Liberty University School of Divinity

Thesis Project Approval Sheet

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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This project examines the role of the Black Church in the development of the African American Community and seeks to encourage churches to embrace this role. Support for communities by churches in rural North Alabama is key to improving living conditions and achieving biblically based outreach. This project investigates the church’s theological duties for community outreach and provides a biblical mandate as a part of a larger community development model, while preparing ministry teams for outreach. This paper will consider the equipping methodology that leads to a trained ministry team able to reach, identify, and fulfill the needs of the individuals within the community. The writer will use currently available research to develop the equipping methodology. A ministry team in the writer’s church will be interviewed prior to and following training to employ the model. Ministries currently engaged in community development will also be interviewed.

Abstract length: 143 words.
Dedication

To the only wise God be Glory Dominion and power.

To my loving wife, who has endured long nights and short weekends, a fulltime job, and the challenges of ministering as pastor in a local church.

May God now use us to reach the unreachable for His Glory!
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## Abbreviations

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<tr>
<td>AME</td>
<td>African Methodist Episcopal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMIN</td>
<td>Doctor of Ministry</td>
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<td>GED</td>
<td>General Education Development</td>
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Chapter 1

Introduction

No discussion of the church’s role in the community can be supported without considering where this activity fits within the God ordained role and purpose of the church. Scripture clearly identifies this role and purpose in the form of the “Great Commandment,” and the “Great Commission.” The great commandment, “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt 22:37-40). Here Jesus communicates the need for loving God and loving one another.

The great commission of the church follows through with this command to love by expressing it through actions focused on salvation. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen,” (Matt 28:19-20). The commandment and the commission provide a foundation for the church, placing the church’s focus squarely on reaching the lost for Christ. But this outreach is grounded in love, fellowship, teaching, baptizing, and faith in God alone.

Within the context of commandment and commission the purpose of the church comes into focus. The purpose of the church can be categorized as worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism.\(^1\) The church must teach those they reach to worship God in every

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aspect of their lives, not just on Sunday morning. Fellowship, is about building relationships. These relationships are planted, watered, and developed by the church. Paul in the Book of Hebrews addresses this when he directs: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching,” (Heb. 10:25). Fellowship builds relationships, and through these relationships the church and its members build each other up.

The church is also on the earth to make disciples. “We were created to become like Christ, and the local church is God’s instrument of choice to establish a process through which Jesus’ followers can grow spiritually.”\(^2\) The creation of true disciples committed to the Word of God and Faith in him alone.

The church was also established for ministry to the lost. And this ministry is exercised through the gifts given to each believer. “We are saved to serve each other, so God has given every believer a unique shape – a mixture of spiritual gifts, passions, abilities, personality, and experiences – to serve God by serving others.”\(^3\) And lastly the church must be committed to evangelism. “That is, they put their focus on reaching the next unreached person in their community. And they think beyond their immediate community to the entire world.”\(^4\)

The church cannot live up to its purpose by entering the church on Sunday, locking its doors, and leaving for home when completed with Sunday service. The church must engage in each aspect of its purpose in the community, to win souls for Christ. An outcome of this interaction with the community is the engagement in and assistance with individual and

\(^2\) The Five Purposes of a Purpose Driven Church.

\(^3\) Ibid.

\(^4\) Ibid.
collective wellbeing of the community. When the spiritual condition of the community changes, the physical condition of the community will also change.

With the purpose of the church in view, a look at the church itself is needed. The makeup of the church has changed significantly over the years. Churches are no longer composed primarily of members from the neighborhoods where they are located but predominantly of members outside of the neighborhood. As a result, although there may be minimum impact on the church’s ability to reach the lost, extra emphasis must be given to relationship building. The transition from a community based church has caused challenges in the area of relationships. Because most of the congregation are not from the immediate area, the church no longer has the worship or outreach needs of the community where it is located, in view. In some respects, because of the focus on foreign missions and expanding facilities, the church, has lost touch with and has even begun to neglect those within and without its walls. This may be true, however, at this point the focus is on what the church has historically done and is currently doing in the community. With this focus in mind, some argue that the responsibility for community development and engagement is clearly that of government. This is true in some respects. There is biblical evidence of government responsibility for community development. As well as there is a constitutional and legal mandate placing responsibility of the community on the government. The government biblical and constitutional mandates have been present since the inception of the


country. But the need for the church to live up to its mandate has never been more important. This need is especially true for the southern black church.

The findings indicate that there is an important role for southern black faith communities in the development of African-American communities. One has only to examine the literature on the black Baptist churches to comprehend that the Church has an extensive history in responding to not only to the religious needs of these communities, but to the educational, social, political, and economic concerns inherent in African-American communities in South. Finally, this study advanced that although black Baptist churches are concerned with secular issues (e.g., community development), they are not, in general, significantly or necessarily active in the development of their communities.8

The research about the history of the church’s community involvement is clear, and the church must change its focus to once again become active in community outreach and development. This change is about the community, but it is also about the church recapturing the ethos and practices of its earlier years.9 This change and engagement may be the difference between life and death in some communities. It is important to note that this life changing affect can only be achieved by connecting faith and influence.10 The church must believe and exercise the influence that comes with faith in God.

When government financial support is delayed, or disapproved, the church can be the key to community survival. This is critical when considering the Baptist denomination itself grew out of the need to address inequities in the community.11 Unfortunately, church involvement has waned at a time when the community needs it most, but thankfully, the idea of

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11 Sewel, African American Religion.
church community engagement is not a new idea, and engagement continues at some level each day. How can this happen? Christine Hamilton-Pennell describes how churches employ members of the community and, by default, have an impact.

Most churches employ at least one person, and many have upwards of 20 employees, especially if they operate a childcare facility or school. Since they generally operate a facility, churches are consumers of energy to heat and cool the often large, open spaces. They also use insurance, maintenance, landscaping, and construction services (albeit sometimes as volunteer labor), and they consume office supplies, furniture, curriculum materials, and specialty church items.12

The employment of members of the community has a major impact on the community and provides a direct link between the church and the community it serves. However, this connection is not enough. Much more must be done, and it will be addressed at a later point in this paper. However, it is important now to express the idea that the church in its engagement must be very precise, focused, and exact. Its primary pursuit must be the spiritual enhancement of the community.

The community development and engagement phenomenon has changed for the good and bad over the years. But today more than ever, the community needs the local church to open its doors and engage through discipleship, ministry, and fellowship. To do so, the church must identify available resources, and seek to equip its ministry teams, as well as its general membership to evangelize and through this engagement help the less fortunate. When the church and community collide as God desires, the results will be a divine merger. Mark E. Strong describes this “divine merger” as happening when the church intentionally integrates with its community.”13 This integration however, has a heavenly focus.

What the church cannot do is continue its inward focus. This trend of turning inward has resulted in community’s being spiritually defeated, leading to spiritual and physical death of some communities. This idea of the need of the community is not designed to bash the church because of its lack of care. The church does care. Rather, the church should understand the needs of the community and the ability of the church to impact those needs.

One of the challenges of the church may rest in the transformation of not only the church, but the societal changes that led to the economic improvements for the individual. These economic improvements allowed the individual to become self-reliant, turning away from their love of God, fellowship in the church, and community interaction. Preferring private engagements instead. As a result, the family in and outside of the church has been impacted. This erosion must end and the church must return. When it does, the community will return to its greatest glory; the knowledge of Christ, the assurance of a heavenly home, and power of the Spirit impacting their daily lives. 2 Chronicles addresses this return and the results when it stated, “if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land,” (2 Chr. 7:14).

Statement of the Problem

From the arrival of the first African slaves to the coast of America, the pursuit of freedom and equality have been the goal. Groups like the Free African Society founded by Richard Allen helped many reach this goal.\textsuperscript{14} The signing of the Emancipation Proclamation should have achieved the necessary results, but it did not. Passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 should also

have eliminated the inequalities that were being endured, but it did not. Although slavery met its end, African Americans continued to struggle in every area of life and still do today. The source of the continued struggle lies in the depressed social, physical, and mental state imposed upon an entire people for an extended period. This imposed environment is akin to that experienced by the Children of Israel in their time of bondage in Egypt (Gen 15: 13-16).

Slowly the freedoms promised by the Emancipation Proclamation began to appear, but not without a fight. Many oppressors wondered what else the Negro wanted. They could not understand the magnitude of the problem nor gauge the fire that burned within Black America motivating them to pursue and achieve equality. If not equality, at a minimum a life of comfort was the goal. Equality and comfort were represented in their minds by the elimination of a myriad of challenges. Although not seemingly at the forefront, spiritual freedom and expression was critical.

The basic and most frustrating challenge was gaining recognition as human beings. This challenge encompasses the basic right to vote, access to and use of public facilities and services, access to educational opportunities, and fair access to employment and housing, just to name a few. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was a welcomed relief and designed to achieve the felt needs along with the stated goals. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 followed closely behind the Civil Rights Act and outlawed the prerequisite discriminatory voting practices adopted in many southern states after the Civil War. Without these rights the African American felt entrapped in

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a strange land. This feeling spiritually left them wondering how they could connect with their spirituality in a land that was not theirs (Psalm 137:4).

These achievements did much for the African American people, but true equality and success were still not in their grasp. The church became the rallying point to achieve the goal of equity because of its unifying presence and basic mission of spiritual liberation. The church engaged in community development by creating housing, while their effort to support economic improvement was expressed in the creation of credit unions, cooperatives, and small businesses. Because of these engagements the African American Community began to flourish.

However, something happened, and the church disengaged. This disengagement resulted in the African American Community’s relapse in areas where spiritual and social gains were previously made. The spiritual degradation led to the social and moral decline of the community and individual. One aspect of this disengagement may be attributed to deterioration of leadership. When leadership declined, new leaders disengaged in previous efforts. This leadership disengagement was caused by the church looking inward instead of outward. The change in church focus was not a change in its belief in God, or the mission of disciple making. Rather the Black Church began focusing more on those who entered its doors, seeking to “facilitate a deeper commitment among believers.” While those outside the church were not being discipled, worsening the spiritual position of the community and individual.

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18 Hill, The Role of the Black, Winter 94, 150.
Statement of Limitations

According to the 2010 United States Census, there are over 1.2 million African Americans in Alabama.\(^{22}\) This population represents one fourth of the state’s population; however, it pales in comparison to the almost 42 million African Americans nationally.\(^{23}\) While it is true that general concepts are applicable to all African American communities, this project cannot hope to address every situation. It will be limited to a select group of churches, church ministry teams, and individuals in a defined community. Namely those living in Limestone and Madison counties, and the city of Athens, Alabama.

To gain insights into the community and their needs this study will use currently available data from the 2010 United States Census, Limestone Human Resources Family Assistance, Athens Homeless Shelter and Services, and Athens Welfare Services. The study will also survey the leadership team of Ebenezer Missionary Baptist Church prior to and after presentation of outreach ministry training, designed to equip them with skills that will overcome fear and doubt, prepare them to evangelize and minister to the needs of the community. In the context of ministering the training will also aid in need identification, provide them with the skills to connect the needy with community programs, and position the church to better disciple and care for its members and the local community.

This paper will equip ministry teams to share the Gospel with all they meet. However, their community focus will be on those identified as at or below the poverty level by the 2010 Census; those without formal education beyond the secondary level; and those living in an


\(^{23}\)Ibid.
impoverished community. While this is the focus group, the proposed thesis project will consider information outside of the focused area to aid in development of a viable development model and programs to equip ministry teams. To better develop a program to train the ministry team this paper will seek to interview three ministries currently performing community development and engagement in rural settings.

The proposed project will not attempt to pin the blame of failure on the church at any level. Instead it will identify where the disengagement with the community occurred and highlight the resources currently available within the local church and community to assist those within the focus area. The project will also seek to equip the church with the needed tools to better align current resources to ministries, reach and address the needs of the community, and increase the churches capacity for further outreach. This paper will also consider the church’s willingness to work with government and nonprofit organizations, while maintaining its dependence solely on Christ. In pursuit of this outcome the project will seek to identify what happen to change the church’s focus.

All areas of need for a community to develop are too great for consideration within this project. Therefore, the project will consider a limited number of outreach potentials. This limited focused area takes into consideration that the primary role of the church is spiritual development and discipleship making.

The proposed Thesis project will seek to engage and equip church ministry teams with the information, skills, and community needs awareness necessary to engage in a limited area and scope. This project can then be exported and refined to address churches and communities in more diverse areas.
Theoretical Basis for the Project

The proposed project discusses the role of the church in community development, and is solidly grounded in biblical teachings. In its expression of the role of the church in the community Scripture clearly points to two focus areas; other worldly and the here and now. These two distinct areas are mutually exclusive while simultaneously mutually supportive.

Jesus’s purpose in life was to do the will of His Heavenly Father (John 4:34). Wherever He went, He brought goodness. To achieve this purpose Jesus went about preaching, teaching, reaching souls, and addressing societal ills that were serving as hurdles to spiritual renewal and development. “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people” (Matt 4:23). These diseases or situations in some cases represented sin, thus Jesus proclaimed healings and commanded the individual “to go and sin no more” (John 8:11).

An aspect that cannot be overlooked is Jesus’s proclamation; “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” (Luke 4:18-21). This reading of a passage from Isaiah by Jesus and then the immediate rolling of the scroll drew a comparison to Old Testament events, while simultaneously pointing to the mission Jesus would undertake.

The symbolic yet real relationship lies in the need for physical freedom and release from worldly oppressors as an example of spiritual freedom from the forces of evil. To fully comprehend this Gospel message, one must first comprehend and understand that Jesus came to
save the lost. In human form Jesus fully understood the physical struggles of man, however He preached salvation to focus on the meaning of life. Grasping this concept provides insight into the sign it represented; God’s redemption of creation.

Consider the physical freedom of man. Throughout the Old Testament there was a constant call for an exodus of the children of Israel from captivity. This release was physical in nature, with spiritual, emotional, and psychological implications for those involved. But for God, it was about a divine relationship. David highlights this dynamic when he asks, “How shall we sing the LORD’S song in a foreign land?” (Psalm 137:4). David’s question is a clear indication that the physical disposition of man has an impact on their felt freedom to worship and spiritual wellbeing. By re-establishing this connection, the church is the only agency equipped to lead the development effort to achieve spiritual and physical wellbeing on earth. Reconnecting these entities allows the church to once again takes its rightful place in disciple making, and allow it to once again impact the wellbeing of the community. Scripture demands the church’s engagement.

The model for community development and the training this project will suggest and ensure the alignment of the principles of Luke 4: the offering of salvation, adherence to the mission and call, the need for repentance, and the power of the word.24 Addressing the physical needs, and through outreach and satisfaction of these needs the church will enhance their ability to share the Gospel and proclaim the year of the Lord. The outcome is preventing spiritual failure and physical suffering. This prevention of failure communicates God’s message that humanity is valuable to God.25


Statement of Methodology

The church’s engagement in community development is limited at best. This does not mean there are no outreach or efforts expended by churches around the United States. However, this area is severely lacking. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in the South, where poverty levels are higher, education levels of minorities lower, and opportunities scarce. It is important early on to identify that the poverty levels in the south cannot be blamed totally on family or individual irresponsibility. This project will focus on creation of a model useable by the church to address these types of concerns as an aspect of outreach, and a methodology to implement this model.

Three additional chapters will be included. Chapter two will seek to address the organization and approach essential to impact community development. It will define community development and address its historical and biblical aspects. As a part of the historical discussion, the project will attempt to show that the church initiated all the relevant actions leading to creation of schools, construction of housing for low income families and elderly, and the development of businesses uniquely designed to support churches and Black Communities. The chapter will take advantage of the efforts of researchers who captured the original works and the resulting solutions. It will also highlight areas where these researchers believed the actions of the church began to depart from a model that achieved the needed results. History will show problems began to arise as the church’s focus began to change.

The review of history will also highlight churches who developed and implemented


effective community development models and how these models were employed. Great care will be taken to focus on communities and churches comparable to those in the focus area. However, it is important to note that despite focusing on comparable churches, each church is unique because of their specific “educational backgrounds, and economic status of the members, as well as the geographical location and size of the congregation.” Churches are also unique because their God given mission and purpose. However, successful models in the Black community will be engaged and utilized regardless of the uniqueness.

A brief look at the government’s well-meaning attempt at community development will be provided. However, the focus will remain on achieving a model of success for future engagement by the church. This chapter will also provide insights development of the team for community development and outreach, focusing on the needs of the community to develop an effective approach. Finally, this chapter will engage resources to identify government and community services available to aid the church in its efforts.

Chapter two will also take a close look at community development from a Biblical perspective. This perspective will seek to build on Luke’s foundation and point to the demands placed on the church by the Gospel. Additionally, the spiritual-physical dynamic in Paul’s declaration of Jesus becoming poor so that man could become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9), lends itself to a meaningful discussion with respect to the sharing and redistribution of wealth. Although it is imperative to note the purpose of Jesus’ actions was to save the world from its sins, and not build a nation or world rich in worldly possessions.

Finally, this chapter will begin development of the model for community development by looking at team formation and organization. The approach needed for implementation will focus on team leadership as a critical aspect of team formation.

Chapter three will discuss current community development activity. It will take advantage of current research to identify what churches are doing to impact the community. This information will prove especially insightful with modern day economic woes. Although outside of the focus area regionally appropriate research of specific community development models currently being employed will also be presented. Although environments may differ, goals and desired outcomes are comparable.

Information gleaned from the focused outreach team will also be highlighted. This information will be taken from a pre-and post-training survey and will consider the individual’s preparedness and willingness to perform outreach and community development. Additionally, information gleaned from the individual interviews will be presented. The data will show that there is a need for “relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution as spiritual works of bodily conversion across social divides to unlearn habits of division, self-sufficiency, superiority, and inferiority toward a new future of mutuality and friendship.” 31 This idea of self-sufficiency is not far off as communities are beginning to understand that “real satisfaction and the good life cannot be provided by corporations, institutions, or systems… People are discovering that satisfying possibilities for their lives are in the neighborhood.”32 None of this can happen without the church engaging in a meaningful and deliberate manner. The model will include instructions

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31 Slade, Heltzel, and Goodwin, 145.

for engagement, application, and implementation in conjunction with discipleship and outreach programs.

An analysis of the information gathered will be provided in chapter three. The results will be used as a form of community analysis, and to determine the team composition and impact of and effectiveness of training provided to the team.

Chapter four will serve as the conclusion of the project. It will present a biblically based model for community development as the solution. The model will ensure applicability across multiple denominations and communities. The model’s initial design and focus will seek to heighten the church’s awareness of how to take advantage of and consider the resources present within the church, as well as those resources available through public and private programs.

The major areas considered for outreach in the focus area are spiritual formation, need identification, specifically food distribution, and elderly care. These areas are only a microcosm of the vast range of support and need areas available. However, this model will show the need for and use of a community needs assessment and analysis guideline that can and should be used to address needs in their respective communities.\(^3\) This assessment will allow the church to ensure that it implements programs that meet the needs of the community it is serving.\(^4\) The needs assessment will also serve as a reminder of the added purpose of the engagement, evangelism and meeting needs. The assessment will also limit the potential for selfishly focused engagement.


\(^4\) Ibid.
The final piece to the model will be the equipping aspect. The equipping plan will provide insight into ministry team formation and development and the tools needed to ensure effective outreach. The equipping aspect will continue to focus on the need for the church to consider reconciliation, preaching the Gospel, redistribution and sharing the wealth and services God has blessed the church to obtain within the community where it finds itself.\textsuperscript{35}

Review of Literature

To provide a practical view of the historical role of the Black Church history in development activities in the Black Community, and to aid in the development of a model depicting aspects of this engagement, and creation of a methodology to train ministry teams, a review of current literature will provide the needed foundation for understanding, application, and execution.

Books


To grasp the depth of the theological impact of the Black Church on the community this text addresses the development of this theology. It addresses the forces leading to creation of what is termed Black Theology, and God’s desire for equality among all men. It also highlights the role this theology played in the Civil Rights Movement to advance social justice.


The ability to develop a solution to the current negative trend can only be achieved through recognition of the problem. This text attempts to identify problems associated with the lack of development in the Black Community and entities that must engage to achieve change.


Churches will indelibly have an impact on the community where they are located, but only if the membership is representative of the community, and impacted by what happens there. This text explains that churches in the addressed area were attended and run by people who do not live in the neighborhood. The lack of local representation made the churches less inclined to cooperate with neighborhood revitalization campaigns and less likely to respond to the immediate needs of neighborhood residents.


History has highlighted the need for political engagement to achieve social change, and the church has been deeply involved from the outset. This engagement has dwindled over the years. This book highlights the impact the political environment has on the churches ability to
engage, and removes the blame from the pastor as a source of failure by describing the responsibilities of the leadership and membership in political activism of the church.


This collection of essays represents a major research project addressing the Black Churches’ civic involvement. These essays draw on survey findings to provide analysis of the social, historical, and institutional contexts of black church activism and to consider the theological and moral imperatives that have shaped black church approaches to civic life. They also consider the impact of faith-based initiatives that address economic development.


A significant aspect of the church’s engagement in any community is collaboration with religious and nonreligious organization. This text addresses the collaboration between church and government to address social concerns and foster community development through development of educational programs, active engagement in the community, and becoming intermediaries between the community and government to effect policy.


The idea or concept of community development especially as it relates to the Black community denotes more than simply an increase in economic status; it signals the expansion of the power base of an entire group of people. This text addresses the impact of community development on the Black Community at large, and highlights the need for a consistent message. It indirectly communicates the benefit of the church taking leadership, which ensures integrity and a Christ like example in dealing with society.


To be effective in outreach and community development, the church must ensure its organization and structure are sufficient and meet all regulatory requirements. This book shows churches how to become a force for revitalization in their community, by showing them how to structure themselves and avoid tax problems. The book also provides step-by-step guidelines for establishing and operating day care centers, drug abuse rehabilitation centers, housing projects, etc.

Arguably one of the most significant challenges the church will face is health issues within the community. This book provides detailed insights into the physical, psychological, and mental health issues threatening the African American community. This study provides the church with a solid understanding of the challenges they face and the programs necessary in the community development model to address these areas.


Black churches in America have long been recognized as the most independent, stable, and dominant institutions in black communities. This book is based on a 10-year study that provides insights into seven denominations, their internal structure, their view on the civil rights movement, women in ministry, the attempts of the Church to involve young people, the impact of the black consciousness movement and Black Liberation Theology and clergy, and trends that will define the Black Church in the future.


One of the more pressing conditions in inhibiting development in the Black Community is the absence of fathers. This text provides insights into the scope of the problem inside and outside of the church and what the church must do to affect change. Churches can reveal a true picture of God through mentoring both children and dads and meeting the needs of children.


The church must examine itself to determine why it is failing to have the impact on the community as in times past. This text points to the transformation of the church from a spiritually focused entity seeking to save the lost to one more concerned with notoriety and popularity. He identifies failures from the membership to the leadership and proposes a solution to the problem.


This book encourages realizing and accepting the Black Church’s responsibility for eradicating economic injustice in the African American community. The Black Liberation Church represented by this work recognizes the authenticity of ministering to the physical, spiritual, emotional, and economical needs of the people.


Throughout the history of the African American people, there has been no stronger resource for overcoming adversity than the Black Church. Black churches have been the focal
point of social change in their communities. Based on extensive research, *Mighty Like a River* is a comprehensive account of how black churches have helped shape American society.


Scripture conveys the need to possess the mind of Christ. This mind will lead the church and the individual Christian to engage for the better of the community. In these short meditative and sermonic pieces, Dr. King articulates and espouses his commitment to justice and to the intellectual, moral, and spiritual conversion that makes his work as a blueprint today for Christian discipleship.


Robert Linthicum offers an integrative, biblical study of the proper use of power to stand up to injustice and confront structural change. Linthicum's model of relational power provides sound, practical strategies for changing individuals, communities, structures, and systems. With insights from biblical mentors, this book offers hope for all who want to move toward the vision of a peaceful community.


The church must be aware of the corporate tools and models available for community development. This textbook provides an academic connection and professional know-how, and it demonstrates how to best plan the rebuilding, revitalization and development of communities utilizing a wide variety of economic and strategic tools.


The source of the problem in the Black community is the result of momentary success. This book uncovers the reason for the downward slide of the black community. It also provides a recommended solution to ignite economic development, care, services, and justice for the community.


This book reveals the shockingly negative effects that modern charity has upon the people meant to benefit from it. *Toxic Charity* provides proven new models for charitable groups who want to help—not sabotage—those whom they desire to serve. *Toxic Charity* shows us how to start serving needy and impoverished members of our communities in a way that will lead to lasting, real-world change.

Research shows that seventy-eight percent of Blacks are affiliated with church in some fashion, and sixty-eight percent of charitable contributions made by blacks are to religious institutions. Additionally, research is uncovered that indicates this giving is at the level of two billion dollars annually. Hill argues from a historical perspective that the church has a history of community engagement, and the level of financial support provided by the community mandates their future involvement.


Seldom are connections drawn between the Black Church and Higher Education. Leak and Reid highlight that the church created what is now known as Historic Black Colleges and Universities. The church and many Black Americans saw education as the only way to rise out of oppression. Today education is as important and the church remains the best place to lead.


Research continues to consider the political and social efforts of the church but does not provide the same level of attention on the church’s role as an economic agent or its effect on economic development. Littlefield highlights this disparity and suggests that the church has proven its ability to affect education, civil rights, and employment, and it must be considered in any discussion of economic and community development.


Research and history both trace the origins of political activity in the African American Community to the church. Sawyer highlights this and points out the significant players that were instrumental to black involvement and success. He shows that all the original leaders had church association, and some of these leaders were even pastors. He also shows that churches are used as platforms for rallies, voter registration drives, and in some cases fund raising.


The church over time has transformed from its self-help model to a mega church with drastically different goals and agendas in some cases. Speakes-Lewis and her colleagues
highlight the transition of the Black church and how its arrival at the mega church destination has in some cases separated it from the real issues facing its members and the communities they are operating. Instead of self-help, the mega church has become selfish.

Scriptures

Acts 2:43-45. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need

For the church to engage in the community they must first overcome the selfishness and castle building that has occurred. This Scripture identifies the need for the members of the church to bring forward their support so that needs in the church will be met. This also ensures the availability of the necessary support for those outside of the church in need.

Leviticus 19:9-10. When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the LORD your God.

The modern-day church has experienced great growth leading to great wealth. To maintain this wealth, it employs accounting practices and budgets to account for its resources and allocate funding to maintain ministries. As it budgets large sums for outreach, the church’s greatest impact could be achieved by committing funding to support members in need from the interest (corners) of its financial wealth. This is not an argument against outreach, rather support for an internal assessment focused on meeting the needs of constituents who are responsible for the churches wealth.

Zechariah 7:9-10. Thus, says the LORD of hosts: “Execute true justice, Show mercy and compassion everyone to his brother. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor.”

The church can find itself consumed with polity and religious practices, and these things may not be wrong. However, the church must turn its attention to executing true justice, and this justice is caring for the needy. The showing of mercy and compassion is more than a religious concept; the church needs to act upon them with its resources and time.

Ezekiel 34: 2-4. Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost; but with force and cruelty you have ruled them.

A warning must be conveyed to awaken the church to the consequences of failing to care for the people and the results of their lack of action. There is no hope if the church does not engage. This Scripture also conveys the idea that it is the church’s responsibility to take care of and protect those entrusted to them.
Philippians 2:3-4. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

The purpose of ministry can challenge those with the best of intentions. When ministry is undertaken, it is important to do it for the right reasons. The reason to engage is Christ, not to show how much the church is doing, who is doing better outreach, or who can grow a bigger congregation. A humble ministry focused on Christ must be maintained.

Matthew 5:13. You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

If change is to occur in the world it must first begin with the church. The true source of change according to this Scripture is the church. Its members have been given what is necessary to have an impact and make everlasting change. Failing to do so renders the church useless and good for nothing. This is a word to the wise to engage before the church reaches this point.

Hosea 4:6. My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. “Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.

Teaching must be done to prepare the church body for the mission ahead. Outreach and community engagement cannot be performed unless those being employed in its work understand why they are doing it and by what authority.

Galatians 6:2. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

The church has allowed society to determine the level of intimacy it has with the community at large and within. This trend must be reversed. The church cannot hope to aid in the solution to problems and burdens of others unless they have somehow built a connection where others are willing to share. In cases where problems are institutional, the church must seek to aid in lightening the load.

Acts 6:1. In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

The church at times can overlook the needs of people because of who and where they are. To do the will of God leaders must establish a plan to attend to the needs of all those around them. This may include training and sending out teams that specifically attend to the needs of an identified group. However, this team must be formed, trained, and sent.

Luke 4:18-19. The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.

To reach the lost for Christ, the church must first come to recognize their calling. This recognition of the calling should then allow the church to freely seek out and meet the needs of
the poor, the prisoner, the afflicted, and the oppressed. The Gospel meets these needs, and physically each of these needs is met through a different approach—education, access to medical care, and freedom through understanding of self-worth.

Matthew 8:3. And if I send them away hungry to their own houses, they will faint on the way; for some of them have come from afar.

Somehow the requirement to feed the hungry has become a requirement of the state. However, this Scripture provides an example of the Master Himself taking care of the needs of those seeking after Him. The church must take every opportunity to share the Gospel, but they must understand that physical needs must be met or the spiritual seeds planted not prosper.

Luke 10:34-36. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.’ So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?’

The tendency to avoid situations where a need is present because of denominational preferences, race, sex, etc., is not excused. This Scripture provides a clear example of what Christ sees as improper behavior and what He sees as the right actions to take for a person in need. The church cannot bypass a need because of any self-created criteria. Rather, when they see a need, they must give it their complete attention.

Matthew 25:40. Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’

The need to reach out to and treat each individual the same is a challenge in a hierarchal society. Jesus is clear that those most in need must not be ignored and pushed away. Rather, they must be cared for all the more because failing to care for them is the same as failing to care for Jesus Himself.

James 1:27. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Religion has become so much more than what this passage describes in modern times, nonetheless James reminds the church to return to the foundation of their belief. This is to show true charity to those he lists. This range of people include the elderly, the young, the widows, and the poor. This charity is to ensure they are not polluted by the world. To achieve this ideal, their physical and spiritual needs must be attended to.

Matthew 26:11. The poor you will always have with you,

This Scripture is used by some as an example for not helping others; however, that is not the intent. Christ proclaimed to those who under false pretense did not want the woman to do good for him. This Scripture provides awareness to the church of the prevalence of the poor and should foster an urgent need to go out and meet their needs.
Jeremiah 22:16. He defended the cause of the poor and needy, and so all went well. Is that not what it means to know me? ” declares the LORD.

There are several needs that should and can be met within the community. Scripture here conveys the presence of the poor and the needy. It conveys the desire of a king to remember those in need, because he understood it to be a solemn duty. By taking care of the poor and needy, God blesses and needs are met.

Galatians 6:10. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

The idea of reaching out to those outside of the walls of the church appears foreign to some. This Scripture provides the recipe for true outreach and community service. The church must be charitable to everyone, inside and outside of the church; especially those within the Christian faith. The community is composed of both; the church cannot be slack in their efforts.

John 13:34-35. A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Scripture identifies that the ultimate show of love is to lay down a life for a friend. This Scripture echoes that sentiment by simply commanding the church to love one another. This love is a selfless love, lending itself to humility so that others may benefit. The church must seek to show the love of Christ to the community of believers and non-believers.

Galatians 5:13. You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.

Often a reminder is necessary to reawaken the church to their God given mission. This Scripture speaks to the instructions to the church to avoid the tendency to seek comforting things for themselves and to reach out in service to those in need. This service must be accomplished in humility and love, not seeking any credit for the ultimate reward is in heaven.

Summary

This project is designed to fulfill the requirements of the Doctor of Ministry and is a great opportunity to develop a method of engagement and support for individuals inside and outside of the church. At the outset of this project, the goal of this writer was to provide insight in the idea of Church Community Development and relate the aspects of church structure and community support programs that may be used in this venture. This project is developed around the writer’s ministry and his desire is to make the developed model transportable and useable for large and small churches. The idea of an ideal community development model is simply one that can be
effective if appropriately planned, implemented, and executed. The goal of this paper is to provide information that will help in understanding the process of church engagement, culminating in the Church again grasping their God given responsibility and the need to evangelize the world, beginning at their own front door.
Chapter 2.
Organization and Approach

The appropriate view of the community’s challenges and the dilemma of the church must be clearly defined and developed to accurately perceive the full scope of the problem and the potential responsibility and capability of the church meeting these needs. Significant attention has been paid to the needs of the community; however, this attention has only come from the vantage point of government. To align with the focus of this paper, the church’s role in community development must be defined and clear definitions must be provided and expounded throughout this project. To achieve this goal of providing a clear definition of the idea and concept, a thorough examination of the community development, and especially Christian Community Development, must be established and clearly communicated. However, no amount of explanation can overcome a lack of organization and misunderstanding associated with a woefully developed plan.

When considering community development and openly admitting that the government has a role, businesses have a role, and private entities have a role, this question must be asked: “What about the church?” To begin to answer this question, the idea of community development must be defined. In addition to defining the concept, it is imperative to identify the historical role the church has played in the community. Any discussion of the role of the church must be grounded in biblical concepts and aligned doctrinally.

This doctrinal alignment simply communicates the need to ensure actions relating to the community are in complete agreement with the biblical foundations and beliefs of the church performing this outreach. In the case of this paper, any plans must be aligned with the Christian faith.
After considering the historical aspects and involvement, this paper will consider the church’s ability to perform the task, team organization, and finally consideration of the government support programs available in the needy area that the church may be able to use in its efforts.

**Community Development Defined**

Community development may be approached from a myriad of directions. Regardless of the approach the concept is straight forward. It is the enhancement of community’s ability to care for itself. Stated another way, community development is, “the improvement of the condition of a particular area or community, especially regarding health, housing, education, etc. (frequently attributive).”

This definition is directly aligned with the focus of this paper, highlighting the areas deemed critical to having a positive impact on a community. Alison Gilchrist also provides a more holistic definition:

Community development represents a broad approach to working with people in communities to achieve greater levels of social justice. In the main, the focus is on individuals, groups and networks that want or need to cooperate in order to realize change at a local or community level. That change might be driven by an external threat to people’s quality of life (for example, the building of new housing on much-loved green space) or it could be shaped by resident’s desire to improve service for a particular section of the community (for example, providing facilities for young people to divert them from drugs or vandalism). Adopting a community development approach means ensuring that the issues and priorities are identified and agreed by the communities themselves, and that people are encouraged together toward a collective solution to a shared concern.

This view of community development goes beyond simply identifying need and developing people and provides a focus on right treatment of citizens. This idea of right treatment seeks to improve the economic and social standing of those within a given community.

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providing the opportunity to achieve the American Dream. Additionally, this definition focuses on what most community development definitions and efforts see as important, the youth.

One more definition for comparison provides a complete view of the concept. In this last view,

Community development is a dynamic process by which local citizens develop capacity to help improve and control their local area. The community development process is one that requires an understanding of the nature of community groups, the function of nonprofit organizations, the ways services are provided, and the networks that tie community groups to each other in the area and region. Community development functions to help community participants influence the direction of important public tasks including planning, governance, economic development, health and social services provision, responses to poverty, effective transportation, housing for all groups, and improved education and human services.38

This definition places the responsibility for development on the community itself. This is the appropriate focus. Until the community takes responsibility for its improvement any assistance provided may be short lived. To take on this responsibility the community must be equipped appropriately.

Incased in this idea of community development are two individual concepts; community, and development. Briefly stated,

The term “community” represents a group of people rooted in a sense of place through which they are in a reciprocal and trusting relationship with one another and their landscape. As such, a community is not simply a static place within a static landscape, but rather a lively, self-reinforcing resonance of ever-changing, interactive, interdependent systems of relationships. Because a community is a self-organizing system within a larger environmental system, it does not simply incorporate information but changes its environment as well. Thus, as the community in its living alters the landscape, so the landscape in reaction alters the community.39

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This idea explains that community is more than houses and land. This concept is empty without the people, their beliefs, their engagement, and interactions. The people aspect is affected by the environmental aspect and vice versa.

Flint explains development differently, especially when referring to the United States of America, as material growth through centralized industrialization and distributed communication, which we equate with social “progress” and “economic health.” The narrowness of this view is behind the geopolitical notion of “developed” versus “developing” nations.40

The concept of development brings in the idea of a better life and environment. It speaks to the improvement of the social conditions being endured by the affected community. To ensure a holistic view of development one must consider the need for change in physical, social, and psychological arenas. “Development involves not only changes in knowledge and skills but also in attitudes and feelings. Truly transformational development involves a change in worldview. A feeling of helplessness and victimization is transformed into a sense of control of one’s own destiny.”41 Real community development changes a person’s entire life.

More in line with the focus of this paper is the idea of Christian Community Development. This concept is not necessarily defined; it is expressed in terms of the pursuit and mission of those carrying out this function. “The roots of the Christian Community Development movement come from a Christian worldview and perspective about how to respond to people living in poverty.”42 This response represents the Christian approach to reaching and

40 Flint, Practice of Sustainable Community Development, 5.
addressing identified needs. These needs must be collectively agreed upon to ensure the true needs and desires of the community are being addressed and not the symptoms of these deeper needs and desires. The symptoms in this context represent what those outside of the community believe are needs without assessment and validation. The most important identified need the church should consider is the need for the individuals in the community to have a relationship with Christ.

The Christian community development approach is based solely on biblical principles, and seeks to connect with and address man’s greatest need, salvation. In this phenomenon called Christian community development it is the local church that is the most effective in meeting the needs and bridging the gap by building effective relationships.\textsuperscript{43} The real idea of Christian community development “is for people to be in a loving fellowship with God and with one another as they toil in fruitful labor, which benefits their community of need.”\textsuperscript{44} This benefit is spiritual, but may have a physical impact. When spiritual needs are met, life improves in all areas, but especially where it counts most; in a relationship with God.

With the focus of this paper squarely on Christian Community Development it is important to include at a minimum a working definition of the idea of Christian. It is this idea that provides the delineating factor between Christian and government or secular entities that provide support to the community. “Christian community development is church-based ministry among the poor, which begins with felt needs, responds to those needs, is based on clear biblical principles, and time tested.”\textsuperscript{45} A dictionary definition of a Christian is: “a person professing

\textsuperscript{43} Perkins, Restoring At-Risk Communities, 44.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, 45.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, 314.
belief in Jesus as the Christ or in the religion based on the teachings of Jesus.” 46 While this is a good starting point, like many dictionary definitions, it falls somewhat short of really communicating the biblical truth of what it means to be a Christian.

The pursuit of a more scriptural focused definition provides that Christian was the:

Name first given to the followers of Jesus Christ (Acts 11:26). When the Christian movement reached Antioch in Syria, the gospel was preached to Gentiles as well as Jews. Such evangelism marked the sect as more than a new type of Judaism; it was a new religion. The Gentiles in Antioch invented a name for the new group. Since members of the group constantly talked about Christ, they were called Christians, meaning the “household” or “partisans” of Christ. Some satire may have been intended in the name. For instance, since the “Augustinians” were an organized group who led the public praise of the emperor Nero Augustus, the citizens of Antioch may have made a comparable Latinized name out of Christ as a joke. Similar groups included Herod’s partisans, the Herodians. “Christ” was an unusual and meaningless name to Gentiles, but Chrestos (meaning “good” or “kind”) was a common name; some pagans called the new sect “Chrestians.” Thus, Suetonius wrote of the Jews being expelled from Rome in AD 49 on account of “Chrestus.” 47

The term Christian is clearly associated with an individual or group aligned with Christ and Christian beliefs. Although comparable names were listed based on the individual group or sect, the basic concept remains. A Christian is a believer in and disciple of Christ. The focus and drive this group brings to community development is grounded in their belief in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, their belief that only in Christ can peace be attained.

A closer look at the purpose of Christianity provides more of an insight into its real meaning. “Organized Christianity came into existence, and exists, to preserve a treasure, a command to be executed, a promise to be repeated, a mission to be filled.” 48 This describes

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Christianity in its entirety and provides a connection to community development. Christianity as expressed by the Command of Jesus Christ exist to obey his command and walk in his way.

**The History of Christian Community Development**

The true history of Christian Community Development is biblically based. The New Testament Book of Acts indicates that the church community collectively supported the physical needs of the body by selling individual assets and providing to those in need (Acts 2:45). This meeting of needs in Acts was accomplished after the church came together as a body focused on and unified in Christ. This selfless act did not only provide food, it also accounted for all human and material needs, allowing the focus of the body to remain on Christ. This act of selflessness can be found in Old and New Testament Scripture, and has a presence in some circles even today.

During the time of Joseph in the Old Testament, there was a drought in the land, and God is clearly the orchestrator. Joseph is sustained through a myriad of atrocities resulting in his promotion to second most important position in Egypt, second to on the Pharaoh of Egypt during this drought and famine. Through Joseph God provided for the entire regional population, especially maintaining the origins of the tribes of Israel (Gen 38-42). This move of God provided food for a nation, while sustaining God’s people and the promise made to Abraham of a great nation (Gen 12:2).

Consider how Scripture addresses every aspect of community development and outreach. 1 Thessalonians addresses encouraging the fainthearted, helping the weak, and extending patience to all (1 Thess 5:14). 1 Corinthians directs Christians to care for one another (1 Cor 12:25). Romans conveys the idea that the believers are one and must be concerned about each other (Rom 12:5). Leviticus addresses the idea of providing for the needs of others out of the
abundance of one’s own resources (Lev 19). These passages are consistent with reaching out and joining together with other believers and unbelievers to improve the spiritual life of the individual and impacting the physical life and of the community.

There is no way to conclude a biblical discussion of Christian Community Development without pointing to the methods and actions of Jesus during His physical presence on earth. Of the many examples available, this paper will use John 4. After completing some of his work, Jesus identified his need to travel through Samaria. “Some think that Christ must needs go through Samaria because of the good work he had to do there; a poor woman to be converted, a lost sheep to be sought and saved. This was work his heart was upon, therefore He must needs go this way.” Regardless of the reason, when he arrived there he engaged. Through His engagement, Jesus improved the spiritual disposition of the woman he met, and those of whom she was connected. Jesus’ engagement led to her and the community’s spiritual freedom, resulting in a release from physical, emotional, and psychological bondage. All things that gripped the community because of the spiritual deficiencies.

Jesus was concerned with spiritual wellbeing and extending salvation to the lost; nevertheless, His interaction with the woman begins by establishing a relationship. Jesus asked the woman for something to drink. Jesus could have accessed the water, or called upon the angels to serve him. Instead, He reached out to the woman to establish rapport, and this meeting ended with her recognizing Him as Christ the Savior. Through Jesus, this woman became all she was made to be. She finally realized; “We are God’s hand-work, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

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This interaction between Jesus and the woman exemplifies relocation; Jesus moved to the place of need. It emphasizes the importance of identifying needs when Jesus interacts with the woman to the point that she confirmed or identified her needs to him. Finally, Jesus fulfilled the woman’s need. He released her from her guilt, connected her to the household of faith, and to others in her community, and provided her with life altering spiritual awareness and a standard to live by for the remainder of her life.

Beyond Biblical times to more recent expressions of support, outreach, and commitment to community development and improvement, one can see the church has at times been intricately engaged. The church was the rallying point for the ending of slavery because of its unifying presence and the basic mission of spiritual liberation it represented and fostered. This spiritual liberation led to a belief that in God all are equal. The church excelled, and its leadership was instrumental in passage of the Civil Rights Act and social improvements experienced in the African American Community. These leaders understood the need to exercise a broad range of leader skills: being imaginative, innovative, emotionally engaged, and the need to improvise. They also had the ability to organize, plan, administer effectively, and maintain order.51

The church engaged in community development through the creation of housing, while expressing their effort to support economic improvement in the creation of credit unions, cooperatives, and small businesses.52 In this engagement the church remained true to its mission of making disciples for Christ. Because of these engagements the African American Community


52 Robert B. Hill, 150.
began to flourish. This idea of engagement was important across the country, and nowhere more evident than in the South.

Historically, the black church in the urban South provided a safety net of community services that was not available to African-American citizens because of the history of ‘Jim Crow’ laws, a century of segregation, and the cultural residue of disenfranchisement. That role in the community grew more pronounced as the black church became the literal sanctuary for its congregations and the focus of institutional antipathy during the tumultuous period of social reform in the south in the 1960s.53

This expression of engagement in the South is particularly important to this study and pending model because of the location and the implication of results. The history of engagement in the modern era extends even further the development of specific denominations.

The contemporary community and economic development activities of the Black Church build on a long and distinguished tradition of self-help. This African tradition resurged in the United States during the 18th century through the efforts of free Blacks to develop mutual aid groups and societies. One of the earliest groups was the Free African Society founded by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones in Philadelphia in 1787. Although the AME movement also emerged from the Society in 1787, the Mother Bethel AME Church of Philadelphia was formally organized by Allen 1794. The fraternal lodge and secret societies were also formed as mutual aid groups. Prince Hall, a Methodist minister, formed the African Masonic Lodge of Boston in 1775.54

The efforts of the church in the community were far reaching, focusing on “social well-being of low-income neighbors or communities. Such efforts may range from community beautification to the construction of affordable housing for low-income individuals, families and seniors.”55 These efforts addressed the entire range of needs, arguably none more important than

54 Robert B. Hill 150.
55 Ibid., 151.
Although not mentioned here, there was a focus on youth. However, in those days, the prevailing need was safety, security, survival, and skill development to support a family. The church was the best entity to seek these changes because of their focus on Salvation, their following of the Holy Spirit, and their desire to live a life pleasing to God.

An aspect that was not so evident is the role of true church religious activity on community development. At first glance, there appears to be no connection between the worship experience and community outreach and development. However, that initial perception could not be further from the truth. Black culture is instrumental in worship and in relationship development.

“For example, Black Church members have been shown to develop symbols such as rituals, songs, sayings, sacred meetings and biblical stories to help them interpret events, focus efforts and provide organizational vision.” These symbols are then attached to such events as slavery and modern-day inequity. This allows the church members to relate to the condition and situation of the community members and potentially prevent condemnation. Although they are in different socioeconomic places, they can relate because they both face the same dilemmas and societal challenges. If the church follows the idea of relocation, the members of the church will follow this model and seek to become members of the community in which they seek to serve.

With the church’s history of community involvement, one must wonder what occurred to stifle this engagement. One reason is clear, churches are no longer community based but

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comprised of members from a vast area. In other words, churches are not necessarily 
neighborhood institutions.

Churches often pull people together around common ethnicity, regional or 
national origin, class background, political orientation, life stage, or lifestyle. Less 
often do congregations form around shared neighborhood identity. Many churches 
draw membership from a geographic area much wider than the immediate 
neighborhood. People pick churches according to social identity more than spatial 
proximity. One black congregation, then, might primarily consist of educated 
middle-class professionals, while another consists of working-poor people. One 
church may attract southern migrants, while another appeal mainly to native 
northerners. Another church might serve Haitians or West Indians rather than 
blacks born in the United States.58

Because they are not neighborhood churches, and predominantly composed of members outside 
of the neighborhood, churches may not be connected to or have the needs of the community at 
the forefront of their worship or outreach activity. To some degree and in some respects, the 
church has lost touch with those within its walls and those outside its walls.59 This loss of 
connection will be addressed by focusing on the current state of church community outreach.

Instead of engaging the local community, some local churches seek to follow the lead of 
larger churches and fund missions around the world. Although world outreach is a great mission, 
it unfortunately has the potential to leave those within the neighborhoods without the support of 
the only entity seeking its personal and spiritual wellbeing.

On another front, as eluded to earlier, the church has even overlooked those within its 
walls. This neglect for those within the church is related to the worship experience, leaving them 
spiritually and culturally irrelevant.60 This irrelevance speaks to the watered-down gospel being


60 Harney, U-Turn Church, 2011.
preached and the distancing of the church from the community. At times, the church preaches more about wealth and conquering something than about salvation. This added to the fact the church is no longer a microcosm of the community, leaves it culturally starved. In the research area, Sundays may find some churches in an emotionally charged worship experience that is void of teaching to sustain the member after the service. This is an internal focus that does not take advantage of the weekly worship experience to prepare the body for spiritual engagement in the community.

This turn from looking outward to looking inward prompts the question, what changed? The response is “everything changed.” The church began focusing on membership and growth. Society changed; the education level of members changed; socioeconomic status changed; and the very nature of community changed. The world changed. The previous isolation of countries and communities resulting from time and space has been overcome by information technology and international travel. The once limited awareness of other religions and beliefs in absolute truths has been overcome by relativism. People became worldlier, or at least more aware of the world.

The church is rightfully concerned with other worldly events. They are without question preaching the Gospel to the poor and leading church goers to spiritual freedom from captivity. As they pursue and achieve the spiritual freedoms and maturity, they should help the believer grasp how they must live out their beliefs in a sinful world. This demand helping the member understand how their faith impacts and plays on their physical, social, and economic interaction

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63 Omar M. McRoberts.
and freedom. However, the church may not be positioned for effective outreach that impacts the whole person.

Churches in the focus area are building larger facilities and performing major renovations on current structures. The building fund budgets are constantly expanding while outreach support budgets are all but nonexistent. A random observation proved that the only funding set aside in the focus area in most churches is an offering labeled “for the poor.” This offering traditionally nets very little in small churches and achieves almost nothing. The writer’s church has a budget line item titled “sick and needy.” The account contains minimum funds and no process exists to identify the needy or address their needs.

When the poor approach the church in the focus area, they are met with opposition from members and pastors alike, especially if money is a part of their request. In some cases, the church’s hesitation is understandable because of the frequency of requests. The cause could also potentially be attributed to the church’s lack of viable programs or trained ministry teams to achieve substantive change in the life of the needy.

The church appears to benefit immensely from the community through participation in fund raising, worship attendance, and the willingness of parishioners to sacrifice when and where needed to ensure ministry occurs. This idea of ministry, however, has gotten perverted. Jesus directed the purpose and focus of ministry: “Then Jesus came to them and said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matt 28:18-20). The proclamation to go is clear, but the church of today is sitting back waiting for people to come. While the church waits, it fails to reach the lost, make disciples, and
educate the body. Educating the body of Christ and reaching out to the lost is paramount.

Scripture also highlights the necessity of education and the results for failure to educate when it addresses the importance of knowledge (Hos 4:6). Knowledge is gained through reaching and teaching.

The impact of the church sitting back is evident. The effects of the church’s disengagement are seen in the ballooning of health needs in the African community with cholesterol, hypertension, heart attacks, aids, etc., reaching epidemic proportion. Reduced numbers of African American children are completing secondary schools. The schools the focused population are attending are in Athens City, Limestone, Lawrence, Morgan, and Madison Counties. Schools in these locations rank from the lower to upper half of all schools in the state. With at least one school ranked 350 out of 358 among other schools in the state of Alabama. Failure in secondary education means fewer students attending college. Leading to fewer qualified members available to compete for positions that can positively affect the community. Poverty levels are increasing; income levels are decreasing; reliance on government substances is increasing; while availability of government substances is at risk.

This declines in income, health, education, etc., have led to increases in areas neither the community nor church are proud of, most notably incarceration. This increase in incarceration is almost a deviance being used to define a race, a community, and a people. “Because poor black men and women tend to live racially and economically segregated neighborhoods, these

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neighborhoods feel the brunt.” Social deviance resulting in the incarceration of African Americans is appears to be a form of compensatory behavior designed to compensate for the personal impotence in a culture that perceives and responds to Black men as if they were non-persons. The degradation of the individual in the community has also had a major impact on the church. Additionally, fewer black men in the church, has impacted its leadership, and its commitment to the community.

This degradation has also had an impact on the mental state of the community. This mental degradation is further impacted because of the lack of spiritual influence of the church. Why is this important? Because spirituality impacts mental health, especially when dealing with African American.

The church does not engage in building or repairing homes for the homeless; and the hungry that find themselves in church are still starving unless government sponsored programs are available. This was highlighted several years ago at a church meeting in Northern Alabama. When approached to provide food for the less fortunate, one member proclaimed, “there are no hungry people in Toney, Alabama.” This statement alone shows the lack of knowledge and desire to reach the less fortunate. All of this happens when Alabama is the sixth poorest state in the nation and Blacks in the state have a poverty rate of more than 30 percent. The counties considered by this project, Limestone, and Madison, have a 13.9, and 13.8 percent poverty rate

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respectively. The church must reengage so that the life of Christ can be experienced in the world today. The church is the salt of the earth, but it appears this salt has lost its savor (Matt 5:13).

This results in the above declines affected, and continue to affect, members of the church and community. Although, in cases historical like these, change is inevitable and “in times of change, learners inherit the Earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists.”69 As such, the church had to change. The changed needed was not to isolate itself, rather the church could have benefited by inverting itself; adopting a missional theology. This phenomenon appears to be changing again. Black churches are seeking personal salvation, and this personal salvation is impacting the approach and success in every aspect of life.70

A more modern phenomenon can be labeled as a hybrid church, cell church, house church, or simple church.71 These ideas of church are a trip back to the past where church was community based and a trip to the present where churches are growing and centralizing. These new small churches are community based with worshippers meeting in different locations, including individual homes. This new approach allows all the needs of the individual to be addressed by the church and ensures the church is not starved culturally. Relationships are built around a central theme, Christ. Members are then able to provide greater levels of support to each other. This supports ensures brother cares for brothers, and spiritual wellbeing is in the forefront.

Based on the projection and research of those pursuing this model, the church of the

69 Cole, Church 3.0, 23.

70 Andrew Billingsley, Mighty Like a River (New York: Oxford Press, 1999), 87.

future will be both smaller and larger. In this multi-role approach and size, the church will be able to revive its connection with the local community while continuing its pursuit of world missions. This new model and focus accompanied by a desire and awareness of the needs of the community will lead to greater involvement and success. This greater involvement and access aligns with Jesus’s proclamation of greater works, not flashier miracles, but greater works in leading the lost to the saving Grace of Christ.

The Process of Community Development

Some eyebrows may be raised at the idea that community development can be expressed as a process, but this is the very nature of development. Like the process of coaching, mentoring, or counseling, there are as many approaches as there are entities engaged in the item being pursued. None of these approaches can be considered wrong if biblically based, and work for the body employing them. This process, as it were, will allow the church to understand their ability to engage, its best approach, and where to engage the community. Regardless of the process selected, it must begin with a care for the spiritual wellbeing of people. This begins with the question the church must answer, “What is a person worth to you?” Until this question is answered and the church comes to grips with its true focus, no real community outreach or development can be performed.

Jesus had a heart for the people, and the church must have the same heart if it hopes to achieve anything approaching Jesus’s command. Jesus ministered to a population of roughly three million people, “teaching, preaching the Gospel, and healing every kind of disease and

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 7.
  \item \textsuperscript{73} Timothy Chester and Steve Timmis, \textit{Total Church: A Radical Reshaping around Gospel and Community} (Wheaton, Ill: Crossway Books, 2008), 24.
  \item \textsuperscript{74} Neil Cole, \textit{Organic Church}, 143.
\end{itemize}
sickness.”75 Their needs touched him, and he sought to provide for them. This is clear in the Book of Matthew, “Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them” (Matt 9:36). Jesus saw their spiritual condition, and was moved with compassion. The individual meant everything to Jesus. The church must follow suit and have compassion for the community. This compassion must address the community’s spiritual needs and seek to develop mature Christians who will seek God in every aspect of their lives. By default, their disposition will improve in every area of life.

The idea the church will seek spiritual development of the community is a given, so the other area the church needs to consider is where and what other needs they are willing and able to address within the community. In the modern era, the church also “needs to continue to exercise power and self-determination in ecclesiastical and civil affairs as a requirement and in defense of the virtues of black manhood and womanhood in American society.”76 This decision should be based on their sincere desire to engage with their compassion for the people. This requires accomplishment of a self-audit, seeking to determine the missional capabilities of the church and its desire and willingness to address other needs in the community. This self-audit among many things will show the need for strong, spirit filled leadership.

Leadership

As you can imagine, a body of believers all trying to have their say will result in a stalemate or a failure to establish a single focus at best. As a result, the second necessity in the church’s pursuit to engage the community is establishment of a single source of leadership. Paul urges the people to “follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). For this very reason, a single leader with a single purpose is needed. A leader sets the example, creates

75 Ibid., 145.
the environment, decides the approach, priorities the effort, and ensures the appropriate focus is maintained and desired effect achieved. All accomplished because of the leader’s dependence on Christ.

Biblical leadership mandates the model for this position and only takes place, when divinely appointed men and women respond in obedience to God’s call.\textsuperscript{77} This acceptance of the divine appointment places a premium on the life of the leader for the accomplishment of the task at hand because it is appointed by God. This appointment also ensures that leaders follow a model that resembles servants and stewards, not dictators and monarchs. Servant leadership is resident in the teachings of world religions, especially Christianity.\textsuperscript{78} These leaders share their “authority with their followers while affirming that leadership is primary ministry to others.”\textsuperscript{79}

Although not a panacea there are seven indicators of leadership potential. These include:

- “Drivers; the drive and motivation to serve as a leader. Awareness; self-awareness of strengths and developmental needs. Capacity; aptitude for logic and reasoning. Derailment; managed derailment risks. Experience; a track record of formative experiences. Learning Agility; the ability to learn from experience. Leadership traits; leadership traits associated with advancement.”\textsuperscript{80}

The source highlights the secular aspects of leadership focusing solely on the individual and their abilities. Speaking from this vantage point these indicators address the motivation and drive of the individual and his or her propensity for service and leadership. These factors also speak to the unseen and spiritual impacted aspects, gifts, and ministry. These indicators give


\textsuperscript{78} Kent Keith, \textit{The Case for Servant Leadership} (Westfield, IN: Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership, 2001), 2.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.

insight into characteristics that provide the seed for leadership, impact, and respect. The ability to lead with integrity while remaining focused on the individual traits and indicators positions the leader to be effective in his or her roles.

The effect of true leadership takes place in the church in clear ways and carries significant responsibilities:

The commitment of pastors and other church leaders is critical to the success of any church-academic partnership. Pastors, in particular, play a pivotal role in shaping congregational members’ perceptions and preferences to participate in health promotion and research. However, church leadership commitment alone does not assure church readiness to engage in health disparities research. Readiness implies both motivation and capability. Although this point might seem self-evident, not much is known about what makes predominantly African American churches ready to engage in health disparities research beyond securing the interest and buy-in of church leaders.81

Although this example is specifically focused on health care disparities and education engagement, it exemplifies the importance of leadership to execution and effectiveness. It also emphasizes the importance of leaders and their ability to see things differently and motivate those entrusted to their leadership.82

The qualities of a good leader the church should consider are the person’s courage and commitment.83 Leaders must realize they cannot solve every problem, and they cannot solve any problems alone. This attitude should be built on a humility that leads to self-discipline and keeps them “committed and focused over the long haul even when tempted by personal gain or by the inevitable distraction of personal pleasure.”84

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83 Perkins, 62-63.

84 Ibid., 62.
Aspects of leadership that are traditionally not considered are the mental and emotional dynamics. The emotional variable is “not learning a bunch of skills to have a better workplace and to get a product. It's about being transformed from the inside out. It's about who you are, deep down, that impacts your relationship with God, with others, with yourself, and the whole created order.”  

The leader must be emotionally stable and have healthy relationships. The mental aspect in leadership is important to the longevity of the leader. The stability comes from the leader’s ability to stand strong and remain consistent during stressful and non-stressful times. More specifically:

**Emotionally stable leaders:**

- Have a reasonable degree of self-esteem. This leader shows confident vulnerability. These leaders know who they are and who they aren't.
- Create teams who feel psychologically safe to take calculated risks.
- Are comfortable hiring and building teams of people who complement their skills and knowledge.
- Behave predictably. Staff know this leader's limited number of hot buttons and know how to redress the situation.
- Are the calm within the storm during crises.

This combination of emotional and mental stability could serve as a defining factor resulting in success of the leader and the ministry team. When combined with spiritual maturity, emotional and mental stability will show through as gifts in the life and leadership of the leader.

**Ministry Team Selection**

After the leader is in position, the church is ready to identify its team that will do the work of outreach and community development. At times, this selection should be an easy task; at

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other times it may be harder than expected. This challenge will be addressed in more detail later.

For now, as the church considers volunteers to be a part of this outreach, they must determine what type of volunteer is required, what the volunteers will be expected to do, what resources are available to be used by the volunteers, and what training if any the volunteers require.\(^\text{87}\)

The volunteer ministry team will be composed of members of the church pursuing the community development, and thus should be known by the church and leadership team. However, because of the type of volunteer work the team will perform, the church should consider a screening process, requiring volunteers to sign a volunteer agreement, and provide training.\(^\text{88}\) To ensure organization and clear responsibility, each volunteer should be provided with specific instructions on their role and expected duties. Although not required, developing of a position description may be beneficial.

The ministry should also consider background checks of each volunteer. These background checks are designed to validate identities and verify the absence of harmful information that could cause the ministry team and church a problem later.

Team size is another item the organizers of the team must discuss and consider. Although nothing is in stone, there are studies that indicate success can be attributed partially to team size.

There have been innumerable studies involving team-building programs and a large number of companies that have designed games specifically to test the factors affecting team cohesion, trust, and cooperation as well as the quality of the work done by various teams. The ideal size to achieve the objectives set by exercises seems to be around five or six.\(^\text{89}\)


\(^{88}\) “Successful Strategies, A-5.

This team size, although not a departure from leadership principles, does question and must be align with the span of control the leader is capable of effectively managing. If the team is too large, the leader may not be able to adequately manage and lead the team and will set the team and ministry up for a less than stellar performance. That said, the team must be large enough to prevent overworking volunteers.

Church Capability Assessment

Once a leader is identified, or the church follows the innate leadership structure and the pastor leads this effort, and the volunteer team is in place, the church can identify where it will engage, how it will engage, how often it will engage, and the resources it has available to sponsor this engagement. This self-audit ensures that the church remains true to its abilities and capabilities, and does not go beyond identified fiscal limits.

The church that is not fully aware of its abilities to support outreach must perform what amounts to a ministry assessment. This assessment will ensure that the church gains a handle on its resources so that it protects itself, especially in a demoralized society. This assessment is not a formal process; rather, it allows the church to look at its current ministries, financial situation, membership population, and engagement as well as member qualifications and motivations.

If for no other reason, the assessment provides insight the church’s ability to maintain any effort it begins, which means the church not only must determine if it can effectively engage today, it must be able to maintain this engagement into the future. Three critical areas must be assessed: how the church relates, what the church values, and how the church defines itself.

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This is not a fail proof potion, but it does allow the church to openly and honestly consider its focus.

By considering the above, it should become clear that the church must understand itself before it can fully help anyone else. This does not speak solely to the church’s awareness of its spiritual direction and mission to make disciples. Rather, it speaks to going beyond salvation to meeting the physical needs of the individuals both in the community surrounding the church and the community of believers within the church. A key aspect that is normally overlooked that must be included is whether or not the community members feel safe. This is important not only to the community, but also to the church members as they seek to reach out to the community.

The main area the church must consider is its calling and mission. What does God require and how has He equipped them to carry out this task? Faith is important. Regardless of what the church thinks it can do, it can do everything God has ordained it to accomplish (Phil 4:13).

Assessing Community Needs

After the church is sure it has a grasp on its abilities, capabilities, and God ordained mission, it must begin to assess how these capabilities can be best applied to affect the needs of the community. At a minimum, the church must become knowledgeable of the community’s beliefs, history, people, politics, and institutions. This assessment must be focused on the community the church intends to engage. As the church looks at and tries to determine the needs of the community, it must realize there are several categories of needs that must be considered. These include the need to belong, the need for self-esteem, and the need for a reasonable level of

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security. These needs are filled in a relationship with Christ. But, until these categories are addressed, the individuals in the community will not pursue or achieve any great feat and the church’s efforts will be for naught.

While keeping the above categories in mind, the church must determine how it can best “affirm the dignity of people, motivate them, and help them take responsibility for their own lives.” In this pursuit the church must consider disorder in the lives of those they are trying to reach may be the result of meaningless living. To reorder lives and achieve this feat, the church must ensure it is following the calling of God and clearly seeking the best for those they are called to help. Remaining true to this thought will prevent the church from placing needs on the community based on what the church wants to do rather than considering what the God demands and the community needs. A Chinese poem best exemplifies this idea:

Go to the people
Live among the people
Learn from the people
Love them
Start with what they know
Build on what they have:
But of the best leaders
When their task is done
The people will remark
We have done it ourselves.

The church must consider every aspect of community life and involvement. These include, but are not limited to, education levels, economic status, access to and use of government assistance, church affiliation, and spiritual maturity/knowledge. The church must also consider any factors it

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94 Perkins, 198.


96 Qtd. in Swenson, 15.
believes contributed to the situation in which the individual community members find themselves.

The Chinese poem above provides insight into how this assessment should be performed. Despite the technological advancements and the accessibility of information the internet now allows, this assessment should be completed in person. This contact will go a long way in fulfilling the need for belonging as well as developing self-esteem through personal contact. But most importantly, it provides the church with real time information that will lead to an immediate and significant impact on the community in which they worship and serve.

Before concluding this discussion, it is imperative to speak to the obvious. The church must be willing and ready to engage a diverse community. One composed of number of groups:

- Single career adults
- Retired and aged
- Institutionalized
- Commuters
- Ethnic groups
- Divorced families
- Deviants
- Diverse Ethnicities
- Handicapped
- Students
- Professionals
- Public employees
- People living in high-rise blocks
- Middle-class dropouts
- People living on social security
- /and public aid.97

Included in the diverse group should be those who know Christ, and those who do not know him. This list is not exhaustive; thus, the church may find a more diverse group with a more diverse group of needs. Regardless of the group, the church must follow God’s example and reach out to all. The community needs survey and assessment will provide the information the church needs to determine its approach and the areas it desires to engage and address. At this point, the church must determine where it will engage to address the needs it has identified.

97Bakke, 110.
Areas of Engagement

With this information in hand the church is ready to determine what areas in addition to extended salvation, it will engage to assist in community improvement and development. Using the needs of the focus area and the resources available in the church and government support, the church will seek to influence the community by leading improvements in a myriad of areas. Working with the government to engage is especially critical to ensure sustainment of the initiative. These areas could potentially include support for children in the community, especially foster children below the age of 16, senior citizen care, food assistance, medical care, housing assistance, employment assistance, etc. Each of these areas is broad and composed of several smaller engagement areas.

Children are a priority regardless of their position, but children in foster care should be the highest priority. In the United States, there are 415,129 children in foster care. Of this group 24 percent are African American. The percentages by race and ethnic group are astonishing. Of this total, Alabama has less than one percent. Specifically, Alabama had 3,243 children in foster care in 2014. It is imperative to note that this entire group has not been permanently removed from their parents and are in various stages and could potentially be returned to parents.

Although children in Foster Care are priority, there are additional children in need of support. Case in point, there are over 59,000 children in North Alabama alone considered food

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insecure.101 These are children who do not have access to or skip at least one meal each day. This need to skip meals can be attributed to the high poverty rate in the state. Alabama boasts one of the highest poverty rates in the country, coming in at 19 percent.102 When combined with the low wage levels in the state, the potential for situations to arise that affect children is highly probable.

The elderly is another group that the church can reach out to in its community outreach and development activities. As of July 2015, 15.7 percent of Alabama residents are over 65 years old.103 Additionally, 39 percent of homes in Alabama contain an elderly member or a member with disabilities.104 These facts, in conjunction with the idea that seniors are either on a fixed or limited income point to their need for support and assistance.

The disposition of seniors and the identification of the poverty level are two specific indicators of the need for food assistance. Combine this with the information that 57 percent of households in Alabama have incomes below $10,000, the idea that there is a need for food assistance becomes a reality.105 The statistics also support the idea that there is a need for housing assistance. As can be imagined, $10,000 will not allow the purchase or rental of any property of significance, especially when the average monthly rental cost for housing in Alabama is $701 per month.106

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103 Ibid.


105 Strickland.

The need for medical and employment assistance can also be deduced based on the average income levels identified above. The bottom line is that money is simply not available to meet all family and household needs. This lack of financial support mandates the need for assistance from outside sources.

**Community Support Programs**

The greatest mistake the church can make in its efforts to reach out to and provide support for the community that leads to its improvement beyond making disciples, is to think they must do this with their own resources and membership. This could not be further from the truth. In its efforts for community development, the church can and must reach out and identify the needs of the community, but it must also know when the circumstances are beyond its ability to address the need.

Although there is minimal evidence, available information shows that effective collaboration between the church and social based entities can produce effective results.

When addressing outreach in terms of racial composition, isolated ethnographic accounts and small-scale studies have documented church-sponsored programs and community economic development initiatives aimed at developing collaborative alliances. For example, Eng and Hatch (1991) developed one of the most notable church sponsored programs, collaborating with area service agencies to use rural churches in North Carolina as a focus for health promotion activities. This and other variations of community-based partnerships recognize that religious institutions occupy a position of trust and respect in black communities.¹⁰⁷

The significance of the church’s engagement with social services programs is centered on the position of the church in the community. “Since church is a potential resource for bridging the gap between state, federal, and local agencies and the informal services provisions,

collaboration between agencies and religious organizations can offer new opportunities to meet the needs of parishioners and community members.”

Thus, not only does the church support the community, members of the church also benefit.

There is a myriad of agencies in the research area available to citizens. In fact, there are over 600 programs available from government or government support agencies (Appendix A). These programs address every area of an individual’s needs, ranging from medical to mental health, from subsistence to financial support, and from employment search and preparation to financial support to those who qualify. The sheer magnitude of services available can be overwhelming; however, the team must keep it in the proper context. The services should only be considered based on the needs of the community the Church has decided to address through outreach.

**Summary**

The idea of community development fully defined allows the church and community to visualize their role in the partnership on the road to community independence. It points to the responsibility of the government as a part of the team, but it also points to the churches role and biblical responsibility to engage, enhancing the communities spiritual disposition and impacting every area of the community and individual life.

This idea that the church is responsible and biblically ordained to engage the community is not a new concept but has its roots deep in American and Church history. The church’s responsibility dates to biblical times. But there is no need to travel back that far. One only needs to look back to a time of slavery and the example set by the church at the end of slavery and throughout the economic rise of the black community. During that period, the church’s efforts focused spiritual

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108 Ibid.
maturity, resulting in a noticeable change in their physical and social wellbeing.

This discussion of the history and definition of the idea of community development and outreach is only the beginning. Once a good grasp of the concept and need is realized, the church must begin to understand when to engage, where to engage, how to engage, and its ability to engage. This idea of engagement is addressed using a focus group and instruments specifically designed to identify needs and position the church and volunteers to be effective.
Chapter 3

Assessment Introduction

The discussion about church community development and engagement capability and desire is important but only the first step in the process of achieving a real impact on the community. The next critical step is the identification of the people within the church, as well as their capabilities, desires, emphases, and even what they see as their callings.

In the previous chapter, the idea of ministry team selection or identification was introduced as a necessity for the church to determine its outreach ability. The previous chapter also looked at the selection and involvement of the leader, who is essential to the success of the outreach and community development team. However, these concepts must be tested and verified by teams in the local community. The verification was performed in the local church using an initial assessment followed by training and a follow-up assessment to determine the impact of the training as well as the team’s preparation and ability to engage in community outreach and development.

These assessments were composed of identification and clarification data and contain ten questions each. The training provided between assessments included five individual sessions composed of forty-five minutes to one hour per session.

The Assessment Process

In this area, the process of gathering information was initiated in a manner that would allow the collection of the needed information to determine the disposition of the assessed group, ultimately leading to the creation of a training package to address and enhance individual capabilities. This assessment seeks to find some concrete information that can make the case for the type of ministry needed, the assessment groups awareness of community needs and church
capabilities, their belief in the necessity of church community involvement, and the effect focused training will have on ministry teams becoming more effective in ministry.

The information was gathered from willing volunteer participants who were aware of the design and purpose of the assessment. The overall results of the assessments were discussed with the group after completion of the training and the follow-up assessment. The assessment information was placed in a spreadsheet for tracking purposes and to determine if an analysis of the information could provide useful insight into the mindset of the group compared to the post-training mindset and beliefs of the participants.

This process began with a discussion of the research project with the body of believers in the church with emphasis placed on ministers, deacons, and lay leaders. Individuals were provided with a date and time the group would meet where they would provide additional information as well as answer any questions not addressed previously. At the outset of the meeting, the participants were again asked if they were volunteers for the study and if they believed they could dedicate the time to participate to the initial and follow-up assessments as well as the five study sessions. Once they agreed, each participant signed a consent form.

The initial assessment found at Figure 1 provides insight into identifying characteristics to allow consideration of the beliefs and motivations and whether sex, age, and education provide any insight into tendencies or beliefs. In addition to these characteristics, the initial assessment provides insight into the pre-training disposition and beliefs of the participating group.
Figure 1. Initial Assessment

Initial Assessment

Please complete the following assessment which is designed to evaluate a ministry team’s current spiritual, relational, community, emotional, and physical status. The Initial Assessment should be answered in its entirety at one sitting. Allow approximately 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Because a ministry team’s first answer is probably the most reflective of their current beliefs, participants are encouraged to respond quickly rather than deliberating over each response.

Date: ____________________________


What ministry do you currently participate with? ________________________________

Does your church participate in community focused activity? ________________

If, “Yes,” what areas (food pantry/clothing drive/education support/elder care) do you have? __________________

Are you currently engaged in any church community engagement effort? ________________

What is the highest level of education you have completed? __________________________

How much do you agree with each of the following statements?

_____ Number that corresponds to sign in roster
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>There is a need in my community</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The church could minimize community suffering</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government is responsible for the community</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>People caused their own problems</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The church has the necessary resources</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I feel comfortable doing outreach</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I know what the needs are in the community</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Bible mandates the church aid the community</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Should your church have a community outreach focused ministry</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Does the church have guidelines for community engagement</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Initial Assessment

The initial assessment was designed to identify the beliefs of the individuals involved in the study. The assessment does not seek to delve deeply into the spiritual, psychological, or mental aspects of the individual. Rather, the assessment only depicts the respondents’ mindsets prior to the training. Although not scientific, the assessment will provide important insights into the individuals in the group as well as go a long way in identifying the dynamics of the participating group and the church they represent. The initial assessment is broken into two distinct areas. The first section includes questions that identify individual characteristics, while the second section is composed of 10 questions related to the participant’s church, its capabilities, its involvement, and the participant’s perception of the church's responsibility to engage in the community and their personal beliefs about outreach and community development.

Group Characteristics

The group, as briefly identified above, was made up of licensed or ordained ministers, ordained deacons, or other church members involved in ministry at some level. This group of engaged members ranged in age from 18 – 66. The ages were evenly distributed with one being in the low range (18-25) and one in the upper range (59-66). The remaining eight participates were evenly dispersed in the four age ranges within these two. The entire group was comprised of participants in some form of internal church ministry with very little engagement in any type of ministry outreach. The group identified a Food Bank ministry as the sole community outreach for the church. Despite the seemingly duplicate question about their individual participation in community outreach engagement, all the respondents did not answer yes, which indicates either their confusion with the question or belief that their individual participation was not considered community outreach and engagement. Based on knowledge of the attitudes of the members, they
do not feel personally connected with the church’s community activity because they are not directly involved or invested. However, most if not all the respondents provide financial support.

There is another potential cause for the apparent disconnection from the actions and engagements of the church. This cause is grounded in the church’s approach to ministry. Historically, the church is concerned with programs and not people.\textsuperscript{109} The church places a premium on programs instead of developing the individual to ensure a connection with God and spiritual development that leads to a connection with the church’s ministry involvements. This idea will be further examined prior to conclusion of this paper.

The final characteristic of the identifying information was related to individual education levels. The individuals in the participation group had varying levels of education. Two of them did not complete high school and two of them had at least a four-year degree. The remaining members of the focus group at a minimum completed high school and/or some level of college study.

These individuals’ identifying characteristics do not provide any information or visibility into the follow-up information at this point. However, the information does provide insight into the community at large, although not addressed in this study. The two individuals with four-year and above college education are outsiders to the community. Both members with less than a high school diploma are in the same family, but their ages are significant different. This family similarity speaks to the importance placed on education as well as the living conditions that may have led to an inability to complete educational, which has some level of impact on beliefs, pursuits, and achievements.

The Assessment

The assessment itself was straightforward and simplistic. The ten questions did not seek to determine any profound beliefs or to challenge any closely guarded ideas. The assessment was designed to determine the participation population and their thinking about the aspects of community development and engagement this paper is considering. In addition, this assessment attempts to consider the participants’ perspectives on how to address areas of concern, especially in those areas that could be considered weak.

The results of the study will confirm if it was appropriately focused and the assessment appropriately developed and administered. The results of the study will provide insights into several areas. Each of these areas will be considered later in this paper. For now, only the raw data will be provided (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Assessment Response Raw Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is a need in my community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The church could minimize community</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suffering</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government is responsible for the</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People caused their own problems</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The church has the necessary resources</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable doing outreach</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what the needs are in the community</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bible mandates the church aid the</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Church should have a community outreach focused ministry 9 8 2

My church has guidelines for community engagement. 10 3 1 1 5

A quick review of the questions suggests that assessment focuses on the church and community, what is occurring now, and what the participant believes or knows to be true with respect to the church’s actions and capabilities. With these results in mind, it is clear in certain areas the focus group is in complete agreement, while in other areas, there is significant disagreement.

Of the areas of agreement, it should be noted that the group unanimously believes that the community is in need. The assessment does not go to any length to determine or identify this need, but the conversation with the participants generated a seemingly endless list of needs resident within the community. The information is taken to heart, especially as it relates to the Black community because 8 out of 10 participants were born, grew up, and remain members of this community. These members did not relocate, most did not attend higher education, and the majority remain in the same environment to this day.

The group also agrees that the church can at a minimum minimize the suffering in the community, the Bible mandates engagement in the community, and the church has a responsibility to include a community outreach focus. Collectively, these four responses capture the essence of this paper. The community has a need and the church has a mandate to have a positive impact on the successful resolution of the community’s shortcomings and problem areas, beginning with and sharing the Gospel for Spiritual development. It is somewhat profound
even in this small sample group that they believe that not only should the church engage but that the church has a Biblical mandate to engage. This idea of mandate raises several questions, namely, if the mandate is so prevalent, why is the church in the local community not following through?

The idea of the Godly mandate was not addressed in depth to this point. Therefore, it is not feasible to believe the group had the idea that it was a matter of success or failure of the church. However, the data shows that respondents believe that this mandate for the Church to engage is resident within the Bible. Lastly in this area, it is not clear if the group fully understands community engagement in its sheerest form, or if they assume the discussion is centered around disciple making or helping citizens with their physical, social, or psychological needs, versus both.

The final six areas of the assessment provide a myriad of responses that do not reflect any level of agreement on the subjects addressed. Disagreement in finances is expected. A correlation of the individual identifying characteristics with the responses shows that lower education levels believe that the church does not have the finances to do what is needed. This correlation may lend itself to the idea that lower educated members have lower paying jobs. These lower paying jobs in turn do not allow some to give as much. Thus, their responses may be based on their level of giving and not the church’s true capability. A parallel argument, however, may be that the church has continually emphasized a shortage of money, leading to beliefs by those engaged in the assessment that the church is not capable of having any significant impact.

Lastly with respect to the raw data from the assessment, it is interesting that the group unanimously indicates that there is a need in the community. However, later in the assessment, there is no agreement or faith in their knowledge of what these needs are. This again raises
questions that will be highlighted through training and discussions with the participants in the assessment and this project.

With the information from the initial assessment in hand, the group was ready to begin the training associated with this project. The purpose of the training was to educate the body on the aspects of outreach and community development, which will create a more informed and more capable church and outreach/community development ministry membership.

Training

Based on the information gathered in the initial survey and on the available research, several subject areas were identified. Based on these subjects, instruction was prepared. The training was not intended to make the participants “super” volunteers or experts in any specific ministry area. It was designed to raise the group’s knowledge and awareness, which will prepare them for community outreach. The assessment that will be provided after completion of the training will determine the training’s effectiveness on attitudes, beliefs, and motivations related to the church and its missions and responsibilities to the community.

Session One

The first session focused on the church’s role and mission as it relates to community outreach and development and discipleship making. Without a disciple making focus, there is no community outreach in the church. This idea of community development through disciplining is grounded in the teachings of Jesus himself.

The foundational material includes a collection of materials expressing the “Theoretical” basis for this project. The participants were provided a copy of the Biblical references available to show Biblical concern for communities of believers and non-believers. A major example used is contained in John 4. The items addressed were the results of heartfelt concern for the
community, the impact of having Christ in the individual respondent’s life, and the power associated with the knowledge that comes from the Spirit of God. In John, Jesus overlooked the socioeconomic status of the woman at the well in addition to the racial and ethical hurdles. This ability and actions of Jesus were the backdrop for the individual participant’s discussion on the importance of the need and ability to forget about race, ethnicity, and economic status and focus solely on helping the individual with a relationship with Christ.

With this basic foundational information in hand, the group was walked through a process that could be used to lead others to Christ. This process is very disciplined and allows for personalization and freedom but remains focused on Jesus as the source. This process is biblically based and uses the Scriptures to walk an individual from a desire through a repeatable process that leads to the truth and knowledge of God.\textsuperscript{110} The text used for this lesson provided very detailed instructions on the how to begin the conversation and when to end it. If the person accepted Christ, a prayer was provided as a model. If the person chose not to accept Christ, the group was helped with understanding this rejection of Christ.

The group was cautioned on the challenges they could potentially face and the potential dangers when engaging unfamiliar people, regardless of the reason. As a result, a local minimum team composition was established. This guideline mandates that a minimum of 2-people would be on every team visiting or engaging in community outreach and development.

Session Two

The second training session addressed the key elements of Christian Community Development which:

- Begins with the felt needs of the people in the community

• Responds to those needs in a holistic way
• Is based on clear biblical principles
• Is “time-tested”
• Develops and utilizes leaders from within the community
• Encourages relocation—living among the poor
• Demands reconciliation—people to God and people to people
• Empowers the poor through redistribution—all community members sharing their skills, talents, education, and resources to help each other.\textsuperscript{111}

The success of this approach lies in the effective communication of the plan. This communication plan during training was depicted on a wheel known as the wheel of ministry (Figure 3).\textsuperscript{112} This wheel illustrates the effective communication of the message of salvation and consists of five parts: call, evangelism, social action, economic development, and justice, which are all grounded in the church. This communication must be compassionate, concrete, and practical.\textsuperscript{113} The group was led through this wheel emphasizes their role and the impact of ministry if performed in an orderly, concise, and Spirit led manner. Each aspect of the wheel was developed and discussed in as much clarity and detail as the participants desired, realizing that the training was not designed to develop experts in a one-hour session.

Session Summary

• The Call: Rightly understanding the message of salvation for the community (urban or inner city) begins with the call that Jesus has given the church in the Great Commission.

  “Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 38.
everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

- Evangelism: Jesus’s ministry emphasized dealing with sin and the inner person. Evangelism is at the heart of community development.
- Social Action: There are two instructions of Jesus—a great Commandment, “love your neighbor,” and a Great Commission, “go make disciples.”
- Economic Development: Economic development simply means helping others manage their wealth so that the economic power remains in the community to build it up.
- Justice: God is concerned about the structures that keep a person oppressed.
- Church: Since the church is the center of the wheel, people can see the importance of this institution.

These items alone address the whole of Christian Community Development and provided the participants with a plethora of new information, which led to a great discussion of the role of the individual and that of the church. The session led these thought provoking questions from the participants: Why aren’t all churches reaching out to the community? What can a small church do, and how can they impact a problem so great? When do we start helping? The group was advised that the questions are insightful and show their desire to begin reaching out. The group was also reminded that the purpose was the development of the participating ministry and not evaluation of other ministries and programs. Finally, the group was encouraged to help others when they were completely engaged with outreach themselves.
Session Three

This session addressed the process for determining the needs of the community. The needs assessment survey (Appendix B) provides the information necessary to address almost every possible strength and shortfall in the community.

The participants were provided critical rationale for use of the needs survey. The reasons given were: To learn more about a group or community, supplement what was observed and experienced, provide detailed information from a larger and more representative group, provide a more honest and objective description of people’s needs, identify possible needs that were not previously identified, document the needs for future use in obtaining funding and/or lobbying for a cause, and ensure that plans for future actions are in line with the needs expressed in the community.114

The group compared surveys to get an idea of the effect of the survey and the impact the information could have in developing a plan to engage and have a positive effect. The group saw first-hand that the results would not only identify the community’s needs but also allow the team to

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and church to engage government entities, who may be in a better place to support long-term and unique needs that were out of the church’s capability.

Session Four

This session addressed the government entities in the local areas and their missions. The list at Appendix A was shared with the participants. The areas highlighted were those aligned with the study and potential capability of the church. The known needs of the participants also influenced the areas discussed. The intent of this area was to show the participants that there is a myriad of support agencies in the area that can be valuable team members in the church’s community development and outreach efforts. An additional emphasis was placed on any agency’s ability to provide no cost support or the potential for reaching out to other professionals that might be able to provide pro bono support.

Session Five

This session addressed development and organization of the community outreach ministry team. Of the number of items discussed, the participants were advised that one of the determining factors for community development is the size of the congregation. The size determines the “level of service delivery and the range of financial, parental and human resources the church has to meet community needs.” This in no way questions the omnipotence, omnipresence, or love of God. This information with prayer, will ensure the church does not engage in areas God does not desire, and they cannot sustain financially or with volunteers.

This session also discusses the need for strong leadership. The ministry team leader should be of the household of faith. However, it will benefit the team to find leaders or potential

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115 Littlefield, 4.
leaders in the community to serve alongside the spiritual leader as a focal point to assist with the effort. “Bolton (1991), Kirk & Kraft (2004), and Mills (2005) contend that fostering community leadership to help make communities better places to live is one of the primary purposes of community development.”

Second, the leader of the community development team must be strong and able to keep the team focused on the task at hand, stay within budget, and ensure the team is cared for. Characteristics of church leaders discussed included: Godly church leaders are responsible to lead; Godly church leaders are responsible to walk personally with God; Godly church leaders are responsible to work together; Godly church leaders are responsible to help those in the church walk personally with God. These characteristics are applicable for all leaders regardless of their role in the church. But especially for those who will represent the church and Christ to the lost.

In addition to the leadership position, the team composition must be addressed. The team composition itself depends on the size of the church and the capabilities and skill sets resident within the church. Possession of professional skills will potentially facilitate access to help organizations while providing the church with a critical asset that will allow them to initiate and maintain their efforts. This discussion on team composition concluded the team training. Although briefly stated here, the team realized during discussions that significant prayer, thought and effort must be expended to form an effective team.

**Follow-Up Assessment**

After completion of the five-session training program the original assessment was again

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administered as a follow-up assessment to determine the impact of the training on the focused group. The results were noticeable (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Follow-up Assessment Response Raw Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Follow-Up Assessment</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is a need in my community</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The church could minimize community suffering</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government is responsible for the community</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People cause their own problems</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The church has the necessary resources</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel comfortable doing outreach</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what the needs are in my community</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bible mandates the church aid the community</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My church has a community outreach focused ministry</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My church has guidelines for community engagement</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the individual data discussed in the initial assessment, the results of this follow-up assessment clearly indicate a level of agreement among all participants in many areas. This is true except in the areas of items 3 and 4 above. These areas address the individual’s view on the role of government in community development and the individual’s role in his or her own situation. A significant difference exists in these areas. The only thing the group has in common is none of them “strongly agreed” in either of the areas. The only other area where there was any level of dissent was one person was neutral in his view on the church’s available resources.
When discussed with the participants, it appeared their thoughts were tainted by several things. First, some believe that the government was required by the constitution to take care of each American. Others believed that as a member of the country, the government is required to take care of those who cannot take care of themselves regardless of the reason. This discussion quickly took on a political focus with the emphasis centered on entitlements sponsored by the Democratic Party and the appearance that the Republican Party did not have the group members’ best interests in mind. To keep the teams on task, they were reminded of the purpose of the church, making disciples.

The differences in beliefs regarding individual responsibility for spiritual, economic, and medical condition was surprising because the entire team with two exceptions are in somewhat of the same condition. These similarities may signal the reason for their responses. It appears those respondents believe they are in their individual conditions because of decisions they have made, and their condition cannot be changed or their paths altered. This is a denial of the power of God by those who call him Savior.

There was less disagreement in the areas of resources than expected. The reason can be found in the initial assessments response. The participants have been with the church since its outset and have experienced the financial ups and downs and can relate the church’s fiscal woes to their own financial shortfalls. But it appears the discussions in the training sessions allowed the participants to see beyond their own financial limits to the idea that the church through the power of God can provide for the needs it has been called to address. The participants did believe a reprioritization of ministry focus was necessary.

The two other extremes lie in the group’s complete concurrence in the Biblical mandate for the church’s engagement in the community and the idea that the church is currently engaged
in outreach. The latter can be explained easily; they were initially not completely aware of the definition of community outreach and development. Once this information was provided, they understood that, in some respects, the church has been engaged in some manner for some time.

The Biblical mandate can be explained in the same manner. After instruction and discussion about the Biblical focus, it was easier for the participants to believe that community outreach and development are individual and church responsibilities. It also allowed the participants to see the door-to-door campaigns by the church to share the Gospel as well as the food distributions were proof their church was already engaged.

The results of the follow-up assessment are not scientific by any means but do provide a clear insight into the thoughts and beliefs of the participants. From the outset, the group was open to the idea of community outreach and development. However, after the five sessions, the discussions showed that the participants were motivated, felt led, and believed it was their individual and collective responsibility to engage in the lives of those in their community.

One final aspect that was not a part of their assessment but did come out in the training was the need for strong leadership. The group agreed that from the church’s beginning, community outreach and development was not a priority. More specifically it was not important to the body nor leaders in the church. An example was given of one pastor who came to the church and asked that they create a program to feed the hungry and consider a street ministry. The membership simply said no. The pastor did not push, nor did he have any alternate means to make it happen. This was contrasted to the current pastor who positioned the church for the move, then led them into the outreach program that now feeds an average of 50 families per month and visits the sick, prays with the community, and fosters an environment conducive for
spiritual growth and development. The difference was the approach and persistence of the leader who believed this was the calling of God and the mission of the church.

The group also believed that the leader would provide access to training to ensure the church was prepared for reaching out to the community. The group became somewhat emotional in one discussion about outreach and leadership. One participant openly wept and stated that she loved helping people but didn’t believe the church had the desire. However, the discussion came down to having a leader who believed in and communicated this calling to the body in a manner they could hear, understand, and internalize.

Agency Interviews

To complete the information gathering and research effort, a request to interview was extended to five different types of organizations. Only three of the five entities responded to the request for interview. These organizations included churches and nonprofits. The focus of the interview was to determine the practices and processes used by entities engaged in community outreach and development to aid in building a template useable in like settings. The primary goal remains the same, developing the community through outreach and engagement. However, more than anywhere else in this paper, this section focuses on those things leading to creation of and preparation of the team.

The purpose of the interview is to determine the processes each entity used to begin their community outreach efforts and, more importantly, to determine their method of equipping staff and volunteers to implement their chosen model. The interview focused on team member selection, training, and the sending of teams. The interview was a simple four question discussion shown in Figure 5; however, in all cases, leaders provided added information to complete the picture they hoped to paint.
Figure 5. Interview Questions

1. What was your process for determining the community and need to focus on?
2. How did you select the team for ministry outreach and community development?
3. What skill sets or ministry tools were key to your team’s success?
4. What model or training method did you use to equip your ministry outreach team?

Interview One

The first of three entities to respond was a medium sized church set on the outskirts of a major metropolitan area with a membership holding an average income equivalent to the lower middle class. However, residents within the church are members clearly live in the population area that is considered impoverished. This is critical to see the need for community outreach by the organization present within its own walls. This introduction is critical to the response provided for the first question.

The organizational leader was very excited about the prospect of sharing his story and the church’s success in the community.

Question 1. What was your process for determining the community and need to focus on?

When faced with this question the initial response was prayer. The idea of how they determined their engagement was resident in the mission and purpose the leader shared. The group’s mission is that the organization “is dedicated to guiding believers in growing toward Christian Maturity. Through evangelism and worship, we encourage individuals and communities to develop a Christ-like character. We endeavor to glorify God and accurately reflect Him in everything we do.” The church’s purpose is, “Taking Christ to the Community (Evangelism), Taking the Community to the Church (Salvation), and taking the Church to Christ (Discipleship).”
The mission and purpose drive the entire focus of the church. The organization’s leader stated that in the mission and purpose onlookers could determine the focus, but that the process of selection was based on spiritual direction, qualification of the staff and membership, and the willingness of the body of volunteers to commit themselves to the direction and calling of the organization. This idea can be seen in the ministries the organization sponsors and works alongside, both within the community and within the church.

The leader quickly identified his organization ministries use with to show their level of engagement and the ministries belief in reaching out. The ministries supported by and engaged with included a couple’s ministry designed to strengthen the bonds in marriage and to establish a path for future happiness for couples considering marriage and to teach those in and outside of the church the skills needed to build a successful relationship. The organization also has an outreach ministry that is tasked with fostering relationships with organizations focused on the welfare and care of communities within a 20-mile range south of the church.

The leader indicated there are a myriad of other ministries resident within the church, but these speak to their desire to reach out and show mission and purpose alignment as the main factor in determining outreach focus areas.

Question 2. How did you select the team for ministry outreach and community development?

He was clear about the individual person having a calling on his life and having expressed this belief and desire to serve. Additionally, the leader was adamant that some areas required the individuals, especially leaders, to possess a level of training and qualification to engage in outreach. This idea of qualification provided an opportunity to delve into how this qualification may be obtained by a person the leader felt had the desire and the calling. The leader believed it was his organization’s responsibility to provide the required training leading to
any experience or qualifications he believed necessary. Based on the areas he identified as engagement areas for his organization, the leader was asked what types of qualification were needed for the areas his organization engaged. He believed that anyone engaged in couple’s ministry should be qualified or at least cognizant of marriage or couples counseling methodologies but not necessarily to the point where he or she must be a professional. They should be familiar with the techniques needed to aid in building effecting relationships and dealing with conflict.

Finally, the leader believed that team members must have the time and patience to engage in ministry and outreach they are participating. If they have the time, they will dedicate themselves and be available. He conveyed that there is nothing like ministry and outreach that disappoints those it seeks to help.

Question 3. What skill sets or ministry tools were key to your team’s success?

The leader thought that the individuals heart for the people was of critical importance. He also thought that his ability to communicate in a clear and concise manner was important. At this point, the leader became somewhat animated when he began to talk about the need to listen. He thought that this skill, listening, was the most critical of all because a person cannot meet the needs of the community until he first understands the extent of the community members’ needs and their willingness to pursue solutions. This can only be done if by listening. When pressed for any addition skills, he simply stated the obvious. The individual needed to have a love for God and for man, and believe that God desires and requires him or her to engage in a meaningful way to improve the lives of those less fortunate.

Question 4: What model or training method did you use to equip your ministry outreach team?
The leader noted that training began the day the people expressed a desire to join the body of worship. At that point, they were provided what he termed new member training. This training dealt with the spiritual and theological beliefs of a Christian. After this training, the people were aligned with an internal ministry area. Their ministry area alignment then led to more training specifically focused on that area. For instance, the entity has men’s and women’s ministries. These ministries focus on development of the God-ordained characteristics of males or females that allow them to become more productive in their roles at home, in the community, and in the church.

The leader further stated that this training then led to engagement in these ministries that provided a level of training based on engagement with fellow members. Finally, when the members expressed a desire to engage in a ministry, they reached out to the community. The leader ensured that there were no disqualifying factors from a legal perspective that would disqualify them. He also noted that training was provided on the proper method to engage, which includes the way people should be greeted with an offer instead of an overbearing press. Finally, he reemphasized the need for the members to listen. This was developed by several internal exercises and events that highlighted the impact of failing to listen.

At the end of the interview, the leader was asked if he could share one nugget he believed was critical to community outreach and engagement. His simple answer was leadership. The leader believed that the selection of the right leader would make all the difference between the ultimate success or failure of the team. When pressed for more details on what he deemed the right leader, this gentleman thought that it must be someone that loves the Lord with all his heart. It must be someone that understands the need to sacrifice for the benefit of others. He thought that it must be someone capable of setting goals and keep the team moving toward goal.
achievement. He believed the leader must be able to manage his time and the team’s time, and
the leader must be someone that understands the need to follow. He then described a few well-
known principles that include the ability to influence, willingness to hold the interest of others
above their own, and a willingness to go even when he must go by himself.

He closed by stating that leadership, especially in the black church, was lacking in so
many areas. Emotions had taken the place of leadership and sound teaching, and any leader who
hoped to engage in and pursue the mission placed on the church by God must engage in teaching
sound doctrine, sharing the Gospel with the lost, and being a part of what brings the community
back to the Lord.

Interview Two

The second interview was of a Pastor leading a congregation of roughly 2000 members in
a high crime area a short distance outside of a large metropolitan area. As with the initial
interviewed organization, this church is composed of a significant number of members from the
community in which it is located, and many of these members benefit from the community
outreach the church has undertaken.

The church’s vision captures the organization’s true focus, be a beacon of hope for the
community. Although simple, discussions with the pastor provide insight into a mission that is
anything but simple. The pastor took the opportunity to provide a brief introduction and history
of his church. He was a part of a traditional Baptist church in the area but was unhappy with the
focus of the church and its impact on those in need around the place of worship. The pastor also
stated that the traditionalism of the church and its commitment to formalities that did not appear
to be impactful on the lives of those the church is called to reach did not sit well with him. This
led him to set out to find a place of worship in an area that he could pursue what he saw as God’s
call on his life. In his pursuit to establish a less traditional worship experience, he also saw the
great need in the community which led him to make outreach a part of the fabric of the church.

Question 1. What was your process for determining the community and need to focus on?

When asked about his process in determining the community he would reach out to and
the needs the church would seek to impact, the pastor slid to the edge of his seat and began to
smile. His response indicated why his posture changed. The pastor believed through prayer and
seeking God the location was selected to begin a worship service. This selection in his mind did
not focus on reaching out to the community per se, but eventually outreach was the most critical
aspect of the selection. After the building was selected and acquired, then the pastor and his
initial cadre of leaders began canvassing the community and quickly learned that there was need.
The area was drug infested, with drug deals occurring consistently, and there were a lot of clubs
in the area. Alcohol was consumed by many throughout the day, and other illegal behaviors were
on constant display. In addition, the level of poverty in the area was staggering, which creates a
recipe for continued decline.

The pastor simply smiled and stated his selection of which areas to engage was not his
selection; it seemed to reach out to him and beg for his engagement. To this point, the pastor
conveyed that he remembers that in the first few services, there were more people in church that
the church needed to support financially than could financially support the church. So, the
community and the needs selected to address were all God’s doing.

Question 2. How did you select the team for ministry outreach and community development?

He simply stated that the initial team was himself, his wife, and one deacon who came
over with him at the church startup. He smiled when he commented that there was not much
selection needed; these people were all he had to support his efforts. Since that time, however,
the church has grown significantly, so the pastor began describing his selection methodology since startup. The pastor believed the primary quality in volunteer members is their relationship with Christ. He thought that this was true because a real relationship with Jesus would assure a specific approach to ministry, a behavior that modeled biblical principles, and a desire to look out for the best interests of those they have been trained to aid. He stated it would be a travesty to hurt those the church is seeking to help.

Additional areas of importance the pastor highlighted were using a person in an area where they may have experience, education, or some type of qualification or certification. The example he provided dated back to the beginning of the ministry. As he went out to the communities, he found out that the greatest need was financial education. Thus, he selected and sent a couple of leaders to Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University. This effort alone changed some of the lives of members by taking them from being unproductive and unable to support the ministry to being self-sufficient and supportive of the ministry.

The pastor was asked if there were more qualifications or skills he used in his selection of outreach team members. He conveyed that his new member training and support for individual ministries prepared every member to participate in some area of ministry and outreach. In his eye, the real selection was not in member participation but in identifying and selecting the leaders. Because of his thoughts, the pastor was asked why he thought leadership was so important. He was quick to point out that he did not believe his idea was earth shattering and that there may be some faults in his thought process. But he believed that examples of this model could be found throughout the Bible and throughout history. Where great leaders were involved, great things occurred. He said the only example he needed to prove his point is Jesus.
Not wanting to allow this opportunity to escape, he was asked what leadership skills he thought were important. He quickly stated that he thought self-confidence, the ability to influence, integrity, humility, faithfulness, and commitment to the calling were the keys to leadership and leadership success.

Question 3. What skill sets or ministry tools were key to your team’s success?

Here he was direct and to the point. He thought that those selected or volunteering to do outreach should have a heart for people. With this heart for people, they should be a good communicator with a good ability to use the English language or any language needed to perform outreach. He further highlighted the need for patience and the ability to take rejection without being dejected. When asked if he wanted to add anything further in this area, the pastor said that if he could have a team with these qualities only, he would consider it a great team.

Question 4. What model or training methods did you use to equip your ministry outreach team?

The pastor did not see the need to relate to any specific model and methodology. In his opinion, the key to training is simply finding out what the team already knows, determining what it needs to know, and ensuring that he address the shortfalls. He also believed that it was important for each team member to be aware of the other members’ strengths. While identifying each other’s strengths, the team can be formed in a manner where each member can work in areas that highlight and take advantage of their strengths.

The pastor then voiced a concern for the team and for those the team seeks to support. The pastor believed that it was critical to provide at least an overview of the security challenges associated with the community where the team will be working. This is important to ensure the safety of the team. On the other hand, the pastor stated that he wanted to perform some level of
background check was performed on members participating in outreach or any ministry. His rationale was to ensure nothing in the individual’s recent past was a cause for concern.

The pastor was asked if he had any final thoughts. He did. It was his belief that community outreach in some form is necessary, and it must begin within the church. When asked what that meant, the pastor pointed to the needs of those who are in the church. The pastor believed that in some cases the most neglected people in the community are those in the church itself. It is imperative to care for those who are of the household of faith.

Interview Three

The third interviewee is the leader of a small church in the study area. The church is multiracial and composed mainly of families from the lower socioeconomic status. Most members attending the church are over the age of 50. The pastor conveyed that his desire is growth through biblical teaching by spiritually feeding those attending and reaching out to the community to address spiritual and physical needs. The pastor was quick to identify that he and the church do not have a lot of experience with community outreach but believes that it is important to the life of the church and the community.

Question 1. What was your process for determining the community and need to focus on?

The pastor identified that his process is very immature, and the church does not have a viable program implemented to this point. However, to address the question, he stated that what he has done so far is first to look within the church to determine the needs of the membership. In his estimation, this research will provide insight into the community’s needs since the church in his case is a microcosm of the community where it sits. Thus, the pastor thought his church community would provide insights into where to begin in the larger community. When asked what he had determined so far, the pastor replied that a lot of his members were on fixed
incomes, and others were living in poverty. As such, he believed that any support would be beneficial. Thus, he needed to understand what the church wanted to support as well as what he believed he could maintain for a prolonged period. He concluded by saying that the purpose of the engagement was to make the community and individuals better, and he believed if done right, the church could at some point pull out after starting community development initiatives.

Question 2. How did you select the team for ministry outreach and community development?

The pastor stated that at this point no team has been formally selected. He and his wife are doing most of the work. He did identify that during the 2016 Christmas Holiday he asked for volunteers to go out into the community for caroling and to provide food. Although many members volunteered, the only people that showed up was him and his wife and two minority young men around the age of 12. His challenge is getting commitment and then getting those who commit following through on their commitment.

Question 3. What skill sets or ministry tools were key to your team’s success?

With no real team in place, the pastor was somewhat hesitant to respond in this area. However, he began by stating that his wife works with the North Alabama Food Bank, and he noticed that the agencies that seek to become partners have collective skill sets and ministry type tools he thought would be important for the individual. These skills he thought were soft skills and not hard skills. Soft skills include “communicating, making decisions, showing commitment, flexibility, time management, leadership skills, creativity and problem-solving skills, being a team player, accepting responsibility and having the ability to work under pressure.”118 While hard skills are much different as they are traditionally related to knowledge.119


The pastor thought the soft skills that were important included the ability to communicate and the ability to sympathize and/or empathize with those they are seeking to assist. He also thought it important for them to be very perceptive of the environment to detect any changes that may identify further needs and to keep the team safe.

When it comes to ministry tools, he thought that the ability to train was critical. In his estimation, training and teaching were key tools to equipping the community members. The best methods for strong teaching included organizing the message around a central theme, logically delivering it, and ensuring each person received the attention needed based on their communication abilities and need. In this vein, he believed that the church should be ready to provide mini-sessions at central places within the community. These sessions could include training on money management, resume writing, how to apply for and take advantage of government subsistence programs, and completing educational programs to obtain a high school diploma and/or certificate.

Question 4. What model or training method did you use to equip your ministry outreach team?

The pastor reiterated that he had not yet fielded a team, and he did not believe himself qualified to address this area. To help the conversation, the pastor was asked how he might apply this question to his work within the church. He explained that his denomination provides training to pastors and lay leaders with specific qualifications for certain positions. His charter was to follow those requirements closely to ensure alignment of the denominational hierarchy which would in turn promote consistent and repeatable actions. Therefore, his model would be scripted by the denomination. That said, when it relates to the community, he did not believe there was a one-size fits all model. However, he readily admitted that he did believe that any team going out
into the community must be able to achieve certain outcomes. Therefore, it only follows that their skills and abilities must be aligned.

In aligning of skills and abilities, the church bears the responsibility to prepare its representatives of the church and of Christ. The pastor concluded with the idea that he took it personally and believed the team represented him personally.

**Summary**

The engagement with participants in the training and assessment as well as the interviews of the entities engaged at various levels in community outreach and development provided a wealth of information. This information provides significant insights into the modern-day view of community development as well as the skills and qualities of individuals who are engaged, seeking to engage, or could be asked to engage in outreach. Although the entities engaged are a small sampling, they provide at least some insight into the community’s view of the church as well as the church’s view of the community. This information provides the needed concepts and methodologies leading to an identification of a model for community outreach and development, which includes the foundational idea that this effort is needed by the community and ordained by Scripture.
Chapter 4

With interviews complete, assessments concluded, and research captured, the task at hand is to identify how this information can be shaped into a model useable by church and religious entities of all types in their pursuit of community outreach and development. The information is not aligned with a specific Christian denomination. Rather, this data can be applied across a myriad of Christian denominations, government, and faith-based organizations. The model will provide a blueprint of sorts as well as examples that lead to successful engagements. The model provided is not a one size fits all, nor the only manner to approach or execute community outreach and development. The design is internally focused first, which means it will address the church’s needs and methods to look within to determine its God ordained mission, innate capabilities as well as those resources within their reach that may not be directly under their purview. With this clearly in focus, the model will address how the church should determine areas of engagement within the community. This paper will use specific areas identified as examples with the understanding that each entity employing the model will use the assessment to determine the applicable needs within their focused community. Finally, the model will address the equipping aspect, which is the development and equipping of teams to perform outreach.

Self-Awareness

The church must be aware of its responsibility, the history of this responsibility, and more importantly, the biblical mandate associated with community outreach and engagement. The church is in somewhat of a crisis, not a crisis of survival, but a crisis of “rediscovering its
The first step in this recovery is uncovering its purpose. The main goal of the church is reaching the lost for Christ. A subcategory of this purpose is the responsibility to improve the lives and develop the members of the community. Although spiritual, a relationship with Christ will affect the entire being of an individual. To this end, the church must realize that the community is in a crisis. Furthermore, it must understand that whether it is the crisis of the church, or that of the community, “crisis events are a part of life originating from God’s specific direction, from the natural progression of creation, or from humanity’s spiritual deprivation.”

The church will in some way must engage in this crisis. Church and church member locations will not in and of themselves determine success, but the church should realize that their efforts will be significantly impacted if the church is not a part of the community it is seeking to aid. This impact does not convey there is no path to success, rather the path will be harder because “effective ministries plant and build communities of believers that have a personal stake in the development of their neighbors.” This personal stake in low performing communities can only be achieved through modeling of the desired behavior on a consistent basis. This demands relocation.

The Church’s Responsibility in Community Development

Research addresses community development from several different aspects. In this expression of culpability, the church has a Biblical mandate. The church is responsible for the community. More specifically, the church is responsible for having a positive impact on the

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community in which it is located. Not only is it responsible for community development, it is more specifically “responsible for creating a community which offers…moral, cultural, and financial support all embodied in a common worship experience.”\textsuperscript{123} This speaks to the membership within the church, but the research shows this responsibility for the community goes beyond the walls of the church.

The historical community development efforts of Black Churches have been focused on enhancing “the social well-being of low-income neighborhoods and communities.”\textsuperscript{124} This is not in lieu of preaching the Gospel. This in addition to the Gospel. This is significant considering that at some point 78 percent of all Blacks were affiliated with the church and 68 percent of all money given to charities by Blacks went to the church.\textsuperscript{125} This number may vary today, but Blacks undoubtedly continue to align themselves with the church.

As far back as the formation of the Black Church, their engagement within the community has been a matter of life or death for many. For example, in 1830 during a time of partnership between the Black Church and College Community developers, The Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church movement provided aid to those who escaped from slavery. This movement “created a variety of functions, including an employment agency, a committee for safeguarding civil liberties, and a structure for data collection and publications.”\textsuperscript{126} This is only one example, but it speaks volumes of the historical activity of the church within the community.

This look back should provide a clear path to the present day Black church and the future Black Church. All churches, but especially the Black Church, remains responsible for the

\textsuperscript{123} Littlefield, 687.  
\textsuperscript{124} Robert B. Hill, 151.  
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 152.  
community spiritually. This spiritually responsibility leads to faith in the promises of God, and creation of a better life through elimination of ungodly habits and actions. Although the definition of community may have changed, the focus of the church remains. Regardless of whether community is where the church resides, or community is where the church has chosen to focus, the community’s development is the responsibility of the church.

In addition to the historical perspective highlighted through research, the Bible also makes it clear that the church is responsible for the community. Its responsibility from a Biblical perspective is addressed from individual accountability and responsibility, as well as forming the church as an institution. There are very well-established discussions about the responsibility of brothers for the welfare of each other (Phil 2:4) as well as discussions about the church’s responsibility for those inside and outside of the church (Gal. 6:10).

This in no way relieves the government or other entities from the legal responsibilities of caring for taxpayers. This is evident in government support programs like food stamps, housing assistance, Medicare, and Medicaid. However, these programs only lead to temporary solutions to a permanent problem. While the church has access to a solution through the Holy Spirit that is permanent. The bottom line remains that the church is responsible for the community beginning with those within the church membership. The church should take hold of this responsibility and harness the available government and private sector resources to meet the physical needs of the community after the spiritual needs have been addressed.

Research places the church in the forefront of community development. The Bible is the document of record placing the greatest call on the church to reach the community. This responsibility deals with the spiritual and physical aspects of development. This idea is seen in reconciliation, which is “the reconciliation of people to God, and the reconciliation of neighbor
to neighbor. Through the Gospel this process requires breaking down every racial, ethnic, or economic barrier to opportunity, such that as Christians people can come together to solve the problems of their shared community.”

This spiritual and physical impact on the community mandates the church take this mission seriously and they begin to understand this is not a government mandate, or a community demand. This is a Biblical mandate that must be pursued or spiritual famine and death will be the outcome and lead to greater a physical catastrophe.

Resource Availability

As the church begins its pursuit of engaging the community or considering the potential for engagement, its first step is to determine its ability to initiate and sustain a community development and engagement program. The resources question addresses the financial health of the church as well as the church’s desire to reach out, its member willingness to engage, whether there are current programs, and an ability to develop new ministries focused on the community.

Although no two churches follow the same path to community engagement and outreach, “several externally focused churches. Like Christ Community. Have helped pave the way. While no two congregations follow the same blueprint for community involvement, most have had to answer the following six questions along the way to becoming more externally focused.”

“What is our congregation’s current view of outreach ministry? What is our current ministry programming? How are we preparing people for externally focused ministry? What are the needs of the city? Who can we partner with? How can we get everyone involved?”

127 Barkley, *Models of effective compassion*.


129 Ibid.
This internal assessment of capability and resources should not be taken lightly. The inability to accurately identify the available resources could result in a failed attempt, leaving many questioning the churches commitment, or the churches message regarding the power of God.

The first area of assessment required is of the churches current programs. “Assessing current programming is not only helpful, but an essential step to improving the church’s effectiveness in all areas. It’s no secret that today’s leaders must look beyond the traditional internal programming of the church if they are to reach the lost.”130 Failure to assess what a church is currently doing, especially what it is doing well, may result in a negative impact on all ministries.

In addition to the program assessment, an assessment of the financial capability of the church must be performed. In this instance, the church either has the cash flow to achieve its stated purposes, or it does not. If the church is in doubt, it should consider benchmarking other community engaged entities to determine the financial burden a specific area of engagement may cause. The church will also need to determine what level of service it desires to provide. This will also determine the financial requirements to support community engagement. In the Black Church, it is even more important to consider finances, as some members believe that money is the reason why many churches fail.131

Finally, the church must do an assessment of its members and their propensity to serve. In addition, it must determine what preparation has already taken place and what preparation is

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130 Petty, Connecting to your Church Community, 5.
required to prepare these members for service. Although the church is considering service to the community, it is critical in this area to ensure spiritually mature members are identified and, at a minimum, placed in influential positions. Those involved must be zealots for Christ and not simply followers, akin to a sports fan.132

In the church, this process was performed and discovered that people are ill prepared to engage in community based outreach, whether for creating disciples for Christ or for addressing the needs of the community. The writer’s church has seven ministers and three deacons, none of which have experience with, or have engaged in, outreach for any purpose. These leaders also lack formal education in ministry. Additionally, they lack awareness of the community although many in the congregation are in need and would benefit greatly from the church’s engagement.

Many churches may fail in this area because they fail to fully understand volunteerism. “Volunteering is a form of altruistic behavior. Its goal is to provide help to others, a group, an organization, a cause, or the community at large, without expectation of material reward.”133 The volunteers must be true disciples seeking to develop disciples for the sake of the Cross and Christ as well as seeking to develop the individual, leading to a better life. After determining the fiscal and human resources available, the church is now ready to consider areas of the community beyond discipleship making to engage. This consideration should be based solely on the spiritual condition and needs of the community.

132 Barna, 92.
Needs Identification

Identifying the needs of the community can be a daunting task for churches, but beginning with a process and methodology that lays out a clear direction will ensure the right focus and identification of the right engagement areas. The best method to achieve this goal is using a needs assessment. The assessment also ensures improvement of services and focus.\(^{134}\)

The concept of redistribution should remain in the forefront when beginning this needs assessment process. By doing so the church is reminded of the ultimate desired outcome, which is,

…the importance of economic development and the redistribution of resources. But this commitment does not mean the heavy hand of government taking from one member of a community to give to another. It requires, rather, ‘bringing our lives, our skills, our educations, and our resources and putting them to work to empower people in a community of need. [This] is redistribution and it helps people to break out of the cycle of poverty.\(^{135}\)

When spirituality and redistribution are central, the needs of the community and the potential for success remain clearly in focus. But this only happens if we allow God to use the gifts He has placed within to achieve the purpose He has ordained by impacting the lives of the poor and needy in the community.

Needs Assessment

Areas of engagement must be based on a community needs assessment.\(^{136}\) This assessment ensures the church is engaging in areas that will impact the community, and not simply engaging in areas that meet the churches desire to heap praise on themselves. Considering


\(^{135}\) Barkley, *Models of Effective Compassion.*

the community’s needs will also build independence, providing greater potential for long-term success.

This is because the inclusion of those directly affected in the planning stages will more likely ensure that the right development needs and their causes are identified; the responses planned will better take into account local resources and strengths of the local communities ensuring that there is less reliance on external inputs; and finally, community participation will also aid in the ongoing management of the project as the decision-making processes will have been developed in the initial stages to include the relevant local beneficiaries and key stakeholders, which will continue once the external funding has ceased.\textsuperscript{137}

Areas of engagement are limitless. Therefore, the church should engage in areas that appear to have the greatest immediate and lasting impact. Of course, spiritual engagement has the greatest of all impacts. In the research area, the greatest areas of need beyond spiritual are support for food, including take home groceries and hot meals for children during non-school periods. In addition, the church can focus on support for the elderly, mentoring, and General Education Development (GED). These can achieve the level of success God desires by ensuring spiritual concepts and principles are included throughout.

Any church considering community engagement and development must develop its own assessment or use one of a myriad of assessments available online. The assessment at Appendix B provides the basic information that can lead the church in developing an effective outreach and community development ministry.

However, development of the assessment is only the first step. After developing and adapting a needs assessment, the church or organization must deploy the assessment in the community it intends to reach. This assessment can be deployed by anyone, but the church should consider using members of the outreach team they intend to employ.

Engagement Areas

After determining the desire and ability to engage in community development and outreach and completion of the assessment, the church must determine what areas they will engage. This selection is impacted significantly by the church’s internal assessment.\textsuperscript{138} What is the church able to achieve? How many members do they have and what level of effort is the membership willing to expend? Answering these questions will go a long way in making the necessary decisions.

In the interviews, the leaders to a person believe that the areas of engagement a church chooses to participate are dependent on what the church believes God has ordained them to pursue in addition to the desire and abilities of the church. They also agree that although all ministries and engagements may be ordained by God, He does not intend for all churches to engage in all areas. Just as God gave different gifts and talents to different people, He placed people with different gifts and talents within each church to achieve the purpose resident within each church.

With that in mind, all churches, and especially Black Churches in the study area, have seen a noticeable increase in professionals within the Back community. Nationally, black physicians have increased from 3.1\% in 1980 to 4.4\% in 2007.\textsuperscript{139} Lawyers increased from 4\% to 5\% between 2000 and 2010.\textsuperscript{140} If these increases are seen in the local church, they signal areas

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the church should consider engaging. In addition to the professionals within the church, they should consider the available resources within the community. Each community should have an array of support services available to which the church can facilitate access. Successful facilitation depends on putting together the right team.

Because of the research, the writer’s church determined the potential areas of engagement in the community were providing food, assistance to children in foster care, and housing for the elderly and needy. These areas were evident in discussion with church members, the Alabama Department of Human Resources, and visitors to the church’s food bank to request support for low and no income families. Thus the church seeks to share the Gospel while address the needs of the individual.

**Equipping the Team**

Reaching this final aspect of the model, it is more important now than in any area to get the process right or risk an unsuccessful effort. Equipping is focused on the individual and the team, with an eye on the total goal of sharing the Gospel and improving the community spiritually and physically. Each member of the team must be prepared to witness to the lost, perform his or her assigned task, and ready and able to achieve the goals set by the church. This idea of equipping brings with it reconciliation. “Reconciliation is an intensely personal ministry between God and people. It may include only two individuals, or it may involve groups of people, but it must be appropriate on a personal level.”\(^{141}\) It will bring about a change by recreating the bond between man and God, and between individuals in the community. This section will address team formation, the training needs of the group, and leader identification.

Team Formation

Team formation is a critical aspect of achieving stated goals in community development and engagement. Having completed the necessary work to identify the community needs and the churches ability and resources, all will be for naught if the team is not formed and prepared to do the work of ministry. In the small church, this team is made up completely of volunteers. The only potentially paid staff member on the team in a small church is the pastor. In this type of situation, when developing the team and filling positions, the same questions should be addressed that are addressed when filling church staff:

- Is there a good process for adding team members?
- What position should be added first? Second? Third?
- What are the legitimate needs of staff members?
- Is there a way to nurture a staff that builds longevity?
- How do we deal with staff problems?
- Is there a way to motivate a superior staff?
- What is the best way to staff a church so that it grows?142

As the team is being formed, the first step is to remember that the team should be developed as far in advance of the outreach as possible. Bringing the team together early will allow it to progress through the stages of team development.143 This progression will end up with a fully functional and productive team motivated to carry out the tasks set before it.

The focus group participating in this study was a group of volunteers; however, their participation was not accidental. When the request for volunteers was made, the focus was on leaders within the church, especially those serving in a ministry capacity. Although this was the major part of group makeup, others who were not in ministry came also. This composition of the

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142 Gary L. McIntosh, Staff Your Church for Growth: Building Team Ministry in the 21st Church, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 11.

group proves that openly communicating the purpose of the team, expectations, and time required to complete the necessary actions may bring together an eclectic group of volunteers. Although eclectic, it is a group focused on ministry and have a love for God.

This “all volunteer” team is great, but there are some inherent challenges. The positives associated with the team are its willingness to do the work of ministry. Any short comings or weaknesses of the team must be mitigated through training. This idea of training and the impact training had on the focus group will be addressed later in the paper.

Although the team is all volunteer, the church must complete an assessment of each person who has stepped forward to participate. This assessment identifies everyone’s abilities, interests, areas of training required, and should include a background check. As a part of the assessment the church should have the volunteer complete and sign a Volunteer Agreement.

The leaders interviewed expressed their view of the challenges associated with fielding a team to perform outreach. With these challenges in mind, the goal of ministry must remain in the forefront.

Church, organizational, and team leaders must be prepared to go beyond the volunteer pool and seek out members in the congregation or organization that have skill sets and gifts that will enhance the team’s effectiveness. It is imperative not to over-spiritualize this aspect, even when the Holy Spirit within is most important. It is important to look at the heart of the individual, gauge his or her desires, and look for the commitment of the person. The power of the Holy Spirit empowering these capable volunteers will assure a successful outcome. This is important because the team must remain focused and steadfast.

\[144\] Department of Health and Human Services, “Empowering America’s Grassroots,” 1.4.
This focus and steadfastness means the person must come to grips with their Spiritual Gift as well as their ministry calling. This awareness allows the person to stand strong when faced with insurmountable odds that lead to mental challenges that could force the individual to give up.

**Training**

After the team is identified, it is important to identify the roles members will play on the team and their roles during ministry outreach. Clearly identifying roles will eliminate confusion. A part of role identification will be embedded in team training. Training may be the single most important aspect of group formation. This idea of training was impactful in the research group. The group was provided training in a limited number of areas because of time constraints. This training included equipping the team in the following ways: leading unbelievers to Christ; the key elements of Christian Community Development, including scriptural evidence; performing needs assessment; and finding resources available in the community.

There are several other training opportunities that may benefit and better prepare the team; however, these specific ideas were developed based on the needs identified during the initial assessment completed by the research participants. Failure to identify the needs of the team and prepare them for the task of ministry could lead to an unsuccessful effort.

Great care must be used in development of the training program. Training and an orientation program will minimize the potential for problems during execution. Training teaches unskilled members the necessary skills to perform the required volunteer tasks.

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146 Ibid, v.
timing of this training is also important. Although there is no advance period that ensures success of the training and preparedness of the team, the more training that can be provided and the sooner it start both will lead to better team preparation and ministry impact. At a minimum, the church or organization should attempt to provide training 2-months prior to executing the community outreach and engagement plan.149 This period allows for training and role playing to minimize fear. Once the training is set focus can turn to the leader.

Team Leader

Although addressed last in order, a critical aspect of team formation is identifying the team leader. With respect to volunteers and to the community it is important to note that “in every community there is work to be done. In every nation, there are wounds to heal. In every heart, there is the power to do it.”150 But to achieve this goal, volunteers need leadership, leadership that provides “advice, guidance, and feedback.”151 Every leader shapes the character of those they lead.152 This leader not only represents the pastor to the team, he also represents, speaks, and explains the will of God to the team and the community.153 The leader should be a great communicator, multi tasker, a lover of the Lord and people, and have outstanding people skills. Ideally, this member is a representative of the church that has been intricately involved in planning the ministry outreach and analysis of the community and church. The in-depth knowledge gained during the planning stage will allow the leader to speak and lead from a

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151 Ibid.


153 Ibid., 83.
position of authority and execute the desires of the pastor or organizational leader. But with this authority, the leader must also be a servant.\textsuperscript{154} The leader must follow God, while looking out for the needs of the team.

The leader must believe in the message and goal of the team. This is critical because the leader must buy into the message himself to convince others.\textsuperscript{155} This leader should be placed in the position to lead before, during, and after the outreach is completed. Leading prior to outreach means that this individual will be responsible for ensuring any required training for the team is provided. He will ensure equipment and assets required for a successful ministry are acquired and ready. During the outreach, he will ensure team members remain true to the mission of the outreach, and he will exercise decision making to alter the direction of the team if necessary while remaining focused on the goal being pursued outside the church.\textsuperscript{156} One of the most important skills the leader can employ to garner team trust and ensure goal focus is listening.\textsuperscript{157}

No discussion about the selection of and the role of the leader is complete without discussing how the leader must take care of himself. First, the leader must understand that his or her effort is not a short race but a long-distance run. In this “marathon race of life, endurance is a major component to finishing the race.”\textsuperscript{158} The leader must have balance in his life. This balance is the harmonious mix of time with the volunteer team, time in prayer and meditation, time in study, and time with family. This balance creates harmony with God and family, and this

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\textsuperscript{156} Petty, 8.


\textsuperscript{158} June and Mathis, 117.
\end{flushleft}
harmony creates a life with minimum stress that relies on God for every need. Leaders should consider this point:

Religious traditions have taught us to sit and be still much in the same way our parents taught us to “sit and be still.” It has taught us how to dress up or dress down but worst of all, it taught us how to “act.” But, the word of God shows us and the Spirit of the Lord empowers us to be. BE of good cheer. BE not afraid. BE strong and very courageous. BE not deceived. BE faithful. BE obedient. BE lovers of God. BE trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. Acting deceives our hearts, hiding in shadows. But being extends from his love within.159

June and Mathis express the idea that the leader must allow things to occur with an understanding that God is in control. Things will occur that do not seem to go the leader’s way, but he or she must approach it from a position of authority, humility, respect, and faith. The leader must remain strong and committed to keep the team focused. This can only happen if the leader is spiritually, emotionally, and mentally stable.

Conclusion

The community, especially the Black Community, whether in the immediate vicinity of the church or further out, is in desperate need of engagement and development. Although there is a myriad of agencies that can assist, it is the Church with the Biblical mandate to reach out and into the community to affect their spiritual well-being and entire life. The Church is the beneficiary of community member attendance and support. These very members pour their heart into its ministries and fill its coffers with their limited funds. It is the church with the heart of God, the mind of Christ, and the power of Christ within. The member participation and the mission and purpose of the church requires the church to pursue ministries to enhance the life of church and community members.

The research highlighted throughout this paper points to the responsibility of the church,

159 Ibid., 131.
and it also points to the need to train any team or member going into the community and representing the Church in any capacity. This training serves to enhance the individual connection with God, connection with fellow team members, and connection with the community.¹⁶⁰

The research also points to the responsibility of the government and its constitutional mandate to help people. However, this governmental and constitutional mandate does not absolve the church of its responsibility. The government establishment, if engaged in a logical manner, can serve as a force multiplier of sorts for the church. This is important within the small church that may not have the resources to engage the community with any measurable impact. This idea of cooperation between the church and government, or the church and other entities, is not a new concept. It has developed and matured over the years. Yet, it is critical for the church to gain a complete understanding on any legal mandates and requirements to ensure that it does not allow its intentions of goodness to reflect negatively on itself or God because of poor understanding of the law (Rom 14:6).

When considering community engagement or outreach, it is imperative that the church approaches it in a logical and methodical manner. If not done right, outreach can have a significant and lasting negative impact, leading the community to fall deeper into despair and creating a level of mistrust in the church leading to a potential denial of the power resident in the savior because of the church’s actions. In this vein, when the church begins pursuing the idea of outreach, it should take a holistic look at itself and all the stakeholders in the community.

Within, the church should assess its abilities, resources, missions, and ministries. This internal assessment will address not only the church’s desires but will also give the church

leadership the opportunity to determine what it can reasonably accomplish and its membership’s willingness to volunteer for and support the outreach efforts in the long term. The assessment may also provide insight into the church’s current ministries by identifying areas of improvement as well as potential waste areas, all of which will aid in the church’s pursuit of community engagement. The church must however, remain true to its God given mission, “make disciples of all nations” (Matt 28:19).

After looking within, the church must perform an external assessment. This external assessment is in the form of a needs assessment, which serves a dual purpose. It prevents the Church from engaging in areas it is not suited or prepared for, and it identifies and allows the Church to engage in those areas that are beneficial to the community. This external assessment may be the most overlooked aspect of community outreach and development performed by churches.

The completion of the needs assessment may be accomplished prior to or after the formation of the outreach team. If completed afterwards, it will form the basis for the team’s training. If completed prior to team formation, it will allow the church to use the areas it intends to focus on as a part of its team recruitment and subsequent training.

Team formation is critical and can be accomplished in a myriad of manners including being staffed completely with volunteers or a combination of volunteers and staff members currently assigned to the ministerial staff. The first piece of the team that must be put into place is the team leader. Research conducted showed that all the church leaders that were interviewed believed that this was the single most important aspect of team formation and outreach.

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execution. The importance of the leader can be seen in his or her ability to provide inspiration and ignite the passion within the people.\textsuperscript{162}

Regardless of how the team is formed, the team must be trained. The types of training are endless; however, this research showed the importance of the following key areas for training: leading unbelievers to Christ, understanding elements of Christian Community Development, including scriptural evidence; performing needs assessment; and identifying resources available in the community. Undoubtedly, these may be different for every church, but the change documented in the participants proves that training, in these areas will have a measurable impact.

A well led and trained team will be able to pursue and engage in the right areas of the community and have a significant and lasting impact. This impact will reflect favorably on the church, but it will more importantly place the church in the place where the Bible intended it to be-in the community.

\textsuperscript{162} Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee, 3.
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APPENDIX A. Government Benefits Listing Athens, AL

Want to learn more about helpful government programs that you may qualify for? Search over 600 benefit programs available from various government agencies all in one location.

Alabama All Kids Children's Health Insurance Program:
ALL Kids provides low-cost healthcare coverage for Alabama's children and teens whose family incomes are above Medicaid eligibility but below 300 percent of the Federal Poverty Level. ALL Kids comprehensive benefit package covers regular check-ups.

Alabama Family Assistance:
The Family Assistance Program provides temporary financial assistance for needy families with a dependent child under age 18 (or age 19 if s/he is a full-time student in a secondary school or in the equivalent level of vocational or technical training.

Alabama Food Assistance Program (SNAP):
The Food Assistance Division administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in Alabama. The Food Assistance Program's purpose is to end hunger and improve nutrition by providing monthly benefits to eligible low-income households.

Alabama Head Start and Early Head Start:
Head Start is a Federal program that promotes the school readiness of children from birth to age five from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development.

Alabama Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (Liheap):
The Low-Income High Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) assists low-income Alabama residents with the high cost of home energy. Funding is provided from the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) block grant.

Alabama Medicaid:
Medicaid is a health insurance program for certain low-income and needy people paid with federal, state, and county dollars. It is the largest program providing medical and health-related services to Alabama's poorest people--including children.

Alabama School Breakfast and Lunch Program:
The School Breakfast and Lunch Program makes nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free meals available to school children each school day. Over 92,000 schools offer lunches at school, and nearly 70,000 schools offer breakfast at school nationwide.

Alabama Special Milk Program:
The Alabama Special Milk Program provides milk to children in schools, childcare institutions, and eligible camps that do not participate in other Federal child nutrition meal service programs.

Alabama Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, And Children (WIC):
The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program provides supplemental foods, nutrition education, and referrals to health care at no cost to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five.

Alabama Summer Food Service:
The Summer Food Service program provides free, nutritious meals and snacks to help Alabama children in low-income areas get the nutrition they need to learn, play, and grow, throughout the summer months when they are out of school.

Alabama Unemployment Insurance:
Unemployment insurance benefits provide temporary financial assistance to workers unemployed through no fault of their own that meet Alabama's eligibility requirements.

Alabama Weatherization Assistance Program
The Weatherization Program is designed to save energy and enhance the self-sufficiency of low-income families by helping them to reduce their home heating and cooling bills.

Ability Plus 4440 Evangel Cir NW, Huntsville, AL (256) 489-4696
806 Governors Dr SW # 204, Huntsville, AL (256) 489-4681
AIDS Action Coalition of North Alabama
600 St Clair Ave SW, Huntsville, AL (256) 536-4750
Alabama Baptist Children's Home
1404 16th Ave SE, Decatur, AL (256) 355-6893
Alabama Institute-Deaf & Blind
600 Saint Clair Ave SW # 2, Huntsville, AL (256) 539-7881
Alabama Sheriffs Boys Ranch
165 Ranch Cir, Danville, AL (256) 773-9246
American Red Cross
1300 Armory St, Athens, AL (256) 232-6820
American Red Cross
431 Holly St NE, Decatur, AL (256) 353-4891
American Red Cross
1101 Washington St NW, Huntsville, AL (256) 536-0084
American Red Cross
Redstone Arsenal, Huntsville, AL (256) 876-3381
American Red Cross
208 Davidson St E # B, Fayetteville, TN     (931) 433-5561

American Red Cross
181 Prosser Rd, Lawrenceburg, TN     (931) 762-1599

American Red Cross
318 S Court St, Florence, AL     (256) 764-2911

American Red Cross
424 3rd Ave SE, Cullman, AL     (256) 734-0921

Arc Mckenny Training Center
312 Cahill Dr NW # E, Huntsville, AL     (256) 382-4478

ARC of Madison County
2300 Washington Cir NW, Huntsville, AL     (256) 539-4111

Association-Retarded Citizens
1100 Washington St NW, Huntsville, AL     (256) 539-2266

Athens Center
110 Thomas St, Athens, AL     (256) 233-3905

Athens Limestone County Family
406 S Jefferson St, Athens, AL     (256) 230-0880

Athens Limestone Hospital: Social Services
700 W Market St, Athens, AL     (256) 233-9459

Barren Fork Head Start Center
155 Barren Fork Blvd SW, Huntsville, AL     (256) 461-8497

Bella Mina Center
7051 Mooresville Rd, Tanner, AL     (256) 355-7331

Big Brothers Big Sisters
110 Thomas St, Athens, AL     (256) 232-4650

Big Brothers Big Sisters
1410 7th Ave SE # C, Decatur, AL     (256) 353-0157

Big Brothers Big Sisters
701 Andrew Jackson Way NE, Huntsville, AL     (256) 880-2123

[163] Information available in the Athens, Alabama Medicare Guide.
Medicare Providers in Athens, AL:
Athens Primary Care

Free clinics and community health centers in Limestone County:

Below are the listings of free and low-cost clinics in Limestone County. These clinics can help low-income and uninsured people by offering free and discounted rates for medical and/or dental care.
Central Health Care:
Location: Athens, AL - 35611-2454
Contact Phone: 256-230-3061
Services: Family Practice Medicine, Pediatric Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Dentistry and Oral Health, Behavioral Health, Pharmacy, Laboratory Services, Enabling Services, Case Management
APPENDIX B. Community Needs Assessment

Family Composition:

Person living in your household include:

Adults: 1 2 3 4 5 6

Children: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 More than 10 ____

Highest Education Level in the home

Less than High School_________

High School___________

Some College__________

College Degree

Economic Status

Your Household Income is:

$1,000 – $10,000 __________

$11,000 - $30,000 __________

$31,000 - $45,000 __________

$46,000 - $60,000 __________

Above $60,000 __________

OTHER __________

Safety Concerns

What is your primary safety concern?

Theft __________

Guns __________

Home Break-ins_________

Car Accidents __________

Fire ________________

Sex Crimes __________

Shootings ____________

Stabbings ____________

Government Assistance Utilized

What areas of government assistance do you participate in?

SSI ______________
SNAP __________________
Section 8 _____________
CHIP ________________
Welfare/TNAF _____________

Church Affiliation

Are you a member of a church? Yes___/NO___
Do you attend church regularly? Yes___/NO___

Spiritual Learnings

Do you have any formal religious education? Yes___/NO___
Do you attend weekly Bible Study? Yes___/NO___
If not, are you interested in attending? Yes___/NO___
APPENDIX C: Thesis Overview Slide Presentation

Thesis Defense

Brye McMillon
Doctor of Ministry

Overview

- Abstract
- Why Community Engagement
- Introduction
- Organization and Approach
- Research
- Conclusion
- What’s Next
Abstract

This project examines the role of the Black Church in the development of the African American Community and seeks to encourage churches to embrace this role. Support for communities by churches in rural North Alabama is key to improving living conditions and achieving biblically based outreach. This project investigates the church’s theological duties for community outreach and provides a biblical mandate as a part of a larger community development model, while preparing ministry teams for outreach. This paper will consider the equipping methodology that leads to a trained ministry team able to reach, identify, and fulfill the needs of the individuals within the community. The writer will use currently available research to develop the equipping methodology. A ministry team in the writer’s church will be interviewed prior to and following training to employ the model. Ministries currently engaged in community development will also be interviewed.

Why Community Engagement?

The Call
- I feel the call of God in this area
- It is a critical part of my ministry
- Church as normal is unacceptable

The Community
- Poverty and Suffering on the rise
- Churches are empty, prisons full
- The Community needs Christ
Introduction

The role of the church

The Great Commandment

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matt 22:37-40).

Introduction

The role of the church

The Great Commission

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen,” (Matt 28:19-20).
Introduction

The purpose of the church

- Minister - The church was also established for ministry to the lost.
- Evangelism – The church is focused on reaching the next unreached person in their community.
Introduction

The Problem
- The church disengaged
  - Internally focused
- Decline in spiritual leadership
  - Engaged leaders departed, new leaders had different focus
- The condition of the community is declining

Organization and Approach
- The church must organize to ensure its efforts are achieving the desired outcome
- Organization ensures a clear focus and defined structure
- The proper approach ensures goals are met and engagement sustainable
Organization and Approach

Community Development defined:
Community development functions to help community participants influence the direction of important public tasks including planning, governance, economic development, health and social services provision, responses to poverty, effective transportation, housing for all groups, and improved education and human services.

Organization and Approach

Christian Community Development:
The Christian community development approach is based solely on biblical principles, and seeks to connect with and address man’s greatest need, salvation. In this phenomenon called Christian community development it is the local church that is the most effective in meeting the needs and bridging the gap by building effective relationships.
Organization and Approach

History:

• Awareness of history central to avoiding pitfalls and understanding the role of the church and community
• The church engaged in the community is grounded in scripture – Acts 2:45.
• Rallying point during slavery

Organization and Approach

History:

• After slavery
  • Historically, the black church in the urban South provided a safety net of community services that was not available to African-American citizens because of the history of ‘Jim Crow’ laws, a century of segregation, and the cultural residue of disenfranchisement. That role in the community grew more pronounced as the black church became the literal sanctuary for its congregations and the focus of institutional antipathy during the tumultuous period of social reform in the south in the 1960s.
Organization and Approach

The Community Development Process:
- Approach must be biblically based
- Approach must fit the individual church
- Team Development
  - Biblical based leadership key to success
  - Team formation based on calling, skills, desire to help
  - Training is central to team development
- Church Capability Assessment
  - Assess self to determine calling and capability

Organization and Approach

The Community Development Process:
- Community Assessment
  - The church must know the communities needs to help the community
  - Spiritual condition must be a part of any assessment
  - Goal is meeting the needs of the community and not the desires of the church
Organization and Approach

The Community Development Process:
- Engagement Areas
  - Determined by Community Needs Assessment
  - North Alabama need areas
    - Salvation
    - Children below the age of 16 (including foster children)
    - Elderly
    - Food assistance
    - Medical Care
    - Housing

Organization and Approach

The Community Development Process:
- Community support programs
  - Local and government entities provide outreach enhancement
    - They are able to support in areas the church cannot
  - Able to provide assistance during community assessment phase
Research

• The Assessment
  • Process is designed to gather information
  • Employs a myriad of tools
  • The study assessment
    • Composed of identification and clarification data
    • Composed of 10 questions
    • Initial assessment provided baseline
    • Follow-up assessment highlighted training effectiveness

Research

• The Assessment
  • Results showed stark similarities
  • Difference found with participants not native to the area
  • Ministry Agency Interview performed
    • Interview of 3 ministries engaged in the community
      • Similar experiences, goals, beliefs
• **Training**
  • Five session training model employed
    • Session one - church’s role/mission in community outreach and development and discipleship
    • Session two - addressed the key elements of Christian Community
    • Session three - addressed the process for determining the needs of the community
    • Session four - the government entities in the local areas and their missions

• **Training**
  • Five session training model cont.
    • Session five - development and organization of the community outreach
    • Leadership overlaid on all sessions
    • The sessions were designed to instruct, disciple, motivate
    • Localization of training was critical
      • Provided connection between participants and community
Conclusion

• Church community development and engagement model
  • Self Awareness
    • The church must be aware of its responsibility, the history of this responsibility, and more importantly, the biblical mandate associated with community outreach and engagement.

Conclusion

• Self Awareness cont.
  • Six questions to assist:
    • What is our congregation’s current view of outreach ministry?
    • What is our current ministry programming:
    • How are we preparing people for externally focused ministry
    • What are the needs of the city?
    • Who can we partner with?
    • How can we get everyone involved?
  • The church must look internally and externally
Conclusion

- Model cont.
  - Resource Availability
    - Determine the church’s ability to initiate and sustain a community development and engagement program
      - Money
      - Volunteers
      - Impact on current ministries and programs

- Needs identification
  - When spirituality and redistribution are central, the needs of the community and the potential for success remain clearly in focus.
  - Needs assessment is best method for determining community needs
  - Engagement area must be selected prior to developing and executing assessment
    - Volunteers
    - Impact on current ministries and programs
Conclusion

• Model cont.
  • Equipping the team
    • Focuses on the individual and the team, with an eye on the goal of sharing the Gospel and improving the community spiritually and physically.
    • Team leader selection
    • Team formation
    • Training

It is the church with the heart of God, the mind of Christ, and the power of Christ within.
What’s Next

• Lessons learned
  • The calling of God on my life to aid the community is clearer than ever.
  • Discipling is primary focus of community engagement
    • When minds are transformed, lives change, communities change
  • A committed, focused, spirit filled team is a must to maintain a standing program
  • Leadership, leadership, leadership

What’s Next

• Impact of the findings
  • Provided motivation to keep pushing forward
    • My heart for the people and desire to help grew stronger
  • Confirmed the calling on my life
  • Led to the development of a team capable of engaging the community
  • Provided an awareness of why the Black Church disengaged; but reaffirmed the need to reengage
What’s Next

- Plan to use the information
  - I have initiated a community outreach and engagement program in the church I pastor.
  - A food bank has been established.
  - My ministry team did not perform any outreach in its history, but are now going into neighborhoods, hospitals, nursing homes.
  - A ministry training program is in development.
  - I plan to share within the Association my church is located.

I have been blessed by this research and will use it to be a blessing.
Questions
IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

7/28/2016

Brye McMillon
IRB Approval 2564.072816: The Black Church and Community: A Model for Church
Community Engagement and Development

Dear Brye McMillon,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This
approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol
number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as
it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The
forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Your IRB-approved, stamped consent form is also attached. This form should be copied and used
to gain the consent of your research participants. If you plan to provide your consent information
electronically, the contents of the attached consent document should be made available without
alteration.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the
requirements for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included
as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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