the hurt."⁴⁴ Even though Ruth and Naomi were excluded from the cultural activities of the other women of Bethlehem, Ruth decided to use assertive anger of exclusion as a tool and go out of the house to find food for them. She was led by the Spirit to the field of Boaz where she found plenty of food and a friendship in Boaz. In this case we see anger being used constructively and how Ruth confronted the issue of being a foreigner and outcast by using a humble spirit and

⁴⁴ Park, *From Hurt to Healing*, 51-59.

confront the “society and culture of Bethlehem” with love.⁴⁵ If you are offended, Park suggests using the method described in Matthew 18:15-18 to confront your offender with an expectation that the offender will repent from the heart and be forgiven.

Examples he used was the, “collective repentance of the Dutch Reformed Church who apologized for their support of the of Apartheid to Black South Africans or like the United States apologized for the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.”⁴⁶ These methods give the offender a way to justification and gives the offended, justice. Park states that:

Biblical justice is restorative (focus on needs and rights of the offended) and not retributive justice (offender receives punishment for wrong doing). Park believes that God gives justification as an act of grace which frees the offended from sins. He offers collective justification for a country such as America to face up to the tragedy of slavery and the enslavement of African Americans. It will move the country toward collective justification.⁴⁷

Conclusion

The Liberation theology’s main focus is on the individual freedom and retrieving human rights which were lost to oppression, while Hans theology focus is on the healing of the oppressed individual. Both of these theologies will impact how one feels, thinks, and acts toward people who are racially different from oneself. Liberation theology is allowing independence which means freedom to be who God has called them to be as a member of humankind. Being free will provide the opportunity to understand and apply scripture with God’s meanings and not humanity's meaning and therefore proclaiming

⁴⁵ Park, *From Hurt to Healing*, 61-62.

⁴⁶ Park, *From Hurt to Healing*, 70-79.

⁴⁷ Park, *From Hurt to Healing*, 128-130.

God's intentions on diversity and its beauty. Liberation theology clearly reflects the attitudes that have been developed and the human problems that have evolved.

When liberation theology is applied to issues of diversity, it suggests that the church is the oppressor and the congregants are the oppressed. Even those who are oppressed do not know it. Our larger society spends time supporting those who have lineage to the founders of this country and serves their interests while all others are not a consideration and/or excluded.

Institutional racism contributes heavily to the church's inability to embrace diversity. The church is to speak out and challenge injustices and set ministries that will support those impacted by the injustices. The church has a voice given to us through prophetic prophets who gives us permission to prophetically confront those persons and institutions who sin by using oppression and injustices which impedes the church from embracing diversity. It is fitting to have the church in this role after acknowledging that God identifies with His children who are oppressed and seemingly God's church would have the responsibility to change this condition.

In John S. Paddock's doctoral research, he states as a white man that the dialogue on racism in America must be reframed particularly in a Parish setting. He believes that white Christians must become aware of their role of their white privilege and white power he tells his members that racism is indeed a problem in America and manifested in the enslavement of people from Africa and the genocide of Native Americans, it is not a proud history. Progress has been made where many white people have opened themselves to people of color. One thing is clear to him following his research, is that racial issues in society are spiritual in nature for racism is among the principalities and powers which corrupts and destroy the creatures of God.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ John S. Paddock, "Reframing the Dialogue on Racism in America in a Parish Setting" (lecture, United Methodist Seminary, Dayton, OH, May 2004).

Both of these theologies place emphasis on being free and liberated. While Cone allows the offended to recognize and resolve the matter according to their context, Park and the Han Theology offers a specific method for restoration in an effort to promote healing and justice for the offended. Injustices are well documented through the history of slavery, oppression, discrimination, and exclusion, the church has the ability and posture in society to transform thinking through constant spiritual and religious means of grace.

The society of today works toward diversity and inclusion and there is a great shift in multi-cultural interaction. However, we continue to have disproportionately high unemployment, wage inequities, poverty, housing shortages, lack of financial support for the cost of living in the black communities and some white communities. These issues continue to create conversations that further discrimination, and prejudice in our society. In 2 Corinthians 5:18, God gives us reconciliation as sinners to restore to God as believers. The church is the institution and the people who are the greatest believers.

Park has a theology that is easy and practical to understand because the construct of racism leaves lasting hurt and pain. His theology turns us toward forgiveness and healing and provides for collective experiences to be dealt with in a non-violent and non-retaliation manner. The shame that the construct of racist has provided is the never-ending cycle of blacks showing the world who we really are as a great people who were enslaved and the world's inability to know, and understand the real people of all the people of Africa.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The theoretical foundation's chapter will examine concepts of theory pertinent to the proposed ministry project. Of interest is how the ministry works to change negative attitudes and none productive actions that create barriers that prohibits the church from embracing diversity to eliminate racial tensions. Included in this research is the application of theories that are appropriate for this ministry as seen in the Book of Ruth and their use in an effort to the church to embrace diversity and eliminate racial tension. The chapter will examine several theoretical components in the Book of Ruth and highlight the approaches that apply to ministry, churches and other religious organizations. A review of the liturgy, worship styles, diversity scripture, text interpretation, hermeneutic pitfalls, the pastoral role in developing the congregational attitudes, church life and activities, the benefit of contextual immersion to know what informs and educates and self-evaluation of attitudes toward diversity.

The themes explored include: God's faithfulness in the life of Israel through ordinary people like Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz. God's hand is seen through hard times as God provided economic resources for the good of all people. God intervened to impact their agricultural labor and work for people, respectful treatment of workers and co-workers. God's faithfulness gave them opportunities. The church must educate people

about diversity and inclusion as it reaches and touches all lives. We will study theories of education to better understand why and when the theories work or fail to work.

Contemporary educators and education as a discipline, align with and support the project.

“Managing diversity is the most formidable challenge of a pluralist society and has become the principal undertaking of the twenty-first century for many Western nations in particular. Immigration trends and demographic changes within the United States are altering the complexion possibly even reconstructing the fabric of our nation.”¹ This is why the church must acknowledge these changes in the world and use its resources to help people address and accept the changing complexion of our societies.

In a social system where inequities and inequalities are pervasive, education is the single greatest equalizer, the factor that can level the playing field.² With this in mind, the proposed project can act as an equalizer and help to level the playing field because it educates the audience visually, audibly and experientially. The context is in one of the wealthiest counties in Missouri, and many of the surrounding institutions offer opportunities for diversity events. The initial response among my context was excitement and as plans continued to be made, it was evident that many people outside of the community would be in the audience and not those who attend the church. No one seemed to realize or became disturbed that the program in many ways leveled the playing field. Initially, some of the church members seemed apprehensive to committing to attend the show luncheon and refused my invitation to be a part of the committee.

¹ E. B. Smith, “Approaches to Multicultural Education in Preservice Teacher Education: Philosophical Frameworks and Models for Teaching,” *Multicultural Education: Personal Perspective*, Spring 2009, 45-50, doi:<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ847145.pdf>.

² C. Rosado, “Towards a Definition of Multiculturalism,” accessed October 6, 2018, <http://www.rosado.net/pdf/DefofMulticulturalism.pdf>.

Baumgartner and Johnson-Bailey argued that the effects of racism and exclusion are embedded in the fabric of our society, and the field of adult education is no exception. For example, people of color still sit in classrooms where they are missing from the text and curriculum or are singled out to speak up for their group. People of color recognize their exclusion as a means of keeping them faceless and imprisoned by dominant forces and ideologies.³ This project brings to light the concept that people of color are not missing from this event, society, history, music, food. All ties to a very special moment and exist whether some curricula acknowledge it or not. The church and the many tools it has available to it must stand strong and speak to the diversity that God has established in the world God created.

In this foundation chapter, it was discovered that one of the most important issues of diversity is the benefit it gives everyone. Many corporations use this conversation with team building and strategic planning sessions. This not only generates buy-in but it answers the question, what is in it for me. Often people accept diversity when their jobs and livelihood are at stake. They began to understand how success takes place in a global arena that everyone is a part of. This project seeks to show benefits of all the diversity in the room and use corporate and biblical languages and concepts that they are familiar with and hopefully, their experience would have been broadened.

What informs us about liturgy, worship styles, diversity scriptures, text interpretation, hermeneutic pitfalls, the pastoral role in developing the congregational

³ L. M Baumgartner and J. Johnson-Bailey, "Fostering Awareness of Diversity and Multiculturalism in Adult and Higher Education," *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 120 (Winter 2008): 45-54. doi: 10.1002/ace.315.

attitudes, church life and activities, is how we understand the definition of diversity and inclusion.

Diversity means all the ways we differ. Some of these differences we are born with and cannot change. Anything that makes us unique is part of this definition of diversity. Inclusion involves bringing together and harnessing these diverse forces and resources, in a way that is beneficial. Inclusion puts the concept and practice of diversity into action by creating an environment of involvement, respect, and connection—where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives are harnessed to create business value. Organizations need both diversity and inclusion to be successful.⁴

“Hudson Jordan who is the Director of Global Diversity and Talent Strategies, at Pitney Bowes, Incorporation states that diversity is a fundamental feature of corporations and that hearing unique vantage points is valuable.”⁵ Whatever questions businesses ask about the value of diversity, surely the church must ask the same questions. Both entities are seeking to leverage learning, increase growth and make better decisions.

Gloria Carter Hicks combines diversity, inclusion and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory when she states that diversity and inclusion are key ingredients to a successful workforce. If that is what she is teaching when she is on the speaking, seminar and workshop circuit, then that is what the church can learn and teach. She teaches clients that diversity is useless without inclusion and vice versa. She says it is not likely that you hire diversely but do not train, develop and retain that diverse person. They are like peanut butter and jelly. They work together. Therefore, it is in a church where we can attract diverse populations but cannot retain those memberships because we are not training, developing or retaining the people we worked so hard to bring in. People, at

⁴ T. Hudson Jordan, “Moving from Diversity to Inclusion,” *Diversity Profile Journal*, March 22, 2011.

⁵ Jordan, “Moving from Diversity to Inclusion.”

work or church need to feel engaged and have the opportunity to contribute their best which is Maslow's theory that dates back to 1943.⁶

Most corporate theories are based on both diversity and inclusion and their benefits which is how everyone can bring their whole selves and who they really are to bring the table. Everyone will benefit from this because who they are in totality will bring a contribution that is their greatest part of themselves. It is not just important to have diversity; it is important for it to blend so that it works well with other management features. Diversity is a fact of life whereas inclusion is an option that we make.

Diversity and inclusion are defined by most groups with great similarity except for the millennial who define diversity as, "unique in viewing cognitive diversity as essential for an inclusive culture that supports engagement, empowerment, and authenticity—and they value inclusion as a critical tool that enables business competitiveness and growth. . . .and also" as the blending of different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives within a team, which is known as cognitive diversity.⁷ They believe that cognitive diversity works best in dealing with innovation and it builds teamwork. However, Boomers and Gen Xers view diversity as a right thing that the company must do to show fairness and equality and it is a matter of doing the right thing regardless of the company's outcome. Churches and religious institutions are aligned with the moral imperative definition. The critical point is that in less than ten years the millennial population will comprise of seventy-five percent of the workforce and they are

⁶ Gloria Carter Hicks, "The Intersection of Diversity, Inclusion, Maslow's Theory and Engagement," LinkedIn, accessed September 21, 2018, www.linkedin.com/pulse/intersection-diversity-inclusion-maslow's-theory.

⁷ Lydia Dishman, "Millennials Have a Different Definition of Diversity and Inclusion," Fast Company, accessed October 13, 2018, <https://www.fastcompany.com/3046358/millennials-have-a-different-definition-of-diversity-and-inclusion>.

not a group that works in any one place for a long period of time.⁸ The business world is getting an education from this group who does not believe that they must down play their opinions, just to get ahead. Their reporting structure on the job is usually boomers and it is showing up as a problem. Millennials require supportive leadership and a supportive culture. For millennials, leaders and culture are supportive when they promote a collaborative environment in which employees can see the impact of their work, understand the value they bring to the organization, and are recognized for their efforts.

In her book *It's Always Personal*, Anne Kreamer points to recent research from Sigal Barsade of the Wharton School of Business that indicates that, “positive moods prompt more flexible decision-making and wider search behavior and greater analytic precision,” which in turn make the whole company more willing to take risks and be more open. On the flip side, analysis conducted by the Gallup organization found that disgruntled employees disengage and cost the American economy up to \$350 billion a year in lost productivity.”⁹

“Globalization has increased the corporate decision to have a diversity and corporate Diversity and Inclusion (D and I) department because new markets bring about the need for someone who has skills and insights to build relationships and credibility in cross cultural context.”¹⁰ This is the trend that is being used in many denominations, assigning cross cultural appointments, assigning pastors of color to congregations that

⁸ Dishman, “Millennials Have a Different Definition of Diversity and Inclusion,” accessed October 13, 2018, <https://www.fastcompany.com/3046358/millennials-have-a-different-definition-of-diversity-and-inclusion>.

⁹ Lydia Dishman, “Secrets of America’s Happiest Companies,” Fast Company, accessed October 6, 2018, <https://www.fastcompany.com/3004595/secrets-americas-happiest-companies>.

¹⁰ Georges Kutukdjian, “Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue: Part 1, UNESCO World Report,” United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization, 2009.

have very little or no diversity in those congregations. The church realizes the need for someone to be a model for congregants who are in these workplaces where diversity and inclusion are a daily reminder of how the real-world functions. Somehow the church is not keeping pace.

“Multiculturalism is defined as the co-existence of diverse cultures where cultures include race, religious or cultural groups that manifest in behaviors, assumption values, communication styles, and modes of thinking.”¹¹ There are many theories of multiculturalism which defines it to understand it or to use it as a lens to influence disciplines. In a document entitled, “Multiculturalism and Adult learning we learn about three theories. Multiculturalism in education examines how diversity influences education, the classroom, curriculum, research, and literature. Multicultural education fosters awareness and appreciation of diversity.”¹²

The first theory that informs and defines multiculturalism is the “Critical Race Theory, which grew out of critical legal studies in the 1970s. This theory questions the foundations of equality theory based on race and proposes radical changes to combat racism and social injustice.”¹³ This theory proposes six assumptions:

1. Racism is ordinary, permanent, and persistent part of American culture and is common for every person of color.
2. The effect of interest convergence does not motivate the white elite to end racism because the upper classes benefit from racism materially and working class people benefit from it physically.

¹¹ “Defining Multiculturalism,” IFLA, accessed July 18, 2018, <http://www.ifla.org/publications/definingmulticulturalism>.

¹² Baumgartner and Johnson-Bailey, “Fostering Awareness of Diversity,” 45-53.

¹³ S. Ianinska, U. Wright, and T. S. Rocco, *Critical Race Theory and Adult Education: Critique of the Literature in Adult Education Quarterly* (Florida, FL: Florida International University, 2005).

3. Race is a socially constructed category based solely on the physical traits that people with a common origin share, ignoring higher-order traits, such as intelligence, personality, and moral conduct.
4. Differential racialization exists to racialize and stereotype different minority groups at different times to satisfy changing economic interests.
5. The notion of intersectionality and anti-essentialism, positing that no person has a unitary identity.
6. The unique voice of color or racial stories, a product of experience and imagination, which are an indispensable part of the identity of people of color, and which whites do not share.¹⁴

These assumptions help to inform our understanding of how society has designed and structured adult education. The first assumption claims that, "racism is permanent and persistent, so the world of adult education cannot be exempted from this fact. Experts claim that "the effects of how race and ethnicity are viewed in the world are embedded in our educational fabric, and the field of adult education is no exception."¹⁵ For example, "people of color still sit in classrooms where they are missing from the text and curriculum or are singled out to speak up for their group."¹⁶ This fosters an environment of "exclusion, rather than inclusion, for those adults of color. In light of the Critical Race Theory, adult education continues to support the dominant culture. This support is a weapon of control rather than empowerment and freedom of individuals. An adult educator can employ a Critical Race Theory lens to challenge and change the structures of power inherent in education and bring about political progress through policy and social change."¹⁷

¹⁴ Ianinska, Wright, and Rocco, *Critical Race Theory and Adult Education*.

¹⁵ Baumgartner and Johnson-Bailey, "Fostering Awareness of Diversity," 45-53.

¹⁶ Baumgartner and Johnson-Bailey, "Fostering Awareness of Diversity," 45-53.

¹⁷ Ianinska, Wright, and Rocco, *Critical Race Theory and Adult Education*.

The second theory is Banks' Five Dimensions, which goes past race and includes ethnicity and culture. In 1979, James A. Banks advanced a definition of multiculturalism based on five specific dimensions:

1. Content integration to infuse cultures, ethnicities, and other identities into the curriculum.
2. Knowledge construction involves students in critiquing the social positioning of specific groups.
3. Equity pedagogy means changing teaching with the intent of encouraging academic achievement.
4. Prejudice reduction describes lessons and activities that teachers incorporate to assert positive images of ethnic groups.
5. Empowering education structure and social structure by examining the culture and organization of an educational setting with the intent to restructure institutional practices.¹⁸

More than simply a definition or theory of multiculturalism, Banks' five dimensions offer a prescriptive approach for adult educators. Like The Critical Race Theory, "Banks' theory proposes and prescribes change, often radical change, to bring about results."¹⁹ However, Banks' theory moves beyond issues with race to culture and ethnicity in education.

In viewing Banks' theory on adult education, one must remember that, "currently much of Western education curriculum devalues the contributions and knowledge of others, which marginalizes minority learners. They are missing from the content of the class, this implies worthlessness."²⁰ As an adult educator applies Banks' first dimension

¹⁸ James Banks, *Culture Diversity and Education: Foundations, Curriculum and Teaching* (New York, NY: Abingdon, 2016).

¹⁹ Ianinska, Wright, and Rocco, *Critical Race Theory and Adult Education*.

²⁰ Baumgartner and Johnson-Bailey, "Fostering Awareness of Diversity," 45-53.

of integrating cultural, racial, and ethnic content into the curriculum, “an adult learner will feel more valued and have a sense of inclusion in the learning process. Inclusion in a general social sense is defined as an individual’s sense of being a part of the system, including access to information, decision-making channels, and informal social gatherings.”²¹

“Not only does Banks’ theory of multiculturalism inform adult education, but it also offers actionable steps to support inclusion and foster power rather than oppression in minority adult learners. In this way, Banks’ theory and Critical Race Theory have similar purposes.”²²

The third theory of multiculturalism, like the theory Banks’ proposed, is intertwined with the field of education. “In 1992, Sonia Nieto offered a definition and theory of multicultural education that still continues to influence the discipline. She proposes a definition with characteristics in a sociopolitical context, namely in the context of communities and the process of education.”²³ She focuses on seven characteristics of multicultural education:

1. Antiracist makes antidiscrimination clear in the curriculum along with teaching student skills to combat racism and other oppression.
2. Basic education proposes the basic right of all learners to engage in core academics to develop skills to expand diversity understanding.
3. Multicultural education is important for all students to challenge the misunderstanding that it is only for students of color.

²¹ M. E. Mor Barak, *Managing Diversity: Toward a Globally Inclusive Workplace*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2014).

²² Mor Barak, *Managing Diversity*.

²³ “Multicultural Education,” Education, accessed September 18, 2018, <http://www.education.com/reference/article/multicultural-education/>.

4. Multicultural education is pervasive and emphasizes an approach that affects the entire educational experience.
5. Social justice helps students put their learning into action. They have power to make changes.
6. Multicultural education as a process highlights the ongoing development of individuals and educational institutions involving relationships among people.
7. Critical pedagogy draws upon experiences of students through their cultural, linguistic, familial, academic, and artistic knowledge.²⁴

Alisa Brown in her paper, “Multiculturalism and Adult Learning,” summarizes the three theories: The Critical Race Theory, Banks’ Five Dimensions, and Nieto’s Seven Characteristics. “All three theories have fundamental common elements, such as awareness, competence, and advocacy for minorities, races, cultures, and other marginalized groups. Banks’ and Nieto’s theories, in particular, have specific application and influence on adult education by prescribing actions that educators can take to create power and inclusion and end oppression. Truly, the lens of multiculturalism can influence adult education for the better.”²⁵

Many lenses are used to provide diversity and multiculturalism education in higher learning institutions. Recently, schools are finding ways to embed the general education’s class curriculum with diversity and inclusion concepts. This is viewed as a way of demonstrating how important these concepts are and how committed the institutions are in investing in the topics. Each student must take core classes and be exposed to these concepts and more importantly, they will know how serious their school

²⁴ “Multicultural Education,” Education, accessed September 21, 2018, <http://www.education.com/reference/article/multicultural-education/>.

²⁵ “Multicultural Education,” Education, accessed September 21, 2018, <http://www.education.com/reference/article/multicultural-education/>.

is about fostering diversity and inclusion. During the Civil Rights era, voices in the curriculum focused on race, sex, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation. In today's world, the emphasis is not on the "what" but "how."²⁶

Although many terms over the years have been used, such as *multiculturalism*, *multicultural education*, and *ethnic studies*, the term *diversity* will be used here. A more encompassing term, *diversity* is meant to represent all perspectives from groups that have traditionally been excluded from or insufficiently examined in the curriculum. The term also takes into account the external forces that influence how academic institutions meet their educational objectives. The legal struggle over affirmative action in admissions, for example, no longer rests on moral grounds of remedy for past discrimination, but on the compelling interest of the state in the educational value of having a diverse student body.²⁷

As this article states, education has played a significant role in the growth of diversity and inclusion.

The changes in students which caused shifting demographics of the students, was the persistent call for inclusion of diverse perspectives in the curriculum. These calls have come not only from the groups that were previously excluded, but also from faculty, students, business leaders, and the general public. In a public poll of registered voters in 1998, the ordinary citizen was overwhelmingly in favor of diversifying students, faculty, and the courses taught. While 58 percent were concerned that the United States was splitting apart over differences, 71 percent believed that higher education could, and should, help people find a way to bring people together. Although Americans might differ in their rationales for broader inclusion, there is consensus overall about the intellectual, individual, economic, and societal benefits for doing so.²⁸

²⁶ "Multicultural Education," Education, accessed September 21, 2018, <http://www.education.com/reference/article/multicultural-education/>.

²⁷ Alma R. Clayton-Pedersen and Caryn McTighe Musill, "Multiculturalism in Higher Education – Demographics and Debates About Inclusion: An Aerial View of National Diversity Requirements," State University Education, accessed September 21, 2018, <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2253/Multiculturalism-in-Higher-Education.html#ixzz5bPVnExGH>.

²⁸ Clayton-Pedersen and Musill, "Multiculturalism in Higher Education," accessed September 21, 2018, <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2253/Multiculturalism-in-Higher-Education.html#ixzz5bPVnExGH>.

In order to align the purpose of higher education with the curriculum, higher education institutions state that:

The very purpose of higher education—to deepen students' understanding of what is known, how it has come to be known, and how to build on previous knowledge to create new knowledge—is thus undermined by eliminating the voices of those whose experiences differ from those traditionally represented. Such exclusions reveal an inconsistency between the rhetoric and the practice of democracy. Correcting this inconsistency eventually became the cornerstone of the civil rights, women's rights, and other movements that have pushed the higher education community to offer a more inclusive curriculum.²⁹

Those who oppose diversity and inclusion as part of the general studies for all:

Argue against including African American, Latina/Latino, Chicano, Asian American, women's, and gay and lesbian studies in the higher education curriculum, claiming that these issues are more appropriately discussed and debated in the political arena rather than in academia. They contend that institutions of higher education should be reserved for the pursuit of objective knowledge and truth through rigorous disciplinary study. Critics of diversity education claim that the focus on differences, which is often a characteristic of general-education diversity requirements, weakens national unity and has only a limited (if any) role in institutions of higher learning. They contend that the curriculum of higher education should be the basis for inquiry, discovery, and dissemination of knowledge, open to students capable of contributing to its development, and devoid of social politics.³⁰

Eventually the infusion of diversity and inclusion in general courses transformed into required core coursework to teach perspectives of rich voices and their contribution in the complex diverse world.

We now reap the benefits of a richer understanding of social, political, economical, religious, from the different ways of knowing. Rather the diversity and inclusion studies are within the general studies or a required course in each curriculum, we come to realize that such teachings are a necessary part of college education. The teachings range from student-centered intergroup dialogue, explore moral and ethical questions, connect global and domestic diversity, racial

²⁹ Clayton-Pedersen and Musill, "Multiculturalism in Higher Education," accessed September 21, 2018, <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2253/Multiculturalism-in-Higher-Education.html#ixzz5bPVnExGH>.

³⁰ Clayton-Pedersen and Musill, "Multiculturalism in Higher Education," accessed September 21, 2018, <http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2253/Multiculturalism-in-Higher-Education.html#ixzz5bPVnExGH>.

and ethnic injustices, living and learning residential experiences, and systems of intolerance and inequality. It is important to discuss the benefits and challenges of diversity and inclusion in education. Many positive statements are generated from research showing diversity as a tool that has wonderful effects on students who impact our communities. "The educational institutions are teaching and allowing real life experiences for students who graduate and become diversity agents in workplaces and homelife while giving rise to innovation, creativity and creative problem solving. As students learn and take what they have learned into the world, their actions teach us how to respect other styles that are culturally different from our own, while becoming aware of unconscious assumptions and behaviors that may be the cause of not receiving maximum benefits of life."³¹

It was further noted that, "the level of critical analysis of decisions and alternatives, was higher in groups exposed to minority viewpoints than in groups that were not. Minority viewpoints stimulated discussions of multiple perspectives and previously unconsidered alternatives, whether or not the minority opinion was correct or prevailed."³²

When students and staff members have interactions with diversity, the benefits are wide spread for society. Their exposure gives them the ability to think broadly and strategically for all persons, businesses and institutions. Their thinking considers the big picture because they have a reality check on all the communities, cultures and heritages that are to be a part of the final decisions. Creative thinkers are those who are open and interacting with different people and their solutions and ideas impact the bottom line positively. However, there are times when the benefits are not wide spread because the students and staffs are not changed by the diverse experience. Those who do not support diversity fail to understand that people who think differently and offer good suggestions are more creative in their problem-solving skills. In addition, it is challenging to witness

³¹ Eve Fine and Jo Handelsman, "Benefits and Challenges of Diversity in Academic Settings," accessed September 24, 2018, Wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/benefits_references.pdf.

³² Fine and Handelsman, "Benefits and Challenges of Diversity in Academic Settings," accessed September 24, 2018, Wiseli.engr.wisc.edu/docs/benefits_references.pdf.

the growing number of diverse local communities and not agree that learning from one another influences peaceful living. For those who want to stand still and not change as they witness change taking place all around them, they will lose out on experiencing a dynamic community where you learn to listen and understand other opinions. Diversify can make everyone a winner collectively.³³

When current disparities in public service leadership are addressed, the public service sector will have greater ability and appeal to people of color with the leadership skills to solve social policy dilemmas. The participation of people of color and the infusion of diverse voices and experiences into decision-making processes ensure a sense of cultural competency and effectiveness within policy-based solutions to social issues. As champions of transformational change, our goal is to not only achieve proportional representation in the public service sector by building a pipeline of talented, highly skilled candidates of color, but also to dismantle the barriers to inclusion of people of color in leadership positions and to support the notion that diversity in leadership leads to organizational excellence.³⁴

Even though diversity in leadership can lead to organizational excellence, there are three organizational perspectives on diversity as found in a:

Seminal article by Ely and Thomas (2001) identifies three perspectives based on qualitative research conducted in three culturally diverse private sector organizations: the integration-and-learning (IL) perspective, the access-and-legitimacy (AL) perspective, and the discrimination-and fairness (DF) perspective. The perspectives on diversity show how people expressed and managed tensions related to diversity, whether those who had been traditionally underrepresented in the organization felt respected and valued by their colleagues, and how people interpreted the meaning of their racial identity at work. We explain each in what follows because these perspectives have been the subject of much scholarly work.³⁵

³³ “Public Service Leadership Diversity Initiative: Leadership, Diversity and Inclusion Insights from Scholarships,” NYU, accessed January 29, 2018, <https://wagner.nyu.edu/files/leadership/LeadershipDiversityInclusionScholarship.pdf>.

³⁴ “Public Service Leadership Diversity Initiative,” NYU, accessed January 29, 2018, <https://wagner.nyu.edu/files/leadership/LeadershipDiversityInclusionScholarship.pdf>.

³⁵ R. J. Ely and D. A. Thomas, “Cultural Diversity at Work: The Effects of Diversity Perspectives on Work Group Processes and Outcomes,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 46, no. 2/3 (2001): 229-273.

In integration-and-learning (IL), cultural diversity is viewed as a potentially valuable resource that the organization can use, not only at its margins to gain entree into previously inaccessible niche markets, but at its core to rethink and reconfigure its primary tasks. Where this perspective is applied, group members are encouraged to discuss openly their different points of view because differences, including those explicitly linked to cultural experience, were valued as opportunities for learning.³⁶

In access and legitimacy (AL):

Cultural diversity is a potentially valuable resource, but only at the organization's margins and only to gain access to and legitimacy with a diverse market. Embracing this perspective in the work groups studied led to race-based staffing patterns that matched the racial make-up of the markets they served. This mindset fostered perceptions of inequity related to staff functions; racially segregated career tracks and opportunities, which fostered concerns among staff of color about the degree to which they were valued and respected; and ambivalence on the part of people of color about the meaning and significance of their racial identity at work.³⁷

In discrimination and fairness (DF):

Cultural diversity is a mechanism for ensuring equal opportunity, fair treatment and an end to discrimination. Where this perspective is at work, there is no articulation of the link between cultural diversity and the group's work and, in fact, this perspective espouses a color-blind strategy for managing employees and employee relations. In work groups subscribing to this view, employees negotiated the meaning of all race-related differences on moral grounds. Questions and concerns about fairness led inevitably to strained race relations characterized by competing claims of innocence, with each group assuming a defensive posture in relation to the other. Racial identity thus became a source of apprehension for white people and feelings of powerlessness for many people of color. This work, like others we review in other categories, presents a spectrum on thinking about diversity, with one end—the IL perspective—being clearly more holistic and considerate of creating a truly diverse organization than a perspective that is based on legalistic notions.³⁸

³⁶ Ely and Thomas, "Cultural Diversity at Work," 229-273.

³⁷ Ely and Thomas, "Cultural Diversity at Work," 229-273.

³⁸ Ely and Thomas, "Cultural Diversity at Work," 229-273.

An article by Selden and Selden uses the three perspectives found by Ely and Thomas to consider their relevance and application to public organizations. For agencies adopting the discrimination and fairness (DF) perspective:

The authors argue that the central question of interest is the extent to which the agency reflects the demographic origins of society. A primary concern, of course, is the determination of which demographic characteristics are most important to public organizations. In the public sector, this view is closest to the notion of representative bureaucracy discussed earlier. Work on access and legitimacy (AL) in the public sector is concerned with the relationship between employment of minorities and women and agency outputs and outcomes affecting these groups. The authors claim that regarding IL, relatively little research has explored the impact of diversity on internal public sector operations. Yet a number of agencies have adopted diversity training in an effort to take advantage of the perceived benefits.³⁹

This next perspective is best described as:

A diversity that works well because people see themselves and their ideas in it. According to, "Selden & Selden, they propose a fourth paradigm: **valuing-and-integrating**, which seeks to create a multicultural climate by incorporating individuals' pluralistic views. Diversity is often discussed at the organizational level, as in the Ely and Thomas work. Selden & Selden's valuing-and-integrating model proposes that one needs to understand diversity from an individualistic perspective before viewing the aggregate organization. A diversified organization is founded, by its very nature, on the fabric of cultures that each person offers and adds to the collective working environment. Thus, this paradigm suggests that an organization's culture is continually influenced by the individual cultures of its members. Employees will be more involved and committed to their employer when their worldviews are reflected in the organization's strategy to implement its mission and vision. The notion of paying attention to each individual versus the whole organization in abstract comes up in other literature below.⁴⁰

The fourth paradigm proves to be correct when it states that one needs to understand diversity as an individual first and afterwards, consider looking at the bigger picture. The committee for the project were people who had experiences or connections with diverse

³⁹ S. C. Selden and F. Selden, "Rethinking Diversity in Public Organizations for the Twenty First Century: Moving Toward a Multicultural Model," *Administration and Society* 33, no. 3 (2001): 303-330.

⁴⁰ Selden and Selden, "Rethinking Diversity in Public Organizations," 303-330.

settings and activities as an individual and was comfortable with the project. Others who seemed to not want to commit to attend the event or support their church hosting a diversity program, were people who had little to no individual experiences with diversity. However, those with very little experience offered comments regarding the congregation's perspective and need for the event. It was difficult to discuss this project on an organizational level because persons who do not have individual experiences cannot discuss an event that promotes a subject on a broad scale. This is what happened to me receptively as I made personal requests for participation and found that many people showed no interest or they showed hesitation in discussing the project. Unfortunately, I misread their behavior as being negative about diversity due to my assumption that everybody knows and understand the need for diversity. Selden and Selden's fourth perspective is the theory, fits how I functioned as a cross cultural appointment at Salem in Ladue, which is to understand diversity as an individual, first and then considered looking at the big picture. The value and integrating model give the opportunity to share your individual experiences on a larger scale. Each person can offer to add to the working collective environment, this means all are valued and the event will reflect a piece of each of us. But if the organization or church setting is not accepting, receiving and influenced by each member, then each member's culture is not being recognized. This is important to the education of all participants in the fashion show and luncheon. This valuing and integrating model were a good way to reach people on the committee which allowed growth while we worked to produce a great project. Adding everyone's thoughts and comments raised the level of interaction among the committee

members as each person could see their ideas in the show. They were part of the strategy and they helped to implement the mission and vision that I ad for the event.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

This final chapter reviews the biblical, historical, theological, and theoretical findings that informed the concept and the creation of “The Many Faces of Fashion.” This chapter also reviews the research methodology used as well as details of the implementation of the project. Further, this chapter presents the results of my research and reviews information from comment cards, uploaded photos from audience participants, answers to the questionnaires, and a summary of what participants learned. All groups need both diversity and inclusion to be successful. Inclusion involves bringing together and harnessing these diverse forces and resources, in a way that is beneficial. Inclusion puts the concept and practice of diversity into action by creating an environment of involvement, respect, and connection—where the richness of ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives are harnessed to create business values. Inclusion represents opportunity for growth, new knowledge and global community. For the purposes of this chapter, I agree with the following definition of diversity:

“Diversity” means more than just acknowledging and/or tolerating differences.

Diversity is a set of conscious practices that involve:

- Understanding and appreciating interdependence of humanity, cultures, and the natural environment.
- Practicing mutual respect for qualities and experiences that are different from our own.

- Understanding that diversity includes not only ways of being but also ways of knowing;
 - Recognizing that personal, cultural and institutionalized discrimination creates and sustains privileges for some while creating and sustaining disadvantages for others;
 - Building alliances across differences so that we can work together to eradicate all forms of discrimination.
- Diversity includes, therefore, knowing how to relate to those qualities and conditions that are different from our own and outside the groups to which we belong, yet are present in other individuals and groups. These include but are not limited to age, ethnicity, class, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, as well as religious status, gender expression, educational background, geographical location, income, marital status, parental status, and work experiences. Finally, we acknowledge that categories of differences are not always fixed but also can be fluid, we respect individual rights to self-identification, and we recognize that no one culture is intrinsically superior to another.¹

After completing my biographical research, the background examination revealed that diversity is a foundational part of me. I can identify many times in my life that involved the themes of diversity, differences, unification of dissimilar things, and bridging gaps in places where people unnecessarily separated. Then I realized that God called me to make diversity a central part of my ministry at Salem, and my ministry in the community. For instance, my mother found a way to be a voice for her husband and family when she approached a political candidate and spoke highly of my dad's abilities and determination to care for his family. She asked if the candidate would remember her family if he won his election. She particularly wanted dad to be hired in a civil service job as an act of appreciation from the government for his previous service in the U.S. Navy. The candidate won his election and returned to our home to meet dad and encouraged him to apply for a position with the fire department. From that point forward my dad, Chief

¹ "Definition for Diversity," The City University of New York, accessed December 29, 2018, <http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/diversity/definition.html>.

Preston Lee Bouie, made history by earning promotions the likes of which the St. Louis Fire Department, in its 119 years of history, never saw. More importantly, my mother's skill set to bridge gaps and to be the voice for the voiceless became a part of my identity and contributed to my desire to have a project that reflects both of my parents.

Another moment in my history that causes me to focus on bridging gaps is my dad's lifelong career with the St. Louis Fire Department beginning in 1952 and how I lived through many of his racial and cultural battles in his thirty-four-year career. His career path serves as a lens, backdrop, and training ground in human relations. I followed in my dad's footsteps in Human Relations or Human Resources which are the racial tensions my dad endured as he progressed through the St. Louis Fire Department, making history in the process as the first black officer, transmitted race and culture issues to me. After his assignment to an all-black fire station in 1952, my father became the chief deputy officer responsible for thirty engine houses, fifty-four fire companies, 284 men, and city-wide duties and responsibilities. The most personal experience that revealed to me that I am to pursue a project related to race and culture in the church was my clear memory of the crowded Bates Elementary School with mostly all black children. The school was so crowded that the school board built temporary classrooms that consumed our playground area. They looked like shot-gun houses. I did not learn the required curriculum for those grade levels as witnessed by my report card grades. As a result, I spent much of the summer going to a tutor and learning the material that I failed to learn. My parents knew that they had to provide better education for their children so we moved to a new neighborhood where the schools possessed plenty of space in each classroom. I noticed the presence of more white children than black children, and the all-white

teaching staff seemed calmer and more visible to me. This new school opened my eyes to differences of skin color, eye color, and hair texture.

My sisters and I walked home from school with these new friends only to see their parents show unhappiness with our presence as we walked past their houses every day until they eventually moved out of the neighborhood. I came to know and understand “white flight” and the ugly implications of racial biases, prejudice and discrimination. Years later, my schedule included a plan to attend a newly built high school in an all-white neighborhood. The bus ride was long, tiring, and sometimes painful when angry whites threw eggs and rocks at our buses as we left the neighborhood. When I asked my parents why others possessed so much hatred toward the presence of black children, they proceeded to remind me of the lawsuit, 1954 Brown versus Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. This historical landmark court case challenged segregation of black and white students within school systems and in public schools.

These conversations prepared me for this project because I experienced first-hand my high school transitioning from an all-white school and the transition of the all-white neighborhood that surrounded the school. I became aware of the presence of segregation in my life as segregation showed up in my school and neighborhood. I became aware of the existence of laws that established these segregation patterns. Such laws created these patterns to foster a false sense of superiority by the perpetrators of these laws. These laws created inferior opportunities like the over-crowded all-black school from which my parents moved me so that I could have a chance to benefit from the American Dream. Finally, when I graduated from Eden Theological Seminary and served in an all-white congregation, I experienced and witnessed more racial and cultural imbalances since the

African Methodist Episcopal Church always served as my denomination. The all-white congregation was Salem United Methodist Church (UMC).

The population of Salem UMC and its surrounding communities is predominantly Caucasian with the obvious absence of people of color. This absence of people with heritage differing from those of European descent is glaringly obvious in the church and at church functions. Salem-in-Ladue United Methodist Church has a history that dates back to 1841, where “twenty-two charter members established the First German Methodist Church west of the Mississippi. The German name translation was ‘Salem Membership of the Faithful.’”²

The church is currently in the city of Ladue, its sixth location, which is the wealthiest city in the state of Missouri. The ecological frame is a city that has local residences, schools, country clubs, and top retail shops and malls. Persons know of the city of Ladue due to its upscale boutiques, restaurants, menswear stores, jewelry stores, and European and American antique stores. The church currently has fourth and fifth generations that are only Caucasian. The people of color in this community are usually service workers who are not worshippers nor residents. Daytime changes in the racial and economic community are due to the commuting of 3,326 workers (39.0%), and workers who both live and work in this city 613 (17%). People who cannot afford to live in the area serve as workers in the area.

Residents twenty-five years and over, possess the following education profile: high school and post high school graduation 99.1%, bachelor’s degree or higher 83.1%, graduate or professional degree 44.1%. Only 2.6% do not possess employment, travel

² Robert S. Appel, *Salem -- Congregations of the Faithful* (St. Louis, MO: Salem-in-Ladue United Methodist Church, 1991), 13.

time for the commute for those who possess employment is only seventeen minutes.³

“The 2010 census reported that the racial makeup was 93.0% Caucasian, 1.0% African-American, 1.4% Hispanic or Latino, 0.9% Native American, 3.1% Asian, 0.9% Pacific Islander, 0.1% other races and 1.3% two or more races. Crime collected data shows that theft and burglaries are the largest incidences of crime while assault, rape, murder, etc. nearly do not occur. The institution of law enforcement has theft and burglaries as their greatest concern in protecting this community.”

Education institutions possess a strong position in the community and have a huge profile in this city. Obviously, education plays a major role in earning and receiving income and wealth. There are seven universities with over 2000 students located within four to eight miles of the city of Ladue. The religious statistics for Ladue residents reveal that 48% are non-affiliates (483,000), Catholic 23% (231,000), Evangelical Protestant 16% (163,000), Mainline Protestant 7% (74,000), Black Protestant 0.9% (9,000), Orthodox 0.2% (2,000) and other (37,000).⁴ Triangulated data received through verbal documentation of members interviewed as part of my Commissioning Pastor Project, that migration confirmed the migration of people from the riverfront to Ladue as wealthier populations moving away from urban and city dwellers for more space and safe areas. Those who I interviewed as part of my commissioning project, stated that the church moved while they were members because the “blacks” were moving in the area. The church’s relocation supported segregation and the separation of God’s people.

³ “Ladue, Missouri,” City-Data, accessed August 22, 2018, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Ladue-Missouri.html>.

⁴ “Ladue, Missouri,” City-Data, accessed August 22, 2018, <http://www.city-data.com/city/Ladue-Missouri.html>.

Caucasians, of German heritage, continue to largely comprise the membership of the church. Although the church has members that represent twenty-four zip codes, because it is located near a major highway, its population and membership reflect a small number of the many faces of Jesus. However, this congregation made a commitment to diversity and made great progress and produced diverse growth since 2010. Since then, the church possessed its first female Senior Pastor and its first African American Associate Pastor since its inception in 1841. We have four services, and the Modern services (9:30 a.m. and 10:45 a.m.) keep continuously growing. The Modern services consist mainly of a population of young families with parents in their forties. This contrasts with our established groups consisting of members, who share history from the time that they raised their children, that hold adult Sunday school classes. They received their distinct identity over time while newcomers form new groups.

This church's history is extensive. One can find accounts of the church and its culture that identify the stories and heroes in an archive room, which persons structured in order to preserve documents and photographs. The room is climate-controlled, and all visitors must wear white gloves when handling papers. These archives document every location since 1841, and those who are fourth and fifth generation members do not hesitate to make that piece of history known. After a church history of more than 175 years, a surge of interest exists for it, one of the largest and richest Missouri United Methodist Church congregations, to become diverse and inclusive. In 2017, Salem UMC, whose theme is "One Church, Two Locations," became more diverse through a merger with another church that was not sustainable based on a context located in a community of lesser means. "The Connection UMC," prior to the merger, received Salem's Easter

offerings and blessings so that they could end their years in the black. Our relationships have increased through children and youth programs that we shared with their community. Our diversity numbers increased mainly because of this merger.

As a result of the members of Salem UMC sharing many of their resources through summer programs, we live out the mission statement “Reaching out in extravagant love to fulfill God’s mission in the world.” Our relationship became a merger, and we combined into a church that now has a second location. Amazingly, we returned to the downtown or south side from which Salem moved away after establishing its first site 175 years ago. Salem now shares its Ladue community resources with the Carondelet community. Church business meetings declared that the purpose of the merger was not to change the identity of the churches but to share resources. This decision to not change either congregation means that they do not change their attitudes and do not interact with people of different heritage but support them through planned and scheduled activities and record diversity in one report although there are two locations. However, progress is being made at the Ladue location. Diversity increased in the past five years and resulted in changes to worship, prayer, music, dress code, and attendance.

The church’s desire to catch up with a world as it becomes more diverse changed the church’s foundation by addressing attitudinal barriers regarding race, color, heritage, and culture. The biblical text and Christian thinking both reveal attitudinal barriers that cause us to exclude, reject, oppress, and marginalize people of our society. I assume that people do hold on to learned negative attitudes, biases, prejudices, stereotypes, and fears in the general population, which means that this is also true of those in the congregation.

The project's goals included a desire to challenge and confront these negative attitudes that cause divides and gaps between multi-cultural congregations. In other words, my project sought to address the barriers to diversity and inclusion. I intended for this project to bridge the divide between multi-cultural congregations through positive interactions that create positive attitudes. I intended to create positive attitudes toward people who are different from ourselves and close the divide between congregations as they participate in a project that represents them and others who are not like them.

The exegesis of the Book of Ruth, chapter one, verses eleven through seventeen gives the message in scripture that it is possible to bridge a divide between multi-cultural congregations as this story shows the breaking down of racial and cultural barriers of the Israelites and Moabites. In these chapters we witness that the divide between race and culture takes place as a result of the history of Moab's god and protector Chemosh, and Yahweh as the God of Israel. Through love, the Israelites and Moabites bridged the divide between these multi-cultural people, including those who have been labeled poor, stranger, outcast, foreigner, wanderer, and sojourner. When some mark and stigmatize persons with these labels, it is usually because the majority failed to embrace their race and culture. Several cultural or ethnic groups within a society which includes people who have many different customs, beliefs, cultures, especially to the traditions of people of different religions and races constitute what it means to be multi-cultural. The church and other houses of worship historically struggle with issues of race because they have never completed the hard work of racial reconciliation and building racial harmony in the church before becoming the leader of harmony in the world. As Christians, we contributed to the Civil Rights Movement of the sixties in many ways but movements,

demonstrations, and marches are not enough. Being comfortable in our skin and being with each other does not destroy the walls that separate us. We must create spaces, places, movements, and diversity activities that breaks down attitudinal barriers of fears, biases, myths, stereotypes, and discriminatory behaviors.

Historically people of faith and the church failed to eliminate the barriers to racial harmony, and hence, has helped to form and sustain racist ideas and practices. In the past, people strongly tied the history of classifying people in America and keeping them separated from each other as soon as the racial enslavement of black people from Africa. Persons separated others based on race, culture, and background. For economic purposes, slaveholders used slavery for the production of tobacco crops followed by cotton. The history of the church grew from the early days of colonialism, slavery, and the Civil War. As a result, the church failed to improve race relations. As history moved from the area of Jim Crow, the Civil Rights Movement to Black Lives Matter, the racial divide continues to prevail, especially on Sunday mornings at the 11:00 a.m. church worship hour known as the most segregated hour in America. An environment of historical racism, prejudice, and exclusion birthed the church. However, the church failed to perform the hard work to stop the diminishing of humanity by unifying God's church according to biblical scriptures that discuss human dignity and equality for all God's people. We must recognize the significance of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, which struggled for equality and freedom, establishing a roadmap for social change through civil disobedience strategies (sit-ins, marches, and demonstrations), and change in legislation in order to advance human and civil rights. Many Christians do not see any systemic discrimination because they do not see that the divide between multi-cultural

congregations caused by free will, individualism, and personal relationships continues and maintains racial inequity.

The two theological viewpoints for this project include Hans and Black Liberation theologies. Hans Theology gives an approach for healing through forgiveness, reconciliation, repentance and justice for those who are victimized. This would be appropriate for people of different heritages who suffer hurt by the powerful majority in their culture. The Black Liberation theology provides freedom for those who suffered oppression and insists that they find their human rights. Black theology also liberates non-white people from all forms of political, social, economic, and religious domination.

The theoretical approach to this project has a methodology of a prevention model that included a small group workshop on diversity, a “Many Faces of the Fashion” event, pre and post comment cards and questionnaire cards. The educational approaches allow continuous reflection and understanding of the information along with the opportunity to receive new information for the participants that could help bring about attitudinal change. Many consider education as a great equalizer in a world that consists of many people of many backgrounds and cultures. Education supports diversity because it not only requires knowledge but also provides interactions which satisfies the requirement that we have encounters and relationships with others. Reading and understanding alone is insufficient, as one must actively seek understanding across lines of differences. Knowledge with interaction removes the ignorance of one another. The education perspective is clear when it tells us that we never have to abandon our identity or communities, but we must be who we are in a relationship and not isolation. Education

tells us to use what we have learned in a model of criticism and self-criticism, give and take, speaking and listening, and agreement and disagreement.

The project, “A Model for Bridging the Divide Between Multi-Cultural Congregations” will bring people of all backgrounds into a venue, preferably the church. The qualitative research model will utilize questionnaires and surveys to measure attitudes pre and post events. I designed this project to enhance education, dialogue, and interactions within and between people and the church by providing a diversity multicultural workshop and fashion event that will facilitate attitudinal change in race relations by opening the doors, minds, spirits, and opportunities for new relationships.

Methodology

This section reviews the mixed-method approach for the research model that I utilized in this project while also providing a profile of the population and the research sample. In addition, this section explains the instruments that I used to measure attitudes and the reason for choosing each instrument. This section also explains the method of data collection, the statistics received, and how I studied and analyzed the data. Furthermore, this section restates my hypothesis and the problem that the project sought to solve.

My project used three data collection events in order to collect data for my qualitative research project. These events included a small group church workshop, a conference seminar, and a race and cultural fashion show and luncheon followed by pre and post comment cards and questionnaires. I chose these approaches because I have not witnessed this population openly discussing race, diversity and inclusion, and this

population might have an attitude that such a discussion is not necessary. This population prefers not to have a discussion due to its fear of hearing words and thoughts that might offend them. However, some of the church members expressed their concern that such a conversation was necessary and they appreciated a long-overdue workshop. I believe it was wise to try three different approaches to collect data in an effort to determine what type of format would create an open and non-threatening atmosphere for people who may not have thought it was necessary to share this information within their church context. These three formats range from a workshop where people sat at tables with others with whom they are familiar, a conference seminar where a larger population of Methodist people sit at tables and sometimes sit in a lecture style floor plan, and finally a fashion show with open seating with a large population that is open to all races, colors, ethnicities, faiths, etc. The fashion show luncheon intentionally included a full meal with interaction with tablemates along with attendees taking photos with others they did not know and who differed from them.

Implementation

The project held its first data collection event at Salem UMC as a small group workshop divided into a two-part module with Salem congregation members. The second event was identical to the workshop but was held at the Missouri Annual Conference. Part one consisted of a slide presentation that visually described the concept of diversity. Part two of the workshop included viewing a video entitled, “The Lunch Date,” which is a short film done with little dialog. The story is about a wealthy white woman who misses her train and just waits for the next train. She goes to the cafe, buys a salad, and sits down

to eat it, only to realize she did not have a fork. After leaving her table to retrieve a fork, she returned to find a homeless black man sitting at what she believes is her booth and eating the salad on the table. She began to eat from the salad plate with him. He buys her a cup of coffee and leaves. She goes to get a sugar packet and as she returns to the table she realizes that her salad was at the next booth and that she mistakenly thought the homeless black man was eating her salad. Even when she realizes she was wrong; she laughs at her mistake and never shows a sign of embarrassment, kindness or forgiveness toward a person different from herself and her false assumption that he stole her salad. The workshop showed the participants the video before discussing definitions and concepts of diversity and inclusion in order to collect pre evaluations on how they received the video. Then, the workshop showed the same video after a thorough discussion on diversity and inclusion terminology. The second viewing brought about a changed conversation where instead of focusing on a woman whose salad was taken from her, the group focused on a homeless man who she accused of stealing. After discussing the definition of diversity, the group changed from believing that the man had wronged the woman to believing that the woman was mistaken in her assumption that the man's salad was hers. They also stated that his color or race led them to originally believe that the homeless black man had wronged the woman, and that his race, social position, and lifestyle gave him the appearance of a taker or a thief.

The third research data collection event was the February 4, 2017, Salem UMC in Ladue (Appendix A and B), "Many Faces of Fashion" show and luncheon. As noted in the Crossroads Newsletter, (Appendix C), the project transformed the Salem multi-purpose room into a center of high fashion and fun as members and friends from the

community came together for an experience of immersion about diversity. The purpose of the show was to bring people together to celebrate differences and to learn from one another. The models who walked the runway were of varied ethnic, racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. This fashion show was a great opportunity for individuals who are different to join with one another to appreciate the beauty in the designs and styles of the day and beauty we find in each other and in our differences.

The first "Many Faces of Fashion" show and luncheon provided 200 guests an experience with diversity that completely immersed them with a diverse audience, food, models, fashion garments, music, and multimedia representing six continents. Every part of "The Many Faces of Fashion" show and luncheon encouraged contact between guests whether or not they knew each other. The second "Many Faces of fashion show and luncheon was held six months later, August 12, 2019 (Appendix E). They took a few minutes during the luncheon and completed contact information on a "Friendship Card," which provided them an opportunity to create a small phone list of people they met at the event. This is a gift to them that encourages them to make a new and different friend in their lives. They also had an opportunity to take photos and upload them using the hashtag #The Many Faces of Fashion. This created a collage of photos from many angles of the ballroom, creating memories that stimulated conversations after the event. Part of this event included positioning comments cards in the center of the round tables for thoughts and comments as they prepared to leave the event.

Since the Missouri conference appointed me to a cross-cultural position, this event involved the church's staff and gave them an opportunity to work with me on an event that is new to them and the congregation. I had the opportunity to lead with my

ideas. Those who attended the workshop and the fashion show participated in this Self Analysis Questionnaire, pre and post activities where they indicated the comment was true by marking an “X,” which is indicated below:

I believe that I . . .

___ Regularly talk to people of different ethnic, race and culture

___ Have a definition of multiculturalism that yields positive results

___ Can gather information and solicit ideas regardless of source (race, gender, etc.)

___ Welcome all viewpoints

___ Respect ideas that are different from mine and the majority

___ Do not stereotype, limit or subjugate people different from me

___ Show myself as one who embraces diversity

___ Can communicate or work with people different from me

___ Avoid offensive statements to people of different race, ethnicity, age, gender & etc.

___ Am a teacher and/or mentor for someone different from me

Thirty participants attended the workshop and provided written responses to additional pre-tests along with answers to the post-tests that were the same as the pre-tests. A comparison of the post test questions to the pre-test questions indicated attitudinal change. The project coordinator administered the questionnaires prior to and after the workshop and fashion show. The participants agreed to complete all questionnaires and attend both the workshop and fashion show. I conducted an open interview with the group to gather more information on those whose answers stayed the same of was lower.

This means I wanted to clearly understand particularly the number of fifteen participants or lower. The questionnaire stated: I believe that I:

Pre/ Post	Comments
9/9	Regularly talk to people of different ethnic, race and culture
3/22	Have a definition of multiculturalism that is positive results
12/29	Can gather information and solicit ideas regardless of source (race, gender, etc.)
7/12	Welcome all viewpoints
15/27	Respect ideas that are different from mine and the majority
28/28	Do not stereotype, limit or subjugate people different from me
29/29	Show myself as one who embraces diversity
30/30	Can communicate or work with people different from me
30/30	_Avoid offensive statements to people of different race, ethnicity, age, gender and etc.
10/10	Am a teacher and/or mentor for someone different from me
30/30	Have been helped by the workshop and fashion show in understanding diversity
30/30	Was connected with a person to add to my diversity circle of friends at the fashion show

The post interviews focused on these questions and the findings of why fewer people answered the questions where there are fifteen or less that responded. The project interviewed all the participants as a group because the group requested that I keep everyone together so that no one would feel isolated. Only nine people out of thirty regularly talk to people of different ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds because they stated that no opportunities exist for them to be in relationship with people different than themselves. The comments from the group members was that they do not have interactions except at church worship and church activities. This number remains the same pre and post tests.

Twelve people out of thirty indicated in the pre comments that they welcome all viewpoints. The conversation focused on viewpoints that might be offensive and

unnecessarily difficult, so they wanted to avoid an uncomfortable moment. They agreed that sometimes the church fails to welcome “all” view points; yet the church solicits some viewpoints if they are sensitive and respectful of how others might feel. Some asked for a reason as to why viewpoints should be acceptable when those viewpoints will not change anything. Half of the group responded positively to the question of whether or not they respect ideas that differ from theirs and from the majority because they believe individuals should respect other people’s ideas even if they differ from theirs. However, the group conversed for a long time about people who might have ideas that are not for the greater good. Many of these church members believe in the ideas of the majority and had problems being open to listening (i.e., respecting, ideas different from the majority). After the fashion show this number increased from 12 to 29.

Only ten people teach and or mentor someone different from themselves. There is a group in the church that tutors at a St. Louis Public school. Many did not realize that mentoring goes further than teaching a process or concept. In this group, only ten touch lives of those different than themselves. The methodology helped to provide cross referencing of the pre-questionnaire, post-questionnaire, and the fashion show comment cards. I used these three methods to test the hypothesis that a workshop and fashion show can bridge the divide between multi-cultural congregations. The fashion show yield greater results in changing attitudes and bridging the divide between multi cultural congregations.

The context and professional associates made significant contributions in implementing and evaluating the project. These associates are members of our Sunday School class and have been part of meetings and conversations in that setting. They have

been open and professional in their expectations of the fashion show and helped to communicate to the church and community. They suggested that the project should encourage men to participate and have them to volunteer and offer their arm to the models as they enter and exit the runway. Men sat in the audience. Youth were on the runway and in the audience. The context associate solicited participation from Salem UMC to be models and in the audience. The senior pastor announced the upcoming fashion show and luncheon to all of the congregations, posted the announcements on social media, and included an article in the church newsletter and in the church bulletin. The project distributed flyers throughout the Missouri Conference district to encourage attendance of all congregations.

Summary of Learning

This section explains what my associates and I learned from the project. The handwritten comments on the comment cards from the fashion show and luncheon provided the main learning point. The same thirty participants in the workshop sat among the 200-hundred-member audience of the fashion show luncheon. The project left comment cards at the plate settings and we encouraged each person to complete the request for “comments about the event.” In addition to comments we asked for name, phone number, and email address. The project collected thirty-seven comments that attendees handwrote about the event, which is nineteen percent of the audience expressing their thoughts on the project. The comments were:

1. Great idea to connect with a new person different from myself
2. Very grateful for the wonderful time to connect with diverse people

3. Beautifully unique event. Not at all what I expected which is what made it so wonderful
4. This was an awesome event. What a wonderful way to spend a Saturday afternoon in Jesus name
5. Continue your work. This was a wonderful experience
6. This was a wonderful, in-action, live, learn more about and appreciate diversity in your life. It was terrific!
7. Spectacular, great reminder of what St. Louis is regarding fashions. Thank or the memories!
8. Wonderfully and beautifully done!
9. It was great. I met a lovely woman from the Philippines
10. Beautiful concept
11. Very nice and professionally done
12. Fantastic event
13. Fabulous diversity and fashion event
14. Exceeded my expectations. Totally fabulous!
15. Thank you so much for organizing this. It was so much fun!
16. Wonderful opportunity to see clothing from around the world and meet new people
17. Fun, beautiful and glorifying God
18. Very enjoyable and beautiful
19. Well done
20. Very successful and beautiful
21. Enjoyed
22. Wonderful and well done
23. Absolutely saw diversify in each person

24. Awesome event. I loved it!
25. Wonderful and well done!
26. Great event!
27. Better find a bigger place for next year
28. Bravo, Great Event
29. I love what you are doing to build our community
30. Beautiful show with unusual presentations
31. I enjoyed it immensely. I know so many who would love to come
32. Would love to be involved next year in fashion show as I make jewelry with African beads, and carry items from Haiti, Australia, and India
33. Great event
34. Lovely fashions
35. I love the collection of dresses and the hats
36. Wish meal was served sooner
37. #Faces forever

After seeing the level of excitement from the fashion show and luncheon we agreed that the workshop was not a good way to collect data. It was easier to let the food, music, garments and models teach diversity as opposed to words and videos. Clearly, the traditional training creates tension and a level of fear to open up and enjoy. The active fashion show and luncheon became the opportunity to talk to people different from self, welcome and respect different viewpoints about the event, and learn and allow the event to provide adult education about diversity. The end of the event was surprisingly longer as the audience did not want to leave the venue. The conversations and noise level were very high. The setting was relaxing, and more people took the opportunity to visit across

the room and spend time making comments about the event. The comment cards encouraged us to reproduce the event at a different six months later which proved to be very successful again. Our third show is planned for August 18, 2019 at United Hebrew Congregation.

We believe that we have a model that bridges gaps between multi-cultural congregations because our audience profile was:

Africans	7	3.5%
African Americans	67	33.5%
Asian / Koreans	38	19%
Caucasians	58	29%
Chinese	22	11%
Philippines	8	4%
Total	200	100%

This study did not consider attitudes by ethnicity or age but we will work to capture this data at our third event. The thirty participant's scores who were in the workshop, reflect life experience and exposure to people who differ from them. The larger group who attended the fashion show luncheon seemed to have greater experiences and exposures as revealed by their comments and their attendance at a church they never visited.

The fashion show created a group that enjoyed each other and the diversity theme. Unfortunately, none of these guests from the fashion show returned to the church for worship service or other activities to my knowledge. This might be because the church struggles to have the many faces of Jesus in four of its services. Another factor might have been the church members who attended the show positioned themselves as a visitor sat with the church membership. The church might find a need to be more open to conversations about other groups who might be proud of their heritage. When one's

heritage is not connected to the church, one feels like one does not belong there. One does not feel as proud of oneself or ancestry. From this experience I have learned that more large group activities are needed with emphasis on diversity and inclusion because bringing large groups of people of different cultures into the church provides greater diversity experiences.

The results supported the hypothesis in several ways. With social media and online ticket sales the show was a success. All 200 tickets were purchased, and the room was packed. The flyer was clear to show that this was a diversity show and the turnout was exciting. Diversity was in every aspect of the room as it gave every person a chance to see themselves on the runway. The show provided a variety of food which men ushers served while wearing top hats. During lunch, the event encouraged the audience to take photos with those who were different from themselves and upload it with a hashtag of #Many Faces of Fashion. This was an effective icebreaker and the noise level was high throughout the luncheon. The photos created an opportunity to talk and pose with a total stranger, and after this the natural conversations took off. I received many photos that I could not have taken or paid someone to produce. The show started with my welcome and thank you. I recognized community officials and then turned the program over to the Fashion Director, Paulette Black, Owner and Editor of *Coverings Magazine*. Each section of the show focused on a continent with multi-media, clothes and music.

In addition to online ticket sales, we sold many tickets at the door. We ran out of table space, so some people opted to sit in chairs and waited for the show without eating. This means we need to prepare for a larger venue. The only population that was not present was the Muslim community. I believe Saturday was difficult or maybe they

should be included in a way that does not offend them, such as male and female events and display of one's beauty. One person commented that the food took too long. Perhaps, placing food on the table is better than actual table service. Some of the photos showed how clusters remained as friends and family. Some people did not benefit from the activity because they did not step across the aisle and visit another table. At the end some people said that they looked forward to next year while the church members expressed surprise that I could be associated with something that was so professionally done. They repeated themselves saying "that was wonderful," with a feeling that they hesitated to say more. The next morning at Sunday service no one in the church spoke of the fashion show as if it never happened. When I inquired about the absence of a comment the senior pastor said that she was told not to discuss it. I felt hurt and disappointed that she and her leaders seemed upset over a successful event. Originally, they did not want it to take place at the church, but no one would openly stop my use of the church as the venue. An article was published in the church newsletter. The negative reactions could not negate the purpose and success of the event. Other than concerts held in the evenings at the church, we never experienced so many people of different backgrounds in the church.

Conclusion

The project worked very well but was not a complete success. Some members of the church who have a strong voice felt uncomfortable with an event like this one. Maybe it was too new for them or they truly want diversity in the pews only. One of the associates challenged me to think that sometimes people who feel they have a lot to lose with diversity do not welcome a change or new activity that emphasizes multi-cultural

events. Also, those who are in charge fear their demise or lack of full control. I think all of these reasons played a part in the unprofessional behavior that I witnessed on Sunday morning and weeks ahead of the event. I think the unsuccessful part of the event included the behavior of many of the home church members.

Some of the church members would find me and reassure me that the event was great. They seemed to be hiding their comments so others would not hear them. There must be a gatekeeper or elephant in the rooms around the church. I am clear that some women want more of this kind of activity, but they do not want to “rock the boat.” Secrets, fears, and punishments come to mind when I see watered eyes supporting me and my efforts. I understand, but I will not let that behavior deter me. All people benefit when we strive and succeed at opening minds and hearts regarding hard subjects like race.

I learned that churches are places where challenges of race and racism lie deep. In this traditionally all-white church with its history of only white male pastors to shepherd an all-white congregation whose community represents wealth. This church epitomizes the definition of “white privilege.” They say what they want and do what they want. The reason for two female pastors at the same time is because they were almost the last church in the Missouri Annual Conference to diverse their pastoral personnel. The church had a 175th anniversary and never mentioned or highlighted the first female senior pastor or me as their first African American Associate Pastor in the church’s history.

I consider American history when I hear members say they have collections of artifacts from the Civil War or signatures of every President of the United States. I have further learned that education, my theoretical approach, is the intentional way to inform people so that they can take actions that corrects, liberates and break down walls.

Future work will include a larger space and more emphasis on houses of worship and diversity, because, “we live in a country that is centered around whiteness that disregards how the image of God is on display in non-white bodies if we do not take responsibility for what has happened in America, we are not willing to see the image of god throughout the world.”⁵ We are all responsible for the poor race relations in this country for those who commit and perpetuate hate and the remainder of us who accept it.

This project is valuable for future work due to assaults, attacks and murder in houses of worship. Particularly the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist church in Birmingham Alabama, many people expressed outrage of the murder of four black girls inside the church.

It was the most egregious acts of racism, the church bombing took place within the context of compromise. The failure of Christians in the South and across the nation to decisively oppose racism in their families, communities and churches provided futile soil for the seeds of hatred to grow. The refusal to act in the mist of injustice is itself an act of injustice. Indifference to oppression perpetuates oppression. White people have had the historical power to construct a social caste system based on color of the skin, a system that placed people of African descent at the bottom. White men and women have used tools like money, politics and terrorism to consolidate their power and protect their comfort at the expense of black people. Christians have participated in this system of white supremacy a concept that identifies white people and white culture as normal and superior - even as they claim people of color as their brothers and sisters in Christ.⁶

Future work is needed and we have created a non-profit agency called, " My Diversity Circle," where the "Many Faces of Fashion," (fund raising event for My Diversity Circle) will continue to function at various venues to increase awareness of unity in diversity. The mission of My Diversity Circle and the event Many Faces of Fashion is to acknowledge that differences of people is valuable and that we are enriched to have these

⁵ Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 11, Kindle.

⁶ Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*, 14, Kindle.

values in our lives. Our purpose is to encourage each person to have a diversity circle which will create understanding of each other and strengthening our communities. Most importantly we must build a bridge to close the divide between cultures and search for intercultural and interfaith spirits that keeps us open to loving each other.

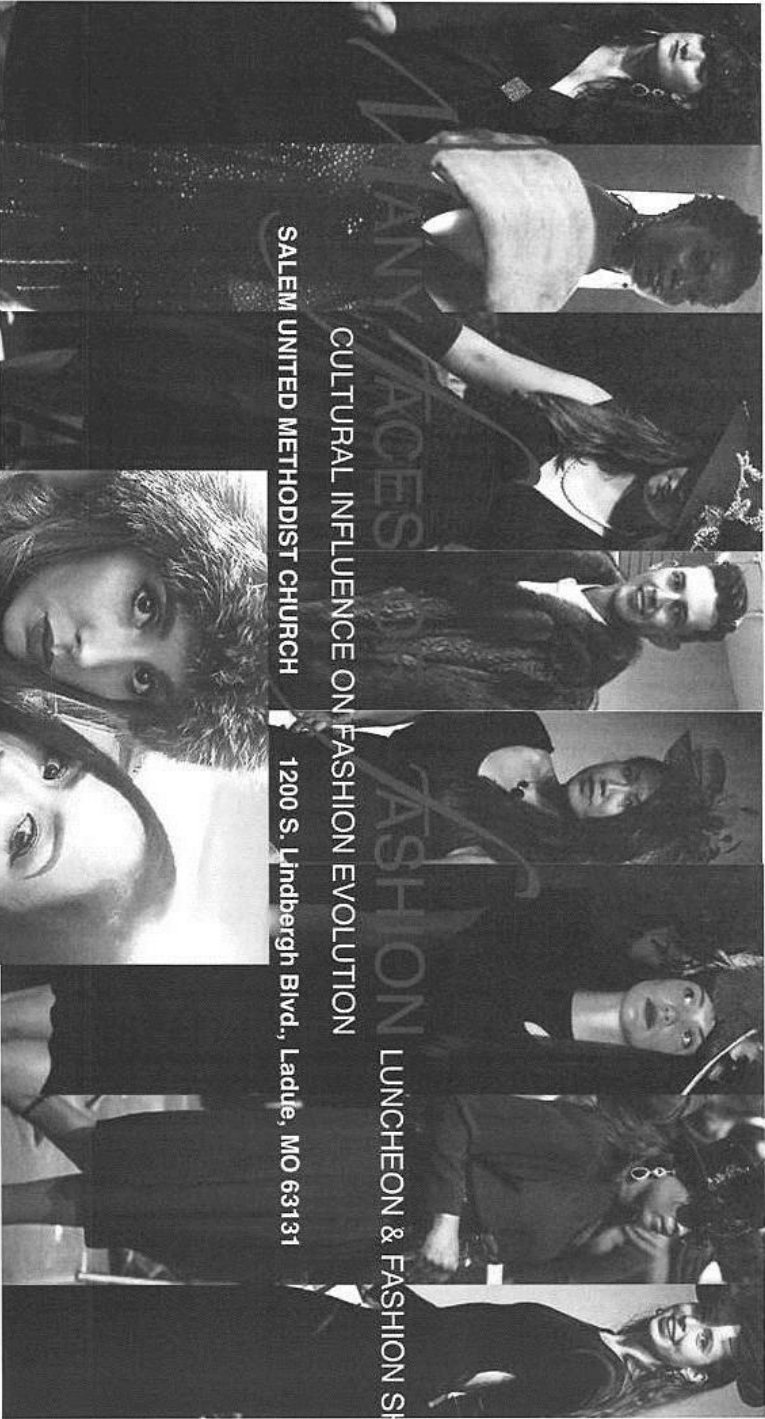
What I would do differently is to involve more people from the church on the planning committee. I did attempt to do this, but I continued to get push back. I now know they did not want to admit that they were not the ones who thought to do this event and hence, they could not get the ownership they wanted. I own my work because I want the same respect that they want when they do something good! Now that it has happened, I can try again to “include” them but if that is not possible; I will move on to other locations that are welcoming to me.

I have produced this show a second time, August 12, 2018 and it was a sellout! This show was at a church that is 98.1% African American. In August of 2019, we are planning to have the show at United Hebrew Congregation. God is doing a great thing with this project as we look at an educational component, grant writing, podcasts and streaming conversations regarding a church model to close the gap between multi-cultural congregations. To God be the glory.

APPENDIX A

**MANY FACES OF FASHION AT SALEM UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
FLYER**

Church Flyer



MANY FACES OF FASHION

CULTURAL INFLUENCE ON FASHION EVOLUTION

SALEM UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

1200 S. Lindbergh Blvd., Ladue, MO 63131

Presented by

Pastor Sheila Bouie-Sledge

Coverings

te Whitfield Black

February 4, 2017 at 1:00 p.m.

Tickets \$20

Benefitting COSTA RICA MISSION:

Rev. Terri Swan, Sr. Pastor - Salem, UMC

Tickets Available at:

314-991-0546

www.salemstlouis.com

www.facebook.com/salemstlouis

APPENDIX B
CROSSROADS NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2017

Newsletter Article



On Saturday, February 4, the Salem Multipurpose Room was transformed into a center of high fashion and fun as Salem members and friends from the community came together for the Many Faces of Fashion Luncheon and Fashion Show. Our own Rev. Sheila Bouie-Sledge and Coverings editor, Paulette Black, directed the event, hosted by Salem partnering with Coverings magazine. Rev. Bouie-Sledge came up with the idea for the show as a way to bring people of different backgrounds and cultures together to celebrate our differences and learn from one another. In addition, proceeds from the event will go to support the Costa Rica Mission Project.

Pastor Sheila conceived the idea for the fashion show as a result of work for a class she is taking. An assignment in the class asked students to consider the elements of their lives that were integral to who they were, and as she examined her background, she realized that diversity was a foundational part of who she is. She began to realize that God has called her to make diversity a central part of her ministry here at Salem and in the community. She commented, "I do not use diversity as a conversation every Sunday morning. However, I believe my presence in a church that has identified a lot of values in having a diverse congregation, by itself, speaks volumes. In my sermons, I seem to lean towards Scripture that teaches about unity, and the love God wants all of us to have for each other."

The models who walked the runway were of varied ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds. The Many Faces of Fashion Show and Lunch event was a great opportunity for individuals who are different to join with one another to appreciate the beauty we all can enjoy in the designs and styles of the day and in the beauty we find in each other and in our differences.



APPENDIX C
MY DIVERSITY CIRCLE ARTICLE

Diversity Circle Article

My Diversity Circle

Part I: An Ongoing Conversation On A Timely Topic

After starting a speaker's platform to train and teach diversity concepts; after presenting on diversity and unison at the Missouri UMC Annual Conference; after speaking to 700 students at a Historical Black College on cultivating their diverse gifts and talents; A whisper from God said practical diversity. Living what we say is where the focus should move.

My first response to the whisper was to invite a core group of women to a series of lunch meetings. I wanted to live diversity by spending time with my closest friends. Not only would I be able to see who they were and the diversity and lack of diversity in my friendships, but hopefully, I provided diversity for each of them through the fellowship and bread breaking luncheon.

As I share our conversations with you, I hope you will join us in taking further steps toward changing how you interact with others who are deemed "different" from yourself.

So what kind of life am I living? As I preach and teach about diversity and unity am I being true to my conversations? Does my life reflect what I articulate? Who is missing?



Rev. Sheila Bouie-Sledge

Associate Pastor
Salem United Methodist Church -
Missouri Conference
Doctor of Ministry Candidate -
United Theological Seminary

“ A whisper from God said practical diversity. Living what we say is where the focus should move to. ”

What ethnic background is not represented in my relationships? Why? what am I going to do to make my circle more complete? By sharing my friends will I provide to someone an ethnic person not in their group? So, if all my friends brought their eight people to a lunch date, will my diversity circle become complete? What will my 12 friends find out about their circles? Will they take on the challenge of being more diverse?

This is a question of not being reactive when there are issues of race in the headlines. We have not done the hard work of being prepared by varying our relationships. It is more than just knowing people who are members of a social, professional, political or religious group, that bring people together for purposes other than being relational with others who are different from themselves.

As the ladies found the private space where we were having lunch, I felt their excitement through the hugs and self introductions. Some of the them began asking questions as soon as they arrived. I explained that this is a project I will use

My Diversity Circle Continued from page

in Doctor of Ministry program as I prepare for ordination with the UMC. I expressed my hope that they would consent to be part of the project as I build it by using their relationship with me in documentation. I have a wonderful friendship in Paulette Whitfield Black who will introduce herself once everyone arrives. Her documentations will vary from written articles, photos and videos.

I confess that I am using my friendships to document how I see Jesus in the many faces of the people that I have chosen to be in my life. I cannot take credit for the people who are in my life when I realize that we come together for a purpose that does not have anything to do with me. I have some people missing in my diversity circle. Hispanic, Jewish and Muslim are the areas where I have work to do. If I am going to preach to other people, I want to represent a sense of wholeness about myself and what I say to others. I do not want to teach and preach it but live it. I want you ladies to live it with me.

This self-analysis started with me introducing each person and sharing how our lives came together:

Kim is my spiritually strong Bible Study teacher who provides me an opportunity to humble myself and be a student. She and her husband are national service entrepreneurial for an world wide technology company.

Judge Judy and her husband are long time friends of Cliff and I. Our children were Top Teens in the Top Ladies Of Distinctions (TLOD) many years ago. Judy is my famous Judge Judy! (laughter).

Alice and I are 20 year neighbors and we have jointly held a, "Who's Your Neighbor" brunch for our immediate neighbors.

Veronica and her husband, Howard, gave me the blessing to officiate their wedding one year ago. She is a fashion designer and decorator.

Mich is a high energy business owner of a social media tech company. She is highly in touch with the St. Louis community. She is the Executive Director for Connect Gateway Arch, and a friend of a friend.

Danielle, a business administration major exploring

a finance career at Lindenwood University. My husband's OSJ in the financial retirement industry, a single mom, wanted a child, so she went to China and brought beautiful Danny into our lives. Her adoption brought this woman, and her mom a happy addition to their American family.

Patricia and I met through the social activities of a national women's club that enjoyed upscale functions across the U.S. Her business connections with friends and the artists bridges our love for jazz entertainment. After retiring communication technology, she now pursues an artist management career.

Paulette comes as a divine introduction at a Christmas Eve concert where her daughter, Sharifa sings like a bird-along with a classical orchestra. Paulette is the accomplished founder and owner of "Coverings Magazine" which features fashion, health and beauty for women of faith. Her previous experience in advertising and marketing is evident in her publication.

They are all wonderful to be a part of this journey with me. In addition to seeing their faces collectively and hearing their voices individually, I confessed that I have also made a huge step by letting GO! That I am sharing and releasing them to each other, hopefully building their diverse circle. I pray for a rippling effect with these ladies. The racial diversity of this group include Chinese, Multi-racial Korean/AA; Africa Americans, and Caucasians.

Commonalities revealed: Adoption in their lives, jazz lovers, Christians, denominational and non-denominational, A type personalities, Moms and wives, profit and non-profits, entrepreneurial. How would we had not known all of this if we had not come together to hear each other's story? Divine timing.

I asked the ladies to think of their personal circle as akin to how Jesus saw and built his team. See the differences and commonalities as we realize the definition of diversity. Why and how you have come into relationship and what plans God has for you? How Jesus established His disciples (personal circle) and what were their differences and commonalities?

Like Mission Impossible, I felt God saying to me if you choose to accept this assignment...

My Diversity Circle Continued from page

Judge Judy: We need love and acceptance of all God's creation from here to the end of the earth. We are all wonderful gifts from God. Let's take the time to make St. Louis bigger and better, and not waste time and energy comparing ourselves to each other.

I am asking God to help me find ways to activate diversity more and more, so that we fulfill our assignment as God's Ambassadors. (Scripture: Corinthians.....)

I believe that all of you understand that prayer, because I believe all of you are Christians or believers of God. I probably have filtered out people who are not believers, and that in itself is another diversity challenge in my life. But to Judy's point there are speakers, articles, etc on diversity that already exist. Just Google diversity to see ALL of the conversations. BUT I want us to WALK The WALK! What I saw and heard people talk about when Ferguson happened upset me tremendously. Who are these people that tell OUR story? Why were we not prepared to speak up for the community where WE live and breathe?

Are we to talk, read articles, lecture, speak and train on a subject like this and not live it? So I ask you, is this living diversity as you sit here and have lunch today with eight women who are new and different to you? Are you living diversity now?

How can so many people decide to talk about who we are to the nation after the Ferguson riots?

Mich: The whole story of the Ferguson riots is being told through the pictures and books that people created. The viewers can understand that a lot more happened than what we saw in the news.

Judy suggested that we answer the question of whether or not we will be a safe and penalty-free space. If we come and share, and decide to take action as a group, will we consider those who really cannot forge forward on some topics based on the sensitivity of the matter and who they are in their roles in the community?

I interated that safety needs to be defined for each person. Will YOU be ok with your picture in a magazine article, your voice on a podcast? Your opinions shared locally or

nationally? Can you feel ok with facing friends, family and co-workers? I think we owe it to each other to answer those questions? I am ok with it. It is safe to be here, and also to not always be here. I want to grow the group, eventually. I believe all voices agree that this is a safe and penalty free place.

Veronica asked that we now turn to prayer and pray for unity and harmony from God, and bless the group as we spiritually link arms and not let the devil push in and stir up our feathers. Where do we go from here? We need to build our foundation and God will direct us. There is no doubt in that. HE will intervene and anything that is not of HIM is not to be allowed in the group.

Then she suggested we pray and bless the food. I agreed but reminded the ladies that Jesus asked the man lying by the Bethesda pool (who cried out to Jesus for help), "what is it that you want me to do for YOU? What is key, is that your voice is to be heard and we are to make our requests known. With that being said I want to share the prayer by starting it and letting each one of you build the prayer with your voice as we go around the table. I will start the prayer but every voice will be heard.

"Thank you God touching and prompting each life around this table. As you send us out to be ambassadors and receive what you have planned for us. May we learn each person and love them as they are, with all of their differences. We ask that you bless the food that we receive and the nutrition it give the body. Amen."

Pat: Thank you for the amazing opportunity to meet and fellowship with this leadership. Guide us and inspire us to be the leaders that you have called us to be.

Mich: I do not understand how things get to be so divided. Why is it so hard? the neighborhood that I moved into is all white. I did not think about it until I moved there. We want our business to include all of the people in St Louis. We're asking where are all the other people and how can we get to know them. We really do not want to be just all white people. (laughter) Then we sit back and say how we need to find out where the folks are hanging out. We do not want our surveys to be seen as just a bunch of white people. I feel like going to a Bosnian neighborhood and ask someone to be my friend. There are barriers

My Diversity Circle Continued from page

where there should not be.

Danny: My sorority is balanced, but the investment arena challenges me. It is 90-99% male. I have become an example to others.

Veronica: Mich is right. There are Black people who it is hard to get to know, though. Our foundation in what God wants for us is the difference. We cannot build without a good foundation.

Pat: Mich, are you from St. Louis? We polarized as a city. In most cities people identify with the college they went to. Here, we ask people what High school they went to.

We will need to let people know what we are looking for in the context of this group so they will understand what we are doing. The entertainment world thrives on diversity. The Bosman Twins are booked outside the city in order to get deserved notoriety, then when they return home they get some recognition.

Judy: (makes comments as she leaves for another engagement) I felt impressed to send flowers to a friend for no apparent reason. It so happened that the flowers arrived on her deceased mother's birthday. She was very touched. God's timing is so important...even in our meetings.

Alice: Yes. We need to move when God nudges us. I always intended to get with this person and now it is too late. When we feel the nudge, we should respond.

Kim: We should start trying to be more intentional and take action when God puts a person on our hearts. We can just say, "hi" or send them a note.

Veronica: Just inbox me and leave a message.

Rev. Sheila: I heard one of you mention the word grass-roots. Can someone comment as to what that means.

Pat: I think we have become more educated just being together. Social media can help us stay connected. We at least have the conversations and dialogue about our perspectives. Are we able to do a deduction and hear others people's opinions, as opposed to going on thinking we know how things are, and passing that on to the next generation?

Grass roots can be just having dialogue often, in a safe place. Our goal should be to become more loving and seek the truth, not just what you are told. Listening and being open should be our goal.

Paulette: My magazine is all about diversity. It is structured to bring women together with different backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities and religious denominations. They all have one thing in common: fashion, health and beauty. *Coverings* creates a diverse atmosphere continuously...breaking down barriers. It amazes even me. Diversity creates an open atmosphere for meeting each other. At one of our shoots, two women who pastored churches right down the street from each other, came together for the first time in years. Though different denominations, had a great time together and prayed for one another before ending the day. They both remembered that they are on the same side. God's side.

Rev. Sheila: I tried not to use my job, school or church in building this group, so I could see who was in my personal life; what that diversity looked like. Not one person here today is from another group family, school, work, church, or from the same denomination. I can say you are in my life because it is about you and me, not an obligation of another kind. That was hard.

Mich: We may not have control of the world, but we do have control of our hearts!

As the core group stated and confirmed the phrase to identify us is, "Diving Deep Into Diversity." ■

**Contact Rev. Sheila Bouie-Sledge
for speaking engagements or to let your voice on
diversity be heard:**

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