Block Adoption: Evaluating the Impacts of Neighborhood Care on Church Attendance at House of Joy

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When a church plateaus, it is a major indication that the church is no longer adding new members. This is a dangerous stage for any church to be. If nothing is done to turn the situation around, the church will likely head down toward decline and death. This Thesis project addresses the problem of stagnation in church attendance. The Thesis project examines how block adoption can be used as an evangelism strategy to reach the people who live in the same community where a local church is located. The thesis project shows how block adoption can be planned and implemented. The Thesis project also demonstrates how block adoption can have both direct and indirect impacts on the weekly attendance of a local church.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Ministry Context

House of Joy Multicultural Church started meeting in a living room on Sunday, August 12, 2007. Six people attended the first Sunday worship service. The first meeting was held at the lead pastor’s home. Prior to the first service, the lead pastor held several prayer and planning meetings with people who could help with the planting of the church. The lead pastor also met with several pastors within and outside Philadelphia, PA to share the vision of the church with them.¹ House of Joy Multicultural Church was officially incorporated in the state of Pennsylvania on February 27, 2007. A checking account was opened for the church. Other legal and structural steps were taken to pave the way for the first service.

The church set up a Board of Directors with seven people as members. The Board members are responsible for making important decisions pertaining to the church. They are also responsible for advising the lead pastor about the day-to-day running of the church. There were two associate pastors, but one has relocated to Florida, FL to start a new location of the church there. The remaining associate pastor is involved in the teaching ministry, oversees the youth and children’s church, and works closely with the lead pastor in putting together the weekly church services. The church currently has two deacons who are responsible for the maintenance of the church building and assisting the lead pastor in organizing church outreach events. As these church leaders fulfill their responsibilities, they enable the lead pastor to focus more on prayer and the ministry of the Word.²

¹ Galatians 2:2. Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the English Standard Bible (Crossway Bibles, 2016).
The vision of the church is “raising godly role models who will in turn influence their world.” The church leaders interpret this in the light of the Great Commission, and they are passionate about it. “Vision carries with it a sense of conviction. Anyone with a vision will tell you this is not merely something that could be done. This is something that should be done. This is something that must happen.” They want the church to be actively engaged in making disciples who make other disciples. The strategy of the church in accomplishing this vision is reaching out to the sinners (evangelism), helping them to follow Jesus (discipleship), and sending them out to repeat the cycle, (mission). The church members gather together during the week for worship and fellowship. The church leaders are working together to raise members who will reflect Jesus Christ wherever they go.

Following are the dreams of the church as listed in its membership class training manual:

1. The people are sold out on The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) and The Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). We strongly desire to see people starting relationships with our Lord Jesus, becoming committed to Him, and living by the Word of God.
2. We are influential in the launching of several other churches locally and globally (either by sending out or supporting outside church planting teams).
3. We come together for worship, teaching, fellowship, to receive strength from God that we may encourage and strengthen one another in our journey of faith.
4. Everyone, irrespective of their cultural background, color, race/ethnicity, is truly accepted, genuinely loved and highly celebrated as an image of God.
5. We discover, develop, deploy, and maximize our God-given potentials, talents, and gifts in serving one another, our community and the world.
6. Both leadership and people development are given top priorities.

As soon as the church started, it began to grow gradually until the lead pastor’s living room could no longer accommodate the people. As a result, House of Joy Multicultural Church began to rent spaces from other churches. At one point, the only space available for the church to

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rent was within a karate facility. Even in that location, the Lord continued to add to the church.
Those were days of great excitement as several people traveled from outside of Philadelphia, PA to attend the church services.

House of Joy Multicultural Church is currently located at 5100 Ditman Street, Philadelphia, PA 19124. This is where the church members meet for all of their indoor church services. The church location is considered to be part of the northeast section of Philadelphia, PA. At this point, a brief ethnography will be helpful in understanding the people who live in the community where the church is located. “In order to determine the laws of church growth, scholars not only study theology, but also sociology, anthropology, psychology, and statistics. The scientific method is also a God-given gift.”

In a lecture presentation, Dr. Troy Temple states, “Learn your community. Take time to understand your community.”

The total population of the zip code 19124 in 2010 was 66,691. The estimated population for the year 2017 is 69,125. These figures show the population within this zip code is increasing.


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5 Troy Temple, “Key Steps for Launching Your Strategy” (Video Lecture, EVCP 840-B01 LUO, Liberty University, 2017), accessed March 16, 2018.

population. The median age is 30.2. Following is a further breakdown of the population according to age brackets. 18 years and over: 47,124; 21 years and over: 43,436; 62 years and over: 6,376; 65 years and over: 5,005.  

Sunday worship service at House of Joy Multicultural Church starts with pre-service prayer meeting from 9:30 am. The associate pastor leads this pre-service prayer session. During this time, the church members pray for themselves, their neighbors, their city, and the country. The main worship service starts at 10:00 am, just after the pre-service prayers. The worship service starts with the worship leader teaching and leading the people in worship of God. This aspect of the service is followed by welcoming the guests and regular members. As a song plays in the background, the people welcome one another, and hold very brief conversations. Other elements of the Sunday service include Scripture reading, video announcements, sermon, tithe and offerings, and closing prayer. The lead pastor or the associate pastor will remind the people of any other important announcement before the people leave.

It is important to mention that whenever it is time for the sermon, the children and the youths go to their separate classes to learn from the Bible such lessons that are designed appropriately for their levels. The idea behind this arrangement is to enable the children and the youths to learn from the adults how to worship the Lord before letting them go to their classes to hold their Bible study at the level they could understand.

The church members meet for the midweek Bible study on Wednesdays at 7:00 pm. This service is small-group based. Members of the group are expected to do personal Bible study prior to the Wednesday night gathering. The study could be selected chapters from the Bible or some

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7 Ibid.

Bible-related topics. The members come together on Wednesdays to discuss what each has learned. They ask questions and pray together at the end of each service.

The church members also host specially-designed services on special occasions. The church members receive the Holy Communion (The Lord’s Supper) together once a month during the Sunday worship service. This usually happens on the first Sunday of the month. The members hold celebrations for church anniversaries, holidays such as Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the New Year. Moreover, the members have specialized services for Mother’s Day and Father’s Day.

House of Joy Multicultural Church subscribes to the Charismatic/Pentecostal forms of church ministry. The members believe in the freedom of expression during worship as they like to clap, dance, rejoice and raise their hands while they worship the Lord during their services. The church uses contemporary styles of Christian music during their weekly services.

Over the years, the make-up of the church’s congregation has been culturally diverse. There have been Caucasians, African Americans, Hispanics, and people from other parts of the world attending the church services. Some people actually attend the church services because of the multicultural setting at House of Joy. The church believes there is no racial segregation in heaven and there should be none in the church either.9 The church leaders are working hard at preaching and cultivating Christ’s culture where people from different Cultures can fit into.

The average age of the church members is 35. There are several young parents who are regular members. The average length of membership is seven years. The percent of ministry involvement is around 75. Almost all of the regular church members are involved in one ministry or the other. The members who usually do not participate in any ministry are those who do not

9 Revelation 7:9.
attend regularly due to several reasons. These reasons include the nature of their jobs, frequent travels, and unwillingness to be committed yet.

House of Joy Multicultural Church members desire to be a church planting church. “It’s imperative that our goal be to plant a church that, in turn, plants a number of churches. That’s a movement. Such movements are how cities can be won.”\textsuperscript{10} However, the church has not been able to get fully involved in church planting activities. Currently, an associate pastor who relocated to Florida about two years ago has started working on starting a branch of the church there in 2019. The church leaders at House of Joy Multicultural Church have discussed church planting and missionary ideas. They had planned on taking short-term mission trips outside of the United States in 2017. They had wanted to visit Lagos and Abeokuta, both cities in Nigeria. The church leaders wanted to work with local pastors in establishing new churches in those areas. They also wanted to conduct charitable, humanitarian, and evangelistic work within the communities they had hoped to visit. The plans were put off due to difficulty in meeting the financial goals.

The church leaders and members recently started working on starting a new church in Stuart, FL. An associate pastor is currently in Stuart, FL building a launch team. The associate pastor has started holding Bible study meetings in a home. He is building a launch team and casting the vision for the new church plant. The leaders and members in Philadelphia are very excited about this development as they have been praying for the opportunities to start other churches. As the leaders at House of Joy Multicultural Church are planning and working on

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{10} Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold, Re:Vision: The Key to Transforming Your Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2014), 34, Kindle.}
planting another church in Stuart, FL., they also want to see the church in Philadelphia, PA grow and become more fruitful.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem this project will address is stagnation in church attendance at House of Joy Multicultural Church. For about three years (between 2015 and 2017), the church attendance has been stagnant. The regular attendance among the adults has dipped from about fifty to around fifteen. This figure has remained about the same since then. Decisions for Christ have dwindled because the church is not attracting a lot of guests. Moreover, the few guests who showed up did not return on regular basis. Some of those guests did not even come back to the church after their first visit. Therefore, the church has not been growing in weekly attendance.

At its inception, House of Joy Multicultural Church started like several other churches did. “For years, to expand their reach into new neighborhoods and population groups in North America, denominational groups would send small groups of people into a locale, set up a worship service and provide a list of support services for families.” 11 Though House of Joy Multicultural Church did not belong to any denomination, the church could identify with the format being described here. “They would announce their arrival with some advertising and then wait for people to gather at a public ‘launch’ service. A new church would be born.” 12 House of Joy Multicultural Church did some “marketing” consisting of letters and postcards which were distributed in the neighborhood. The church continued to distribute postcards over the years with varying results. The church did not do any mailer in 2018 because the result between 2015 and 2017 was very poor.

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12 Ibid.
The breakdown of the racial population within zip code 19124 where House of Joy Multicultural Church is located indicates almost even distribution of races: the Whites are 22,464, the Blacks are 28,699, and the Hispanics are 26,361. These statistics appear favorable for a church with multicultural approach to ministry like that of House of Joy Multicultural Church. Available statistics also indicate that there is a huge opportunity for ministry to the young adults. The figures state that there are about 47,000 people between the ages of 18 and 21 in this community. Yet, the church has not been able to take advantage of these available statistics. “We need to rethink the mission paradigm in the light of emerging challenges. We need to keep mission central to church life. We need to be in tune with the rhythm of God’s heartbeat.”

One of the emerging challenges for churches in America has to do with people who are not coming to weekly church services. The leaders at House of Joy Multicultural Church have not been able to come up with strategies to handle the challenge.

Various statistics show that a lot of churches in America have not been experiencing growth in attendance. “Since 2001, established churches have declined in attendance every year, with the rate of that decline escalating.” According to Tom Rainer, “As many as 100,000 churches in America are showing signs of decline toward death.” This is the danger that House of Joy Multicultural Church has been facing for some years. If a church continues on the downward slope of decline, it will eventually die.

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14 David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis: Groundbreaking Research Based on a National Database of over 200,000 Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 1776-1778, Kindle.

Contrary to the realities many churches are experiencing in America, the Bible actually prophesies growth and expansion.

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.\(^\text{16}\)

The above passage is repeated in the book of Micah.\(^\text{17}\) Since the Lord wants his church to thrive, he will continue to guide his people toward effective means of getting the job done.

There is hope for churches in America. “Though they are leaving religious institutions at a fast pace Americans remain interested in spirituality and engaged with the idea of seeking a relationship with the divine in some form.”\(^\text{18}\) For the fact that Americans are interested in spirituality is an indication that God is still at work in the hearts and lives of the people. The church needs to develop some practical outreach methods that will be effective enough to connect the sinners to the Savior.

The harvest was plentiful in the days when Jesus Christ ministered here on earth. The harvest still remains plentiful even today. “When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”\(^\text{19}\) People in America are also dealing with burn out, helplessness, hopelessness, and lack of direction in life. There are people who do

\(^{16}\) Isaiah 2:2-3.  
^{17}\) Micah 4:1-2.  
^{19}\) Matthew 9:36-37.
not understand why they are here on earth. They lack guidance and they do not know how to
overcome the confusion in their lives. However, there is a Savior called Jesus Christ. He is
described as the “true light, which gives light to everyone.”

Jesus Christ came to show the world who the Father is. Jesus loved the people. He
preached and taught so the people could understand the kingdom of God. He healed and
delivered the people. He performed miracles when needed. Jesus Christ went about doing good.
“He was the most attractive man who ever walked the planet, and his life was a constant
expression of God’s mission to the world. His church should therefore be the visible
manifestation of his life.” Jesus was attractive because he loved everyone. He received the
sinners and forgave them. Therefore, the sinners loved him back and they loved to be around
him. If the church would attract the sinners with the love of God, the church should experience
growth in its attendance.

The potentials for church growth abound. If the church can truly reflect Jesus Christ, if
the church can show the world who Jesus is, just like Jesus showed the world who the Father is,
the church will experience growth in its attendance. As Jesus moved from one place to another,
large crowd followed him. The church has to align its outreach methods with what Jesus
modeled. “The methods it develops ought to be consistent with the nature and purposes of the
sent God who in turn sends us.”

20 John 1:9.
22 Alan Hirsch and Dave Ferguson, On the Verge: A Journey into the Apostolic Future of the Church
(Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 95, Kindle.
Churches will grow in their attendance as long as the members keep going and preaching the gospel under the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Churches will continue to grow as long as the church members will seek the welfare of their neighbors who do not yet have a relationship with Jesus Christ. “As long as there is one person in the world who does not know Christ, the church has a mandate to keep growing. Growth is not optional; it is commanded by Jesus. We should not seek church growth for our own benefit, but because God wants people saved.”

It is not that House of Joy Multicultural Church is lacking in efforts. Some of the church members are very excited about outreach events. They have been going out into the community to share their faith with the people. The church holds several outreach events, many of which were well attended. The church members have led several people in the neighborhood to Christ. Despite all these efforts, the church attendance remains unchanged because those who were believed to have received Jesus Christ as their Savior did not show up in the church.

The church members continued follow-up with those they led to Christ, but those people usually found different excuses not to come to the church. Interestingly, the next time the church held any outdoor event, the people in the neighborhood would show up again. On this basis, the church is reaching out, but the result does not reflect the level of efforts they have been investing.

House of Joy Multicultural Church can be described as a generous church. The leaders have worked over the years to intentionally position this church in a positive way in the community. This is against the backdrop of the negative perspective many Americans have about

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the church in general. The church members have encountered people who described church as a place where all they preach about is money.

One of the ways House of Joy Multicultural Church has been meeting physical needs of people is through the food pantry set up within the church building. People attending the church services may pick the food they need on their way out of the church building. The church also gives out free items such as clothes and household items. The church really cares for the poor. Even though the church continues to be generous, the display of their generosity has not translated into an increase in the church attendance.

So, it is obvious to the leaders at House of Joy Multicultural Church that their outreach strategies have not been yielding desired results. The church is not adding new members. The church has not conducted water baptism for anyone in two years! The leaders want a change, but they need a workable strategy.

During one of the meetings the leaders held to discuss what strategy to implement, they agreed on becoming more outgoing, more externally focused. “The locus of mission is re-centered so that instead of expecting unchurched people to come to us, we are exhorted to go to them.”26 Eventually, the church leaders agreed on block adoption as a workable strategy. “Without the interruption, though, the church will remain stuck, and the natural pull will be toward decline and death. Without interruption, death is inevitable.”27 Both the leaders and the members of the church agreed to implement the block adoption program to avoid the pull toward decline and death.

Statement of Limitations and Delimitations

The focus of this research is on the homes within three blocks to the location of House of Joy Multicultural Church located at 5100 Ditman Street, Philadelphia, PA 19124. The research will focus on block adoption form of outreach. The outreach will incorporate getting to know the people and sharing the gospel with them. This research will not engage in community projects such as neighborhood cleaning and beautification. The research will not provide any financial assistance. There will be no handing out of free food and clothes except when it is necessary. “Our free food and clothing distribution encourages ever-growing handout lines, diminishing the dignity of the poor while increasing their dependency. We converge on inner-city neighborhoods to plant flowers and pick up trash, bruising the pride of residents who have the capacity (and responsibility) to beautify their own environments.”

This research is not about servant evangelism. It is about neighborhood evangelism. The former seeks to serve people or engage in acts of kindness while sharing the gospel with those being served. The latter is about walking through the neighborhood, getting to know the people, caring for them and sharing the gospel with them. According to Swartz and Swartz, “Neighborhood evangelism is simply this, adopting a street or neighborhood for the purpose of sharing the love of Jesus with the people of that neighborhood. After careful prayer and direction from the Holy Spirit on what neighborhood or street to go to, you will make a commitment to go out to that street on a regular basis.” While shedding more light on how neighborhood evangelism should be conducted, the authors add, “you will walk it and pray over the people and

houses in that community. You will go out in groups of 2 to 3, but no more than 4 per group. You should be in prayer on who will be in your group.”\(^\text{30}\)

Moreover, this research will not attempt to do for the people what they should be doing for themselves. “Giving to those in need what they could be gaining from their own initiative may well be the kindest way to destroy people.”\(^\text{31}\)

From the natural or physical standpoint, this is not a neighborhood revitalization project. It is not the purpose of this research to engage in activities that seek to address the economic, educational, and other problems the people are facing. The block adoption outreach is seeking to bring the people into relationship with Jesus Christ and connecting them to House of Joy Multicultural Church. Any other gains or benefits from this outreach are welcome but they are outside of the scope of this research.

In the words of Alewine Sheila, “Our goal is to discover God’s heart for others, and to make ourselves available for Him to use to share the good news of Jesus right in our own backyard.”\(^\text{32}\) This research is specifically about the members of House of Church Multicultural Church making themselves available so God can use them to reach out to their neighbors and share the gospel with them.

The target population of this research shall be between eighteen years old and sixty-five years old. There shall be no gender or ethnic restrictions. All participants in the research shall be residents within three blocks of 5100 Ditman Street, Philadelphia, PA 19124. This is the current location of House of Joy Multicultural Church.

\(^{30}\) Ibid.

\(^{31}\) Lupton, Toxic Charity, 4.

\(^{32}\) Todd Alewine and Sheila Alewine, Going Around The Corner: Taking The Gospel To Every Neighborhood In America (Around The Corner Ministries Resources, 2018), 195, Kindle.
Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore what impacts that block adoption will have on the church attendance at House of Joy Multicultural Church. The church has tried some other outreach programs without seeing increase in its weekly attendance. There seems to be a missing link between the church’s outreach efforts and the poor results the church has been getting for some years. The church has plateaued, and decline may soon follow unless the problem is addressed effectively. “The reality is that organizations, including churches, can get stuck in any season of the life cycle. That’s why it’s important to determine what season the organization is in. Then we can intentionally interrupt it. The necessary interruption will look different based on where the church is on its life cycle.”33

This research project is chosen as a solution to address the stagnation in church attendance at House of Joy Multicultural Church. During the period of conducting this research, it is expected that the church members taking part in the block adoption program would have some time and opportunities to personally interact with the people they have been trying to reach. It is also expected that the church members would get to know their neighbors even as the neighbors too would get to know the church members. Therefore, this research is an attempt to help House of Joy Multicultural Church members discover an effective approach to growing their church. As a result, the church will be able to reverse its trend from decline toward growth.

Basic Assumptions

Jesus declared with authority, “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”34 Regardless of what challenges churches have to contend with, churches are

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33 Morgan, The Unstuck Church, 2.
34 Matthew 16:18.
still going to overcome. God does not have any other representatives outside of the church to display his love, power, and glory. “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”\(^{35}\) The church remains the agent of reconciliation between God and sinners. God is not going to give up on his church. When Jesus was wrapping up his earthly ministry, he commanded the church, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”\(^ {36}\) The church is called to go out into all the world. The church that is on the go, the externally-focused church will continue to experience the wonders of God as he works through the members to save and deliver the lost. “And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.”\(^{37}\) Just as the Lord worked with those disciples, he will work with his modern-day disciples if they too would go out and preach everywhere.

Definitions

- **Block**: A group of homes in a row surrounded by streets.
- **Block adoption**: In the context of this research, this is taking responsibility to know the people living on a block, pray for them and share the gospel with them in love.

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\(^{35}\) 2 Corinthians 5:20.

\(^{36}\) Matthew 28:19-20.

\(^{37}\) Mark 16:20.
Neighbor: Within the scope of this research, a neighbor is someone living within three blocks of House of Joy Multicultural Church but, Jesus expands the concept by showing that “anyone in need is our neighbor.”³⁸ Read the parable of the good Samaritan for details.³⁹

**Statement of the Thesis**

It is expected that church planters would like to see their churches grow rather than decline and die. However, planting churches and seeing them grow is not guaranteed. “Church planting is an exhausting but exciting venture of faith that involves the planned process of beginning and growing new local churches.”⁴⁰ Denominations used to plant churches in various communities and watch people flock to those churches. Nowadays, a church may have the most beautiful building in a community and still have people walk or drive by it. The unpleasant reality today in America is that many churches are not doing so well. “In my experience of traveling across America as a church consultant and working with these churches, I have found that many are in serious decline.”⁴¹ Americans still struggle with all kinds of problems in their lives. It is sad to note that some people would rather google the solutions to their problems than go to church. “While many mainline and conservative churches are plateaued or declining, the number of churched people in North America is also declining.”⁴² What this means is that more and more people are simply not enthusiastic about attending church any more.

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⁴¹ Ibid., 293.

⁴² Ibid., 305-306.
There are phases of life stage for every church. “A church will find itself in one of the five phases of the Life Stage. These include: Birth → Growth → Plateau → Decline → Death.”43 One or two other phases such as reproduction or multiplication can be added to these phases of life stage. Yet, there are few churches experiencing growth, reproduction or multiplication. Why are so many churches in America struggling to grow? Why are so many churches plateaued, declining, or dying? “What might we do to reach people who would not otherwise come to our churches?”44 Against this background, this thesis will argue that block adoption is an effective outreach method for growing a church.


Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

Every church goes through the five life stages of a church: birth, growth, stagnation, decline, and death. Currently, House of Joy Multicultural Church is in the “stagnation stage.” Like any other church in this life stage, if nothing is done to improve the situation, the next stage is decline followed by death. “Southern Baptists alone lose more than nine hundred churches every year. Ninety percent of those churches are in our cities. Seven out of ten churches are either plateaued or declining. They haven’t seen a ‘winning season’ in more years than they can count.”

A reason for addressing the problem of stagnation is to avoid the decline and death of the church. As stated above, a lot of churches are dying in America. If it can be prevented, leaders of a dying church should do whatever the Holy Spirit guides them to do in order to save the church. While Jesus wants his disciples to bear much fruit, the reality in churches across North America is not close to Christ’s expectation. “There are fruitless churches all across North America, churches where new disciples aren’t being made and neighboring communities aren’t being transformed.”

Another reason for addressing the stagnation problem at House of Multicultural Church is to see the church grow in its attendance. “In a multitude of people is the glory of a king, but without people a prince is ruined.” Growth in attendance is an indication that more and more people are visiting a church and they are choosing to return. Growth in attendance enables more people to hear the Word of God preached and taught. As a local church increases in its attendance, more people will be reached and transformed.

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46 Ibid., 222.

47 Proverbs 14:28.
membership, more people can be discipled, the Great Commission can be fulfilled, and God can be glorified.

Therefore, bringing God the glory and reflecting his glory in a community combine to make the best case for addressing the stagnation problem at House of Joy Multicultural Church. The glory of God is a much more compelling reason for any pastor or pastors stepping up to the challenge of stagnation in a local church. “A dying church robs God of glory. Nothing matters more than his glory. Whether a church dies in Kansas City, Boston, or in rural Texas, we must care about what that church’s death means in respect to the glory of God.”  

Actually, the death of a church means God is denied the glory that he could have revealed through his people in the community. The death of a church can rob a community of experiencing the life-changing power of the gospel. The death of a church can deny the church members the opportunity to be the light and salt in a community. It is better to see a church thriving, making disciples, and transforming a neighborhood than to watch a church decline and die. If a church can be rescued from stagnation and death, God will be glorified.

Literature Review

Church growth has been a constant factor throughout church history. Principles hindering church growth as well as those contributing to it continue to generate interest among church leaders. Theologians have written about church growth principles. Church practitioners have applied various principles to test what works and what does not work. Many authors have written on different principles of church growth. Some of these pieces of literature will be reviewed in this chapter.

48 Clifton, Reclaiming Glory, 283.
In his writing, Kieran Beville asked, “Has our failure to address mission in a holistic way partly contributed to new departures in evangelism and engagement?”49 One of the implications of this question is that the church has been failing to address mission the right way. The author examines the differences between the ways attractional and missional churches go about evangelism and engagement. The author highlights some of the shortcomings of the attractional church, the most important being the fact that its strategy of evangelism may not have been effective. The author also sheds some light on the dangers of the missional church’s strategy of evangelism. These include lack of “theological competence”50 to undergird the movement, the concern that “fellowship with unbelievers is more a kind of camaraderie which does not constitute true unity of the Holy Spirit,”51 and the possibility of syncretism.52

The concern of the author here is balance. Neither attractional nor missional approach to church ministry is bad in itself. In attractional churches, a guest can enjoy great preaching and great programs. Attractional churches are designed to bring in the crowd. However, one of the problems with this model is that the people they attract soon become too comfortable within their church community. As a result, they do not grow into matured disciples, and they do not go out to make other disciples. Therefore, there is no spiritual transformation in their neighborhood.

On the other hand, missional Christians seek to immerse themselves within the community where they live. “Establishing a missional church means you plant a church that’s engaging in God’s mission, is focused on the kingdom, and is part of the culture you’re seeking

50 Ibid., 363.
51 Ibid., 365.
52 Ibid., 366.
to reach.” While the attractional church draws people to its building, the missional church lives among the people in order to help them become Christ’s disciples. The balance approach can be seen through the ministry of Jesus Christ. ‘And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” Jesus was both attractional and missional in his approach. He drew people to himself and he turned them to disciples who went out to make more disciples.

In his book, Patrick Darrin writes about four different approaches that churches employ to influence their cities: church in the city, church against the city, church of the city, and church for the city. The “church in the city” shares the characteristics of the attractional churches described above.

There are churches that are merely in the city. Their heartbeat is to get people in the doors to hear the gospel. That’s a good goal. But, unfortunately, that’s often where it ends. Such churches create programs for people inside the church walls, and the reach of their ministry only occasionally goes outside to the city. The primary focus of these churches is what happens inside the church building. Churches like this are geographically in the city, but they aren’t effectively engaged with the people and culture of the city.

The second approach is the “church against the city”. This is described as a church that takes “a defensive posture toward the city.” This church is against the dominant or prevailing culture in which it operates. The third approach is the “church of the city”. According to the authors, “These churches wholeheartedly embrace the culture of the city, so much so that they lose the flavor in their salt and the brightness of their light by abandoning the call to be in the world without being of the world.” The fourth approach is described as the “church for the

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54 Mark 1:17.
55 Darrin Patrick, *For the City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 190, Kindle.
56 Ibid., 195.
57 Ibid., 200.
58 Ibid., 212.
city”. This is the approach to church ministry the authors recommend. In this type of church, the author states, “there is a model of engagement where a church speaks the truth of the gospel and is not afraid to uphold a biblical worldview and moral standard. Such a church proclaims the truths of Scripture with passion, clarity, and boldness. At the same time, though, this is a church that commits itself to seeking the shalom, the flourishing, of the city.”59

Obviously, church leaders intending to influence their neighborhoods and grow their churches will opt for the fourth approach. The church for the city should be a model for church planters who want to be part of what God is doing in their cities. The church is not only interested in the welfare of its city, but the church is an active player in seeing that the city prospers. This is the heart’s desire of the leaders at House of Joy Multicultural Church. This is why the church members are adopting blocks in their neighborhood. They want to see the peace of God, expressed through good news and good deeds, permeate their neighborhood and their city.

Tim Keller believes that the only place that a person can be wholly ministered to is in the church. The author states that it is through the gospel that people can come to understand how sin has ruined humanity. The author concludes that “Only Christians, armed with the Word and Spirit, planning and working to spread the kingdom and righteousness of Christ, can transform a nation as well as a neighborhood as well as a broken heart.”60

Both Jay Pathak and Eric Swanson address the importance of motives in their writings. According to the authors, those seeking to reach out to their neighbors should be careful not to make evangelism their sole motive. Pathak warns his readers not to consider loving their

59 Ibid.
neighbors as a method of evangelism. “We want to be clear about something when it comes to the art of neighboring. This is not an evangelism strategy. And if evangelism is your only motive, then you won’t be a very good neighbor. However, if neighboring is done with the right posture, then people who don’t know God will most certainly come to know him.”\textsuperscript{61}

Along the same line, Swanson writes, “Evangelism should never be our ulterior motive in serving and loving others, but if we fail to recognize it as our ultimate motive—the thing that makes the mission of the church unique—we have lost sight of our calling.”\textsuperscript{62} It is important that Christ’s disciples check to confirm that their motives are pure when walking across the street to love their neighbors. It is not a good idea to use people as evangelism project, but it is a godly idea to love the sinners so much as to share the gospel with them. Jesus died for the whole world because he loved the people. Christ’s disciples should also reach out to their neighbors in love.

Even though the members at House of Joy Multicultural Church embarked on the block adoption program without much good deeds accompanying it, these Christ’s followers have been displaying the practical side of compassion toward their neighbors for years. Since the church moved to its current location, the members have been displaying good deeds within the neighborhood.

When it comes to evangelism and engagement, should a local church put emphasis on good news or good deeds? Good news is preaching the gospel. Good deeds is showing compassion for the people. Some group of Christians focus mainly on preaching the gospel while some Christians advocate for showing compassion. Swanson reminds Christians of their role as

\textsuperscript{61} Jay Pathak and David Runyon, \textit{The Art of Neighboring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside your Door} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2012), 99, Kindle.

\textsuperscript{62} Eric Swanson and Sam Williams, \textit{To Transform a City} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 198, Kindle.
kingdom builders and warns them not to simply take on the role of community volunteers.

“Because good deeds and goodwill can never substitute for the message of God’s good news, we need to constantly be thinking of new and creative ways in which we can combine compassionate service with passionate evangelism.”\(^{63}\) In essence, the author advocates for the combination of both the good news and the good deeds.

If church leaders are looking for what technique or strategy to implement in their efforts to growing their churches, they should not choose good news and then neglect good deeds. Rather, it will be helpful if they can combine the two. The same Jesus who commanded his followers to preach as they went\(^{64}\) was the same Jesus who went about doing good.\(^{65}\) Good news and good deeds should not be exclusive of each other. This is not to say that they are on the same level because they are not. Good deeds should supplement the good news and not the other way around.

Despite the fact that good deeds can supplement good news, preaching the good news without good deeds can still accomplish the purpose of God more than simply displaying good deeds without the good news. This differentiation is important to free up people of God to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.”\(^{66}\) There have been church planters and missional Christians who choose to engage in good deeds without the good news. The problem with that approach is that there are many community volunteers who engage in doing good to people in their neighborhoods. Christians will be no different from these community volunteers. Anyone can

\(^{63}\) Ibid.
\(^{64}\) Matthew 10:7.
\(^{65}\) Acts 10:38.
\(^{66}\) 2 Timothy 4:2.
rake the leaves and clean them up for their neighbors. Anyone can wash car windshield free of charge by the roadside or at the gas station.

Doing good without good news will not lead people to repentance. It will not deliver the people from their sin. It may bring people to a church, but it will not bring them into the family of God through conversion. There is no guarantee that doing good without the good news will lead people to starting a relationship with Christ the Savior. “If we don’t provide a verbal witness that explains our actions of love and mercy, then people, left to themselves, will just guess at our motives.” So, what is the essence of doing good if there will be no accompanying good news? People, “when left to their own, will often come to the wrong conclusion regarding the motive for our good deeds. Deeds can verify the truth of our words, but it is our words that clarify the reason for our deeds.”

While Christ’s disciples engage their neighbors with the gospel, they should not neglect to do good. It is true that the good news is the more important, yet, compassion and mercy have their place as well. ‘But generally, the ministry of mercy is a dynamic witness to those with whom you share the gospel, because it builds a “plausibility structure” for our message… The mercy ministry of Christians provides tremendous social and psychological support for the validity of the gospel.’ Christ’s disciples should not just speak of their faith. They must practice it too. Love is characterized by giving. When necessary, Christians should give sacrificially. God demonstrated this kind of love by giving his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to the whole world. Therefore, “A great church, a healthy church, is one in which Jesus Christ is found in

67 Swanson, To Transform a City, 133.
68 Ibid.
69 Keller, Ministries of Mercy, 3176.
70 John 3:16.
word and deed. The emphasis here is on the word ‘and.’ A healthy church isn’t just a preaching church. A successful church isn’t simply a hub for social justice. A God-honoring, gospel-loving church is one where the Word of God is the primary motivator for doing the work of God.” So, when it comes to loving their neighbors, Christ’s disciples should combine both the good news and the good deeds.

Keller writes about how Christ’s followers can and should engage the culture of the city where they are located and influence it for Christ through the gospel. Keller describes Christians as “parepidemoi” meaning exiles or resident aliens. The idea was that “Parepidemoi were citizens of one country and yet full-time residents of another.” The author paints Christians as resident aliens in the cities where they live but their primary allegiance is to the kingdom of God. “Communities of Christ-followers are God’s ‘city’ within every earthly city. They are the renewed people of God (see Isa 32:14; Dan 9:16). Their ultimate allegiance belongs to God and his kingdom.” Therefore, Christ’s followers should not be for or against their cities, but they are to introduce the kingdom of their God into their cities.

Keller encourages his readers to step out of the church walls into the neighborhoods in their cities, make new believers, and disciple the people. “But in the New Testament, mission becomes centrifugal — moving outward from the center. The people of God are sent out to the world to proclaim the gospel (Matt 28:16 – 20; Acts 1–2).” Keller expresses that the church of Christ must grow as they reach out to the unsaved and introduce the kingdom culture into their

71 Darrin Patrick and Matt Carter, For the City (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 75, Kindle.
72 Timothy Keller, Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 146, Kindle.
73 Ibid.
74 Ibid., 147.
cities. “The church must also multiply and increase in the pagan city as God’s new humanity, but
this happens especially through evangelism and discipling (Acts 6:1, 7; 9:31; 12:24).”

Keller draws some distinctions between what he calls the centripetal and the centrifugal
approaches to evangelism and discipleship. The author explains that centripetal approach is the
Old Testament way of calling nonbelievers in while centrifugal approach is the New Testament
way of sending believers out. According to Keller, “if the gospel is unfolded at the urban center,
you can effectively reach the region and the surrounding society.”

In order for a church to effectively evangelize and disciple a city, Keller lists some
characteristics that must define such a church. The essential characteristics are the following:
“1. respect for urban sensibility 2. unusual sensitivity to cultural differences 3. commitment to
neighborhood and justice 4. integration of faith and work 5. bias for complex evangelism 6.
preaching that both attracts and challenges urban people 7. commitment to artistry and
creativity.” A local church intending to minister effectively in its neighborhood should pay
attention to these characteristics.

In Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples, Francis Chan seeks to draw the reader’s
attention to Jesus’ command to the church which is to make disciples. “If we are going to call
ourselves followers of Jesus Christ, we should be making disciples.” The author’s main goals
include helping his readers understand the Bible and help them make disciples. The author
recommends that Christ’s followers should make discipleship happen within the context of

75 Ibid., 173.
76 Ibid., 149.
77 Ibid., 173.
79 Francis Chan, Multiply: Disciples Making Disciples (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook 2012), 9, Kindle.
communities. This recommendation reflects the way Jesus made his own disciples. He did it within the context of communities.

The author defines a disciple as a student or an apprentice. Chan adds that disciples, during the time of Jesus, usually followed their teachers, learned from their teachers, and did what their teachers trained them to do. The author sums it up this way, “becoming a disciple of Jesus is as simple as obeying His call to follow.” While encouraging his readers to obey Christ’s command to make disciples, the author warns that this process should be handled with the right motive. “As followers of Jesus Christ, we should be focused on making disciples. But if we don’t do it with the right motives, we are wasting our time. Worse yet, we could be doing more harm than good.” This warning is in alignment with the position of Jay Pathak and Eric Swanson (discussed earlier) on the issue of motive.

The author also guides the readers through one of the essential components of disciple making process: “teaching people to obey everything Jesus commanded (Matt. 28:20).” The author argues that Christ’s followers cannot teach others what Jesus commanded if they themselves do not know what he taught and commanded. As a result, the author recommends that his readers should study the Scripture and let God speak to them through what they read. The author provides the readers with two important questions to ask themselves as they read the Bible: “1. What is God saying in this passage? 2. How am I going to respond?”

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80 Ibid., 16.
81 Ibid., 39.
82 Ibid., 91.
83 Ibid., 330.
As the members of House of Joy Multicultural Church participate in the block adoption program, they have been holding Bible study discussions. The two questions above are included in the questions they have been asking themselves.

In *On the Verge: A Journey into the Apostolic Future of the Church*, Alan Hirsch and Dave Ferguson write about what they consider to be the new move of God, and about how the church leaders should prepare for what God is about to do. The authors believe the church is on the verge of reclaiming its lost apostolic mission. They write, “the task of this book is nothing less than to call the church to recover her most ancient, her most potent, and also her most beautiful form, that of the apostolic movement.”\(^8^4\) Believing that the apostolic movement is springing up again in the Western churches, the author declare that “this book is written to help birth the paradigm shift, to compellingly describe it, and then to help churches practically implement it.”\(^8^5\)

The authors warn church leaders about the dangers the churches in the West face. They warn the church leaders that if they refuse to move from the institutional paradigm to the apostolic paradigm, their churches will continue to slide down the path of decline. The authors believe that “a genuinely apostolic paradigm of the church is by nature inclusive of all forms in service of its mission, whereas the more institutional paradigm is by nature exclusive, demanding high conformity.”\(^8^6\) The authors advise churches to be externally focused and to send their members into the world instead of staying safe inside the church walls. They, therefore, call for a shift in paradigm from institutional to apostolic.


\(^{8^5}\) Ibid., 134.

\(^{8^6}\) Ibid., 435-436.
In *The Trellis and the Vine: The Ministry Mind Shift that Changes Everything*, Collin Marshall and Tony Pane weave a parable around two trellises and a jasmine vine. The authors use the parable to make a point that churches need to preach the gospel and make disciples, but they also need a good structure to coordinate their activities. By trellis, the authors refer to how a church is set up to support its vision. By vine, the authors refer to what the church has been called to do. The authors make some contrasts between the nature of trellis and the vine within a church context. According to the authors, working on the trellis is easier and more impressive than working on the vine. The danger therefore lies in the possibility that “in many churches, maintaining and improving the trellis constantly takes over from tending the vine.”

This is an imbalance in church or ministry work the authors seek to correct. The authors encourage church and ministry leaders to refocus their attention on what Jesus Christ has called his church to do: preaching the gospel and making disciples.

The relevance of this book is in its strong recommendation to church leaders to keep their focus on evangelism but to also build an effective system to raise disciples. The lesson here for members of House of Joy Multicultural Church is to build a good follow-up system to track the spiritual journey of the people they will be meeting during the block adoption program.

In *Concentric Circles of Concern: Seven Stages for Making Disciples*, Carolyn Ritzman and Oscar W. Thompson seek to help their readers be faithful disciples who make other disciples. The authors emphasize the point that gospel moves through relationships. “God intended that gospel to spread across the relationships his people had with others in their circles

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While the authors put a lot of emphasis on sharing the gospel and making disciples, they are also very direct about being good ambassadors for Christ.

Expounding on Acts 1:8, the authors point their readers’ attention to some areas of influence they need to focus on. “You have a Jerusalem—those closest to you. You have a Judea—a broader concentric circle. You have a Samaria—a still broader concentric circle. And you have a remote part of the earth.” While the authors challenge their readers to go out and reach the lost, they clarify who a disciple is and what traits characterize a disciple. According to the authors, the cycle of discipleship starts with conversion and ends with helping new Christians make other disciples. Block adoption can be likened to being Christ’s witness in Jerusalem. It is an effort by House of Joy Multicultural Church members to reach those in their neighborhood.

In *The Me I Want to Be*, John Ortberg discusses the importance of spiritual formation and surrender. The book highlights the importance of knowing where one is standing spiritually in light of where one is supposed to be. The Psalmist states that God’s Word is a lamp to one’s feet and a light unto one’s path. The Word of God helps people to know where they stand as well as helping people to understand what path they should take. Ortberg, through the book, helps his readers to identify who they are in God and how they can become the best version of themselves.

The author discusses several issues that could help the readers move closer in their relationship with God. The author emphasizes the need to be free from rules, and to be free from unwise comparisons with other people. The author seeks to help his readers deal with the

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89 Ibid., 106.
90 Psalm 119:105.
versions of themselves they do not want to be, deal with the versions of themselves they think they should be, as well as deal with the versions of themselves that other people want them to be.

The author encourages his readers to cooperate with God by surrendering to Him because He is wiser and much more competent. The issue of surrender is a key factor in the journey of spiritual formation the author is trying to help his readers embark upon. While the author challenges his readers to practice some spiritual disciplines, the willingness to surrender is crucial for those who want to enjoy the best versions of themselves.

It is this issue of surrender that is crucial in the life of a Christian who want to obey the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. It will take Christians willing to surrender, willing to yield to the promptings of the Holy Spirit to love their neighbors. It will take Christians willing to surrender to say to the Lord, “here I am, send me”\(^{91}\) to my neighborhood to love my neighbors and share the gospel with them.

In *Share Jesus Without Fear*, the authors seek to prepare their readers, in this case followers of Christ, toward being ready to share their faith without fear. The authors express that their concern is to move a Christian from being passive about evangelism to becoming actively engaged. The authors want their readers to move from passive Christianity into the group of “those who talk to the lost.”\(^{92}\)

The authors also encourage those who share their faith not to be discouraged when people do not accept Christ as their Savior immediately. The authors write that “nonbelievers must hear the gospel an average of 7.6 times before they receive it. So if anyone walks away from you when you share the gospel with him, remember: the Word of God never returns void. Maybe the

\(^{91}\) Isaiah 6:8.

As the members of House of Joy Multicultural Church prepare to step into their neighborhood for block adoption program, they will surely benefit from this advice when people choose not to become Christians right away.

The authors state, “God calls us to go into his harvest. If you are living in isolation from the world and the only friends you have are in your comfortable Bible study, Wednesday night church get-togethers, ..., you will never experience the joy of sharing your faith.” The authors add, “Your life will become dry because you are ignoring the call to work in his fields. You will lose a sense of vitality that comes from obedience to the Great Commission.” The more Christians huddle together inside the walls of their churches, the more they will lose contacts with non-Christians. One of the ways to deal with this problem is to keep loving one’s neighbors. And as Christians display the love of God toward their neighbors, the more opportunities they will have to share the gospel with them.

In order for Christians to expand their relationship circles with non-Christians, the authors offer several suggestions. The authors state, “there are many ways to build relationships. We are limited only by our creativity and by our desire to please God.” Here are some of their suggestions: meeting neighbors, offering prayer request, organizing video and story parties, using special interests to connect with people, doing kind deeds, organizing block parties, doing community service, reaching out to old friends, and reconnecting with people in our past. One of the suggestions, meeting neighbors, is what the members of House of Joy Multicultural Church chose to work on.

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93 Ibid., 11.
94 Ibid., 114-115.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid., 116.
Theological Foundations

The psalmist lamented, “We have become a taunt to our neighbors, mocked and derided by those around us.”\(^{97}\) Several churches across America are finding this statement to be true in their communities. When a church declines and dies, it becomes the joke of the community. When the people in a community refuse to attend a church because of the reports of immorality among the church leaders, that brings shame upon the church. When people stay away from a church because the church is not friendly, not welcoming, not making a difference in the community, that church will be derided.

On the other hand, when a church goes on God’s mission into a community, displaying the love, power, and glory of God, the people will have good things to say about that church. When a local church is thriving, bearing lasting fruit, and blessing its community, that local church will generate positive stories. Block adoption can help a local church to position itself positively in the eyes of the people.

Block adoption, in its broad and strict applications, is not a new concept. God has been asking His people to take responsibilities for their neighbors and neighborhood for years. This responsibility started with the first man God created, Adam. “The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.”\(^{98}\) Since that time, God has been positioning his people in various settings such as offices, villages, towns, cities, and even nations, for godly influences.

God called Abram out of his native community into a different culture. As God pronounced blessing upon Abram, God stated, “And I will make of you a great nation, and I will

\(^{97}\) Psalm 79:4.

\(^{98}\) Genesis 2:15.
bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.”\textsuperscript{99} Abram obeyed the Lord as he stepped out to go to a place he had never been before. Block adoption may happen to be a new concept for some churches, but they should not be afraid to step out into their neighborhood. The blessing of the Lord is upon his church. When God’s people obey him and go into the communities he chooses to send them to, the blessing of God will rest upon the receptive families. Just like Abram obeyed God, Christ’s disciples should obey him, step out and walk through their neighborhoods and be a blessing.

During the time of Noah, the people filled up their hearts with evil and became very wicked. There was corruption everywhere. Violence was the order of the day. God raised up Noah to step into his community and do something about it. God instructed Noah to build an ark to save the people and the animals from the impending destruction. Noah obeyed God, stepped out in faith, and got the ark built. “Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.”\textsuperscript{100} Even though Noah was described as a preacher of righteousness, he was able to rescue only eight people. The point is that Noah did his part. He accepted the responsibility for his generation. The eight people who got on the ark went on to replenish the earth. In the same way, the Church of Christ should take responsibility for their neighbors. Regardless of how many people will repent of their sins, there will be joy in heaven over just one.\textsuperscript{101}

While sending out his disciples to go into different neighborhoods of Israel, Jesus instructed them, “As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you.”\textsuperscript{102} If church members want to

\textsuperscript{99} Genesis 12:2.  
\textsuperscript{100} Genesis 6:22.  
\textsuperscript{102} Matthew 10:12-13.
see the peace of God rest on their neighborhood, they have to enter into that neighborhood. They should give God the opportunity to bless their neighborhood by engaging their neighbors. Church members should allow God’s peace to enter the homes of sinners as those families welcome the people of God into their homes.

The church has been entrusted with the mission of preaching the good news. “The good news is that God has acted in the person of Jesus Christ. Through his life, death, and resurrection we are transformed, made new.”103 Jesus is counting on the local churches to continue the mission he began. Jesus is counting on the members of each local church to engage in the preaching of the gospel and to engage in the process of making disciples.

Toward the end of Christ’s ministry here on earth, the eleven disciples had a very important meeting with their Master on a mountain in Galilee. The meeting gave clarity to the mission of the Church. “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”104 This instruction has been generally viewed as the Great Commission. It is considered to be the main task Jesus is calling His church to complete.

The global church is expected to engage in Christ’s global mission. The Great Commission is not just for the disciples back then. It is still the task of the church today. Jesus is clearly giving the instruction to every local church and to every member of the local church.

When God’s people obey the Great Commission in their neighborhoods, there will be a global transformation.

There is a sequence of evangelism steps laid out in the Book of Romans: ‘For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”’

In reverse order, we understand that all who call on the Lord will be saved. However, the people will not call on God until they believe, which will not happen until they hear the gospel. People will not hear the gospel unless church members preach to them. Church members are not preaching because they are not being sent into their neighborhoods.

The church is tasked with the same mission Jesus accomplished during his earthly ministry: reaching the lost and helping them mature. “God would have us be part of a local church ministry, and that church should have an organizational mission and vision. The mission is to make disciples (Matt. 28:19).” As Jesus Christ walked through the neighborhoods of Israel preaching and teaching about the kingdom of God, his disciples should be busy doing the same thing. Local churches should be intentional about engaging in neighborhood evangelism. “A working definition of evangelism is the bringing of people who are alienated from God into a reconciled and vital relationship with God.” Block adoption is therefore a form of neighborhood evangelism.

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106 Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold, Re:Vision: The Key to Transforming Your Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2014), 63, Kindle.
The local churches must not assume that evangelism has ended at the point when people receive Christ as their Savior. Leading people to Christ and leaving them at that point is like giving birth to babies and leaving them in the hospitals. That falls short of Christ’s instruction as contained in the Great Commission. Jesus wants the church to turn new converts into disciples. “Discipleship is a way of living that follows the example and teaching of Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{108} It is a life-long journey of being with Jesus and walking with Him.

A scribe once approached Jesus and asked which of the commandments Jesus considered to be the most important. In response, “Jesus answered, The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.’”\textsuperscript{109}

The original list of commandments, popularly known as the Ten Commandments, can be found in Exodus 20:1-17. The Lord instituted these commandments to help the Israelites understand how to relate with him as well as how to relate with one another. When Jesus compressed these commandments into two, he was not canceling the Ten Commandments. Rather, he was helping the people to understand how to practically apply them. Jesus warned the people not to conclude that he came to abolish the Law and the Prophets. In fact, Jesus came to fulfill them.\textsuperscript{110}

Loving God and loving one’s neighbor was so important that Jesus stated, “On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”\textsuperscript{111} Moreover, these commandments have


\textsuperscript{109} Mark 12:29-31.

\textsuperscript{110} Matthew 5:17.

\textsuperscript{111} Matthew 22:40.
become so well known that they are popularly referred to as the Great Commandment. Therefore, it is not enough for Christians to profess their love for God while they neglect their neighbors.

During a conversation with Jesus, a lawyer asked who he should consider to be his neighbor. Jesus chose to use a parable to answer the lawyer’s question. The parable of the good Samaritan found in Luke 10:25-37 describes how a Samaritan chose to care for a man who was robbed, stripped, beaten, and left half dead. Meanwhile, a priest and a Levite had seen the man in his ugly condition and both of them passed by without lifting a finger to help him. The lawyer was able to identify the Samaritan as the neighbor of the dying man because he showed him mercy. Jesus then commanded the lawyer to go and do the same thing the Samaritan did.

Jesus, through the parable, is still asking his disciples to love and care for their neighbors. Sinners are in ugly situations. They are spiritually dead, and the devil is robbing them of eternal life with God. Church members should not follow the example of the priest and the Levite. Jesus is not selfish with his love. In John 14:3, Jesus expressed the desire to have his disciples to be where he is. To ensure that, Jesus is working on getting a place ready for them. As followers of Christ, church members should not be selfish with their love either. They need to love their neighbors as themselves. Church members who are saved and have a relationship with Jesus should be willing to bring their neighbors into the same experience. This is a beautiful way for Christ’s disciples to love their neighbors as they love themselves.

The essence of outreach events is to go out of the church building, meet with people who are not coming to the church, and help them become part of God’s family. “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing
all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.”\textsuperscript{112} Jesus did not sit back and expect the people to keep coming to him. He took the initiatives to go to the people. He showed them that he actually cared as he met their needs.

In his efforts to love and care for humanity in practical ways, Jesus came down from heaven and lived with sinful people in their neighborhood. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”\textsuperscript{113} Jesus modeled a very powerful and effective method of outreach here. As the Savior of the world, Jesus stepped out of heaven to interact with the people he wanted to save. He walked with them. He ate with them. He attended their parties. He comforted them when they were experiencing pain and sorrow. Jesus lived within the culture and ministered within the neighborhoods of the lost people.

If Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, would step out of heaven and live with the sinful people, his disciples should be willing to do the same. Church members need to step out of the church buildings. The disciples of Christ have the responsibility to leave their comfort zone and identify with the people around them. Church should not be about attending the weekend worship service. Church should not just be where the members go to. The members should see themselves as the church who are on mission with God.

Sometimes, the neighbors that God is calling the church members to love and care for will not look like them. The neighbors may belong to a different culture. They may have a different economic or educational status. The truth is that God “desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”\textsuperscript{114} Church members will have to learn to overcome

\textsuperscript{112} Acts 10:38.  
\textsuperscript{113} John 1:14.  
\textsuperscript{114} 1 Timothy 2:4.
such barriers as race, gender, and status in order to be effective in loving their neighbors. In John chapter four, Jesus Christ modeled another outreach strategy to reach one’s neighbor and share the gospel with them. Jesus, a Jewish man, was able to connect with a woman who was a Samaritan. This is really instructive considering the fact that the Jews and Samaritans had no dealings with one another.\textsuperscript{115}

So, what if the neighbors and the church members are not on good terms? What if the neighbors around a church do not look like the members of a local church? The implications of block adoption include loving the neighbors for who they are. Block adoption has to do with loving the entire families living on the block. There is no room to pick and choose. If the church members struggle to walk across the street to share their faith with their neighbors, how would they expect those neighbors to walk across the street into the church building? Church members should not be expecting their neighbors to do what they are unwilling to do.

It takes the willingness to see one’s neighbors become transformed in order to engage in block adoption. “Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.”\textsuperscript{116} God wants the church members to deny themselves, make the necessary sacrifice, and actively seek the good of their neighbors. After all, Jesus himself came seeking the lost in order to save them. When the church members seek the good of their neighbors, they are actually expressing the love of God to those neighbors. They are indeed showing the neighbors that God is good. “But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful,

\textsuperscript{115} John 4:9.
\textsuperscript{116} 1 Corinthians 10:24.
even as your Father is merciful.”¹¹⁷ Interestingly, God even promised that he will reward his people greatly for doing good in their neighborhood.

Block adoption can be expanded to include events such as block party and community BBQ day. Jesus told some parables in Luke chapter fifteen about inviting one’s neighbors to parties. One of the parables has to do with a man who found his lost sheep, returned home, and invited his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him.¹¹⁸ Another parable closely related has to do with a woman who upon finding her lost coin, invited her friends and neighbors to rejoice with her.¹¹⁹ During the course of a year, a local church can take advantage of different holidays and events to bring their neighbors together. At such events, the church members will have opportunities to share the gospel with the people in attendance. One sinner who repents and becomes a child of God will ignite a party in heaven. “Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”¹²⁰

One of the critical elements that can be easily overlooked in the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin is the value of both. The lost sheep was so valuable to the man that he went after it. The lost coin was so precious to the woman that she went after it. Neither of them gave up until they found what they were looking for. Imagine what could happen in different communities across the United States if church members would go after their lost neighbors with the same passion and intensity! Imagine what would happen if church members

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would pursue their neighbors with the love of God, through relentless prayers, through practical ways of caring, and through anointed sharing of the gospel!

Block adoption can express itself through how much value the disciples of Christ place on their neighbors. Do members of a local church value their neighbors to the point of sharing the gospel with them? Do the members of a local church really value the children in their neighborhood to the point of helping them escape ungodly influences? “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.”

All the people living in the community where a church is located matter to God. These people are significant in the eyes of the Lord. Church members can humble themselves and accept the responsibility of loving and caring for their neighbors.

The Bible speaks of the obligation that church members have toward their neighbors. “We who are strong have an obligation to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to build him up.” When people go into the church building and enjoy their weekly services, they may feel good about their church. They may even feel built up. The question is, how about the neighbors? The instruction here is for “each of us”, not just for the church leaders or for the evangelists, or for those who are outgoing. God wants his people to do something pleasing for their neighbors. God wants his people to build up, to encourage, to inspire their neighbors. The apostle Paul states that “Christ did not please himself….” Attending a local church should not be about pleasing oneself. Of course, Christians get built up as they gather together to worship and hear the Word of God. However, Christians have the obligation to pay attention to building up their neighbors as well.

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121 Philippians 2:3.
122 Romans 5:1-2.
123 Romans 5:3.
Block adoption is a way of showing kindness to one’s neighbors. Whoever has the knowledge of the gospel should be kind enough to share it with others. “He who withholds kindness from a friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty.”  

When church members adopt various blocks of homes in their neighborhood, they will have the opportunities of making friends with the families living in those homes. As the relationship grows, the church members should tell those families about the Lord who loves them so much that he died for them. They should share their personal stories of what the Lord has done for them. They should invite those families into the family of God.

The Bible states that God loves people in the whole world, yet he chose to send Jesus to minister to the people in Israel, focusing on some part of the world he loved. When Jesus sent out the disciples on their first evangelism campaign, he told them to go to the lost sheep of Israel.

Just before Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, he told his disciples some geographical factors to consider when spreading the gospel. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” In essence, Jesus wanted the disciples to start where they were, right there in their community. It is a worthy goal for any local church intending to do great things in its city, on a national level, and on a global scale. According to Jesus, such a church should start right where it is located. Members of a local church should seek to be Christ’s witnesses first in their neighborhood.

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125 John3:16.
127 Acts 1:8.
Every neighborhood is worth fighting for. Jesus did not just die for some parts of the world. He died for the whole world. He paid the sacrifice for every single neighborhood. Wherever churches are located, there is a need for spiritual warfare. Block adoption should never be attempted without prayers. “And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”128 It is going to take spiritual warfare to open up a neighborhood for the light of the gospel to shine.

Spiritual warfare should be a major component of block adoption. Church members must fight for the souls of their neighbors. This was the same situation the Jews found themselves during the time Nehemiah was leading the effort of rebuilding the walls. The rebuilding of the walls was not just some neighborhood revitalization project. It included that but much more than that. The walls brought about a sense of protection, dignity, and control.

In Judah it was said, ‘The strength of those who bear the burdens is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall.’ And our enemies said, ‘They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.’ At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, ‘You must return to us.’ So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.129

In the same way, block adoption is not just an effort to be nice to people in a particular neighborhood. It is much more than that. Eternity for the people in different neighborhoods is at stake. Adopting a block, within the scope of this research, is taking personal responsibility for

128 2 Corinthians 4:3-4.
129 Nehemiah 4:10-14.
the spiritual condition of a neighborhood. It is part of a process of connecting the people living within three blocks of House of Joy Multicultural Church to the church family.

Local churches will have to do more than simply gathering for church services. They should get into the business of sending. The commandment of Jesus Christ to the church is still, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”\textsuperscript{130} If the local churches want to obey the Lord’s commandment, they have to start sending their members out into the neighborhoods around them. They have to take responsibilities for their neighborhoods. As those neighborhoods get transformed, the local churches will also benefit from the transformation.

\textbf{Theoretical Foundations}

God is a relational Being. The Godhead is manifested in Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. When God made man, He saw that it was not good that man should be alone.\textsuperscript{131} Therefore, God gave man a companion. Right from the first man, it was evident that people were going to have different needs. Problems and needs are part of every neighborhood in our world today. “Our nation is becoming a mosaic of different groups, each with a unique complex of needs. Most churches are surrounded by growing numbers of the unemployed and underemployed, new immigrant populations, singles, divorced persons, unwed mothers, the elderly, prisoners, the dying, sick, and disabled.”\textsuperscript{132} As a result, God created different people, and in fact equipped his church, with different gifts to meet different needs.

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\textsuperscript{130} Matthew 28:19-20.  \\
\textsuperscript{131} Genesis 2:18, ESV.  \\
\end{flushright}
Whenever a church is planted within a community, that church should seek to address some of the problems in that community. The needs of each community will indeed be different. Some of the problems in the communities across the United States include poverty, homelessness, drug addiction, gang-related violence, and prostitution. The opioid crisis in America has become so bad it has been declared a national epidemic. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, “Every day, more than 115 people in the United States die after overdosing on opioids.”\textsuperscript{133} It is the responsibility of a church to find out the needs in its community and seek to do something about those needs. “The church is to minister to all kinds of needs: spiritual, emotional, relational, and physical.”\textsuperscript{134}

House of Joy Multicultural Church is located in Philadelphia, PA. The city government has been working, over the years, to transform different neighborhoods in different parts of the city. For example, “In April 2001, Mayor John F. Street unveiled his Neighborhood Transformation Initiative (NTI), an ambitious drive to combat blight in Philadelphia.” The Mayor’s plan was “to revitalize Philadelphia’s distressed neighborhoods by issuing $295 million in bonds to finance the acquisition of property, the demolition of derelict buildings, and the assembling of large tracts of land for housing redevelopment.” However, the plan was not properly implemented. “The result was a watered-down effort that achieved some goals but has fallen short of what might have been accomplished.”\textsuperscript{135}

Currently, the city government has designed several programs for different neighborhoods within the city. One of these programs is the “Anti-Graffiti Network”. This

\textsuperscript{134} Rick Warren, \textit{The Purpose Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission} (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 104, Kindle.
program is “dedicated to the eradication of graffiti vandalism through coordinated efforts of city agencies, business organizations and community groups.”\textsuperscript{136}

Another program the city government is using to transform the communities in Philadelphia is the “Housing Authority”. This is “Organized under the laws of the Commonwealth of to (sic) Pennsylvania develop, acquire, lease and operate low income housing programs for limited income people. Funds to operate and improve residences come from subsidies from US department of Housing and Urban Development.”\textsuperscript{137}

One of the most successful programs the city government has been running in Philadelphia is the “Philadelphia More Beautiful Committee”. This program is designed toward “Facilitating (sic) a workable approach to combating neighborhood crime with organized block cleanings. We have grown to be one of the largest volunteer organizations of its kind in the country.”\textsuperscript{138} This program has been around for more than seventy years. Looking at how dirty the city still appears, Philadelphia probably would have been an ugly city to behold if a program like this is not functioning!

Wherever programs like these are in operation, they will be beneficial to the people living in such cities. Yet, they are limited in the sense that they cannot transform the total person. While such programs can positively affect the physical aspects of neighborhoods, they lack the power to touch the spirit of the people.

Only the church can minister to the whole person. Only the gospel understands that sin has ruined us both individually and socially. We cannot be viewed individualistically (as the capitalists do) or collectivistically (as the Communists do) but as related to God. Only Christians, armed with the Word and Spirit, planning and working to spread the kingdom

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.
and righteousness of Christ, can transform a nation as well as a neighborhood as well as a broken heart.\textsuperscript{139}

When it comes to neighborhood revitalization, the church has some unique roles to play. Only the church can minister to people in the realms of their spirit, soul, and body. No other organization or program can minister to people’s spirit like the church. This is why the church should be actively present in the lives of the people in their communities. This is not to say that the church is solely responsible for its community, but the members of a local church should get to work and do whatever God is calling them to do in their neighborhoods.

Indeed, there are many churches across the United States reaching out to their communities in order to help their neighbors.

One of the outstanding churches in America today is First Baptist Church of Leesburg, Florida, led by Pastor Charles Roesel. This church is one of the consistent leaders in baptisms in the Southern Baptist Convention. First Baptist has various community ministries such as homes for battered women and unwed mothers. These ministries touch the physical, financial, and emotional needs of people in the community. Most important, the church often reaches the greatest spiritual need as many of those who benefit from the ministries also accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Perhaps the church most frequently mentioned as the model for community presence is Bear Valley Baptist Church in Denver. The church has unleashed hundreds of members to do ministry. The people in the church are constantly reminded that they are the ministers and that they have the freedom and the permission to begin ministries under broad and reasonable guidelines.\textsuperscript{140}

The church has the power to touch every area of people’s lives because God is the One working through his people. This is why Jesus commanded his followers to go into all the world. By going, they will give Jesus the opportunities to reach people through them. “And they went

\textsuperscript{139} Keller, Ministries of Mercy, 348.

out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.”¹⁴¹

Another good example of churches transforming their neighborhoods is the Door of Hope Church located in Portland, Oregon. The Door of Hope Church can be described as externally focused. It “is reaching out to hipsters with great effect. The church leadership even decided to take its Sunday evening service to a nearby park. It was the regular service, just held in the open air. They faced sneers, hecklers, and a woman who stripped off her top to try to shock the congregation. But others, who saw the kindness and love in the church, joined them.”¹⁴²

On its website, the Door of Hope Church states, “We are committed to the city of Portland. This is the city to which we have been called. This is where we live. This is where we show others the love of Christ. We do not believe the Gospel can change Portland unless those who believe in the gospel actually invest their lives in the city for the glory of Jesus.”¹⁴³ As a confirmation of their commitment to their neighbors, the church adds, “We believe in neighborhood revitalization through proclamation of the gospel and intentional living, knowing that where Jesus is lifted up many will be drawn to Him.”¹⁴⁴

Pathak, et al. give a report of some outcome of the efforts their network of churches took to make impacts in their neighborhoods.

As church leaders, we began to dream about what it would look like to start a neighboring movement among our people and in our city. We decided to come together and, with one voice, create a joint sermon series around the idea of taking the Great Commandment literally. Each church in our network held a three-week teaching series following Easter Sunday. We developed a few resources for the churches to use, such as video interviews, sermon outlines, and illustrations. Soon after the sermon series was

¹⁴¹ Mark 16:20.
¹⁴⁴ Ibid.
launched, people responded and began taking steps to get to know their neighbors. Stories about block parties and new relationships began to pour in. City leaders began to talk about the initiative—as well as the value it created in their communities—all from people simply learning their neighbors’ names and working with others to throw a block party. The results were immediate. New friendships evolved, strangers became acquaintances, and acquaintances began moving toward genuine relationships with one another.\textsuperscript{145}

Dave Runyon, co-author with Jay Pathak, “led a neighboring movement that mobilized over 70 churches and 40,000 people in the Denver Metro area”\textsuperscript{146} in 2010. He is currently serving as “the executive director of City Unite and as a consultant for companies that have a desire to make a positive impact in their communities.”\textsuperscript{147}

Darrin provides his readers with some information about the practice of neighborhood evangelism at his church. Here is an excerpt:

At The Journey we have tried a variety of different approaches to create these small, gospel-driven communities in our neighborhoods. The latest iteration (and so far the most effective) is what we call ‘missional communities.’ Our missional communities are the primary way we are helping people live out their call to advance the gospel in their neighborhoods. Here’s a quick sketch of how these groups work in our church and city. Our missional communities are created with a simple goal: helping people get over their instincts to stick together and form a ‘holy huddle’ and empower them to boldly set out on a missionary journey to love and serve their own neighborhood. Our missional communities do have occasions where they turn inwardly, but only for a time. Typically, they are made up of members who live near each other geographically, and as a group they gather to pray for their neighbors, share wins and setbacks in their relationships with their non-Christian neighbors, and receive collective training from each other about how to continue seeding the gospel in the soil of their own ‘backyard.’ The inward-focused times of meeting together serve the essentially outward focus of the group. At the heart, these are groups with a mission to reach their neighbors with the gospel.\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{145} Pathak and Runyon, \textit{The Art of Neighboring}, 212.
\textsuperscript{146} Pathak and Runyon, \textit{The Art of Neighboring}, 205.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{148} Darrin. \textit{For the City}, 1394-1405.
The Scripture makes it clear that it is the will of God for his people to love him and love their neighbors. There are available literature on different forms of neighborhood evangelism as practiced by churches across America. Some of the available literature have been discussed above to highlight how some churches are making positive impacts in their communities. In the next chapter, the focus will be on how House of Joy Multicultural Church implements the block adoption program to reach out to their neighbors.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This research is designed to explore how block adoption can positively influence attendance growth at House of Joy Multicultural Church. As stated earlier in chapter one, this church has plateaued and is in the state of decline. Therefore, it is important that a solution be worked out and implemented to address the problem. The church members have tried several outreach events to attract new members, but none proves to be effective.

The leaders at the church held some meetings and came up with additional outreach ideas to address the growth problem. Out of the ideas generated, block adoption appears to be the most practical. The researcher, in collaboration with the church leaders, started the process of recruiting volunteers who would like to participate in the block adoption program. One major quality the researcher was looking for during the recruitment stage was willingness. “The real key to mercy ministry is motivated lay volunteers. When a group of people begins to learn how to minister to a particular need, and when they are willing to commit significant time and emotion to the ministry, then you have all the resources you need.”

The Vision Casting Phase

The researcher began by casting the vision of how both the community and the church could benefit from the block adoption program. The researcher explained to the volunteers that participation in this program is actually one of the ways to fulfilling the Great Commandment: “And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like

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it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

The researcher described the situation at House of Joy Multicultural Church as concerning. The church was definitely needed in the community, but the leaders and the members would have to change the way they did evangelism, so they could get better results. “The emphasis should change from maintenance, keeping what you have, to mission; from being an institutional church to being a movement of followers of Christ.”

The researcher helped the church members to envision and to paint a picture of a preferred future.

The church members began to get excited as they allowed the vision to develop. “Vision is a preferred future. A destination. Vision always stands in contrast to the world as it is. Vision demands change. It implies movement. But a vision requires someone to champion the cause.”

The researcher assured the church members that he would work closely with them throughout the research period. The researcher also promised to be available to answer their questions or attend to their concerns. While the researcher was still spending some days with the church members on vision casting, some of them had begun to ask when they could get started. They were that fired up and ready to go. “The Lord must grip our hearts with a vision of what can be, a vision of a preferred future. Our time with the Lord must move us to prayer, and prayer, in turn, moves the hand of God.”

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The Training Phase

The researcher later scheduled some dates to meet with the volunteers for training purposes. During the training sessions, all participants discussed about, and agreed upon, the blocks to be adopted. The four blocks that were adopted were the 5200 block of Ditman street, 5200 block of Burton street, 5200 block of Glenloch Street, and 5200 block of Jackson street. All of these blocks are within the 19124-zip code in Philadelphia, PA. All of the blocks are within three blocks away from House of Joy Multicultural Church. The training sessions took place in October 2018.

The researcher explained to the church members that the block adoption is not a drive-through approach to evangelism. “First, missional communities are committed to intentionally spending time with the pocket of people with whom God has placed them.” The researcher challenged the church members toward taking personal responsibility for each of the blocks to be adopted. Part of the responsibility is praying for the people living on the block and sharing the gospel with them. “Those who commit to a community don’t just leave the people they are with and look for others to serve; rather, they serve right where they are. They engage the people around them with the Word of God and regularly declare the gospel through their lifestyle, their conversations, and prayers for people.” The researcher emphasized that the church members would have to be committed to this assignment for the entire period that the research would last.

All trainings and preparations were concluded toward the end of October 2018. The researcher informed the church members that the research would be conducted during the months of November and December 2018. The church members exchanged phone numbers to

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154 Darrin Patrick and Matt Carter, *For the City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 1817, Kindle.
155 Ibid.
enable them stay in touch with one another, schedule for each day of outreach, and support one another.

The researcher instructed the church members to be on the lookout for “people of peace”. This term was used to describe the people who would open their doors and welcome the church members, and to those who would stop at the sidewalk long enough to hear what the church members had to say. “Jesus instructed his disciples to exercise discernment concerning the receptivity of their audience ...”\(^{156}\) Jesus instructed his disciples, “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house!’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house.”\(^{157}\)

The principle of the people of peace is important because nobody can change anyone. The researcher recommended to the church members to be sensitive to what God is already doing in the lives of the people they would meet. Jesus stated, “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.”\(^{158}\) The researcher emphasized to the church members not to use coercion or any form of manipulation. They should simply allow God to use them in drawing the people to himself. “Thinking about characteristics we should nurture in our communication of the gospel, the intentional invitation needs to be optional – maintaining the freedom of the invited person; genuine – taking the risk of offering real relationship as you invite the other person to take the risk of crossing a threshold (physical or metaphorical).”\(^{159}\) God has given


\(^{158}\) John 6:44.

people the free will to make their choices. It is important that people are allowed to use their free will in receiving Jesus Christ as their Savior.

The researcher explained to the church members that there was nothing to fret about when sharing the gospel. There was a church member who seemed to be new to participating in evangelism. The researcher suggested that all the church members needed to do was to share some personal stories of what God has done or is doing in their lives. The researcher pointed out that Jesus was asking the church members to be his witnesses. “In the Bible, the nation and people of Israel, and later Christians, are called to be witnesses whose task is to tell others who God is and how God relates to humankind and creation.”160

The researcher explained that by being witnesses, they would be sharing their stories to demonstrate that God is real, loving, and interested in the lives of people. Being a witness “is not the communication of general knowledge but of specific truthful acknowledgement about what has taken place. Just as the witness in a court of law commits to his or her testimony, so one who confesses Christ commits to bearing a truthful testimony of what has happened.”161 The researcher guided the church members in preparing long and short versions of any of their stories they chose to share. The researcher recommended that both versions should be used as occasions demanded. The short would be useful when engaging someone who may not have all the time to listen to the long version.

The researcher also emphasized that the block adoption is not about persuading Christians who have church home to leave their churches. “Evangelism is not proselytism. It

161 Ibid.
must not be connected with any form of ‘sheep-stealing’ directly or indirectly.” The researcher clarified that the outreach should be focused on non-Christians and on Christians who were not attending any church.

During the training sessions, the researcher helped the church members to understand that they were going into their neighborhood to partner with God in his mission to save his people. “Recognize that loving, serving, and ministering to our communities—getting the church outside the walls—is something God is already doing. God wants our churches to be salt, light, and leaven—all agents of transformation that work by direct contact and not at a distance.” Therefore, the researcher encouraged the church members to see themselves as workers together with God.

The researcher encouraged the volunteers not to be ashamed of the gospel because God has been using it to save everyone who believed. “Evangelism. We have a problem with the word! Loaded with images that embarrass and shame us, we struggle even to begin the conversation about faith sharing.”

By the time the volunteers were supposed to start with the program, it was already November. The fall season, with its cold effect, was already hitting hard. In fact, it was becoming freezingly cold. The cold wind and the chilly effect were too much for some elderly members, and they could not participate in the project. Some other church members could not

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163 Eric Swanson and Sam Williams, To Transform a City (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 196, Kindle.

164 2 Corinthians 6:1.

165 Romans 1:16.

take part due to family and work demands. Eventually, only four people were able to participate in the block adoption program. Consequently, three of the blocks had to be dropped. The only block that was selected for the research was the 5200 block of Burton Street.

An elderly member who could not walk around the block was asked to pray for the volunteers even as she stayed in her home. One of the volunteers regularly drove around all the four blocks just for the purpose of praying over the people in the selected parts of the community. Two other volunteers expressing their belief in the power of God fasted and prayed the people living on the 5200 block of Burton Street. “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

Some materials were provided to assist the volunteers with the outreach program. They had their notebooks and pens to keep a record of each day of outreach. They were also expected to record the contact information of the people with whom they met and talked. Moreover, the volunteers were expected to write down the needs of the people, their prayer requests, and an assessment of their spiritual status/condition.

The information to be recorded about spiritual status/condition included the salvation or born-again experience of the people if they already have a relationship with Jesus. Other information included what church the people were attending and if they had a church home. This information is needed to separate those who already Christians with church home from those who are not Christians as well as those who did not have a church home. The focus of the outreach program was on the people who were not yet Christians and those who did not have a church home.

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167 James 5:16.
Two different “marketing pieces” were designed and printed for the outreach program. One was a postcard and the other was a door hanger. Both of these pieces contained the church information, the service days and times. The volunteers were supposed to leave the postcards with the people during their first meeting. The door hangers were designed to be left on the doors of homes where the families were not available. The door hangers were designed to help “wet the ground” for the volunteers on their next visit(s). The volunteers could then give either the postcard or the door hanger to the people after the first time of meeting with them. The additional copies of the postcard and door hanger were meant to serve as a replacement for the lost pieces or simply as reminders.

**The Ministry Phase**

This was the practical side of the research where the church members were expected to minister to their neighbors. As they began to walk through their neighborhood, the church members understood that many of the people they would be meeting with had different forms of lifestyle. “Not everyone in the neighborhood is cleaned up and easy to be around. We need to be willing to follow Jesus and choose to be with others in uncomfortable situations, because we can’t always expect people to come onto our turf; we must also be willing to enter their world.”

Moreover, the church members understood that they were not supposed to use the same standard for Christians to judge non-Christians. “For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside….” The block adoption was not about passing judgment. It was about showing the love of God, talking about

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169 1 Corinthians 5:12-13.
his grace, mercy, and goodness. It was about telling the sinners there was a Savior. It was about calling the sinners to repentance and asking them to trust in the name of the Lord. Jesus “commanded his disciples to announce that the forgiveness which he had offered was open to all people. All persons, Jesus believed, stood in need of God's forgiveness.”

**Outreach Day One: Saturday, November 3, 2018**

The first of the block adoption program days was November 3, 2018. The church members came together within their church building to pray, discuss, and plan. Soon after, they walked across the street to the 5200 block of Burton Street. Two female adults and a man participated in this outreach event. As soon as the volunteers got to the block, they started with the first person they saw sitting on the porch of his house.

The volunteers met with a couple who received them into their home. The volunteers began to talk with the husband who was more receptive than the wife. However, there was a language barrier because the husband spoke Spanish which none of the volunteers understood. The volunteers spoke English, but the husband did not understand. The man expressed that he would like to visit House of Joy Multicultural Church if his wife was willing to come with him. When the man called his wife to ask her, she did not give any specific answer. The volunteers made additional efforts to find out from the woman if she would be willing to come with her husband to the church. She still did not give any definite answer. The volunteers left a postcard with the couple. The volunteers explained to the couple that the postcard had the information of the church should they need in case they decided to visit the church.

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As the volunteers were coming out of the couple’s home, they saw a woman coming out of her home to pick up her food being delivered by a delivery car. By the time the volunteers got to the woman’s home, she had gone back inside. When the volunteers knocked on her door, there was no response. The volunteers left a door hanger and moved to another home.

At the next home, the volunteers met with a man who was receptive. He listened to the volunteers and had conversations with them. The man told the volunteers his name, but he did not make any commitment to visiting the church. The volunteers left a postcard with the man.

As the volunteers walked over to the next home, they met with a young man who stated that he knew one of the volunteers. The man stated that he had attended one of the outdoor events that House of Joy Multicultural Church held in the past. The man stated that he would be able to visit the church within the following two Sundays. The volunteers gave him a church postcard.

The volunteers met with a man at the next home who stated that he moved into the neighborhood not too long ago. The volunteers engaged him in conversations. When they got the opportunities, the volunteers told him about House of Joy Multicultural Church. The man asked some questions about the church service days and times. The volunteers answered his questions. They also gave the man a church postcard, pointing out to him that the postcard had information about the church.

The volunteers came across a woman living with her mother. The mother also had a boyfriend living in the home. The woman was quite helpful during the time the volunteers spent in the home with her. She told the volunteers about vacant homes where renovations were being made. She explained to the volunteers that if they knocked on the doors of those homes, there might not be anyone available to answer them. The volunteers thanked her and asked if they
could speak with the woman’s mother. The mother, speaking in Spanish which the daughter translated, stated that she was too busy to talk at that moment. The volunteers discussed with the woman about church. They left their church postcard for so she could use it to remind herself of the church service days and times.

**Outreach Day Two: Saturday, November 10, 2018**

Two female adults participated in this outreach event. They met on the 5200 block of Burton Street to discuss their strategies for today’s outreach. They also encouraged each other. “It seems … the necessary first step is that we evangelize ourselves and not evangelize others. We need to rekindle our enthusiasm and believe in it as we proclaim the good news of Jesus. Evangelizing ourselves means being in close dialogue, in close solidarity – looking into the eyes of others as Jesus did when speaking with the Samaritan woman and with his followers.”

The volunteers then prayed and got started with great enthusiasm.

On this occasion, they started with homes on the other end of the block different from where they started on the previous occasion. They met with a man who volunteered to tell them his name. When the volunteers invited the man to church, he stated that he usually helped out with babysitting over the weekend, which would make it difficult for him to attend Sunday church service. The volunteers then informed the man about the Bible study group holding on Wednesday. The man stated that he would try but he would not want to promise.

The volunteers also met with a family of three: father, mother, and son. There was also a language barrier between the volunteers and the father. When they invited him to church, they could not understand his reason for not showing any significant interest. The volunteers also spoke with the wife who was very receptive as her husband. They told her about the church, but

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it was unclear how of that she understood. She responded, but since she spoke in Spanish, the volunteers were unable to understand her. However, they explained to the couple that if they came to the church, there would be interpreters who would help them translate the message from English to Spanish.

A family was on their way out when the volunteers got to their home. They were very polite as they waited for few minutes to attend to the volunteers. When the volunteers invited them to church, the mother thanked them. She received a church postcard from the volunteers and went out with her three children.

At the next two homes visited, the volunteers were unable to meet with the adults. It was a child, speaking through the window, who answered the volunteers’ knock on one of the two homes. The child stated that her mother asked her to inform the people at the door that she was unavailable. The volunteers left a door hanger for the family. It was another child who opened the door of the second home. The boy announced that his parents were sleeping. The volunteers also left a door hanger for this family and left.

The volunteers met with a couple at the next home. The man was working on cleaning the entrance to the house. He stopped what he was doing to attend to the volunteers. He also introduced his wife to the volunteers. The man showed interest when invited to the church. He actually stated that he would come to the church the following day.

The families in the next two homes were not very receptive. The volunteers met with a man who stated that he was not interested as soon as the volunteers introduced themselves as members of a church in the neighborhood. The man in the next home reacted in a similar manner. He did not show any interest in the volunteers’ invitation to their church. The volunteers thanked both men and walked away from their homes.
Outreach Day Three: Saturday, November 17, 2018

The volunteers met at the church building to pray and plan. They picked up enough supplies of door hangers, church postcards, and they took their notebooks with them. They walked across the street to 5200 block of Burton Street. The volunteers were able to reconnect with some of the families they had met with during their previous visits. They also met with some new families who were not available previously.

The volunteers met with a middle-aged woman who received them warmly. The volunteers and the woman talked for a while. The woman informed the volunteers that she already had a church home. When she learned about the midweek Bible study, the woman stated that she would like her granddaughter to be attending. She expressed that she liked the fact that House of Joy Multicultural Church was close to her home. She told the volunteers that she would discuss the possibility of midweek church attendance with her granddaughter.

The volunteers met with a woman whom they have spoken to previously. This time around, her husband was not at home. She too stated that she was very busy as she had to attend to some household chores. The volunteers thanked her for her time and left.

The volunteers’ stops at the next few homes were very brief because no adult was available. When they knocked on a door, they heard the voices of children. Since no adult came to answer the door, they left a door hanger for the family. Next, they saw a child who told them through the window that his mother could not come to the door because she was not properly dressed to attend to strangers. The volunteers left a door hanger for the family. It was also a young boy who answered the knock on the door of the next home. When he called out to his mother to inform her that some people were at the door, the mother did not respond. The volunteers left a door hanger for the family.
The volunteers met with a teenage girl who stated that she was nineteen. She was friendly as she received the volunteers warmly. The volunteers introduced themselves, stated why they were in the neighborhood and invited the girl to their church. The girl stated that she would not be able to accept their invitation because she spent her weekend with her father. The volunteers then told her about the Bible study group on Wednesday. The girl stated that she would think about the possibility of attending the Bible study. The girl informed the volunteers that she was living on the block with her mother who was not at home during this visit. The volunteers left a church postcard with the girl, asking her to share the church information with her mother.

Next, the volunteers met with a father who had two daughters living in the home with him. He was courteous as he engaged the volunteers in conversations about his spiritual journey. When the volunteers invited the man to church, he stated that he would need time to think about it. He made it clear that he could not offer any promise yet.

The volunteers met with a man who said he lived in Georgia. He apologized that he would not be able to attend to the volunteers because he would be leaving for Georgia in a few hours. The man was willing to give the volunteers the information of the other people living in the home. The man received a church postcard and promised to pass on the church information to the people living in the home.

The volunteers also met with a middle-aged woman. She expressed she has not been able to find a new church home since moving into the neighborhood. She expressed interest in attending Sunday worship service and Bible study group at House of Joy Multicultural Church. The volunteers and the woman discussed about the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday. The woman stated that she would be having a “late Thanksgiving” celebration because she would be
receiving her pay check late. The woman accepted an invitation to come for the next Bible study on Wednesday of the same week.

The volunteers saw a man going into his house. When they said hello to him, he did not respond. They tried again to get his attention, but he did not respond. The next man the volunteers met with stated that he was Muslim. He was polite, but he stated that he would not be able to come to a church. As the volunteers approached the next home, they saw the lights inside getting turned off. When they knocked on the door, no one answered. They left a door hanger for the family.

The volunteers met with a man who was respectful and friendly. He was willing to listen to the volunteers as he showed interest in what they had to say. When the volunteers invited him to church, the man stated that his schedule would not permit him to attend the Sunday worship service, but he would think about attending the Bible study group on Wednesday.

Lastly for this outing, the volunteers met with a mother and her son. The child was six years old. The woman expressed interest in coming for the Sunday worship service at House of Joy Multicultural Church. She shared that she was still dealing with the loss of her father-in-law which happened about a year ago. She added that she was going to have some surgery soon. She willingly gave her phone number to the volunteers. She expressed that she needed a church family, but she has not been able to find any since she moved into the neighborhood. The volunteers encouraged the woman, and they prayed for her before leaving her home.

**Outreach Day Four: Saturday, November 24, 2018**

The volunteers met for prayer at the church prior to going out for the outreach today. After the prayer time, they discussed effective ways to connect better with the families they have been reaching out to on Burton Street. The volunteers agreed on fasting and praying on Mondays
for each person living on the block. They also agreed on using text messages to follow-up with
the people on Wednesdays and phone calls on Fridays.

One of the volunteers expressed how she has been enjoying the block adoption program. She stated that she preferred it because it was encouraging her to develop a lifestyle of evangelism. “What we want is a lifestyle of evangelism; not a sporadic focus, but a consistent walk that brings people to an increasing knowledge of Christ. By aligning our thoughts on the subject with Scripture, we begin to change our patterns of living.”172

The first person the volunteers met today had not been home during the previous visits. She appeared to be in her twenties. She was very friendly with the volunteers. The woman stated that she was already attending a church with her grandmother. When the volunteers asked her how often she attended a church in a month, the woman was unable to give any number. She voluntarily gave her phone number to the volunteers as she asked them to keep in touch. The volunteers stated that they would stay in touch with her.

At the next home, the volunteers met with another woman who was willing to visit House of Joy Multicultural Church. She gave the volunteers her name and phone number. The woman stated that she had recently dropped out of her church family. The main reason she gave for dropping out of church was a conflict situation with her sister over power of attorney. She described her sister as one of the founding members of their church family. The woman expressed going through some emotional pains due to the loss of family members within the past six months. She stated that one of the two family members who died was not discovered until

after several days. The woman stated that she would like to get back into a church as soon as she felt better physically and emotionally.

The volunteers made attempts to check on the families that had met with during the previous visits. Several of them were not at home. As they left each of those homes, the volunteers left door hangers for the families.

The volunteers met with another Muslim who told them he was not interested in anything church. Prior to talking with the Muslim, the volunteers engaged a man in a brief conversation, and they told him they would come to his home in few minutes time. By the time they got to the man’s home, he seemed to have gone out. They knocked on his door, but there was no response. They left a door hanger at the house.

The volunteers met with another woman they had not seen previously. The woman told the volunteers that she had three children living in the home with her. When the volunteers invited the woman to church, she appeared excited. The woman stated that she might be able to attend both Sunday worship service and the Bible study group on Wednesday. Lastly for today, the volunteers met with a man who had two children living in the home with him. He expressed interest in visiting House of Joy Multicultural Church but asked for time to think about coming to church.

**Outreach Day Five: Sunday, December 2, 2018**

Prior to going for the door-to-door visit to Burton street today, the volunteers met at the church at 12 noon as scheduled. They prayed together and strategized on the approach they were going to apply in reaching the people today. “Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will
be established.”

Today, the volunteers chose to personalize the door hangers by putting a short message on them. The message stated that the volunteers were from the church and they just stopped by to say hello. Both the volunteers printed their names on the door hangers. They thought this message would be appropriate especially for the families they had met previously. They also thought the message would be appropriate for those they had never met before.

The volunteers started with the houses with odd number. They worked through that line of houses from one end to the other. They went through the same routine of moving from house to house, knocking on door or pressing the door bells, and waiting for responses. On occasions when nobody came to the door to answer, the volunteers would leave the personalized door hangers in such a way that they could be easily noticed and picked up.

On occasions when people responded, the volunteers took the time to know them by listening to them. They waited for the opportunities to talk about themselves and about their church. They also took advantage of whatever opportunity they had to invite the people to church. At the end of each contact, the volunteers left the church postcard or door hanger with the families.

The volunteers met with a woman who stated that she was a Christian looking for a new church. The volunteers had not met with the woman during their previous visits. The volunteers talked with the woman about House of Joy Multicultural Church. She expressed interest in coming to the church, but she stated that she would not be able to make any promise yet. The woman was willing to talk about her family and some of the problems she was dealing with. The

\[\text{Proverbs 16:3.}\]
woman mentioned that she has a granddaughter who might be able to attend the church with her whenever she decided to come.

The volunteers met with another woman who invited them into her home. She too stated that she used to be a member of a local church until recently. She talked with the volunteers about her reasons for dropping out of the church. The woman asked the volunteers to pray with her. After listening to her story, the volunteers prayed with the woman. They also encouraged her to remain faithful to the Lord. The woman gave her contact information to the volunteers. The woman expressed interest in attending the Wednesday Bible study group. She stated that she would make plans to attend.

The volunteers met with a man who also invited them into his home. He told the volunteers that he was a father of two children. The volunteers took the time to listen to the man as he too was courteous enough to listen to them. The man stated that he was willing to attend church services but only if his busy work schedule would permit him. The man provided his contact information when the volunteers asked if it is alright to stay in touch with him.

There were some people who engaged the volunteers in lengthy conversations. Since the volunteers were not in a hurry, they stayed with those people to hear them out. The volunteers asked the people about their families, jobs, and what their typical days looked like. The volunteers asked the people if they had any relationship with Jesus. They also used the opportunity to ask the people if they had any prayer requests.

The volunteers were able to pray with some families. They exchanged phone numbers with several people as more and more neighbors were becoming familiar with the volunteers. Today’s visit to 5200 block of Burton Street lasted about two hours. The volunteers had a debrief after the outreach, and they agreed on the following action steps: pray for the people regularly,
follow up with the people through text messages and phone calls, send them Christmas greeting cards.

**Outreach Day Six: Saturday, December 15, 2018**

The volunteers met at the church to pray and to pick up some door hangers and church postcards. A volunteer stated that while she went out shopping, she met with someone they visited on the 5200 block of Burton Street. The volunteer stated that she felt excited when the neighbor referred to her as “the woman from the church”. This really was a compliment because “a believer’s life should be characterized by evangelism. Simply put, bringing the gospel to unbelievers should be a consistent part of our lives. If it is not, we are neglecting the very reason God has left us on earth.”

The testimony served as inspiration for the volunteers as they went out for today’s outreach.

When they got to the adopted block, they met with a man who appeared very cautious when the volunteers introduced themselves. The man was willing to talk with the volunteers after he heard they were from a church. However, he stated that he would not be able to come to House of Joy Multicultural Church because was not living in the neighborhood. When the volunteers asked if anybody else was in the home, the man was evasive. Eventually, he stated that he would rather not talk about any of the occupants in the home. The volunteers left a church postcard with the man, asking him to give it to the people living in the home.

The volunteers knocked on several other doors and rang the door bells without getting any response. They left the door hangers at those homes and moved on to others. Again, the volunteers wrote a brief message on the door hangers with their names printed as well. The only

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house the volunteers have not been able to reach had a pit bull at the door. The dog usually barked ferociously whenever someone moved close to the house.

The volunteers met with another man who they could not communicate effectively with due to language barrier. He spoke Spanish and the volunteers spoke English. Since there was no one to interpret for both sides, the volunteers left a church postcard with the man. The man showed appreciation and said “thank you” in English as the volunteers left for the next home.

The next set of people were the ones the volunteers had made contact with previously. There was a man was very receptive of the volunteers during their previous visit. So, this was the second time the volunteers met with him. The man introduced his girlfriend to the volunteers. He also shared that his father was very sick, and he was in the hospital. The volunteers prayed with him. They also encouraged him. The man stated that he would like to come to church the following day.

The volunteers also met with a woman for the second time. This woman had visited the church once but she has not returned after that first visit. The volunteers asked why the woman has not come back to church since her first visit. The woman stated that she had difficulty waking up early on Sunday. She added that she could not attend the Wednesday Bible study because she was afraid of going out in the night. The woman stated that she read from the Book of Psalms and prayed every day. She informed the volunteers that she has a son. When the volunteers asked if they could talk to him, she stated he was sleeping.

The volunteers met with a couple they had seen previously. The husband had to go out, so the volunteers talked with the wife. She was more receptive during this visit than the previous one. The volunteers talked with her about her relationship with Jesus. They encouraged her to
put her faith in Jesus Christ. The woman gave her phone number to the volunteers as she expressed interest in staying in touch with them.

The volunteers met with one more woman they had seen previously. She told the volunteers she “was under the weather from picking up her car from Tennessee”. The volunteers prayed with her. They also encouraged her to attend either the Sunday worship service or the Wednesday Bible study group. The woman introduced her three grandchildren to the volunteers. After playing with the grandchildren for a few minutes, the volunteers left.

There were three homes the volunteers had been trying to reach since the beginning of this research. They were able to establish limited contact with two of those homes today. At one of the homes, the volunteers met with a teenage boy who stated that his parents were busy. The volunteers asked him to give a church postcard to his parents, and he agreed. At the second home, the volunteers met with two children who stated that their mother not available. Again, the volunteers gave a church postcard to the children and asked them to give it to their mother.

The last two homes happened to be where the volunteers have been well-received all the time. The volunteers met with the families briefly, stating that they were in the neighborhood again and just wanted to stop by and say hello. Both families expressed their appreciation and their interest in visiting House of Joy Multicultural Church as soon as they could.

**Outreach Day Seven: Saturday, December 22, 2018**

This was the last outreach visit the volunteers made to the 5200 block of Burton Street. Three people met for prayers at the church. They got enough supplies of door hangers, postcards, and specially designed letters to wish the neighbors a Merry Christmas.

At one of the homes they had visited previously, the volunteers met with an elderly woman they have not met before. The elderly woman stated that she came to spend some time
with her grandchildren. The volunteers talked with the elderly woman about her spiritual life. They also invited her to their church service. A couple later came into the home, but they ignored the volunteers when they tried to get their attention. The elderly woman apologized for the couple’s behavior and the volunteers went to the next home.

The volunteers met with a young man who stated that he was twenty-six years old. He was attentive while the volunteers shared the gospel with him. However, when invited to church, he expressed that he would not be able to come to church because he worked, and he attended school.

The volunteers mistakenly knocked on the door of a Muslim man, who had told them he did not want to have anything to do with a church. When he came to the door, he was very polite when he saw the volunteers. They in turn apologized for bothering him and left.

At the next home, the volunteers met with a man who welcomed them but stated that he was already attending a local church. The man initiated some conversations with the volunteers who decided to spend some time talking with him. The man talked about his family and his job situation. The volunteers also asked him some questions about the neighborhood which he answered politely. The volunteers also met with an elderly man who was very friendly. He introduced himself and talked a little bit about his family. When the volunteers invited him to church, the elderly man stated that he was a member of the Catholic church. He expressed interest in attending House of Joy Multicultural Church. He even told the volunteers he would find the time to honor their invitation.

The volunteers met with a woman and her children. Initially, it was the woman’s father they had met with. During this visit, the woman, her father, and her grandfather were all present. In addition, the woman’s four children were also at home. She shared that it has been very
difficult raising the four children. The volunteers prayed with her. They encouraged her to cast her burden upon the Lord.\textsuperscript{175} The volunteers encouraged the woman to connect with a church family. She stated that she would not be able to attend any church because she worked on Sundays. The volunteers then suggested that the woman should check with her employer if she could take Sundays off in order to attend church. The woman thanked the volunteers and stated that she would check with her employer during the following week.

The volunteers experienced what they described a miracle toward the end of the visit today. For the first time, they were able to access the gate of the home guarded by the pit bull! They knocked on the door, but nobody answered. The volunteers then left a door hanger for the family.

The volunteer then met with a man who stated that he used to attend a church while living in a different neighborhood. He stated that he stopped attending his church since he moved into this neighborhood due to transportation problems. When the volunteers invited the man to House of Joy Multicultural Church, he stated that he would come the following day with his wife and 9-year-old step-daughter. He gave his phone number to the volunteers and expressed that he would like to stay in touch with them.

Finally, the volunteers met with a father and his two children. He stated that his two children lived with their mother, but he got to see them occasionally. When invited to church, the father stated that he worked seven days a week. The volunteers gave him a church card postcard.

The block adoption program concluded at the end of December 2018. Through rain and gusty wind, the volunteers worked tirelessly. They overcame the discouragement of negative weather forecast. As the volunteers prepared to go out on some days, the weather reports seemed

\textsuperscript{175} 1 Peter 5:7.
too discouraging to even attempt walking through the neighborhood for five minutes. Yet, the
volunteers went out and endured the unfriendly weather conditions. They knocked on doors.
They met with several families and prayed with those families. They established contacts with
several people on 5200 block of Burton Street. Toward the end of the research, the volunteers
had begun to move the relationship from the level of strangers to acquaintances. “Your job is to
initiate contact. You must turn strangers into contacts, contacts into acquaintances, and
acquaintances into friends.”176 While the church members could not be described yet as friends,
they were no longer strangers on the block they adopted.

The researcher held a meeting with the church members who volunteered to be part of
this research. The researcher thanked them for their time and efforts. The researcher also
encouraged them to always make themselves available for any assignment God has for them
even when there were no immediate or visible results. “We recognize that selfless service does
not always lead to salvation. Jesus cured ten lepers of their hideous disease, but only one made
the ‘God connection’ and returned to give thanks (Luke 17:11–19). But that didn’t stop Jesus
from healing them.”177 The researcher challenged the volunteers give themselves to preaching
the good news and doing good deeds regardless of the results. “The number of good deeds we do
is not always proportionate to the number of conversions we see. Jesus did most of his miracles
in cities where there was the least repentance (Matt. 11:20-24), but that didn’t keep him from
healing and blessing.”178 The researcher challenged the volunteers to avoid discouragement when
results do not match their efforts.

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176 Keller, Ministries of Mercy, 1757.
177 Swanson, To Transform a City, 59.
178 Ibid.
The volunteers were grateful for the opportunity to participate in the block adoption program. “This is a world in which God is active and present, bringing completion to God’s creation. It is a world in which the church is called to participate as the Triune God’s partner in God’s creating and saving work.”\textsuperscript{179} The volunteers appreciated the fact that God used them to reach several families on the 5200 block of Burton Street.

Having experienced the blessing of God through the outreach, the volunteers have expressed their desire to continue with the program even though that would be outside the requirement of this research. The volunteers stated that they counted it a great privilege that God called on them to participate in what he was already doing in their neighborhood. Each one of the volunteers expressed that they were personally blessed because the block adoption program helped them to grow spiritually.

Two Major Challenges

One of the two major challenges the volunteers encountered was the cold weather. It was very cold on all of the days of the outreach. On some of the days, it was even raining. There were times when the wind became gusty as well. The volunteers usually dressed up in layers to withstand the wind and the cold. They endured the rain because it was difficult to carry an umbrella as they walked from one house to another. The cold weather discouraged many of the neighbors from spending time outdoor as they liked to do during spring and summer. Therefore, the cold weather made it more difficult to reach several people.

The second major challenge the volunteers faced was the language barrier. Several of the families on the block spoke Spanish. It happened that none of the available volunteers spoke

Spanish. All of them spoke English. Some of the church members who spoke Spanish were not available for this research. As a result, the volunteers found it difficult to communicate meaningfully and effectively with the Spanish-speaking neighbors. Despite these two challenges, the volunteers considered the result of the block adoption to be a great success. The result obtained and the data analysis will be discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 4: Results

Darrin Patrick asked, “What makes a great church?”180 The author adds, “That’s a question all Christians should ask themselves. Not just pastors, not just worship leaders, not just the most gifted volunteers, but every Christian.”181 Answering his own question, Darrin states that “a great church, a healthy church, is one in which Jesus Christ is found in word and deed.”182

It is the dream of the leaders at House of Joy Multicultural Church to build a great church. These leaders want to be known as a church where the Word of God and good deeds are inseparable. As they walk by faith and share their faith, they also want to show their faith by their work.

The members at House of Joy Multicultural Church who participated in the block adoption outreach showed great enthusiasm, devotion, and faithfulness. They went into their neighborhood even when it was cold and rainy. They prayed, knocked on doors, visited several homes, and talked with several families. They invited many people to their weekly church services.

**Direct Result**

The intervention plan led to significant results in church attendance at House of Joy Multicultural Church. Even though the intervention plan did not bring multitude to the church, the result obtained can be described as commensurate with the amount of time and efforts the church members invested. It should be noted that the research was conducted during the cold months of November and December 2018. The research was limited to just one block instead of four blocks due to limited number of volunteers available. The volunteers went into the neighborhood to meet with people on only seven occasions. By the end of the research period,

180 Darrin Patrick and Matt Carter, *For the City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 64, Kindle.
181 Ibid.
182 Ibid.
House of Joy Multicultural Church has recorded an increase of four people in their church attendance.

One woman started attending the church as a result of the church members reaching out to her. This woman stated that since she moved into the neighborhood, she has been looking for a church to attend. She, in turn, told her mother about the church. Both the woman and her mother started attending the church services regularly.

The woman informed the church leaders about her decision to get married to the man she had been dating. During the month of November 2018, the pastors met with the woman and her fiancé for pre-marital counseling. The man got born again during one of the pre-counseling sessions. “Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.”

The lead pastor informed the congregation about the woman’s wedding coming up in few weeks. The church members supported the woman and her fiancé in planning toward their wedding. On December 1, 2018, the couple got married at House of Joy Multicultural Church. The families and friends of the couple were present to celebrate and rejoice with them.

Since their wedding, both the woman and her husband have been attending the church regularly. In addition to regularly attending the Sunday worship service, the woman has been attending the midweek Bible study group as well. The husband, on his part, is attending Sunday worship service, but he has not been attending the midweek Bible study group yet. Moreover, the woman’s husband has an uncle who came to live with them. This uncle has also been invited to the church. In total, these were the four people who started attending the church as a direct result of the block adoption program.

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It should be noted that House of Joy Multicultural Church has not been able to add new members for some years. Based on this fact, it has been encouraging for the church members who participated in the block adoption to see some tangible results. They were able to see their efforts yielding some fruit. “Numerical growth is to be expected in local churches. Some local churches grow dramatically, others more slowly, and, of course, some do not grow at all. However, if the universal church is to grow, as Christ promised it would, local congregations must win people to Christ and assimilate new disciples into the body.”\(^{184}\) The church members have already started working on assimilating these new people into their church family.

As shown below in figure 1, the number of men prior to the beginning of the research was four. The women were twelve and the children were sixteen.

As shown below in figure 2, the total number of weekly attendance at House of Joy Multicultural Church before the commencement of the research was thirty-two. This figure comprised of all the men, the women, and the children.

![Figure 2: Total attendance figure before block adoption: 32](image)

As shown in Figure 3 below, the number of men had increased from four to six as a result of the block adoption program. The number of women also increased from twelve to fourteen. The number of children remained unchanged. It still stood at sixteen.
Figure 4 below shows the total church attendance increasing to thirty-six as a direct result of the block adoption program.
Indirect Results

The block adoption program was implemented as an intervention to address the problem of stagnation at House of Joy multicultural Church. The direct result expected from the intervention was church growth. As a result of four additional people who joined the church, it is evident that the intervention produced some positive result. Yet, the intervention produced other results too important to ignore. These other results would be described as indirect.

Embarking on the block adoption has given House of Joy Multicultural Church members an initial number of 165 homes to “fish” from. Three of the four streets adopted have forty-five homes each. The remaining street has thirty homes. Though the volunteers were able to work through just one of those blocks, the church would be including the three other blocks not included during the research period.

Starting and growing relationships with the neighbors happen to be a significant result of this research. People in America are living on the block where neighbors usually do not know or interact with one another. “We observed how the Lord began to create unique opportunities for us in neighborhoods. We were experiencing God’s presence as we served our neighbors, but we also began to know them, and they began to know us. What started as an attempt to follow Christ’s simple directive to love our neighbors drew us nearer to what our Father was doing.”185 This was also true of the church members who took part in the research. The block adoption program has drawn the church members closer to their neighbors.

The volunteers expressed how much they cherished the opportunities they had to initiate connection, friendship, and growing relationships with their neighbors. These were opportunities that the church members never realized or utilized until now. “As those in our

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The church began to serve others in various neighborhoods, relationships naturally began to develop…. The church members who participated in the block adoption program continued to stay in touch with the families they interacted with during the research period. Some of the families on the block have also been initiating contacts with the church members.

The block adoption has created a sense of ownership and responsibility among the church members who participated. These members now refer to the block they adopted as “our block” and the people living on the block as “our people”. The volunteers continued to have conversations about the people living on the adopted block.

The church members stepped up spiritual warfare over the adopted block. The volunteers fasted and prayed for the people living on the block. During weekly church services, the whole church has been praying for the people living in the neighborhood. The whole church is praying that the light of the gospel will shine in their neighborhood and God will save their neighbors.

The block adoption program has also created a sense of continuity among the church members who participated. They have come to see some possibilities of what God can do through the outreach that they do not want to end it yet. The members understand that there is so much possibility of seeing more people getting saved as they continued in their prayers and in the sharing of the gospel message.

Churches with a community presence find prospects in two ways. First, those who are served by the community ministries are often prospects for salvation and for the church. The church that views these people as prospects may discover that the prospects are ‘down andouters.’ The attitude of Jesus is necessary as the church does outreach in New Testament style, ministering to ‘the least of these’ (Matt. 25:40). Are churches today ready to give up their comfort zones by letting different kinds of people come into their buildings? Second, the church discovers prospects as people in the community get involved in these ministries. There is a deep hunger in the hearts of many people to touch lives and to make a difference. Unfortunately, most churches do not offer opportunities for ‘outsiders’ or members to be involved in front-line ministry. If you lead a church

186 Ibid., 331.
toward involvement in the community that makes a difference, the church will become a magnet for many prospects.\textsuperscript{187}

It takes several gospel conversations to help some people get to the point of putting their faith in Jesus Christ. “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth.”\textsuperscript{188} Planting and watering are required in the work of evangelism. As the church members have planted, they want to continue watering because they believe God will give them growth in their church attendance. Having stepped into their neighborhood to share the gospel, the church members have been exposed to a workable evangelism strategy they believe is too good to suspend or cancel. “Whatever size church you now serve, chances are that numerous growth opportunities are present but overlooked. After fifteen years of consulting across dozens of denominations, I have yet to be in a church where more growth opportunity is not present than the church is willing to respond to.”\textsuperscript{189}

In the parable of the yeast, Jesus stated, “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.”\textsuperscript{190} The presence of light makes the darkness disappear. Jesus described himself and his followers as the light of the world.\textsuperscript{191} The members of House of Joy Multicultural Church have come to realize that their presence was needed in their neighborhood. They have come to believe that as they shine as Christ’s representatives, the darkness of drug addiction and violence in their community will disappear. “The key to changing a community is not the speed at which it happens; it’s the fact

\textsuperscript{188} I Corinthians 3:6.
\textsuperscript{189} Warren Bird and Carl George, \textit{How to Break Growth Barriers: Capturing Overlooked Opportunities for Church Growth} (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book, 1993), 18, Kindle.
\textsuperscript{190} Mark 13:33.
\textsuperscript{191} John 8:12; Matthew 5:14.
of the church’s involvement in the community that makes the critical difference. The presence of the yeast will always cause the dough to rise.”  

The church members believed God has called them into the community and they were willing to be actively present. They have resolved to show up and obey the call of God in reaching out to their neighbors. “Externally focused churches that engage their communities with good works and good news will see their communities transformed into something new.”

The church members have been learning and practicing how to share their faith through personal testimonies of God’s grace in their lives. They even had a Sunday service in November 2018 during which several members came forward to share stories of God’s goodness in their lives. Some of those testimonies had to do with how God had transformed the church members. “Similar to the way that the presence of Christ in our life begins the personal transformation process, so too an externally focused church that is present and involved in a community begins the process of changing that community.”

The volunteers expressed that taking part in this research helped them to grow spiritually. “while people can learn through good preaching, personal Bible study, and healthy small groups, most people don’t grow past a certain point if they are not involved in serving others. “It’s also important to remember that serving others changes and transforms the very people who are serving.”

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192 Eric Swanson and Sam Williams, To Transform a City (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 47, Kindle.
193 Ibid.
194 Ibid.
195 Ibid., p. 49.
196 Ibid.
While the church members who took part in the block adoption program felt encouraged, some of those who did not take part have become inspired by the direct result. As a result, more members have expressed their desire to be part of the block adoption outreach. These members have started discussing with the lead pastor about being trained and assigned to their own blocks.

The members at House of Joy Multicultural Church have begun to expand their vision for the block adoption program. They feel they should be doing more good deeds as they spread the good news. “As we get to know them better and allow ourselves to be known, we become aware of deeper needs and can begin to pray and care for physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs. It all happens so naturally.”197 As part of expanding the vision, some members have started looking into the possibility of starting Bible study groups in the homes of the people. The members have identified a home and they continued to explore how to implement this idea.

Moreover, there have been discussion surrounding the possibility of adopting a school in the neighborhood. There are several schools close to where House of Joy Multicultural Church is located. One elementary school and one middle school are within three blocks of the church location. The discussion seemed to be leaning toward the elementary school.

The church leaders and the members of the church have intensified their prayers for their community since the block adoption started. The outreach has enabled them to see how big the harvest was in their community. “And he said to them, the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”198 The church leaders have been praying for additional people to join in the outreach.

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efforts. Two Christians from two different churches have offered to help in walking through the neighborhood sharing good news and doing good deeds.

The evangelism temperature at House of Joy Multicultural Church has risen tremendously. Prior to the block adoption program, the church members’ enthusiasm about sharing their faith had been waning. After the block adoption program began, the church members have become more externally focused. They have been talking to people and inviting them to their church. As a result of these invitations, the church has been experiencing growth in its weekly attendance. As shown in Figure 5 below, the church has increased in its weekly attendance in general.

Figure 5: General change in attendance figures

Figure 6 below shows the results attributed both directly and indirectly to the research. In the space of two months, House of Joy Multicultural Church has grown in its weekly attendance from thirty-two to forty. To some of the church members, this increase was a miracle! It was an
answer to their prayers that God should add to their number. The increase in weekly church attendance has been inspiring more church members to step forward and get involved in what God is doing in their midst. House of Joy Multicultural Church is looking more and more like a gospel-saturated church. “A gospel-saturated church is a church that exists not for itself but for its city, neighborhood, and block.”

It was during the block adoption program that one of the volunteers expressed she had discovered she had passion for outreach. The volunteer stated that she was especially interested in sharing her faith with young people and ministering to them. She started discussing with the lead pastor at the church about how she could get involved in some youth ministry.

Another church member has expressed her desire to start what she called “Breakfast Club with Jesus” for children in the neighborhood. Each session would hold on Saturday, from 8:00 am to 9:30 am. The woman wanted to prepare and provide healthy breakfast for children. During

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199 Darrin Patrick and Matt Carter, *For the City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 1108, Kindle.
the meeting, she wanted to teach from the Bible and give the children prizes for learning or memorizing Bible verses. “Community transformation begins with and is led by people who themselves are being transformed. We should never underestimate how important an individual believer with a changed heart can be and how much impact he or she can have upon the world. Jeremiah 5:1 reminds us that it takes only one person to affect the outcome of a city.”

Outreach Plan for the Year 2019

At the end of the research, the researcher met with the church leaders at House of Joy Multicultural Church to discuss keeping and increasing the gains of the block adoption program. In order to keep the momentum going, the church leaders have started discussing and they have been strategizing on making their outreach efforts more effective in the year 2019. There are several outreach events the church would be holding to build more bridges and connect with

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Figure 7: Attendance growth chart

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200 Swanson and Williams, *To Transform a City*, 48.
more neighbors. The church was determined to be a great blessing to the people in the community.

The first outreach event lined up for the year 2019 is scheduled for Sunday, February 17. Titled “Super Sunday”, the leaders were planning a weekend worship service that would incorporate elements of arts and creativity. In addition, the church would be giving out clothes, shoes, and other items free of charge after that Sunday service.

The leaders were also working on holding Worship Night service once a month. Unless rescheduled, this service would hold on the last Friday of each month, starting from 7:00 pm. “Based on more than 30 years of observing the church … it is obvious there is a huge disconnect between the biblical understandings of worship and evangelism. If not addressed in an honest manner, this false dichotomy will continue to stifle the influence of the church in a world that is seeking spiritual answers.”

The Worship Night would be an opportunity for people to grow in their love for God. This would be a night when the church members would be led and encouraged to express their hearts in adoration of God who made and loves them. So worship will serve the purpose of drawing people closer to God while evangelism would serve as an opportunity for people to grow in their love for their neighbors.

The church leaders have lined up coffee outreach events throughout the year. This would be either indoor or outdoor event depending on the weather. During the free coffee outreach events, the church members would be serving their neighbors with free donuts and hot/cold coffee. These events were designed to serve as a bridge, as a platform for the church members to connect with the unchurched. As the people stop by and enjoy their donuts and coffee, the church

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members would look for opportunities to share the gospel with them. Moreover, the church members would look for opportunities to initiate contacts that could develop into relationships.

The church leaders also discussed holding BBQ Day events during summer. These events would be held outdoor. The church leaders discussed about serving free food, juice, water, soda, watermelons, and ice cream. They planned on giving out clothes, shoes, and several other household items.

According to the church leaders at House of Joy Multicultural Church, the BBQ Day event would be one of their biggest outdoor events in the community. Their plan included casting vision, recruiting volunteers and coordinating with other churches. The idea would be to invite the whole community, set up chairs and tables for them on the sidewalk around the church building, and serve them good food. “Ideally, all of our efforts at evangelism would have at their very core the assurance of God's love for all people and God's presence with us no matter what.”202 The church members would be trained to befriend their neighbors while the event lasted. The church members would also be trained in ways to initiate and sustain conversations around the gospel.

The church leaders expressed their desire to continue to explore effective ways of conducting servant evangelism which is “a combination of simple acts of kindness and intentional personal evangelism.”203 They stated that they wanted their church to be known for loving and serving the people in their community. They stated that they wanted to be known as a church reaching out to the unchurched and making disciples who make other disciples.


In order to create a healthy culture of evangelism within their church, the leaders at House of Joy Multicultural Church stated that they would be revisiting their previous practice of equipping their members for personal evangelism. To that end, the leaders decide to buy gospel pamphlets/tracts which their members would be able to hand out to people who needed to hear the gospel. They stated that they were going to train their members to practice personal evangelism on the bus, on the train, at the shopping mall, at the playground, and everywhere they went.

The church leaders would also revisit their former practice of printing invite cards and postcards that their church members could carry around to give to people who needed to have some basic information about the church. The information on those cards included the name of the church, the location address, the days and times of weekly services, phone number and church website address. “The right tools are essential to any job. Painters need brushes to paint. Builders need hammers to nail. Cooks need pans to sauté. You get the idea. In the same way, your members and regular attenders need tools to carry out the task of evangelism.”

Furthermore, the church leaders have started working on ways to take advantage of what they called “the big days”. “Churches can use Easter, Christmas, Mother’s Day, Grandparent’s Day, and Super Bowl Sunday, among others as designated times when you have an evangelistic message and service.” The church leaders were determined to make good use of every opportunity they would have in each year.


For instance, the church leaders have agreed to make Easter Sunday of 2019 a big day of evangelism. Though they have not been able to make a final decision, one of them had suggested doing postcard mailer. This leader suggested sending between 40,000 to 50,000 pieces into the community. The leader advised that the church should toward making Easter Sunday 2019, and every other Easter Sunday, an opportunity to receive a lot of guests at their church. The church leaders used to do a mailer, but they stopped because they were not getting good results from the strategy. Now, they seemed to have rekindled their interest in the strategy.

The Women’s Fellowship has been tasked with the responsibility of organizing the Mother’s Day event for the year 2019. Likewise, the Men’s Fellowship would be organizing the Father’s Day event. The church leaders have agreed to print some invite cards toward these two events. The church leaders planned to encourage their members to invite their family members and friends to the two events. The church would be inviting the people in the neighborhood as well.

The church leaders expressed that they wanted to move as many members as possible from being spectator Christians to becoming disciples who were also making other disciples. They stated that they wanted to raise a group of Christians who were passionate about saturating their communities with the gospel. “When believers are faithful to evangelize in the routine of life, they more naturally gather together in evangelistic efforts that flow beyond their immediate context and into the world.”

The church leaders discussed with the researcher about the need to revamp their follow-up system. They lamented that they have not been able to retain many of the guests who showed up during their services for several years. They stated that as they had worked hard over the

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years to bring in people through their front door, they have been unable to keep those people because they left their back door open. They discussed several ideas including setting up a reception table for their guests after each church service, serving them light snacks, and collecting their contact information.

In addition, the church leaders discussed how they would train and assign church members to follow up with the guests starting from the same week those guests came to the church. They agreed on some action steps to take which would include contacting their guests by phone and email. Within two weeks of guests visiting House of Joy Multicultural Church, the church leaders stated that they would be following up with them with thank you card and letter of appreciation. They stated that they would assign church leaders or church members to build on-going relationship with the guests for the purpose of discipleship. “No one grows alone. It takes a community of Christ followers to help each person grow in faith.” The assigned church leader and church members would then encourage and guide the guests to join a small group where they would be able to receive care and support.

The church leaders admitted that they needed to do better at holding one another accountable in their spiritual journey and making of disciples. They agreed to regularly hold on-going meetings toward planning, strategizing, and implementing their evangelism and discipleship process. The leaders promised to show good examples of preaching the gospel and serving their neighbors. “Leadership is a dynamic process in which a man or woman with God-given capacity influences a specific group of God's people toward His purposes for the group.”

207 Bill Donahue, Leading Life-Changing Small Groups (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 2479, Kindle.

The leaders stated that they understood that the way they live their lives could have significant impacts on the church members. In line with the vision of the church, the leaders agreed to re-committing themselves to living as godly role models.

The church leaders stated that their commitment would include challenging other church members to discover and develop their spiritual gifts so they could use those gifts to glorify God and bless people. “The need, the responsibility, the urgency, include us all, and all of us must ask ourselves what we are doing about reaching those who are outside the Church and away from the influence of Christ.” The church leaders stated that they were committed to actively recruiting volunteers, training them, and helping them use their spiritual gifts as they all sought to reach the unchurched.

As the church leaders deliberated and decided on what action steps they would be taking to keep their evangelism temperature hot, they all stated that there was a need to improve on the level of their prayer. “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.” The church leaders agreed on continuing with their pre-service prayer time on Sundays which usually ran from 9:30 am to 10:00 am. They also agreed on the need to conduct regular prayer walks in their neighborhood. “Prayer is our major assault weapon in battle.” The church leaders agreed to dedicate themselves to praying for the people living in their neighborhood.

As part of their efforts at increasing the level of prayer at House of Joy Multicultural Church, the leaders stated that they would be training intercessors and assigning them to pray

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210 Corinthians 10:4.

about specific issues in the community and in the city of Philadelphia. “For godliness to increase in a city, ungodliness must decrease, and none of this can happen without radical improvement in the spiritual climate of the city.”212 According to a report from the Philadelphia Police Department, there were 351 murders in the city in the year 2018.213 This was the highest figure since 2007! The church leaders believed if they prayed, the Lord would hear them, and bless their city.

Another step the church leaders agreed to take was to set up an occasional prayer chain. This is a system whereby people pray continuously based on various slots of time assigned to them. The church leaders stated that they wanted to see the glory of God in manifestation in their community and in their city. They wanted to see a preferred future where their community would be transformed by the power of the gospel. Even though the church is currently located in a drug-infested neighborhood, the church leaders expressed their trust in God for a supernatural change in the lives of the people in their community.

Starting from the second Sunday in February 2019, the lead pastor would be preaching a series of messages titled, “Love God, Love People”. The lead pastor wanted to use these messages to start a church-wide campaign on love. The lead pastor also wanted these messages to awaken the church members toward playing their roles in the fulfillment of the Great Commission. “The great commission is the major turning point of the Bible in which the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile is dismantled and the mission of Jesus expands explicitly...

212 Ed Silvoso, Prayer Evangelism: How to Change the Spiritual Climate over Your Home, Neighborhood and City (Grand rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2018), 758, Kindle.
The lead pastor wanted the church to experience a revival in their commitment to the mission of God.

The leaders and members at House of Joy Multicultural Church considered the block adoption program to be an effective method of outreach to their neighbors. They have experienced the presence and power of the Holy Spirit during their outings. They have seen God opening doors for them both literally and figuratively. The leaders and members of the church have started working on expanding the block adoption program. They had re-opened their food

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pantry which was temporarily closed toward the end of the year 2018. The food pantry would enable the church to meet some physical needs of the people in the community.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

The mission of the Church still remains the same. Jesus Christ told his disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”\textsuperscript{217} How the local churches respond to the Great Commission, if they respond at all, will be different. How the local churches respond will determine what transformation will take place in their communities and in their cities. How the local churches respond to the Great Commission will have eternal consequences.

Whatever the differences may look like, “going” has to be a major component of fulfilling this instruction from the Lord. Local churches cannot continue to wish that the sinners will come to them just because they have the buildings or the programs. “But studies show that even the more conservative estimates indicate well over 100 million in the U.S. do not know Christ and would be considered unchurched, or beyond the reach of established churches.”\textsuperscript{218} Jesus stated that he came to seek and to save the lost.\textsuperscript{219} He is simply asking his disciples to do the same thing he did.

Jesus has already shown the local churches a great strategy to reach the sinners: go to them instead of waiting for them to come to you. “Finally, there is the approach of invading communities with the Gospel message. This is the biblical example of Jesus. That is, the church functions as the incarnate reflection of Christ through invading the world with the powerful

\textsuperscript{217} Matthew 28:19-20.
\textsuperscript{218} Alvin L. Reid and David Wheeler, \textit{Servant Evangelism} (Gospel Advance Books, 2013), 1-2, Kindle.
\textsuperscript{219} Matthew 18:11; Luke 19:10.
message of service, hope, love, and genuine redemption.” Block adoption is a good strategy to invade communities surrounding the local churches.

**Lessons Learned from Block Adoption**

While implementing the block adoption program, one of the lessons the researcher learned was that Christ’s disciples would have to meet their neighbors where they are. Spiritually speaking, the sinners are separated from God and they need help making the decision to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. Jesus went out to minister to the people. He sent out his disciples to people’s homes. He even instructed them to stay in those homes as they preach the gospel to their host families. Apostle Paul liked to visit places where people usually gathered. ‘And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” In the book of The Acts of the Apostles, there are accounts of Paul reaching out to people and engaging them where they were.

Another lesson the researcher learned through this research is that soul winning is a process. The Holy Spirit leads, but Christians have to follow. Some people are so far from God that it will take some time and efforts to help them reach the point of repentance. People in this group will usually insist that they are not ready yet to receive Jesus or visit any church. On the other hand, some people are like low hanging fruit. They are ready to be plucked. They are ready to receive Jesus into their hearts as soon as they hear the gospel. They readily say yes to an

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221 Acts 17:2-3.
invitation to visit a church. “Biblical church growth is a journey, not a destination.”  

Whoever is thinking of using block adoption strategy of evangelism is advised to allow the Holy Spirit to reveal where the people are on their spiritual journeys.

The researcher learned that people are more receptive of women and children than men. “If you have children, especially young ones, use your children as bridges for relationships. At church or in your neighborhood, you will find that the presence of your children lowers barriers. Put a child in a stroller and take a walking tour of your neighborhood to invite people to a backyard cookout. You will find people much quicker to talk to you than if you were alone!”

The neighbors warmed up to the women volunteers during this research. Men volunteers were also received but not with the same level of enthusiasm the women enjoyed.

Another lesson the researcher learned while implementing the block adoption program was that people were not as resistant as they were being described. “The Matonyok program suggests that people characterized as resistant may be evangelized successfully when approached in a creative way. In this case, the argument is that the label ‘resistant’ is less an accurate description of response to the gospel than an excuse for an irrelevant presentation.”

The neighbors did not fling open their doors and greet the volunteers with open arms during the first time they met, but they could not be described as resistant. The neighbors became more friendly as they got to know the volunteers better.

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222 Gary L. McIntosh, Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 76, Kindle.


Soul winning may sometimes look like pieces of a puzzle. It will require the help of the Holy Spirit to understand where each piece fits. During this research, there were moments when members of House of Joy Multicultural Church felt they were simply going to share the gospel with their neighbors, lead them in sinner’s prayer, and invite them to Church. However, things did not work that way. Most of the time, the neighbors the church members were reaching out to had mental, emotional, financial, and physical problems which made hearing the gospel difficult.

The researcher also got to understand, through this research, that there are different problems behind different doors. There are different stories in different families. Each family on the block had different problems or difficulty they were dealing with. There was a woman who had nothing to cook for Thanksgiving. There was a woman who was afraid to go out of her home by herself. She was especially afraid to go out in the night. As a result, she could not step out of her house to come to the church. The church members were discussing how they could support the woman toward attending church service. A woman had unresolved conflict with her sister. She had to leave the church she was attending because she could not bear seeing her sister who was also attending the same church.

**Growing Number of the “De-churched” People**

One main concern the researcher came across was the high rate of the “de-churched” people. “The de-churched are those who have been churched in the past but are currently on hiatus. Many of these people have a history of cyclical church attendance patterns, going through a phase when they are involved followed by a phase when they aren’t, and so forth. The de-churched are the fastest growing segment, presently one-third of the population.”

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neighbor stated that he was a pastor’s kid. He added that he used to play musical instrument in his father’s church. This man dropped out of the church and he did not have any inspiration to go back. Commenting on this serious problem, Cory (2017) writes, “His research revealed that 30.5 million people have left the church in America, and that another 7.5 million are on the verge of leaving. Packard has labeled those who have left as the ‘Dones.’ They are people who are done with the church as an organization and institution….”

Some of the reasons the de-churched people gave include church conflict, relocation, job demands, and the need for break or independence from what they called “organized religion”. “Americans are dismayed by traditional Christianity’s emphasis on rules, doctrine and dogma and find this emphasis to be a barrier to their continued involvement in religious institutions overall.” Some of these de-churched people also claimed that their relationship with God was personal, adding that they did not have to be part of any church to be Christians.

Moreover, there were several former Catholic church members who left their parishes but refused to join any other church. “Another factor to consider is that one-third of all churchless adults are former Catholics who say they will not consider returning to the Catholic church. They retain beliefs in God, Jesus, the Bible, and other elements of Christianity, but are hesitant to shift their allegiance to a Protestant church, which is unfamiliar or even scary to many of them.” Engaging these wonderful people with the gospel or inviting them to church service was quite different from engaging those who were never part of any church culture. “Walking with these believers into a connection with a local church or a reconnection with a Catholic parish demands

228 George Barna and David Kinnaman, Churchless, 921-925.
sensitivity, trust, patience, and understanding— and the offer of an irresistible reason to pursue that connection.”

These former Catholic church members needed church members who would be able to serve as their link or bridge to new church families.

Need for Change in Reaching the Unchurched

Church planters and church leaders have the ongoing responsibility of thinking through effective ways of reaching the people in their cities. There are cultural changes taking place in every city in America. There was a time when people felt they had to be part of the church in their communities. People felt proud to describe themselves as “Catholic”, “Baptist”, “Methodist”, “Presbyterian”, etc. Nowadays, a lot of people do not want to be associated with the church. Putting up church buildings in communities no longer attract the people as it used to. “Understand that we cannot get different results from just doing more or trying harder at the same things we’ve done in the past. To create a different future, we need to think differently, be different, and do things differently.”

The problem is the church has a reputation of holding on to its tradition until it becomes outdated.

It took so long for the church to realize that the traditional approach to church ministry was becoming ineffective. Even when the church leaders realized there was a need for change, the needed change took more time to be introduced and implemented. So, for several years now, many churches have shifted from traditional model to contemporary. “Most of our churches believe and act as if modeling on (and perfecting) the successful contemporary church approach will resolve their problems of mission.”

Yet, the church leaders need to realize that since the

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229 Ibid.
230 Eric Swanson and Sam Williams, To Transform a City (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 196, Kindle.
adoption of the contemporary church model, there has been generational shift happening. The active church members and leaders who adopted the contemporary church model back then, are becoming the older generation. New generation of people in the culture are unable to identify with what the older generation considered to be contemporary. “Clearly, God uses the contemporary church. It is simply to say it is not sufficient to the increasingly missional challenge now set before us.”232

Churches like Calvary Chapel, Willow Creek, and Saddleback have been able to take advantage of the contemporary church model. God has used the model to draw multitude to himself despite the criticisms against it. Several church leaders have built megachurches using the contemporary worship style. Despite the great results the church has enjoyed through the contemporary model, there are so many unchurched people who would not be drawn into the church buildings because of the lights, guitars, and projector screen. While all of these appeared innovative years ago, they are no longer as attractive. “If we really were getting great results from our current approaches to city ministry, we could simply accelerate those efforts. Unfortunately, that is not the case in most communities.”233 Since the contemporary church approach does not appear as contemporary to the younger generation, this approach is not going to get the same results it was getting.

Church planters and church leaders need to re-envision the church on a regular basis. They need to be asking themselves some questions. “Who lives in our area but is not represented in our church? Senior citizens, young families, singles, the urban poor and needy, the urban wealthy and self-satisfied? Who in our current congregation is positioned to best reach the group

232 Ibid.
233 Swanson and Williams, To Transform a City, 196, Kindle.
or groups of people God is calling us to reach?" In their prayers, church planters and church leaders should be asking the Holy Spirit to teach them the best strategies to reach the lost in their cities. God loves the sinners. He wants them saved and drawn to him.

A strategy of evangelism such as block adoption is needed in America. As more and more Americans reported feeling lonely, this is an opportunity for the local churches to step in, get to know their neighbors, build growing relationships, and minister to them effectively.

“Health insurer Cigna’s 2018 U.S. Loneliness Index found that 46 percent of Americans report feeling lonely sometimes or always, and 47 percent report feeling left out sometimes or always. A little less, 43 percent, report feeling isolated from others, and the same number report feeling they lack companionship and their relationships lack meaning.”

Church leaders who want to combine both the elements of attractional and missional forms of church ministry can take advantage of what block adoption has to offer. Jesus attracted people by asking them to follow him. He created a missional community by turning his followers into fishers of men. When a local church adopts block in its neighborhood, it is sending out its members as missionaries. When those church members succeed in bringing in their neighbors to the church, they will be inviting those neighbors to come and taste that the Lord is good.

**Recommendations**

The block adoption is an evangelism strategy that can be applied in other settings? It can be implemented wherever people live. In fact, the strategy can be customized based on the mission goals of different local churches. For example, a local church may choose to adopt the

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234 Darrin Patrick, *For the City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan. 2010), 1123, Kindle.
236 Matthew 4:19.
237 Psalm 34:8.
elderly citizens in its community. Another local church may decide to adopt families with special needs children in its community. Yet, another local church may choose to adopt the youths or children in its community.

Block adoption can be modified toward starting home Bible study groups. Church members in different neighborhoods can volunteer to open up their homes for God to use. Block adoption can be implemented by church planters as a strategy to kick start new churches. As they meet with the people and introduce themselves, they can start to cast the vision of planting churches that will positively impact the communities. This research will conclude with recommendations on how churches can implement block adoption in their local settings.

Raise missional disciples. Church leaders must make disciples who make other disciples. “We must make missional disciples! So how do we begin? The pastor must lead, teach, train, and seek to make missional disciples who will continually be surprised by grace and overwhelmed every time even one person is converted. The overwhelming reality of grace moves you from manipulation to celebration, from attractional to missional.”

Making missional disciples will relieve church leaders of having to spend too much of their time caring for the sheep in their fold. Missional disciples will not sit back to be served. Rather, they will be willing to reach out and serve other people. “Missional communities are structured and defined so that they focus on identifying the needs of their neighbors, serving them as a demonstration of the gospel.”

Get actively involved in the welfare of your city. Pastors and other church leaders should fall in love with the city God has called them to serve. In fact, local churches should be actively

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239 Patrick, *For the City*, 1825.
seeking the transformation of their communities. “But seek the welfare of the city where I have
sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your
welfare.” God will continue to call his people and assign them to different settings. Pastors
should be careful not to hate their cities or the people they are called to serve. They should rather
cooperate with God, so his will can be accomplished. When a city prospers, everyone will
benefit from it. “By seeking the shalom of the city, God was asking those in Babylonian captivity
to live and invest in the midst of the social and cultural world of their enemies, encouraging and
supporting the goodness and enjoyment of life by creating shalom in every niche of society.”

Part of getting involved in a city is getting to know the city well. Pastors should get to
meet with other pastors as well as other city leaders. They should go where the people of the
city go. They should attend parties the residents invite them to. Some of those parties may not
look like what the pastors are used to. It does not really matter. Christ’s followers live in this
world, but they are not of this world. Jesus Christ himself attended parties the people invited
him to. Pastors should get to know what is going on in their city. Getting actively involved
may open some doors of ministry opportunities in the city which the pastors should be sensitive
to. Pastors should also be willing and ready to take advantage of whatever ministry opportunities
God gives them in their cities.

It will be interesting to see what could happen if churches in a city will work together to
adopt every block in their city for Jesus! There is a possibility that every family will hear the

240 Jeremiah 29:7.
241 Patrick, For the City, 1825.
242 Swanson and Williams, To Transform a City, 198.
243 John 17:16.
gospel. There is a possibility that every family will have someone praying for them on a regular basis. “Remember that this is a work of God, who uses yielded people of faith, prayer, and action. The world can be transformed only by those who themselves have been transformed by God’s Spirit… Begin praying and seeking out like-minded, like-hearted people who want to change the world. Every movement of God starts with just one passionate person who says yes.”

Find some needs and meet them. Jesus did not raise up his disciples to be spectators. He did not call them to sit down and be entertained. Jesus called those disciples, so they could be with him, and so he could send them out to preach. “But how do evangelical believers accustomed to a spectator model of worship transition from low commitment to high commitment? From inwardly focused small groups into missional communities? Answer: you just do it! You act your way into a new way of thinking.” Pastors should work with their church members to find out the needs in their communities and meet those needs.

Block adoption offers a lot of potentials for church growth. Members of House of Joy Multicultural Church have used it to change their status from stagnation/plateau to growing. Block adoption can serve as a way of obeying the Great Commandment. It can also serve as a way of fulfilling the Great Commission. It is time for Christ’s disciples to look up and see what is going on in their communities. “Do you not say, ‘There are yet four months, then comes the harvest’? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest.”

245 Swanson and Williams, To Transform a City, 199-200.
247 Patrick, For the City, 1792.
248 Matthew 22:36-40.
250 John 4:35.
Any Christ’s follower can start a block adoption program wherever they live. Any family living for Jesus can start a block adoption wherever they live. There is so much to be explored and understood about block adoption. When more and more Christ’s disciples choose to apply this strategy, then more and more of its effectiveness can be revealed.
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October 1, 2018

Victor King
IRB Exemption 3462.100118: Block Adoption: Evaluating the Impacts of Neighborhood Care on Church Attendance at House of Joy

Dear Victor King,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless:
   (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

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