

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

Aiding a Reformed Church into a Multiethnic and Economically Diverse Congregation

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
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Doctor of Ministry

by

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Ethnic and economic diversity can be experienced in the local church. There is a biblical undertone in the Scriptures that shows Jesus, the apostles, and Old Testament themes that point to Revelation 7 for the reality of it. This reality can be lived on earth while Christians practice for heaven. While 95 percent of the churches around America remain homogeneous, with intentionality, adequate training, and a willingness to engage in difficult conversations, historically Reformed churches can also experience ethnic and economic diversity within their congregations. Although many churches do not feel the capabilities to become multiethnic and economically diverse, by participating in the PRIME Diversity Action Plan, churches can be trained and walked with in achieving that goal. This DMIN action research project's purpose is to develop and deploy the PRIME Diversity Action Plan to implement the value of intentionally pursuing and becoming a multiethnic and economically diverse church. Using the diversity plan, new core values will generate a multiethnic and economically diverse church, resembling Revelation 7 and Philippians 2. The PRIME Diversity Action Plan was implemented to gather qualitative data from elders, deacons, leaders, and ethnic minorities attending the same church in order to train, equip, and empower the leadership and pastor to move into church diversity. The results revealed participants grew in their ethnic and economic awareness, their desire to pursue, and their willingness to help cultivate a value for ethnic and economic diversity in the Reformed church.

Keywords: church, diversity, economic, ethnic, multiethnic, Reformed, workshop

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Abbreviations

ARC	<i>Awareness Relationships & Commitment</i>
CRC	<i>Christian Reformed Church</i>
DEI	<i>Diversity Equity Inclusion</i>
DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
ESV	<i>English Standard Version</i>
FC	<i>Faith Church</i>
GED	<i>General Educational Development Test</i>
IRB	<i>Institutional Review Board</i>
NIV	<i>New International Version</i>
PCA	<i>Presbyterian Church in America</i>
PRIME	<i>Posture, Racial Reconciliation, Identified Ideation, Meticulous Methods, Enlightened Enjoyment</i>
RCA	<i>Reformed Church in America</i>

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The church in America is one of the only places that continues to practice racial and ethnic segregation. Most schools, sporting venues, and government entities have laws preventing segregation and ethnic discrimination. While some pockets throughout the country do not have cities and towns with greater than 1 percent diversity, that is not the case for all communities, as most cities have more diversity now than in 2010.¹ Thus, it is disappointing when other entities have taken measures to emerge from the dark past of racial segregation, but Christ's church in America is not intentionally gaining significant ground. It was in the year 1960 when Dr. Martin Luther King stated the sad reality that Sunday mornings were the most segregated hours of Christian America.² What was true over sixty years ago still rings for truth today inside the church. Thus, a question emerges: Can a church succeed in enfolding ethnical diversity if it pursues it intentionally?

This question is why such an action research project is needed for today's church in the United States. When looking at the diverse worship scene depicted in Revelation 7, churches across all denominational lines need to feel a solid prompting to generate an environment in their worship spaces welcoming to differing ethnicities and demographics. While examining the ministry of Jesus Christ, Peter, and Paul to the marginalized, economically displaced, and

¹ Deidre McPhillips, "Measuring racial and ethnic diversity in America's cities," *U.S. News*, January 22, 2020, <https://www.usnews.com/news/cities/articles/2020-01-22/measuring-racial-and-ethnic-diversity-in-americas-cities>.

² Jason Tripp, "The Most Segregated Hour in America - Martin Luther King Jr.," April 30, 2014, YouTube video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1q881g1L_d8.

varying ethnicities, the church in local communities today should ask if they are reaching and ministering in the same way. That task, however, leads to another question: How can a church with a historical narrative of seclusion arise from its past storyline that repelled difference into a new chronicle that welcomes and embraces? It will be a challenging task and can only happen with intentionality.

Imagine the glory that God receives when the church represents ethnicities from all His creation together, worshipping Him with a unified voice, unlike any other entity on earth with all its hatred and segregation can accomplish. For this reason, this action research project walks with a historically reformed, Reformed Church in America (RCA) church to cultivate a worship experience that tolerates and accommodates ethnically and economically diverse people. Successful implementation would impact the church and the community that it is called to serve.

Ministry Context

Faith Church was established in 1963 in South Holland, Illinois. Since then, it has grown into a multi-site church with its main campus in Dyer, Indiana. Faith's mission statement is, "Reach the disconnected, and grow the connected." This means it desires to reach out to those who feel disconnected from God or the Christian community and provide them with a vibrant and welcoming environment in which to grow in their faith in God and their community with others. The vision statement of Faith Church is "To see a world transformed by and through the love of God." Summarized, this statement means the church wants to actively engage and restore the world "one relationship at a time."³

³ "Get to Know Us," Get to Know Us, Faith Church, 2024, <https://wearefaith.org/get-to-know-us/>.

Faith Church is Reformed and evangelical, aligning with the National Association of Evangelicals. It follows the historical creeds, such as the Nicene and Apostles, and uses confessions like the Heidelberg, Belgic, and Westminster. Faith Church believes the Bible to be God's inspired Word; as such, it is the authority for faith and practice. Faith Church is committed to gathering, growing, giving, and going as foundational pillars for developing the Christian walk.

Historical Journey

The following historical data came from the Faith Church website's "Get to Know Us" page and the *New Membership Class Manual*.⁴ The concept of Faith Reformed Church began in 1963. It was in 1964 that they bought land and started to build in South Holland, Illinois. In ten years, it had grown to 180 families. In 1992, Faith brought on a new pastor who is still serving as the senior pastor. In 1999, Faith Church rebranded its children's ministries as it experienced exponential growth. This growth led to the purchase of twenty-five acres of land across the Illinois, Indiana, border into Dyer, Indiana, in 2001. In two years, it modified its name from Faith Reformed Church into a simplified version of Faith Church. During this time, the new location in Dyer opened its doors and quickly became overcrowded. In 2005, an addition was made to give more space for worshippers. One year later, Faith Church explored the multi-site concept because it could not keep up with the number of people coming in by adding to the building size.

Then, in 2007, Faith Church launched its first multi-site in Cedar Lake, Indiana. By 2009, Faith launched an extensive marriage crisis ministry called the Ravines Retreat Center in Lowell, Indiana. As growth continued, an additional multi-site was established as Faith enfolded Beecher

⁴ "Get to Know Us," Get to Know Us, Faith Church, 2024, <https://wearefaith.org/get-to-know-us/>.

Community Church and became Faith Church Beecher. A year later, in 2013, Faith enfolded another church called Highland Christian Reformed Church, and it became known as Faith Church Highland. As momentum was soaring, a 50th anniversary was held in 2014, which welcomed six thousand attendees at the Star Plaza in Merrillville, Indiana. In 2017, Faith Church Munster began by enfolding Trinity Reformed Church of Munster.

Other campuses were enfolded, opened, and closed over the years. Some were within the Northwest Indiana region, while one was overseas in the Dominican Republic. Currently, Faith Church has five campuses. Three of those campuses have run out of indoor space. To help generate more space for the overgrowing campuses, a \$10 million campaign began in 2023, and currently, just under \$8 million has already been pledged, and \$3.4 million has been collected. In 2021, Faith invested in an enormous amount of technology and launched Wearefaith.TV.

Church Makeup

Each of Faith's five locations operates in an interdependent model. This means there is oversight from the central services, located in the Faith Dyer location, but each location can operate independently in many areas, while some are mandatory. For example, each campus must preach from the same text each week. Still, after spending time with the other pastors in sermon collaboration, each location pastor may go differently with the text than the other preaching pastors that week. All locations have the same branding, designs, sermon series, and central announcements. Each site maintains its own staff, pastor(s), location announcements, and city oversight. Each location keeps the name of Faith but adds the city/town name—for example, Faith Highland.

Across the five sites, an average of 3,340 people are in attendance. This breakdown equals Beecher = 217, Cedar Lake 801, Dyer 1430, Highland 634, and Munster 259. In 2023, the

church experienced 310 new members, 132 baptisms, and 117 professions of faith. There were some losses of members as well. To walk with the members and provide care for the connected and disconnected, there are sixty part-time and forty-seven full-time employees of Faith Church.

Denominational Influences

Since its inception, Faith Church has been a member of the Reformed Church in America; however, in 2021, it cut ties with the RCA and became a member of the Kingdom Network. Understanding both denominations is important to grasp a clearer picture of Faith Church's nature and culture.

Reformed Church in America History

The following historical data is from the “History of the RCA” about us section of the Reformed Church in America website.⁵ The Reformed Church in America began in 1628 in New Amsterdam, Manhattan. Its foundation comes from the 1500s Reformation, whose primary leader was John Calvin. This Reformed arm of Protestantism found its home in the Netherlands and became the Dutch Reformed Church. After finding its way to America, it underwent splits amid the Revolutionary War. The English language was not used in services until 1764. In 1847, the Reformed church grew as many Dutch immigrants settled in Pella, Iowa, and Holland/Zeeland, Michigan. More controversy emerged over hymns, secret societies, and Christian education, leading to a split, giving birth to the Christian Reformed Church in 1857. Impacted by World War II, the RCA spent millions of dollars from 1949 to 1958 to start new churches.

⁵ “History of the RCA,” Reformed Church in America, September 15, 2021, <https://www.rca.org/about/history/>.

In 1998, the General Synod began a Commission on Race and Ethnicity to address institutional racism and commit to becoming a multiethnic denomination. In 2022, the General Synod of the RCA, hoping their recommendations would “support the inclusion and belonging of historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups within the denomination,” adopted an Anti-racism policy with six items. 1) Acknowledging that racism is a sin and offense to God, 2) Defined anti-racism, 3) Confess their sin led to erecting "religious, cultural, economic, and political barriers along the racial and ethnic line and that these barriers have separated us from one another and deprived many of us the right to develop our personal and corporate identities," 4) Respect the rights and freedoms of all people of color, "where the cries of people who have become victims of racial injustice and discrimination" are taken seriously, 5) Support allies, and 6) "Commit to dismantling racism in its attitudes and structures in all assemblies (local churches, classes, regional synods, and General Synod).

Understanding these race relation inclusions, admission of sin, and dismantling racism in its churches just two years ago in 2022 brings added support to the importance of this action research project. Some sixty years after the Civil Rights Movement, the Reformed Church in America is now taking action to push for the equality of all races. While the recent racial reconciliation efforts are to be supported and applauded by the RCA, it should be understood that its hesitation over the years has cultivated a segregated culture within its churches across America, especially with its older members. Therefore, although Faith Church has made some strides not to be reclusive to racial inclusion, it certainly has been impacted by the historical nature of the Reformed Church in America.

Kingdom Network History

The following information is from the Kingdom Network website.⁶ In 2021, pastors and churches left their beloved denomination to create a “innovative, faithful, and missional” Reformed movement.⁷ More than a denomination, it is a network of reformed churches that hold to the Scriptures and are committed to seeing churches and leaders multiply. The Kingdom Network desires to see “Revelation 7:9 – every tribe tongue and nation – in our midst.” The Kingdom Network spans from Ohio to California with twenty-two partner churches, thirty-two locations, and thirteen pending churches.

As Faith Church has recently withdrawn its presence from the Reformed Church in America and was a leading pioneer in the development of the Kingdom Network, there is a willingness to move beyond the historical past of the RCA into an embrative denomination. Since Faith Church is a part of the Kingdom Network now, there is a precedent stated within the Kingdom Network that Faith will need to pursue and adopt. That precedent is the desire to see "Revelation 7:9 – every tribe, tongue, and nation – in our midst." Although the Kingdom Network and Faith Church want to see and experience this diversity inclusion, the question it must consider is how it will generate such a culture within its worship spaces. This void is what this action research will help navigate and build.

Demographics

The following demographics were obtained using MissionInsite from ACSTechnologies. Compiling and comparing the five Faith Church locations of Faith Beecher, Faith Ceder Lake,

⁶ Bob Bouwer et al., “About Us - Kingdom Network,” Kingdom Network - A Community of Reformed Churches, April 11, 2023, <https://kingdomnetworkusa.org/about-us/>.

⁷ Ibid.

Faith Dyer, Faith Highland, and Faith Munster provided a snapshot of six target demographics as of 2021 and are projected for 2026. Understanding the demographics will quantify the necessity for pursuing ethnic and economic inclusion within Faith Church campuses.

Race and Ethnicity

This content is vital to the research project as it illustrates the potential for ethnic diversity in each location. Faith Church's senior pastor has a goal of mirroring the communities regarding ethnicity. The community populations where Faith Church has churches indicate that over 75% of the people are White, with current data as (Beecher 91.32%, Cedar Lake 92.56%, Dyer 83.44%, Highland 77.86%, Munster 78.33%) and are projected to remain that way in 2026. The Hispanic population is the next highest (ranging from 5.52% in Cedar Lake to 14.5% in Highland). The Black population ranges from .32% in Cedar Lake to 4.33% in Highland. This racial makeup is not represented proportionally in the five locations of Faith Church. For example, Faith Highland does not see 18.83% of its Sunday attendees as multiethnic as the community is. Because Faith Church desires to mirror the community in each location, the current data shows it is not accomplishing this goal. While Beecher and Cedar Lake communities have less diversity, the reflection can explain why both churches are not as diverse.

The following is a breakdown of each location according to the average weekly attendance and the community ethnic emersion, as defined by the target goal. Otherwise stated, this is a breakdown of how many people currently attend each Faith Church campus and the respective amount of diversity each campus should be experiencing based on the racial demographics contrasted with the stated goal of mirroring the community rounded to the nearest whole number. Beecher, of the 217 attendees, respectively, should experience 3 Blacks and 14 Hispanic. Cedar Lake, of the 801 attendees, respectively, should experience 3 Asians, 2 Blacks,

44 Hispanics, and 9 Other. Dyer, of the 1430 attendees, respectively, should experience 37 Asians, 37 Blacks, 77 Hispanics, and 25 Others. Highland, of the 634 attendees, respectively, should experience 12 Asians, 28 Blacks, 90 Hispanics, and 10 Others. Munster, of the 259 average attendees, respectively, should experience 13 Asians, 9 Blacks, 29 Hispanics, and 4 Others. It is noted that not one location is experiencing those multiethnic percentages across Faith Church. Therefore, although the senior pastor would like to mirror the community in terms of ethnic makeup, Faith is not meeting this goal. Thus, the question is posed: Is this because it does not know how to pursue it, or does it not authentically desire to see such ethnic diversity within its membership?

Education

Educational levels illustrate part of the economic differences. Knowing educational levels and understanding how to engage people in those varying capacities is essential in economic diversity. The highest average level of education for all locations, except Munster, is a high school diploma or GED (ranging from 31.9% to 39.2%). Munster's highest demographic is bachelor's degrees at 30.5% and 16.4% for graduate degrees. Messages from the pulpit must be mindful of potential barriers such as a lack of understanding or oversimplification for the higher educated.

Income

This content generates the variance of economic diversity within the community and across all Faith Church locations. All five communities have the most people making between \$50,000 and \$150,000 (47.7% in Munster and 56.3% in Cedar Lake). Cedar Lake (3.6%) and Beecher (3.1%) have the highest percentage of people making less than \$10,000. Munster has the highest percentage of people making \$150,000 to \$199,000 (13.6%) and over \$200,000 (16.1%).

As Faith Church considers becoming economically diverse, it will need to be aware of the lower income bracket (>\$24,000) and poverty levels (>\$14,580) of each community as it considers how to include and accommodate this population.⁸ Beecher has 13.5% of the population in the lower bracket, with 4.2% in poverty. Cedar Lake has 13.5% of the population in the lower bracket, with 7.4% in poverty. Dyer has 7.6% of the population in the lower bracket, with 3.2% in poverty. Highland has 14% of the population in the lower bracket, with 3.2% in poverty. Munster has 13.7% of the population in the lower bracket, with 6% in poverty.

Religious Program or Ministry Preferences

Knowing this demographic helps to understand what is important to community members as Faith Church continues in its mission statement to reach the disconnected, but now with an additional lens of intentional engagement of ethnic and economic differences. Across all community locations, the number one factor that people identified as “Very Important” for going to church was “Warm and friendly encounters” – 36.5% in Dyer to 37.9 in Highland. Sacraments were the next highest in all communities at approximately 25%, followed by holiday programs and activities at 16%, then opportunities for volunteering in the community at 14%. From this data, Faith Church will need to understand what the term “Warm and friendly encounters” means to the various diverse entities they pursue.

The Role of the Researcher

This researcher serves as the Pastor of Development and Discipleship for the Highland location of Faith Church (FC). Faith Highland is the third largest site of Faith. Its growing campus consistently averages over 73 percent of its 370-seating capacity in its two Sunday

⁸ “Federal Poverty Level (FPL) - Glossary,” Federal Poverty Level, HealthCare.gov, accessed January 25, 2024, <https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/federal-poverty-level-fpl/>.

services. This percentage does not reflect the weekly average (101) of kids meeting in their overcrowded spaces. Although this researcher's primary focus is at the Highland location, he is involved with the other pastors and leaders of the different sites through the interdependent model of Faith Church. Of the one hundred and six staff members, this researcher makes up one of the fifteen non-White staff members who are ethnically diverse. He has been on staff for a year and a half.

Problem Presented

The church in the United States has observed and proven true the statement from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in a “Meet the Press” interview over sixty years ago, “Sundays are the most segregated day of the week in America.”⁹ The church has mirrored the racial barriers that have identified the culture of America, which has seen the evils of slavery, civil war, denied civil rights, and ongoing discrimination. The church has been used as an advocate for segregation as well as combatants of it. The country certainly has improved, but this era continues to struggle with race relations. Some denominations have taken great strides to push back segregation and embrace racial differences. Some churches have seen the importance of pursuing and cultivating multiracial Sunday services. In 1960, 85 percent of the population was White; however, it is projected that by 2060, it will only be 43 percent.¹⁰ As communities change in ethnicity, the church must see the need to represent the change.

The church is called to observe a biblical guidance of unity. A unity described in Revelation 7 depicts the heavenly worship scene with people from every tribe, nation, and

⁹ Tripp, “The Most Segregated Hour.”

¹⁰ Derwin L. Gray, *The High-Definition Leader: Building Multiethnic Churches in a Multiethnic World* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2015), 2.

language together. Some churches have not taken the opportunity to navigate their congregants into the demanding work of racial unity on Sunday mornings. Without intentionality and accommodations, a homogenous church will not experience the delight and biblical example of being multiethnic. Faith Church's senior pastor has a concept of seeing each location to ethnically mirror the community they are in. At present, no location has actively pursued the idea into reality. Some of the leadership thinks that everyone would feel comfortable at Faith Church, no matter their ethnicity. If this is true, what is holding other ethnicities back from coming and staying at a Faith Church location? If Faith does not intentionally pursue mirroring the diversity depicted in Revelation 7 with a set of core values and leadership cohesiveness, this ethnic immersion goal will not become a reality. The problem is that Faith Church is failing to give congregants a core value resembling Revelation 7 with intentional multiethnic and economic diversity.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this DMIN action research project is to create and deploy the PRIME Diversity Action Plan to implement the value of being multiethnic. This plan will help Faith Church overcome a historical narrative that has hindered its intentional pursuit of becoming a multiethnic church. PRIME is an acronym for Posture, Racial Reconciliation, Identified Ideation, Meticulous Methods, and Enlightened Enjoyment. It is imperative that this process is covered in prayer and implemented cautiously and slowly. Rushing the process of unity can split the church.

Posture – is an alignment of pastors, leaders, and critical staff into developing a vision statement and mentality that embodies the need for ethnic inclusion through intentionality.

Racial Reconciliation – is walking the church through the painful past to create honesty, lamenting, healing, and celebrating.

Identified Ideation – is the development of a church culture that depends on the Lord, pursues intentionality, establishes diverse leadership, develops cross-cultural relationships and competencies, and expects an attitude of inclusion. It uses intentional integrations to carefully launch the ideation methods according to the strategic timeline set in the methods step.

Meticulous Methods – is establishing teams to strategically work through the newly formed ideations into practical, realistic, measurable, and specific launching points.

Enlightened Enjoyment – is living into the ideation reality and experiencing the power of multiethnic and economically diverse worship with spiritual and life transformational enjoyment.

This action research project will help the leaders of Faith Church focus on its true intentionality of the diversity articulated by the senior pastor. Transitioning from a solo thought into a living reality across all five locations can be disrupted and overthrown at many levels of leadership and the members. This plan will help transition from concept to its feasibility and, if possible, to actuality. The leadership teams and the congregants will need much guidance in the intentional pursuit of not only allowing multiethnic and economically diverse people into a welcoming worship experience but also allowing those same individuals to become leaders and stakeholders. This research will help pastors, elders, leaders, and congregants assess and rectify any overlooked presuppositions and traditions impeding the culture of change.

Basic Assumptions

Going into this action research, this researcher has some basic assumptions and presuppositions at the onset of this project. This researcher holds both positive and negative assumptions for the project moving forward. All assumptions need to be sifted carefully to ensure they do not hinder the authenticity and achievability of this project. This researcher carries five assumptions in no particular order.

The first assumption is that pastors want to see a Revelation 7 congregation. This means that pastors desire to have the diversity depicted in Revelation 7, which includes people from

every tribe, nation, and language. This assumption is projected onto every pastor from the five Faith Church locations. This assumption pushes the following: although the pastors want to see a Revelation 7 congregation at their location, they do not know how to make that desire a reality. This assumption exists because most FC pastors do not have a background in multiethnic ministry.

Another assumption is that not all current members will desire a multiethnic and economically diverse church at their location. Some congregates will be accustomed to the predominant monoethnic culture and will be hesitant to movements that push inclusion and diversity. Based on this researcher's past experiences in other settings, there is an assumption that dealing with race relations will potentially be difficult to navigate. Therefore, pastors may like for the congregation to be multiethnic and economically diverse in theory, but they may not want to do the work to make it a reality. As they count the cost, they may perceive that the risks do not outweigh the benefits. The final assumption is that in the methodology component, it is assumed that because of their Christian background, the people asked to participate will be honest in their feedback with no intentional lies even if they experience uncomfortableness.

Definitions

This DMIN action research project looks at establishing multiethnic and economic diversity in a historically Reformed church. As such, it is imperative that definitions of key terms are clarified for the ongoing writing. Some terms are used for continuity, and others are for updated terminology that brings more inclusion to the project.

Black. This action project uses the term Black instead of other familiar terms such as African American, Black American, People of Color, or Colored. As many Black people living in America have never been to Africa, and because White Americans are not commonly referred

to as European Americans, the term Black is the preferred word choice in this project. The term Black was preferred over the term “Negro” by activists in the 1960s, and African Americans came into use in the 1980s to show the descent of a person from Africa.¹¹ The term “People of Color” originated as an alternative to Black. However, “People of Color” now encompasses Native Americans, Latinos, Asians, and other non-White groups.

Classis. Is a term used in the Reformed Church in America to describe ministers and elders who oversee the churches of a particular region. Some of the Classis's responsibilities are to ordain and install ministers, receive new churches, and walk with individuals in school who desire to be ministers.¹²

Diversity. Some would define diversity as “an average property of a community,” but that does not specify what the average is being measured to. Patil describes diversity as “the average rarity within a community.”¹³ There are rarities in the church. Rarities are beautiful and should become part of the overall community. Although they are rare, the same accommodations should be made for them as for the dominant community members.

Economically Diverse. Historically, economics provided another means for segregation. Class systems were designed to give names to those with and those without. When people have different preferences and unequal power, it provides unique challenges. Tach says, “Segregation by race and income reduces access to high-quality housing, institutions, and services for poor

¹¹ Nicole Chavez, “Which Is the Correct Terminology: Black, African American or People of Color?,” University of Alabama Huntsville, April 8, 2021, <https://www.uah.edu/diversity/news/15567-which-is-the-correct-terminology-black-african-american-or-people-of-color>.

¹² Efikkert and Becky Getz, “The Reformed Church in America,” Reformed Church in America, June 27, 2024, <https://www.rca.org/>.

¹³ G. P. Patil and C. Taillie, “Diversity as a Concept and Its Measurement: Rejoinder,” *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 77, no. 379 (September 1982): 548, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2287712>.

and minority residents, which reproduces and exasperates racial and economic inequalities.”¹⁴ Therefore, creating economically diverse settings pushes against another form of segregation. This type of segregation has been experienced by many church members in various communities.

Enfolded. In the history of Faith Church, other churches have been enfolding. Within this history, FC has lovingly come alongside other churches that were seeking help or were in the process of becoming stagnant or dying out. Enfolding is more than a merging, as each location has given its way, polity, membership, and name to Faith Church. It is not a hostile takeover, but rather the enfolded church that has asked for help in their current situation. FC does not enfold all churches that reach out asking for help but moves forward with prayer and strategic action.

Ethnic. There are three basic ways to describe people's identity. Race, culture, and ethnicity are commonly used to define a person's identity. Race typically deals with the biology of a person, such as their skin color and physical features, and is placed in the categories of White, Black, Asian, and Native.¹⁵ Culture deals with artifacts and practices of a group of people, including food, customs, clothing, language, etc.¹⁶ Ethnicity contains history. It is a history connected to other families, with a shared history around people and places.¹⁷ This project uses the words ethnic and ethnicity because they are seen in the Bible more than race and culture. Race conversations are dismissed more quickly than ethnicity. This action research project focuses on more than the biology of people but the history that can unite tribes, nations, and people.

¹⁴ Laura M., Tach, et al., "Diversity, Inequality, and Microsegregation: Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion in a Racially and Economically Diverse Community," *Cityscape* 16, no. 3 (2024): 14, <https://doi.org/26326904>.

¹⁵ Steve Tamayo, *Ethnic Identity: Bringing Your Full Self to God* (Westmont, IN: InterVarsity Press, 2021), ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/liberty/detail.action?docID=6446613>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

General Synod. The General Synod of the RCA is the highest court and assembly within the denomination. It comprises elders and ministers from different regions around the country that convene once a year to set the direction for the denomination and its policies.¹⁸

Hispanic. In the 1970s, the Office of Education enlisted a study group to identify different ethnic groups. At that time, the Hispanics made it known that they were unhappy with references to “Chicano,” “Mexican American,” “Cuban,” and “Borinquen/Puerto Rican” as ethnic categories.¹⁹ In 1975, a committee on ethnic definitions was formed, and one of the subcommittees was to work on defining Hispanics. The committee narrowed all possible terms down to Hispanic and Latino.²⁰ Because “Latin” and “Mexican American” both represent the differences between Anglos and Whites instead of an inclusive American ethnic group, this paper uses the term Hispanic to encompass people of all Spanish lineage.

Multiethnic. Multiethnic includes people from different histories who engage with one another. Their engagement looks beyond a dominant group in charge and places the common good above the people in the majority. It intertwines race, culture, and ethnic differences into a unified whole.

Racism. Racism has different components of it, such as structural racism, cultural racism, and discrimination at the individual level.²¹ Williams adequately describes it, saying that racism is a social system designed by a dominant racial group that pushes external social groups into

¹⁸ “The General Synod,” Reformed Church in America, May 1, 2023, <https://www.rca.org/about/government/general-synod/>.

¹⁹ Grace Flores-Hughes, “The origin of the term ‘Hispanic’,” *Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy* 18, no. 20 (2006): 81.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

²¹ David R. Williams, Jourdyn A. Lawrence, and Brigitte A. Davis, “Racism and Health: Evidence and Needed Research,” *Annual Review of Public Health* 40, no. 1 (April 1, 2019): 105, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040218-043750>.

classes called “races,” and those external races are made to feel inferior, devalued, stripped of their power, and deprived of their resources.²² Racism leads to segregation, and segregation affects health in multiple ways.²³ Therefore, without realizing it, segregation in the church today can carry a negative impetus that racism is the driving force within churches that are set within multiethnic communities yet remain segregated within their walls.

Reformed. The Reformed perspective that this action research project depicts comes from the Reformation in the 1500s when there was a belief that the church had moved away from the Word of God and allowed other standards to rule and lead the church. Pioneers such as Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin helped to remold the church, utilizing the Word of God to define the doctrines of God, man, Christ, salvation, and the church. Godfrey says the reshaping of thinking, living, and worship by the Word of God is the essence of being reformed.²⁴ To be Reformed happens in the understanding and taking seriously what the Bible says about election, the work of Christ, the sovereignty of God in effectual calling, and the perseverance of the saints.²⁵ Being Reformed happens from the Word of God. Confessional documents such as the Heidelberg, Belgic, and Westminster give great insight into what it means to be Reformed.

Reformed Church in America. Also known as the RCA, it was founded in 1628 in the United States and has roots in the Protestant Reformation of the 1500s.²⁶ With its Dutch heritage, having diverse congregations was not its priority. Understanding the historical narrative of the

²² Williams et al., “Racism and Health,” 106.

²³ Ibid., 108.

²⁴ R. William Godfrey et al., “What Does It Mean to Be Reformed?,” Ligonier Ministries, accessed January 27, 2024, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/qas/what-does-it-mean-be-reformed>.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Reformed Church in America, “History of the RCA.”

denomination gives insight into the critical nature of this research project while providing background and understanding of the difficulties in fostering a multiethnic environment.

White. To bring consistency, this research project uses the term White to augment the term Black to identify people who would otherwise be classified as European American. There is caution when using the term White as studies have shown that many associate or believe White equals American.²⁷

Limitations

This action research project may experience differing limitations and, therefore, must be addressed. The first limitations are the senior pastor's desire and ability to pursue a higher level of ethnicity and the steps to get there. As the senior pastor has stated, he desires to see FC grow into being multiethnic. The steps to get there are intensive, and he may have some resistance in the actual pursuit of getting there. He may also resist the survey portion of this project geared toward church members to acknowledge their cultural awareness and motivation to push forward.

Another limitation is the involvement of the other location pastors. Although the senior pastor desires to become multiethnic, the campus pastors may not. Location pastors may feel the burden of this action research is too demanding of their time. If so, they may resent and resist involvement in the process. Along with this resistance could be another limitation of participation in the educational training workshop component of the methodology section of this project. This training is designed to help the location pastors, elders, deacons, leaders, and ethnic

²⁷ Thierry Devos and Mahzarin R Banaji, "American = White?" *Journal of personality and social psychology*. 88, no. 3 (2005): 447, <https://doi:10.1037/0022-3514.88.3.447>.

stakeholders be better prepared to minister to people of different ethnicities and economic statuses than themselves. The pastors may reject being a part of the training.

Additionally, due to the current cultural climate and political unrest regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, "DEI" (an article for understanding this concept more is *Race and Justice*²⁸), some leaders and congregants may be hyper-sensitive to the word diversity and misconstrue this action research and the PRIME Diversity Action Plan as attempting to implement categories outside of ethnicity and economics, such as gender and sexuality. This may impact the involvement of leaders and congregants. There is a potential limitation on the congregant's ability to be forthright in their struggle with current or past racial and economic inclusion and exclusion of those outside their likeness. The unfamiliarity outside of a monoethnic congregation could also prevent the needed additional step of current leaders and members from expanding the concept of people feeling comfortable to feeling accommodated. Thus, the final limitation in this action research plan is the speed at which the leaders and congregants are willing to progress through the various steps of the PRIME Diversity Action Plan.

Delimitations

Four specific delimitations are unique to the scope of this DMIN action research project when forming the methodology. First, while the church could focus on many types of inclusions, such as gender, age, disability, and so forth, this research project focuses on two specific inclusions: ethnicity and economics. Narrowing the focus allows for enhancement and better avenues for implementation.

²⁸ David R. Williams, Jourdyn A. Lawrence, and Brigitte A. Davis, "Racism and Health: Evidence and Needed Research," *Annual Review of Public Health* 40, no. 1 (April 1, 2019): 105–25, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-040218-043750>.

Additionally, a vital delimitation deals with the timing of this project. While this project could take years to implement and track desired growth in all locations, the project will be limited to the education, training, development, and launching of the action plan, not to monitoring the long-term results. Along with this delimitation is the restriction to not include all five FC locations. This project will focus on Faith Church Dyer and Faith Church Highland. Each location has a different DNA and style of operating. Undertaking implementation into all five locations will be too large of a project to oversee and manage. Although only two locations are targeted for the immediate implementation of this action research, pastors from all locations are encouraged to participate in the training and educational components of the project, even though their respective campuses will not be involved. The three other locations can consider further engagement with the PRIME Diversity Action Plan upon the project's success.

Another delimitation is that this project will focus on collaborating with pastors and leaders for development along with the selected representation of congregants. Although all members will benefit from the PRIME Diversity Action Plan, a representative population will be focused on. Because of the sensitivity of this action plan, the project will not outrun the senior pastor and his comfort level for each implementation step. He must feel comfortable and be assured of safety, confidentiality, and control as he guards the sheep of the pasture.

Thesis Statement

Becoming a multiethnic and economically diverse church that not only accepts and assimilates people who are viewed differently but accommodates them is a model of the first church in Antioch and a vivid description of Revelation 7. This plan will transition a church with a long monoethnic history and passion for its reformed heritage into a multiethnic church without causing a church split in the unity process. It is not typical for reformed churches in

denominations such as the Reformed Church in America (RCA), Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), or the Christian Reformed Church in America (CRC) to pursue breaking their molds of mono-ethnic homogenous people to embrace being a congregation of multiethnic people.

Therefore, Faith Church will have the perplexing task of developing a core value that will allow it to pursue this kind of transition with its historically reformed background in a healthy way. Hidden and unknown biases of prejudice will push against the heart for various ethnicities worshipping together, as witnessed in Revelation 7. Yes, bringing multiple ethnicities together has the potential to create problems within the church. These potential issues should not be minimized, nor should the church be infatuated with or deny the possibility of problems. Some problems that the church could experience are the loss of members who feel uncomfortable with different ethnicities worshipping together or who reject having to include various elements from the incoming ethnicities. The church could experience murmuring and complaining from membership and leaders who pushed back against ethnic and economic inclusion. Although the church may experience responses such as these, it is believed that which may come and can be fostered and cultivated is worth navigating for the glory of God and the inclusion of His people from differing backgrounds. With the Holy Spirit's guidance, the leaders can walk according to His call and purpose while pushing back against the darkness that rejects the available hope in the gathering of God's children that are His heirs, even if there is a moment or season of affliction for that which is yet to come is far greater than the negative moment (Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 4:17).

This plan is not merely adding people to the church who act, think, and assimilate as if there are no differences. This plan will cultivate a new identity in the church culture that will

create a Philippians 2:3-4 atmosphere that looks out for the interest of others. This plan does not attempt to fill a quota but empowers ethnicities to worship God together while embracing and appreciating differences. If Faith Church utilizes the PRIME Diversity Action Plan, then its new core value will generate a multiethnic, economically diverse church, resembling Revelation 7 and Philippians 2.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Discovering relevant literature on a proposed ministry project is vital in the academic process. This research process will guide the project moving forward. It is imperative not to overlook this process of gaining knowledge from the leading scholars in this identified problem area of ethnic and economic diversity in the church setting. While examining the top scholars on bringing diversity into the reformed church, it was noticed that there is not a lot of material from scholars and leaders who have successfully accomplished a multiethnic church and written scholarly about it. Although there is a gap in the literature from a reformed perspective, there is research from a few pastors and leaders who have documented their journey from being a monoethnic homogeneous church to being a multiethnic one.

This chapter covers the literature review and the theological and theoretical foundations for establishing a multiethnic and economically diverse church resembling Revelation 7. This multiethnic concept is not a mere idea that looks good in culture, but rather, it is a biblical and theological mandate that the church has not lived out as it could. There are varying Scriptures that support this call to a church that is inclusive of varying economic and ethnic people. This chapter focuses on research done by others that can assist this action research and the development of its methodologies. At the same time, this chapter illustrates the varying scriptures that support the theological pursuit of ethnic inclusion. Finally, this chapter constructs a theoretical foundation that illustrates the potential community growth benefits enacted when a church within a community seeks to be the leader of ethnic and economic unity. It is believed

that as the church gets better within the community, the community, in turn, has a foundational guide to pattern itself and live from.

Literature Review

Racial differences are a factor in the world, and how those differences get navigated varies from person to person and ethnicity to ethnicity. To be a church that pursues multiethnic and economic diversity, there must be intentionality to transition the church which exists in the United States that has a history of slavery, war, segregation, protest, civil rights movements, lynchings, exclusions, unity, and continued church seclusion. In a country that became a “Melting Pot,” the church has remained mostly segregated. This literature review covers the necessary components for navigating a monoethnic church beyond the historical narrative of segregation existing in the church.

The church located in the United States of America must ask itself if it has played a role in the segregation that exists in the country and the walls of the various churches. Willis does a fine job pointing out that while tradition, housing, and economics have contributed to segregation, the church also has a role because it has not done a distinctively great job of being the salt of the earth (Matt 5:13-16), the head and not the tail (Deut 28:13), nor the leaven that can alter the attitudes (Gal 5:9) to a greater sense of love thy neighbor that is most usable by the Lord.¹

Even though there is not much literature pertaining to the Reformed church on pursuing diversity, what has been written is beneficial for advancing this research project. It is believed that there is a crossover from one denomination to another as it pertains to establishing a

¹ Dan Willis, *The Multicultural Church: Embracing Unity and Restoration* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2019), 11.

multiethnic and economically diverse church. By examining the work of a couple dozen leaders and pastors who have written their concepts and stories of becoming multiethnic, this researcher has found some common themes and best practices that will assist in developing this action research project. The following authors and articles proved to be the most beneficial.

Distorted views

To be a multiethnic church, it is essential to understand that people will bring distorted views that hinder progress. The church and its leaders must acknowledge distorted views, understand their origins, and address them to become multiethnic. The bride of Christ in the United States experiences beauty, chaos, cultures, unity, and diversity. Unfortunately, it also experiences segregation. This segregation pushes ethnicities apart as distorted views are being carried from one group to the other. When views are distorted, it allows for perceived irreconcilable differences to remain. Views such as the “Black church” or the “White church” continue an ongoing narrative that is divisive to the kingdom of God.² In the same way that President Ronald Reagan spoke to Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev regarding tearing down the Berlin wall, "There is only one Berlin," is the same way the church must recognize there is only one church and one blood; therefore, the racial distortions that segregate must intentionally be torn down.³ The historical racial narrative resulting from decades and centuries of segregation within the local sanctuaries of the Reformed Church is an example of the walls that need to come down. Faith Church will have to push against old paradigms that the older

² Glenn Bracey et al., *Beyond Diversity: What the Future of Racial Justice Will Require of U.S. Churches* (Ventura, CA: Barna Group, 2021), 10.

³ John Perkins, *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race and Love* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2018), 116.

members would have lived through, which caused division in the nation as it tries to mirror the ethnically diverse communities in which its churches are located.

Research shows that this can be a difficult conversation for some will take the belief that this is a means to attack and critique their segregated congregation.⁴ Hardwick states, "At the heart of discussions about both diversity and disability are the emotional fears and attitudinal sins of stigma and prejudice toward the 'other' that solidify into systemic discrimination and social barriers."⁵ Timothy Keller shares an experience that helped him to see that White Christians are blinded to the Euro-White culture. While speaking with a Black pastor, the pastor helped him to notice that when he comes to his church and watches the worship, singing, and preaching, the thought is that is the Black way, but in his own church, the idea is "that is the right way."⁶ DeYmaz elaborates on an encounter where one White youth pastor carried an assumption that caused him to look down on a Black youth pastor for his means of community and pastoral care. The Black youth pastor responded that it was wrong for him to carry the assumption just because they do not approach ministry in the same way.⁷ Strickland says there are those in the White church who hold a belief that the Black church does not have good theology, which can escort the mind into subtle and potentially unknown White supremacy.⁸

⁴ Mark DeYmaz and Harry Li, *Leading a Healthy Multiethnic Church: Seven Common Challenges and How to Overcome Them* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2020), 78.

⁵ Lamar Hardwick, *Disability and the Church: A Vision for Diversity and Inclusion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 7.

⁶ Irwyn L. Ince Jr., *The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at Its Best* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 2.

⁷ Mark DeYmaz, *Building A Healthy Multiethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of a Diverse Congregation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2020), 15.

⁸ Walter R. Strickland II and Hartman Dayton, *For God So Loved the World: A Blueprint for Kingdom Diversity* (Nashville TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2020), 20.

Bracey identifies that three in five White Christians believe personal prejudice and not institutional discrimination is a bigger problem, contrasting to the two-thirds of Black Christians who say that institutional discrimination is a bigger problem than prejudice.⁹ These distorted differences enable both White and Black Christians to view God as representing their color more than the other.¹⁰ Unlike Black evangelicals, White evangelicals typically approach racial issues as individualistic, which hinders building racial bridges.¹¹ For example, as impressive as Billy Graham was for the kingdom of God, he did not accept Martin Luther King, Jr.'s methods of nonviolent protests during the Civil Rights Movement even though he was not openly pro-segregation.¹² One reason racial bridge building within the church in America is complex is that evangelicals are not engaging with people differing from their race and social class, as more than seventy percent of their time outside the church is spent with people from their congregation.¹³

There are differences between Black and White churches. Those differences carry the underlying heartbreaking reality that only 5.5 percent of congregations in the United States are made up of less than eighty percent of one racial group. Otherwise stated, 94.5 percent of all churches have less than twenty percent ethnic diversity within their congregational attendees regardless of their community demographics. This means that eighty percent or more of the people are of the same ethnic background. Half of those 5.5 are transition churches that

⁹ Bracey, *Beyond Diversity*, 6.

¹⁰ Steven Roberts et al., "God as a White Man: A Psychological Barrier to Conceptualizing Black People and Women as Leadership Worthy," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 119, no. 6 (2020): 1290. doi:10.1037/pspi0000233.

¹¹ Michelle Oyakawa, "Racial Reconciliation as a Suppressive Frame in Evangelical Multiracial Churches," *Sociology of Religion* 80, no. 4 (2019): 496, <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srz003>.

¹² *Ibid.*, 498.

¹³ DeYmaz and Li, *Leading a Healthy*, 24.

eventually will be above 80 percent of a monoracial makeup.¹⁴ Some underscored truths must be illuminated within churches embracing the multiethnic mix. Smith's research shows that "Christian evangelicalism is only willing to tolerate evangelicals of color to the extent that they can be safely incorporated within White evangelicalism."¹⁵ Those who do become incorporated have the burden of "relationship maintenance," regardless of the amount of racial representation like them.¹⁶ Simply stated, diverse and disabled people who are termed "other" have to learn the unwritten scripts of the majority to embed the unspoken expectations into their behavior."¹⁷ Morrison describes her experience, "As a person of color, I'd integrated within their majority culture. I had become familiar with their movies, music, and fashion. ...I was comfortable and familiar with White culture, but they'd never had to learn about the history or culture of my people."¹⁸ Thus, ethnicities must get to know each other to have a triumphant multiethnic church.

Knowing

The goal of intimacy in the church should mirror getting to know each other as knowing God.¹⁹ Christians focused on racial diversity must strive to familiarize themselves with each other's backgrounds and stories to understand that there is more commonality than they imagined.²⁰ A racially diverse church will be built on knowing each other, which requires

¹⁴ Jennifer Harvey, *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2020).

¹⁵ Andrea Smith, *Unreconciled: From Racial Reconciliation to Racial Justice in Christian Evangelicalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 3.

¹⁶ Ince, *The Beautiful Community*, 2.

¹⁷ Hardwick, *Disability and the Church*, 8.

¹⁸ Latasha Morrison, *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2019), 4.

¹⁹ Ince, *The Beautiful Community*, 25-26.

²⁰ John Perkins, *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race and Love* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2018), 113.

listening. The majority in a congregation must listen to the voices of people with disabilities and minority people of diverse skin.²¹

Knowing the struggles of those who are different and the difficulties that Christian brothers and sisters of diverse colors navigate to overcome racism to be a part of a church that is majority or monoracially different is imperative. Tisby identifies that “Racism uses an array of tactics to deceive, denigrate, and dehumanize others.”²² Tisby uses ARC, an acronym that stands for awareness, relationships, and commitment, as a starting point to defeat the racism that has infiltrated the church.²³ He states that by getting to know others, those who were once termed as “problems” can become people who develop into friends who can jointly face racial bigotry.²⁴ This process of knowing “others” can seem strange, but it is necessary to cultivate a multiethnic church.

Strangeness

To become a racially diverse church that resembles Revelation 7, the people will experience strangeness. Because America is a melting pot, there are multitudes of languages, customs, and traditions that go with it. As the church opens to racial diversity, it must anticipate the strangeness of experiences that come with it. For example, using certain words from one ethnicity may sound strange and need explaining or context in another.²⁵

²¹ Hardwick, *Disability and the Church*, 9.

²² Jemar Tisby, *How to Fight Racism: Courageous Christianity and the Journey Toward Racial Justice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), 5.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Cory Hunter, “Thy Kingdom Come: Racial-Ethnic Oneness in African American Gospel Music,” *The Musical Quarterly* 105, no. 1–2 (2022): 22, <https://doi.org/10.1093/musqtl/gdac003>.

Strangeness is not foreign even in the Bible, for the Scriptures are filled with references to the strangeness of entraining and welcoming strangers while engaging in God's love for the world.²⁶ The strange feeling does not cancel God's narrative, for Moses left Egypt with a mixed people, and the early disciples of Christ were being led to cross-cultural borders.²⁷ In the multicultural church established today, there will be strangeness as congregations typically adopt the persona of the dominant culture, leaving others to lack full autonomy because they are knowledgeable that they will always be guests.²⁸

Historical Undertones

To develop a multiethnic church, the leadership team must understand the historical undertones that will try to evade the efforts of overcoming church segregation. The racial past in the United States has impacted the Church today. Like shingles lying dormant, the racial past in the Church in America, although at times may appear symptom-free, is at any time at risk of an outbreak. To be symptom-free is different from being cured. Some will contend that racism ended with the Civil Rights Movement; however, it did not possess the instruments to truly comprehend the vast multiconnected venue of racism, sexism, and classism in American culture and its institutions.²⁹ People will go on to argue that since racism is not a factor in today's America, it is not necessary to bring it up in the church. This thinking is dangerous. To ignore, dismiss, excuse, or justify past wrongs does not bring the opportunity for forgiveness, lamenting,

²⁶ Mark Lau Branson, and Juan F. Martinez, *Churches, Cultures, and Leadership: A Practical Theology of Congregations and Ethnicities* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2023), 10.

²⁷ Ibid., 2.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Matthew Kaemingk, *Reformed Public Theology: A Global Vision for Life in the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), chapter 18.

reconciliation, and celebrating.³⁰ Although it is not wise to dwell on the past, it is necessary to understand it to navigate the current culture and to develop an alternative, healthier future.

Identity is partially lost when there is a lack of historical understanding.³¹

A historical framework of prejudice and racism has molded Americans.³² Even their assumptions, aspirations, and imaginations have been manipulated by racial narratives that generate segregation.³³ This racial prejudice has invaded the institutions in the United States,³⁴ including the church. Dougherty contends that over the generations, Christians in America affiliated with churches that reflected the racial segregation of the country.³⁵ Therefore, even though racial history is a difficult conversation to engage in, it cannot be omitted due to uncomfortability because those historical undertones led to racial church segregation that needs to be lamented.³⁶ Ideations and undertones are both in the church; as the church deals with them, they generate the best opportunity to develop a multiethnic culture.

Misaligned viewpoints will help generate a receptive attitude, allowing diversity to pass beyond tolerance and be desired by the majority ethnicity. It will also create an environment that makes the minority comfortable to engage in when they can let down their historical guards of past discrimination. This effort is not a fault-giving endeavor but an educational awareness that will aid in dismantling bad ideations and unaware, continued practices. Strickland says many

³⁰ Morrison, *Be the Bridge*, 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

³² Branson, *Churches, Cultures, and Leadership*, introduction.

³³ David W. Swanson, *Rediscipling the White Church from cheap diversity to true solidarity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020), 6.

³⁴ Branson, *Churches, Cultures, and Leadership*, introduction.

³⁵ Kevin D. Dougherty, Mark Chaves, and Michael O. Emerson, "Racial Diversity in U.S. Congregations, 1998–2019," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 59, no. 4 (2020): 652, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12681>.

³⁶ Morrison, *Be the Bridge*, 39.

Christians possess an outdated thinking that believes the present is identical to the past, and that thought leads Westerners to imagine biblical characters as Anglo-Westerners instead of Middle Eastern and African actuality.³⁷

Koo adds that Christians are known to, on occasion, misunderstand the Bible and embed too many Americanized constructs that push the ideology of White superiority.³⁸ Over the years, some have expanded these detrimental thoughts and projected that not only are the biblical figures White, but God is also.³⁹ This mentality gave an association of Whiteness with Godliness, and such a concept gave support to ideas of White superiority and Black inferiority as Blacks were labeled as sinners who were the “blackened” cursed “sons of Ham.”⁴⁰ In the United States, this reinforced a social hierarchy that impacted Black people and women.⁴¹ It is in America’s history and colonialism that sailed the globe that people who professed Christianity have been the most substantial catalysts and perpetrators of racism.⁴² Christians violently defended the racial pyramid they constructed and benefited from.⁴³ Ignoring racism does not make it go away. Kaemingk says evangelicals typically respond with extraordinary measures of charity but often neglect to dismantle systemic and structural modes of inequality that exist in the

³⁷ Strickland, *For God So Loved*, 21.

³⁸ Byoung Ok Koo, *Transitioning from an Ethnic to a Multicultural Church: A Transformational Model* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019), 89.

³⁹ Roberts, “God as a White Man,” 1291.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1311.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1291.

⁴² Tisby, *How to Fight Racism*, 8-9.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 9.

fabric of institutions.⁴⁴ Pretending or masking its past tolerance prevents evangelicals from responding to the healing process that God desires in His Church.

Suppose biased thoughts such as these are conducted. In that case, the congregation will have difficulty selecting diversified leadership teams in the multiethnic church with ethnicities that differ from the current monoethnic makeup. This thought process is also why the historical undertones must be discussed, identified, and surrendered before the Lord so that healing, lamenting, forgiveness, and celebrating a restored biblical concept of leadership can be pursued and established.⁴⁵ It will take strong leaders to navigate the bitter past of the historical undertones in the nation and those carried out within this local church to triumphantly escape the existing framework of church segregation to embrace a multiethnic, economically diverse renovation.

Church Segregation

Research indicates that the leadership team will need to understand why church segregation exists and what can be done to move beyond it to transform a homogeneous church into a multiethnic one.⁴⁶ The leadership team will need to approach the conversation with contemplation if what happened in the past with racial undertones and church segregation is impacting how they are currently doing church and if it is causing the continual dissonance of multiethnic opportunity from existing. While many factors contribute to church segregation, this research does not need to focus on those aspects but rather glean a brief understanding of what has been experienced and then shift concentration on what practices are still being done that contribute both intentionally and unintentionally to the continuation of church segregation.

⁴⁴ Matthew Kaemingk, *Reformed public theology: A global vision for life in the world* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), chapter 18.

⁴⁵ Morrison, *Be the Bridge*, 2-3.

⁴⁶ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy*, 59.

The church in the United States experienced blatant segregation over the centuries and certainly in the Civil Rights era. Kosek walks through the history of one example of such segregation, which could be observed in what was known as kneel-ins or “church sit-ins.” This is where an all-black or multiethnic group of Christians would take a Sunday visit to a White congregation and endeavor to enter for worship. These individuals were met with varying responses. Occasionally, they would be welcomed inside; other times, they were escorted into separate auditoriums. However, many times, they were restricted outright, arrested, and even thrown into jail. The oddity is that even when a church had a theology that demanded entrance to all who came to its doors, it blatantly prohibited Blacks from church membership and their sanctuaries.⁴⁷

Force-outs, lockouts, and an unwelcoming spirit engulfed the church. The church and its pastors were not trying to live from a biblical mandate inviting to the foreigner or compassionate like the Good Samaritan. Even Dr. King was frustrated with the pastors of the South who were not helping to dismantle segregation, as captured in his letter from a Birmingham Jail, which articulated that instead of them being allies, they were his biggest opponents as they refused to embrace the movement.⁴⁸ The takeaway here is that there was a time in which segregation was the norm, even though it did not represent the heart of the Lord. However, since then, segregation in concept has been eradicated from schools, businesses, government, etc. However, the only place that remains is within the church. Mandated inclusion, such as forced school

⁴⁷ Joseph Kip. Kosek, “‘Just a Bunch of Agitators’: Kneel-Ins and the Desegregation of Southern Churches.” *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 23, no. 2 (2013): 232. <https://doi.org/10.1525/rac.2013.23.2.232>.

⁴⁸ Oyakawa, “Racial Reconciliation,” 499.

integration or equal housing and lending laws, has not bridged into the ninety-three percent of the churches that are not embracing a multiethnic platform.

If the church is to make the multiethnic shift, it must not fall into the trap that many churches do. It is a belief that they are welcoming and desiring people of varying backgrounds to come into the places of worship without recognizing they have a preexisting directive. A directive that unofficially says, you can come in, but be like us in every way and do not change our culture.⁴⁹ This is an evangelicalism that allows people of color to be incorporated as long as it can be done safely without disrupting White evangelicalism.⁵⁰

The leadership team must understand church segregation before progressing in the transformation of the multiethnic church. However, this knowledge and retraining must be assimilated into the congregation before diverse people are encouraged to enter a welcoming church environment. Inviting people prematurely will continue the cycle of accepting but not accommodating.⁵¹ There will be difficulties for the average church denomination, even more for the Reformed denominational church.

Reformed Perspectives

Church segregation can be understood from the lens that America's historical narrative goes back to Britain and Anglo-Saxons, who came from a class-based society and brought their prejudices with them to the New World. Although it is centuries later, discrimination against immigrants, mainly from Mexico and Africa, suffers from the prejudices that have been born and

⁴⁹ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy*, 58.

⁵⁰ Smith, *Unreconciled*, 3.

⁵¹ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy*, 59.

taken root in the country.⁵² As many Reformed churches have their birth in similar country contexts, a dark narrative has been birthed in the different denominations. For example, the Presbyterian Church in America has a historical narrative that aligns with the Confederate side of the Civil War. The Reformed churches in the United States were not always welcome to individuals of differing economic backgrounds and sometimes blatantly refused their entrance and membership. This past has left the modern ethnically diverse individual to shy away from known Reformed churches for fear of continued unwelcoming beliefs and practices. Reformed Christians have willingly embraced faulty thinking that perpetuated cultural ideations and doctrines, along with other political beliefs that have hindered and caused harm to other ethnic communities.⁵³

As Reformed Christians get involved in the racial systems and structures that have plagued the United States, there will need to be a willingness and vulnerability to intently listen in and learn from the embodied stresses and hardships of their sisters and brothers who come from the bottom side of those systems and power structures.⁵⁴ Brouwer even suggests for churches pursuing multiethnic and economically diverse settings, that a name change that results in the removal of any denominational identifiers be removed from the title and signage.⁵⁵ The church can certainly still be reformed in its distinctive, but the name will hinder diverse ethnicities from coming in. For a church to truly embrace the concept and capabilities of becoming multiethnic and economically diverse, it will need to reflect on the reformed perspectives and narratives associated with it. Understanding the historical undertones, church

⁵² Willis, *The Multicultural Church*, 45.

⁵³ Kaemingk, *Reformed*, Chapter 18.

⁵⁴ Kaemingk, *Reformed*, 18.

⁵⁵ Brouwer, "How to Become," 33.

segregation, and reformed distinctive will generate a platform for the modern church that is embarking on becoming multiethnic and economically diverse to engage in the process of reconciliation.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is a powerful concept that demonstrates God's love for humanity. He acted first to restore the relationship between humanity and Himself by sending who He loved (John 3:16) to forgive mankind while they were still in their sin (Rom 5:8-9). As God modeled reconciliation, He, in turn, has given Christians the ministry of reconciliation, as depicted in 2 Corinthians 5:17-19. Reconciliation may not be an easy concept, and it certainly is not easy to engage in when deep hurt and pain have been experienced. However, it is in the deepest hurt that Christians can model best God's desire to display His will on earth as it is in heaven (Matt 6:10). The United States has experienced deep hurt and significant pain in the stead of racial differences, slavery, and segregation. This topic has brought an enormous gap between Christian brothers and sisters of varying ethnicities. The church is called to break down the walls of hostility (Eph 2:14) that continue to bombard the segregated church in America.

The snail-paced pursuit of racial reconciliation demonstrates an enormous hole in the living out of sanctification.⁵⁶ When Christian brothers and sisters can worship together across racial lines, they display beautifully how God can break down dividing walls on earth as humanity awaits the heavenly opportunity of worshipping together, as demonstrated in Revelation 7.⁵⁷ There have been racial reconciliation initiatives that have pushed into evangelical

⁵⁶ Strickland, *For God So*, 7.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

churches and Christian political activism as well.⁵⁸ Racial reconciliation aims to establish a church whose doors are open, and because people are part of God's creation and family, all ethnicities are welcomed, loved, and respected.⁵⁹ Willis, expounding on Jeremiah 1:5, states that before a person had hair, eye, and skin color, or a country, city, or state, God accepted and loved that person unconditionally, and God has called His followers to do the same.⁶⁰ Reconciliation allows Christians to remember that each has been uniquely and wonderfully made, and those differences can be celebrated instead of pushing another down.⁶¹

Some churches will try to bypass the reconciliation phase while attempting to create diversity. To pursue a multiethnic church without reconciliation is a problem that omits a gospel-centered heart adjustment in loving others that is pleasing in the Lord's eye.⁶² Simply attaining diversity without racial reconciliation, such as a local high school, does not embrace the gospel obtained by Christ's sacrifice and command to love others (John 13:34-35).⁶³ Some evangelicals struggle to push into the concept of racial reconciliation as they believe it to be a social issue and not a gospel need. These individuals are missing the vital ministry of Christ as He carefully gave sight and value to various kinds of people who were considered social outcasts. Consider the ministry in Ephesus. Primarily, it depicts that sinners were reconciled to God from a position of being hostile to Him (Eph 2:4-5, 13-14; Rom 6-8; 2 Cor 5:16-21). Thank God for His mediatorial work in ingrafting believers in (Rom 11:11-24). While that is the main focus, it can be seen in

⁵⁸ Smith, *Unreconciled*, 4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁰ Willis, *The Multicultural Church*, 33.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁶² Jarvis Williams, "Racial Reconciliation, the Gospel, and the Church" in *Multiethnic Churches* (Washington, DC: 9Marks Journal, 2015), 10.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 11

the first-century church the development of inclusion (Eph 3:1, 8-9). Paul's ministry encapsulates non-Jewish individuals as part of the ministry and salvation of Christ. The people were being "built together for God's dwelling in the Spirit" (Eph 3:22, English Standard Version). The different ethnicities were coming together even though that was not common then. As the ministry in Ephesians 2:11-3:8 is about reconciliation, so the church today and the Christians that fill them must be about the Lord's business (Luke 2:49) by observing the great commands (Matt 22:34-40) as carried out to their neighbors who are of different ethnicity and economic status (Luke 10:25-37).

Establishing racial reconciliation will take much work, especially in the reformed church. Morrison encourages the majority culture to approach the task of reconciliation with a posture of humility that allows for talking less and listening more with open hearts to brothers and sisters of differing ethnic backgrounds.⁶⁴ As ethnic voices arise, Morrison encourages White Christians to try to understand the complicated and disheartening truths of racial history and its impact on the ethnic minorities of the country without trying to explain those pains and truths away.⁶⁵ Humility will be the bridge that brings the marginalized, ethnic, and economically diverse voices within the local walls of a church to bravely pursue its progression from awareness to acknowledgment that can lead to repentance and forgiveness.⁶⁶ The ethnic minority also needs gentleness. Ethnic minorities should pursue reconciliation by avoiding shaming and blaming but giving a strong measure of kindness that has the power to turn away wrath (Prov 15:1). Reconciliation is impossible without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, honesty that leads to confession and

⁶⁴ Morrison, *Be the Bridge*, 7-8.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

repentance, and willingness for the hurt to respond in forgiveness. Any imitation will be tainted, causing additional harm.

Repentance

Perkins believes that repentance beautifully demonstrates Christ's power in a believer's life.⁶⁷ The Scriptures remind Christians that repentance is necessary before baptism (Acts 2:38-41). Repentance happens after awareness of wrong sets into a believer's heart by the prompting of the Holy Spirit, leaving that believer with a choice to confess and turn from continued erroneous living or to ignore the Spirit's prompting and continue in sin. Suppose there is any chance for a Reformed Church to begin walking in a multiethnic and economically diverse congregation that has justice, truth, and mutuality at its core. In that case, repentance is the first step.⁶⁸ Failure of a church or denomination to repent is asking the entirety of the country to overlook, ignore, forget, and minimize the injustices that have happened racially, economically, and ethnically.

The local church and the Reformed denominations are wise in encouraging confession and lamenting. Morrison suggests that acknowledgment of sin should lead to lament, which propels toward seeking mercy, leaving an attitude and conviction of doing things better.⁶⁹ However, ignoring the facts and walking in a distorted and prejudiced truth will keep a church from being able to walk in the awareness that leads to acknowledgment and lament, dampening

⁶⁷ Perkins, *One Blood*, 114.

⁶⁸ Harvey, *Dear White*, Introduction.

⁶⁹ Morrison, *Be the Bridge*, 46.

the efforts of racial reconciliation.⁷⁰ Repentance is a concept of change, empowered by the Holy Spirit, that can lead and transform an enemy into a friend, which pleases God's heart.⁷¹

The Presbyterian Church in America decided to engage in the concept of racial reconciliation by taking the step of repentance in 2016 at its 44th General Assembly by passing Overture 43. While the vote was not unanimously passed (861-123-23), it was a step in the right direction. In short, the PCA recognized, confessed, condemned, and repented of corporate and historical sins, including the ones committed during the Civil Rights era and the ongoing sins of allowing segregation by race and the exclusion of people from membership based on ethnicities.⁷² The PCA then pushed forward Overture 45 to form a racial reconciliation study committee to provide practical steps for moving churches and the denomination forward.

This researcher was one of a select few ethnic minorities in the Mobile, Alabama, room of over 1,200 White elders and pastors of the General Assembly during the discussion and debate on whether the denomination should make such a confession. The conversation lasted hours as people who were in favor and those who were opposed took turns stating their cases at microphones around the room. Reconciliation was in process as a Reformed denomination took the step to confess, repent, and pursue better efforts to cultivate ethnic diversity. This is a display that the local church can engage in. It is not easy and involves vulnerability, but that transparency will cultivate an environment for fertile soil of ethnic and economic church diversity. Repentance in this form can lead to a returned forgiveness by the Lord and the ethnic and economic minorities in the church's communities.

⁷⁰ Morrison, *Be the Bridge*, 46.

⁷¹ Perkins, *One Blood*, 126

⁷² Roy Taylor, "Actions of the Forty-Fourth General Assembly of the PCA," PCA History, accessed April 22, 2024, https://www.pcahistory.org/pca/ga/actions/44thGA_2016_Actions.pdf.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness can be a challenging concept for humanity and even Christians. However, complex concepts are not God's permission to ignore. Just as White American Christians and reformed denominations are being asked to take the complicated and challenging role of pursuing reconciliation utilizing repentance, so too are those who have been impacted by a hostile and perhaps hurtful racial past that is needed to step into the concept of forgiveness. As black Americans have had many accomplishments, such as Barack Obama becoming the first black American president, there is still much ground to gain, which will require forgiveness.⁷³

In order for this and future generations to experience healing and Jesus' name, forgiveness needs to go out to the past American slave-enabling ancestors.⁷⁴ Holding on to the bitter past stifles the possibility of being a multiethnic and economically diverse church. If the perpetrators that cultivated the segregated church as it mirrored American Society repent of their sins, those hurt by the segregation have the opportunity to display a beautiful response of forgiveness. Even without the response of repentance, ethnically diverse Christians can still extend forgiveness if they are engaged in a church that is intentionally pursuing diversity without offering repentance in the reconciliation process. As Jesus is the model, he forgave while on the cross a society that did not ask for forgiveness (Luke 23:34-38). To hold a local church hostage for the sins and discrimination of its founders blocks the reconciliation process. The reconciliation process will ride on the backs of a leadership team as they persevere with intentionality and dependence on God for His transformative work.

⁷³ Willis, *The Multicultural Church*, 46.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Leadership

Because diversity does not happen independently, becoming a multiethnic and economically diverse church requires excellent leadership. The church's leaders cannot expect its members to develop, embrace, and maintain a vibrant multiethnic church that they have not created a foundation for it to exist. Doctor Wayne Lucas has been known to say, “The speed of the litter determines the pace of the pack.” There are three main essentials that the leaders will have to press into in order to generate a multiethnic church. As they lead, they must embrace dependence on God, walk with great intentionality in establishing all things, and display and cultivate a culture of empathy for the people who represent diversity.

Embrace Dependence

One of the most vital steps the leadership team can adopt and live from is to embrace dependence. This dependence is on the will, power, and leadership of God. It has been noticed throughout biblical and modern history that people often attempt incredible feats in vain because they are not pursuing and being dependent on the Lord. Often, humanity takes things into its own hands as it navigates its own will. Consider the mentality at the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9) as they attempted to reach God through their own efforts and not relying on the guidance of God in humility. The process of becoming ethnically and economically diverse will take significant effort, as diversity in this way will take great faith and dependence on the Lord. DeYmaz says the multiethnic church can only be built when people of great faith abandon themselves to God’s will and trust God day by day, as human effort will not be enough, and reliance on themselves will fail.⁷⁵ This faith of the leaders will have to be courageous as they must not consider what

⁷⁵ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy*, 47.

can and cannot be done from a human perspective, as that runs contrary to the Lord's desire for His disciples and church.⁷⁶

The Lord is the great reconciler, and as such, He will be needed to cultivate a culture that is different from the segregated voice in the United States. The multiethnic church is different from any other church; therefore, it will need the power of God to break down the dividing walls of hostility (Eph 2:14-16) that have been passed down over the generations of this country. As the leadership pursues this glorious Revelation 7 church culture, they are wise not to lean on their own understanding acknowledging God (Prov 3:5-6), for without being connected to Christ, they will not be able to do this task (John 15:5). The Lord Himself, when leaned upon, will give strength in presence of humanities weakness (2 Cor 12:7-10) as He leads the church just as He led Israel through the wilderness as they keep His commands (Deut 8:2-3), without worry (Matt 6:30-32), but with a strong sight up to the Lord from where the proper help will come from (Psa 121:1-8 in this multiethnic endeavor.

Intentionality

Bracey, writing for the Barna Group, identified that sixty-four percent of Christians and forty-four percent of the general population of United States adults believe that the church has a vital role in impacting and improving race relations in the country.⁷⁷ So, cultivating ethnic impacts will require great intentionality from the church and its leaders. Leadership teams are responsible for building a culture that matters to their overall mission and vision. The culture will always reflect the leadership's drive. Therefore, the leadership must intentionally create and transform the culture to its intended and desired form. DeYmaz states that creating a multi-

⁷⁶ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy*, 50.

⁷⁷ Bracey, *Beyond Diversity*, 13.

colored ethnic blend requires intentionality to turn the vision into a reality because it will not happen on its own.⁷⁸ Without intentionality, it is irresponsible to foresee change, especially change as significant as having a church that is pushing past the societal boundaries of church segregation in pursuit of being multiethnic and economically diverse. The leaders are required to notice cultural characteristics, what God is up to, and the inclusion work that it takes to mold a multiethnic community.⁷⁹ There must be intentionality of incorporating diversity within the leadership in which no nationality or gender is privileged above another; as Brouwer says, differences should be recognized and taken seriously, not minimized.⁸⁰

Developing leadership teams with various views and divergent ideas may be difficult for many leadership teams to establish because they often try to keep people who have the same values and conform to having efficiency as the ultimate value that the team strives for.⁸¹ However, efficiency is not always possible when establishing a diverse population because differing cultures have other priorities from which they lead.⁸² If the church is going to be multiethnic, it will need different ethnic leaders around the leadership table who are seen as assets and establish the congregational climate. It is a good thing to have diversity of age and gender around the table, but it is vitally important to have a church consistory or board that has representation of elders from every ethnic group and nationality.⁸³ Creating this change is not just in action but also in attitude.⁸⁴ It is known that God does not look at outward appearance but

⁷⁸ Bracey, *Beyond Diversity*, 56.

⁷⁹ Branson, *Churches*, 12.

⁸⁰ Douglas J. Brouwer, *How to Become a Multicultural Church* (Grand Rapids: MI, Eerdmans, 2017), 53.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁸⁴ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy*, 60.

at the heart, as He did with David (1 Sam 16:7). Thus, the point here is that leadership teams are wise to understand the added value of including diversity in their leadership groups and not excluding due to the outward appearance of ethnicity. Not just for the sake of inclusion. For if a person is not qualified, they should not be in leadership just to make a status quo. However, there are often gifted people within the church setting who are being overlooked and underutilized. The church today can remember the powerful action of the early church, which selected deacons who were diverse (Acts 6:1-7), which allowed them to serve the people better. One author stated, "When a practicing Christian's identity is reflected in the racial composition of the leadership team, they face fewer hurdles in their worship community."⁸⁵ Brouwer, taking from another author, highlights the importance of opening minds, ears, and leadership tables to global voices; otherwise, the dominant Anglo-American church will be left behind in the post-American church world.⁸⁶ While the church will undoubtedly have a Western and American culture, only intentionality will allow it to have a culture of inclusion.⁸⁷ This culture of inclusion will represent Revelation 7 on Earth very well.

The segregation battle still plagues this country and others around the world. Research shows that White Christians feel as if something is wrong, but it is there where they get stuck.⁸⁸ However, there is hope. More congregations in the United States have begun taking intentional actions to become more welcoming to people with differences and disabilities.⁸⁹ This intentionality will require strong leaders willing to roll up their sleeves and navigate the murky

⁸⁵ Bracey, *Beyond Diversity*, 8.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁸⁸ Swanson, *Rediscipling*, 3.

⁸⁹ Hardwick, *Disability*, 6.

waters of ethnic unity in a yet-polarized nation. Martin Luther King called for this strength while pointing out its alternative from his Birmingham Jail letter, stating that Christians have been “more cautious than courageous” as they continue in their silence and comfort behind “stained-glass windows.”⁹⁰ Courageous leaders will make the multiethnic and economically diverse church a reality as they lead with empathy.

Empathy

When it comes to leadership, Dan Willis believes in the importance of utilizing empathy. While empathy is fantastic and essential for welcoming differing ethnicities amongst the congregants, it is a necessary tool and skill set for the leadership team to walk with. Leaders must relate to the differing backgrounds while caring about where the people have been and where they need to go, as the Lord helps heal deep wounds from generations of segregation and hardships.⁹¹ While walking with those from lower economic backgrounds, leadership must show empathy as sometimes some individuals come from a hardship that comes from generational poverty and despair.⁹² A leader cannot change their ethnicity, but they can have compassion and empathy for those who come with emotional hardships suffered by a society that has not always done its best to protect and embrace their diverse and unique cultures.⁹³ To truly understand the lives of members, empathy is necessary.⁹⁴ Scripture reminds Christians to walk in empathy by rejoicing and weeping with those who are rejoicing and weeping (Rom 12:15). This empathy will foster a welcoming church community.

⁹⁰ Tisby, *How to Fight*, 10.

⁹¹ Willis, *Multicultural*, 44.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 47.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 48.

Welcoming

Welcoming is how the church makes people feel when outsiders enter the building and seek to connect. To create a welcoming environment, the church must understand different historical and current norms within society and White churches across the country. White churches that desire to be multiethnic need to be aware of potential blinders and practices that hinder the transformation to becoming multiethnic. Some churches may experience institutional norms and White purists who work to maintain the racial boundaries of White evangelicals and their racial interests.⁹⁵ Bracey contends that there are many factors that operate from within the structure or norms of White church culture and practices, such as length of service, dress code, preaching and music styles, missionary interests, and political and community engagement.⁹⁶ These practices reinforce church segregation as they exclude people of color with their preconditioned participation styles.⁹⁷ When churches operate to maintain the status quo of segregation and exclusion, they miss the opportunity to work as God's agents to transform a racially charged American culture and instead end up being a mirror or reflection of the same racial divisions within the country.⁹⁸ To be a welcoming multiethnic church, a Reformed church will have to push past these types of systemic undertones and other “race tests” that hinder ethnic diversities from actually feeling welcomed.

Part of the welcoming platform can be identified as the Accommodations Progression. This progression ranges from accepting to assimilating to accommodating. A monoethnic Reformed church will have to examine its own narratives to see how they may have hindered

⁹⁵ Bracey, *Race Test*, 297.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 284.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Craig S. Hendrickson, “Ending Racial Profiling in the Church: Revisiting the Homogenous Unit Principle,” *Mission Studies: Journal of the International Association for Mission Studies* 35, no. 3 (2018): 345.

diverse cultures from feeling welcomed and desired within the church. To be a healthy and vibrant multiethnic church, the leaders and members must navigate from merely accepting multiethnic and economically diverse people to accommodating them. When ethnically and economically diverse people are accommodated, they will no longer feel like guests who hope to be welcomed; they will feel at home with the permission to welcome others. The following is a breakdown of each progression level, followed by the overall big picture.

Accepting

The first step in welcoming people is accepting them. Accepting people allows them to enter through the door, creating an inviting space. However, Smith highlights some ethnic studies that depict that in White Christian evangelicalism, there is only tolerance for differing ethnicities who can “be safely incorporated within White evangelicalism.”⁹⁹ Bracey says that multiple studies show that White Americans feel discomfort by only discussing race, and the discomfort is even higher to be in the physical presence of differing ethnicities as they hold to the belief that segregation is “natural” because everyone wants to be with their own group.¹⁰⁰ This is a misguided projection of cultural feelings based on one ethnic perspective. Accepting various ethnicities is the lowest level of engagement the church and its members can walk in. The risks and stresses upon the church are minimal. Nevertheless, the monoethnic church will allow other ethnicities into the church as long as they do not change or challenge the dynamics of the White space and organizational goals.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Smith, *Unreconciled*, 3.

¹⁰⁰ Bracey, *Race*, 285.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 286.

At the accepting level, people from varying ethnicities are welcomed and encouraged to return. This level is also the biggest reason for the lack of returning multiethnic attendees. Often, White Christians in monoethnic churches strive to have very few people of ethnic diversity at a time, and those who come need to fit a particular mold to ensure that the White majority churchgoers cannot be disturbed in “their” space.¹⁰² When individuals feel accepted but know they cannot be assimilated or accommodated, their desire to stay is minimized, and they continue their journey to find a church they can call home. Because the accepting phase is the lowest level, leadership teams often have not spent the time helping to educate the congregation on how to be multiethnic sensitive; therefore, multiethnic guests are more likely to experience insensitive comments and behaviors that are not actually welcoming at all. Churches that do get it correct attempt to assimilate ethnic and economic diversity within distinct roles of the church.

Assimilate

The middle level of engagement that the church can enter is assimilation. At this level, the church sees the ethnicities that are different from their homogenous majority and begins to place them in different serving areas. At the assimilation level, people are allowed to serve on hospitality teams, as sound technicians, in children’s ministry, and in other similar capacities. This assimilation level has a medium risk response to the church and its leadership teams. However, Bracy highlights Barron’s qualitative study that depicts that White Christians use efforts to “manage diversity,” ensuring that the ethnic majority is not disrupted.¹⁰³ The original church members who may have tolerated accepting multiethnic individuals into the church may disagree with assimilating them into various church roles. Those original members may contest

¹⁰² Bracey, *Race*, 288.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

the allowance of those who are different having visible roles within the church. At this level of engagement, the mentality of the church's original members will be okay with multiethnic presence if those multiethnic people act, behave, and worship just as the majority homogeneous group. Some churches and White pastors run into dangerous territory by trying to install quick fixes to being multiethnic by placing people of ethnic diversity in highly visible and stereotypical roles, such as worship leaders, with a concept of entertaining the homogenous group.¹⁰⁴ So, while assimilation can be a good thing if done for the right reasons, it is one step short of truly welcoming and establishing a multiethnic and economically diverse church that can only happen with accommodation.

Accommodate

The accommodation phase is the most complex level for a church to navigate well. At this level, the majority culture is willing to not only accept and assimilate individuals from various cultures, but they begin to intentionally create avenues for the multiethnic attendees to have the opportunity to worship God in ways that reflect their culture and heritage. The goal at this level is not to create a separate service for the “other type of worship” but to include elements from other cultures in the central worship experience. This mentality has the greatest potential and risk for losing members from the original monoethnic attendees. In the church setting, it is easy for congregants to embrace a set way of engaging in worship that is comfortable and familiar to them and does not desire change. It is observed that some members believe they have been assigned seats week after week because they are creatures of habit as they sit in the same seats. It is also noted that there have been many church splits over far fewer

¹⁰⁴ Bracey, *Race*, 290.

peripheral changes, such as carpet changes and pew colors. Therefore, moving into the accommodation level, while it is beneficial and life-giving to the incoming diverse populations, great care should be taken to be immersed in dynamic communication. At the accommodation level, multiethnic individuals are assimilated and allowed to be in the most significant spheres of leadership. This goes against the historical narrative of the church, which restricted leadership roles to diverse ethnicities.¹⁰⁵ If the historical Reformed church has made it to this point, they have transitioned the church's mentality as they no longer see ethnicities as inferior and assign insignificant roles to “outsiders” but have begun to place value on their belonging, emotional, spiritual, and psychic of ethnic minorities.¹⁰⁶ The language has shifted from they and them to us and we. As the church navigates the accommodation progression, it is moving forward to become welcoming. While embarking on becoming welcoming, the church must keep the bigger picture before them.

The Bigger Picture

Today's church must ask, “What is the church’s big picture?” Churches from every denomination must ask this question. Did God truly set up his church to be divisive, or is it more holistic when it is inclusive? Perkins highlights that since Scripture indicates that God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35), God was not going to have two classes of churches, a Jewish church and a second-class church for the Gentiles, for after all, when Peter preached to Cornelius, and his family the Holy Spirit fell on them as they were brought into the Church of God even though they were not Jewish.¹⁰⁷ Perkins believes the church illustrates the most

¹⁰⁵ Bracey, *Race*, 285.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 291.

¹⁰⁷ Perkins, *One Blood*, 34.

beautiful picture when different ethnicities live out the idea of unity in the body of Christ.¹⁰⁸

DeYmaz adds to the concept, stating that when relationships are developed across ethnic and economic barriers, they generate and cultivate a fertile ground that allows the multiethnic church not only to grow but also to produce the most extravagant fruit.¹⁰⁹ Ince even describes what he calls a beautiful community as a church that pursues reconciliation by gathering a diversified group of community people that extends backgrounds, cultures, and ethnicities that flow naturally in biblical commitments and relationships.¹¹⁰

Therefore, the big picture is a beautiful community unified over and across backgrounds and ethnicities. This molding leaves the church with an identity, as Paul describes in Ephesians 1:10, as “All things coming together in Christ.” Branson adds to this vivid picture by illustrating that the church depicts its social imagery as it is nourished and changed by the various perspectives from the diverse people that it allows to be a part of its intercultural life and all the complexities that come with it.¹¹¹ In Boyce’s “A Doctrine for Diversity,” he articulates that God is worshipped and glorified at a higher level by humanity when humanity does not allow divisive and racial differences to tear down and dismantle God’s church but instead becomes more valuable when that diverse group of people comes together proclaiming the redemption story.¹¹² The church is so beautiful when it unites to tell the story of God's redemptive love and offer of reconciliation that far outweighs anyone's race, ethnicity, economic status, political affiliation, country of origin, or anything else. It is here in this diverse unity that it shows the power of God

¹⁰⁸ Perkins, *One Blood*, 35.

¹⁰⁹ DeYmaz, *Building*, 83.

¹¹⁰ Ince, *The Beautiful*, 11.

¹¹¹ Branson, *Churches*, Chapter 10.

¹¹² William E. Boyce, “A Doctrine for Diversity: Utilizing Herman Bavinck's Theology for Racial Reconciliation in the Church.” *Journal of Markets & Morality* 23, no. 2 (2020): 326.

as it transcends not only segregation in the modern era but could override the separation of the tribes that split into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms (Ezek 37:15-28) as well as the scattering that took place at the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9).

Because 80 percent of practicing Christians believe the church has the ability to improve its race dynamics by being a place that welcomes people of all ethnicities, it is time for the church leaders to become the catalyst for making this improved culture a reality.¹¹³ However, in doing so, the church should be aware that it does not create multiple cultures but multiple ethnicities in this process. As Koo describes, their church pushes back on the notion of being “multicultural” as they operate from only one culture of dedicated followers of Christ, by people of different ethnicities, which makes their church multiethnic instead.¹¹⁴ The different ethnicities that can fill a church are a powerful witness to a world that spends much of its time trying to silence those who are different. However, Christians should understand that the Lord wants them to see the beauty shared with their brothers and sisters in Christ.¹¹⁵ The church and its members must fight against the costly mistake of not valuing the perspectives of people who are different than themselves.¹¹⁶ This difference extends beyond ethnicities as it embraces economics and disabilities as well.

An inclusive church that models itself after the patterns of Christ extends not only across ethnic lines but ventures into embracing those in Scripture that we see as marginalized. Yes, Jesus continued to minister to people of various cultures, but He often took time to be with people with varying elements. The church must not see the individuals who come through its

¹¹³ Bracey, *Beyond Diversity*, 8.

¹¹⁴ Koo, *Transitioning From*, 83.

¹¹⁵ Swanson, *Rediscipling*, 6.

¹¹⁶ DeYmaz, *Leading a Healthy*, 81.

doors as burdens and problems but rather as opportunities and assets to the leadership and members.¹¹⁷ Lamar states there is power and wisdom in inviting people with diversity and disabilities into an inclusive room for leadership, discussions with the Bible, and church culture.¹¹⁸ Tisby summarizes it by saying that the church's big picture is when it experiences harmony in the foreground of prevailing diversity as racial equity and justice for all people in the background.¹¹⁹ It is in this place that Scripture can be witnessed and emphasized that as iron can truly sharpen iron (Prov 27:17), God's people sharpen one another by removing every stumbling block that would divide them and instead walk in Christ-centered unity.¹²⁰ A unity that brings the people of God together as one.

Summary

This literature review has shown various concepts that must be implemented into the project development to generate the best opportunity for success. Although it is not wise to remain in the past, it will be necessary to understand the historical undertones and continual church segregation if the church desires to push into being multiethnic. Many scholars have planted churches that, from their inception, became multiethnic. There are only a few scholars who have tracked their church's progress from being monoethnic into multiethnic. A gap in the literature does not show how to transition a church in a Reformed denomination into being multiethnic. This gap is covered in the PRIME Diversity Action Plan for Faith Church.

¹¹⁷ Lamar, *Disability*, 9.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 7.

¹¹⁹ Tisby, *How to Fight Racism*, 7.

¹²⁰ Strickland, *For God So Loved*, 11-12.

Theological Foundations

There is a praise celebration going on in heaven. This gathering is made up of diversity. God is very intentional about the diversity lived out in heaven. God has called His children to be one so that the world would know Him, His love, and believe (John 17:23). The church must move beyond the concept of racial reconciliation, even though that is a beautiful thing to attain, nor should it rest on pursuing a multiethnic culture because the community is changing, or that it is not culturally or politically correct to not be a place of inclusion. Instead, the church must push into “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10, ESV). If heaven is multiethnically populated with diversity by God’s desire, then the church can see His intentionality as prescriptive for today’s gatherings. DeYmaz makes a fascinating statement, “If the Kingdom of heaven is not segregated, why on earth is the church?”¹²¹

Today's homogeneous churches are restricted in their ability to display God's love and unity for all people and that which will be experienced in Heaven. As churches have the primary goal of seeing people reconciled with God, they should be mindful of how it was done with diverse people in the local church of the New Testament.¹²² This theological section is based on Revelation 7, Christ's prayer, the New Testament Church, and Paul's ministry as observed in Ephesians.

Revelation 7 Distinctions

While studying the Book of Revelation, and upon reading through the sixth seal, it is natural to wonder who will be left to stand as God's wrath is being poured out on the earth (Rev

¹²¹ Mark DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multiethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of a Diverse Congregation*, Kindle (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2020), 4.

¹²² Ibid.

6:17). However, amid the outpouring of anger, it is seen that the Lord sealed and saved His servants that are faithful to Him. Any merits of man do not do the saving, yet it is more significant than including the most righteous and spiritual people. The final number is more than just a remnant, but a multitude that no one could count and which it is not necessary to be a Jew to be saved, but rather people from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the Lamb of God (Rev 7:9).¹²³

The Gathering

Jamieson utilizes Greek to describe all nations as “out of every nation.” This means humanity is “one nation” by creation but then is categorized into tribes, peoples, and tongues, which correlates to one singular, followed by the three plurals.¹²⁴ He states the 144,000 represent the first fruits unto the Lamb from Israel, followed by an election from the Gentiles (Rev 7:3).¹²⁵ Some commentators, such as Beale, question whether this uncountable number refers to the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 17:2-27) or nations (Gen 35:11, 48:3-4, 19) by being included in God’s people, true Israel, along with being in accordance with the commission in Genesis 1:26–28.¹²⁶ For the purpose of this thesis, it is not bearing as to where the origination of the many nations and tribes are generated from, for it still shows an inclusion of a multitude that includes Gentiles and the unity of praise from a redeemed humanity both here and in Revelation 5:9.

¹²³ Paul Gardner, *Revelation: The Compassion and Protection of Christ*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 110–111.

¹²⁴ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 570.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1999), 430.

This diverse gathering is shouting, “Salvation belongs to our God” (Rev 7:10, ESV). God is the source of humanity's salvation. This adoration is very similar to what was seen as Jesus's triumphal entry into Jerusalem when the crowd shouted Hosanna, which means “save us now,” taken from Psalm 118.¹²⁷ From that shout of “salvation belonging to God” is a beautiful sevenfold doxology that implies “totality and completeness” with “The blessing, the glory, the wisdom, the thanksgiving, the honor, the power, the might unto God forever and ever” (Rev 7:12, ESV).¹²⁸

Nations, Tribes, People, & Tongues

When reading Revelation 7, attention should be placed on the meaning of the nations, tribes, people, and tongues. Understanding their historical contexts while grasping their future implications in Heaven should influence how modern Christians and the church interact today. In Revelation 7, nations refer not only to Jews but all the nations of the earth.¹²⁹ People would refer to a mass of people without referencing any particular origin or division.¹³⁰ Tongues, also used as languages, refer to the inhabitants of the earth who speak different languages, not as divided by nations or about their lineage or clan, but as divided only by speech.¹³¹ What is remarkable to pull out from these four words is tribes. The historical narrative of tribes and how Jesus's disciples engaged as tribes can give virtue to the modern church today.

¹²⁷ Jamieson, *Commentary*, 570.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ John Peter Lange, Philip Schaff, et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures: Revelation* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 190.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

Tribes, or kindreds, are those from a common lineage or race.¹³² As such, they would come from the same village or neighborhood and would have provided mutual aid to all of the connected families¹³³ while also being a part of any military advancement.¹³⁴ Typically, when speaking of tribes, the twelve tribes of Israel are mentioned, which list twelve individual tribes from one unified nation. Thus, tribes are best understood in terms of their structure and function within the larger whole.¹³⁵ Twenty times in the Bible, the list of tribes appears with slight variances.¹³⁶ Much can be said about each tribe, their importance, allotted territory, punishment, and their increase or decrease in status.¹³⁷ However, reflecting on Matthew 24:30, it is important to remember “all the tribes of the earth” and how the disciples began to represent the tribes of Jesus as they were stronger together, of the same origin, had the same desire for Kingdom advancement, and outside of Christ, they would not represent much.¹³⁸ The church today must always remember it is a part of something larger than itself. While the church may not be a tribe, it is certainly the bride of Christ (Rev 19:7-9; Eph 5:25-27; 2 Cor 11:2), and as such, it should act like it. It is not wanting distinction but unity and not walking in isolation and segregation but having great determination to make significant advancements to see all people from every nation, people, and language enter communal relationships and, more importantly, reconcile with God.

¹³² Lange, Schaff, et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, 190.

¹³³ Frank S. Frick and Mark Allan Powell, “Tribes,” ed. Mark Allan Powell, *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary (Revised and Updated)* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2011), 1069.

¹³⁴ David Witthoff, ed., *The Lexham Cultural Ontology Glossary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

¹³⁵ Frick, “Tribes,” 1069.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1070.

¹³⁷ Allen C. Myers, *The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 1018.

¹³⁸ Burton Scott Easton, “Tribe,” ed. James Orr et al., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Chicago, IL: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915), 3010.

Revelation 7 Unity

John's vision in Revelation packs a powerful punch to convince the church that Gentiles and Jews are formed together to make only one church in Jesus Christ.¹³⁹ John bears witness to the fact that when all the calamities of the church have been dismissed, the people shall stand in their white robes, declaring that the troubles of this world have ended. Then, instead of a hundred and forty-four thousand Israelis only, the innumerable multitude of people will contain all Israel, Jew, and Gentile as it declares that Christ is triumphant in his roles as Prophet, Priest, and King, making all nations blessed by Him and leaving all nations to call Him blessed (Mal 3:12).¹⁴⁰

Jesus' Priestly Prayer

The question is, where does this unity come from? As is depicted very well in Revelation 7, this unity culminates in Jesus's high priestly prayer in John 17. Jesus's prayer is broken up into three essential sections. In the first section, Jesus prays for Himself and the accepted and accomplished work from the Father before Him (John 17:1-5). In the second section, Jesus prays for His disciples that the Father would keep them as they go on mission for Christ without Christ (John 17:6-19). In the concluding section of this prayer, Jesus prays for the future of His church (John 17:20-26). While examining His prayer, He makes three statements of being one. This is His plea. He desires that the people called by His name will be one in Him and the Father.

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the [world may believe that you have sent me.] The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may *be one* even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become *perfectly one*, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me (John 17:21-23, ESV, emphasis added).

¹³⁹ Robert Hawker, *Poor Man's New Testament Commentary: Philippians–Revelation*, vol. 3 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2013), 542.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 542–543.

This oneness supersedes nations, tribes, people, and languages. This oneness overrides what today's modern world allows to polarize and separate. The unity that is in heaven is a manifestation of the unity from Christ's prayer, and as such, it is a unity that should be expressed in today's modern church. The church gets it right when they live out being one in Christ, not segregated individualists. DeYmaz says, "It may not be easy, but it is biblical, and it is right."¹⁴¹ Christ finishes His prayer by asking that the love that the Father had given Him would be in His followers. As people of diverse backgrounds walk in the unity and love of Christ, they unequivocally display the Father's love on earth as it is in heaven (Matt 6:10). For it is only through the Messiah, Prince of Peace, and Perfect Redeemer that unity and love can flow externally and internally from every nation, tribe, people, and tongue creating peace on earth (Luke 2:14) in such a broken and hostile world.¹⁴² People admire God because there is no strife or discord in His Nature; therefore, it is to His glory when those who profess Him are united across differences in peace.¹⁴³ The love of the Father engages the world and encompasses many nations, tribes, people, and languages so that they can be reconciled to Him by His sacrifice (John 3:16). The love of the Father for unity and diversity was portrayed in a variety of ways before Jesus' prayer.

Aliens and Foreigner

Unity is also depicted in the Old Testament. It is seen in God's command on how to treat the aliens and foreigners. In Leviticus, Exodus, and Jeremiah, God warns them to treat the

¹⁴¹ DeYmaz, *Building*, 9.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ John Chrysostom, "Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Gospel of St. John," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and Epistle to the Hebrews*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. G. T. Stupart, vol. 14, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 304.

foreigners with respect and as themselves as God reminds the people that they once were aliens in Egypt (Lev 19:33-34; Exod 22:21, 23:9; Jer 22:3). In Hebrews, Christians are reminded that they once were aliens to God but because of His reconciliation and allotment, they were allowed to become members of His family instead of an outcast (Heb 11:13-16). More than any earthly nationality, believers are reminded that their citizenship is in heaven, which they are waiting for (Phil 3:20), and they should practice resembling in church gatherings.

Regarding unity, the Scriptures show that caring for others was embedded in culture. A traveler or community member could be found in the town center, typically by the well, as it was a place of hospitality. Like a well in the center of the town, the church should be a safe place for outsiders to come and find refuge and shelter. At the well, people were not only noticed and accepted; they were accommodated. When the Church models itself after the Father, its accommodation for others generates family connectedness.

Sons and Daughters

Followers of Christ should remember that their identity has been changed from selfish, inward-focused individuals that the curse of the fall has formed them into. Due to the work of Christ, they have been bought with a price (1 Cor 6:20), transformed in their minds (Rom 12:2), and have been given a new identity in Christ (2 Cor 5:17). One of the best avenues of Scripture to view is from Romans 8 as it depicts being transformed into sons and daughters of God.

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Rom 8:14-17, ESV).

Why would sons and daughters forgo being united in their Father's house? Being a son and daughter of His should elicit the response of men and women celebrating their ethnic

diversity in the presence of their Heavenly Father and on display for the entire world to see. It is not a good image for the sons and daughters of Christ to be segregated over ethnicity and economic variances when His children say there is one God. Paul shows in the previous verses that when they joined Christ, the Spirit gave them His “mind.” Barnett says it is “a mind of ‘life and peace,’ to direct their feet to walk in his paths and so to ‘please God’” (vv. 5–8).¹⁴⁴ Therefore, Sunday services are to be filled with peace, unity, and accommodations for ethnic and economic differences.

First Corinthians 12:12-31 shows that the church is to be cohesive as one body. As sons and daughters of the King, Paul uses a fascinating metaphor to show Christians' bond and unity to Christ and one another. Paul invites us to look at the human body as he vividly points out oneness in multiplicity. Using a chiastic form, he shows the oneness expanded as he says: “the body is one and has many members.” then goes backward from the multiple to the oneness as he says: “and *all* the members of the body, being *many*, are *one* body” to stress that all are ONE.¹⁴⁵ When Christians do not assemble across their differences and ethnicities, they lack the opportunity to show the oneness of being one body. To be a segregated body misrepresents the wholeness that God desires His church to represent. Galatians 3:28 illustrates that Christians are not separated by ethnicity but are one. Consider how John 10:14-16 shows the Good Shepherd makes believers one, Ephesians 4:4-6 illustrates one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Spirit, and Colossians 3:14 depicts love.

¹⁴⁴ Paul Barnett, *Romans: The Revelation of God's Righteousness*, Focus on the Bible Commentary (Scotland, EN: Christian Focus Publications, 2003), 183.

¹⁴⁵ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963), 512–513.

Early Church

Because of the ethnic diversity that has come into the United States, when it comes to the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20), DeYmaz says, “to reach the World for Christ, then, no longer necessitates the crossing of an ocean. Today we can do so by crossing the street.”¹⁴⁶ In a country that experiences so much diversity, the modern church needs to see what they can learn from the early church. Some believe that the monoethnic church in the world today is going to get left behind due to its inability to express and demonstrate a love for all people that is not experienced and open for all people within its doors.¹⁴⁷

Acts 4

While examining the Scriptures of Acts 4, a church is observed that welcomed people of different economic backgrounds. Instead of pushing people away or making them feel unwelcome, they gave what they could to ensure those without would have. The needs of all were taken care of among the assembly of believers. Their character of love for each other was itself a courageous witness to the love of Jesus.¹⁴⁸ To love and live like this is the command of Jesus, “love as I have loved you” (John 13:34–35 ESV). One may contend that the church today gives a lot away and raises lots of money for the less fortunate, stocks homeless shelters, and partners with fantastic community organizations that are reaching out and ministering to the downcast and marginalized. One would agree with that connotation. However, what is lacking is that none of those are geared to cross the economic ladder. That is to give out and not to bring in. The Acts 4 church saw the needs of one another because they were with one another. Their

¹⁴⁶ DeYmas, *Building*, 12.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 13

¹⁴⁸ John-Michael Wong, *Opening up Acts*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2010), 46.

conviction and compassion for love enabled them to give at liberty to one another in unity, being “of one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32 ESV).¹⁴⁹ Should this love, unity, and generosity be a prescription for the church today? As Faith Church implements this intervention, it can theoretically change the community around it. Hawker says, “How sweetly the love of God in Christ wrought upon the heart when the streams of such a fountain diffused themselves in all directions!”¹⁵⁰ This Acts 4 church shows what it can look like when a church is willing to see God’s image bearers over a socioeconomic class.

Good Samaritan

Christ Himself taught the importance of moving beyond the status of ethnicity, prestige, and wealth to continue doing life with His redeemed. It is easy to call someone brother, sister, or neighbor, but what does it mean if they do not receive generosity, compassion, and care from the Christian community? Is it possible that Jesus uses this moment with an upper-class lawyer to teach the importance of economic diversity among the followers of Jesus Christ? The titled man, a lawyer, is contrasted with an untitled man, better known as a certain man that Luke uses when going into parables.¹⁵¹ Is it also possible that Jesus uses two illustrations of religious leaders to show how the church can get this wrong (v. 31-32)? These two were returning from serving inside the temple and had not learned the principle of mercy and not sacrifice.¹⁵² Like this priest and Levite, the church is also guilty of passing by (v. 31-32) the marginalized. Jesus adds

¹⁴⁹ Wong, *Opening up Acts*, 47.

¹⁵⁰ Robert Hawker, *Poor Man’s New Testament Commentary: Acts–Ephesians*, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2013), 38.

¹⁵¹ Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 317.

¹⁵² Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, vol. 2 (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 109.

contour to the story by showing what it looks like when a person truly engages and walks with someone temporarily or permanently distressed.

He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he *set him on his own animal* and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day, *he took out two denarii* and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, *I will repay you when I come back*’ (Luke 10:34-35, ESV, emphasis added).

The Samaritan did three things that were beneficial for the people of the church in terms of theoretically engaging in the ethnically diverse church. One, he accommodated the man. Instead of making him walk, he saw his condition and placed the man upon his own animal. The church must move beyond tolerating people into accommodating them. To go beyond seeing the need to helping the need. The second thing this Samaritan did was invest in the man. There was no guarantee that this man would ever pay him back. However, it does not appear that the Samaritan was looking to be paid back. He was investing in his future well-being. The third thing that the Samaritan did was secure the man's next step in the future. Imagine when the church engages on all three levels with people who can never pay them back, but they go all in because of genuine love for their neighbor, brother, and sister in the Lord. That is the kind of lifestyle that can change the community in which the church is located.

The Scriptures use other illustrations to capture this point of embracing economic differences within the church. Jesus points out the widow with two mites (Luke 21:1-4) to show the church should be a judgment-free zone regarding economic status. The church is more than those who are wealthy, who give from their wealth and not their hearts. Jesus said they gave from their abundance, but the woman gave from her poverty (v. 4). Both economically different individuals belong to God's kingdom and, as such, to his church. The church must be willing to engage in Jesus's beautiful detection for unity among His followers. Jesus shows that He wants compassion and love in His church to be shown “even to the least of these” (Matt 25:40-45,

ESV). This is the example that the world needs to see, and the church is nestled beautifully and strategically by the hand of the Lord to display it in such a way that humanity is changed and the church is theologically enhanced.

Theoretical Foundations

Existing research on this topic has been multidirectional. Research has been done on economics in the United States, as well as multiracial studies. There has also been work done on segregation within the church in the United States. Some work has been done by individuals who have bridged the segregation gap within their church settings. Within all that has been done, there remains a gap that delineates best practices for helping reformed monoethnic churches begin the process of pursuing multiethnic and economic diversity within their sanctuaries. Some different reformed denominations, such as the RCA and the PCA, have recently made statements and overtures regarding past racial sins of avoidance and non-inclusion.¹⁵³ Although there has not been much findable research on helping a Reformed Church move forward in ethnic inclusion, this researcher believes that the work of other leaders and pastors from non-Reformed churches can offer platforms to inform and guide his work.

To generate the largest results and sustain impact, at the baseline, there must be a design and push for moral development and Christian formation that becomes the catalyst for ethnic inclusion and economic diversity. After moral development and a strong Christian formation are developed as a framework, then a deeper look into additional research can generate a philosophical approach by this researcher.

¹⁵³ Harvey, *Dear White*, Chapter 7.

Compelling Research

Even though there has not been an enormous amount of research regarding ethnic inclusion inside of the church, this researcher believes that research that has been done regarding race relations as it relates to the country can help foster potential learning opportunities for the church. Through exploring different concepts and methods, this researcher has found some conceptualized methods that he believes would bring significant benefits if applied and installed in church settings. On the contrary, he has also found some practices that would potentially generate more problems and dissension than unity. An example of a suggested implementation by one researcher that this researcher believes would be detrimental is the inclusion of restitution and reparations.¹⁵⁴ While such a method could be advantageous in a community or country, it would hinder ethnic unity within the church. However, the research on implementation concepts for the community and country shows many crossover opportunities for ethnic and economic inclusion in the local Reformed church.

Researchers identified the most beneficial concepts in establishing multiethnic churches: repentance, reconciliation, leadership, and understanding the role of church segregation. John Perkins describes repentance as “The most beautiful demonstration of the power of Christ in the life of the believer. I believe that repentance begins with a consciousness that something is wrong.”¹⁵⁵ He goes on to say that repentance brings about change, which is empowered by the person of the Holy Spirit, which pleases the heart of the Father.¹⁵⁶ Harvey says repentance is what leads to interracial relationships that are identified by truth, justice, and mutuality in the

¹⁵⁴ Harvey, *Dear White*, Chapter 7.

¹⁵⁵ Perkins, *One Blood*, 114.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 126.

church.¹⁵⁷ Morrison contributes by stating that once the need for repentance is acknowledged, it can lead toward lament and mercy, fueling a new conviction to do it better as continual ignorance or willful prejudice hinders lament and the hard work of racial reconciliation.¹⁵⁸

Illustrating this repentance, Swanson makes a powerful concluding statement,

Confessing our failure to disciple people in the way of Jesus will be difficult. The temptation to pull back, to look for an easier way to address the unease we feel about our churches, will be strong. But there are no quick fixes, no prescribed steps to a racially reconciled church. Instead, our own repentance over shallow spiritual formation and harmful segregation is a prerequisite for the way forward.¹⁵⁹

Some of the most notable researchers stated that the gospel could define reconciliation; therefore, it needs to be both personal and interpersonal along with cultural and structural, for as it pushes past music and food, the cultures experience more complexities.¹⁶⁰ Ince goes on to say that the church is on a display of the reconciliation that Christ has made for humanity to God; therefore, when individuals and churches fail to pursue reconciliation, they are in line with resisting the heart of God."¹⁶¹ Focusing only on diversity ends up being more of a problem with false hope, as without reconciliation, there can be no authentic unity.¹⁶² However, Oyakawa warns that racial reconciliation can bring out political and divisive conversations, preserving a Civil Rights racial hierarchy, therefore, should be avoided, and instead, racial justice brings out injustices openly.¹⁶³ However, Tisby counters that claiming Christianity must engage in the reconciliation conversation because often White Christians have been responsible for racial

¹⁵⁷ Harvey, *Dear White*, Introduction.

¹⁵⁸ Morrison, *Be the Bridge*, 46.

¹⁵⁹ Swanson, *Rediscipling*, 6.

¹⁶⁰ Branson, *Churches*.

¹⁶¹ Ince, *The Beautiful*, 10.

¹⁶² Bracey, *Beyond*, 12.

¹⁶³ Oyakawa, *Racial Reconciliation*, 498.

injustice.¹⁶⁴ Reconciliation conversations can help press through the barriers “buried deep beneath our religious convictions.”¹⁶⁵

Over the years, research has been done on economic diversity and multiethnic inclusion. Economic diversity and multiethnic inclusion can be seen worldwide in many organizations, government entities, and the United States. The one place that it needs to go beyond a textbook concept into a theoretical practice is in the church. The research for the church has already been contained in the Scriptures. Christ spoke on economics and ethnicities coming together. The early church model is what it looks like when Jesus’ commands and teachings are implemented. Also, while on the island of Patmos, John gives a vision of what heaven will look like (Rev 1-18). It is imperative that the church moves beyond what has been written in modern books and press its way into doing and living the lifestyle that Christ died and resurrected to establish.

However, research and continued practices have led to two basic church models. One model illustrates that churchgoers are likelier to enjoy when worshipping with people who are like themselves or believe it is the way it should be since “it is the way that it has always been.” This pattern has been traced back to the 1830s when racially segregated churches began.¹⁶⁶ As White supremacy emerged, Black and Indian Christians began to start their own churches with like-minded and affirming people with whom they could most closely be aligned. In the modern era, research is being done to further the concept that it is more beneficial for churches to remain segregated so that people can have their desired preference of being with people from the same culture while engaging in their preferred worship style.

¹⁶⁴ Tisby, *How to Fight*, 9.

¹⁶⁵ Hardwick, *Disability*, 42.

¹⁶⁶ Heath W. Carter, “Review of Dividing the Faith: The Rise of Segregated Churches in the Early American North, by Richard J. Boles,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (2022): 459. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lut.2022.0109>.

Another church model being researched is the interracial or multiethnic church model. This model aims to bring different ethnicities together for an inclusive cultural experience while worshipping God. Research for this model has shown that cultures can unite to honor God and have a focus that illuminates the Lord and the ethnic diversity He has created.¹⁶⁷ Research has shown that Christians who participate in this setting experience harmony and unity with others without feeling awkward or displaced.¹⁶⁸ Additional research also shows that some churches are pressing not only into ethnic diversity but economic diversity as well.¹⁶⁹

With this compelling research, it is believed that the best practical practice to instill into the church to combat the segregated church in the United States will come from discipleship. When leaders learn and grow in their moral development, they can foster and model ethnic and economic inclusion for the members of the church. This lays the foundation for the Prime Diversity Model, which will work with the leadership to help them grow in moral development for ethnic and economic diversity. This is what it will take to mirror the heart of Jesus to all people. This concept holds to the belief that when current leaders and pastors are taught how past actions of the leaders in the church and in government can potentially hinder their personal and church life growth. Moral development will teach leaders to see their neighbors. It will then help them to transition from seeing a person to accommodating them instead of passing by. It is important to understand how moral development and Christian formation overlap to help the leaders grow. Without moral development and Christian formation, the leaders will be unaltered, and the church will remain segregated.

¹⁶⁷ DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy*, 9-10.

¹⁶⁸ Ince, *Beautiful Community*, 8.

¹⁶⁹ Hendrickson, *Ending Racial*, 344.

Moral Development and Christian Formation

This action research project not only aims to help a local congregation work to become ethnically and economically diverse, but it also seeks to help the leadership and stakeholders press into moral development while further shaping their Christian formation. To be ethnically and economically diverse to appease current societal trends would miss the mark that God calls His followers into loving thy neighbor (Matt 22:34-40). This project calls for an inward change of the heart of leaders, which will catapult them to embark upon the change that will make Faith Church an earthly representation of the heavenly scene of every nation, tribe, people, and language (Rev 7). This transformation is most likely to happen when participants are challenged to have their decisions and behaviors modified by moral development and Christian formation.

Describing Moral Development and Christian Formation

Regarding moral development, there are multiple theories, such as conditioning, psychoanalytical, moral potential, and cognitive/moral reasoning. Included with morals are decisions that impact emotions and expected behaviors. The most significant influencers of moral development are family and the church, of which Clouse believes the *imago Dei* gives the most prominent foundation.¹⁷⁰ Spirituality and morality are different yet connected; thus, the Holy Spirit, Scripture, and the church form morals. Estep says, “If the church is to be a moral voice in the world, it must be a moral community itself.”¹⁷¹

Joy illustrates ethical development as a pilgrimage categorized by an eagerness to move forward with “better perspectives and solutions and a magnetic attraction for advanced ways of

¹⁷⁰ James Riley Estep Jr., “Moral Development and Christian Formation,” in *Christian Formation: Integrating Theology and Human Development* (Nashville, TN: B&H Books, 2010), 130.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 154.

interpreting reality... in which the 'vision' is embraced well before matching 'performance' is attained."¹⁷² Dykstra says that vision is the foundation of moral development based on imagination and revelation and is facilitated by the spiritual disciplines of repentance, prayer, and service practice individually and within the community of faith.¹⁷³ Clouse holds the position that the Bible and social sciences show that moral development is the result of psychological conflict, action, knowledge, and our potential as human beings.¹⁷⁴ Ward adds that it's like a bridge that goes from moral truth to moral action, with the three moral parts of reasoning, will, and strength leading to character.¹⁷⁵

Morals include effect and behavior and imply normalities given from and dependent on God.¹⁷⁶ Morality is internalizing, following, and living from the heart (Eph 6:6) and the ethical standards God has given (2 Thess 3:5). More than a formula, it is more of formation as prescribed in the Scriptures that moves a person beyond themselves into having concern for the laws of God and to being transformed through Scripture and faithful obedience in accordance with the Holy Spirit.¹⁷⁷ This is the place where abandonment from the world's views (Jas 1:27) is assisted by the renewing of the mind to discern God's perfect and pleasing will (Rom 12:2). For the Scriptures indicate that it is God's will that individuals do not only focus inwardly or selfishly (Col 3:5) but that they would extend care outwardly to God and their neighbors (Mark 12:28-34).

Christian formation and moral development are intertwined. Scharf says the church should engage in helping the spiritual formation of others by weaving together "indoctrination,

¹⁷² Estep, *Christian Formation*, 138–139.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 141.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 142.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 143.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 145.

values clarification, and developmental moral education.”¹⁷⁸ Therefore, this action research project will tremendously impact stakeholders and their moral perspectives by using indoctrination and clarifying the values while in the moral and educational phase of the implementation. This is where the stakeholders will renew their minds as they understand God's pleasing and perfect will (Rom 12:2) toward ethnic and economic diversity within His church. This moral development and Christian formation are what make this research project unique. By developing the mindset of the leaders, the congregation and its future members will have the greatest propensity for sustained economic and ethnic diversity. Whereas some diversity models attempt to facilitate change by quickly recruiting ethnic minorities into their congregation or by having a quick fix of bringing a diverse worship leader onto the stage, this researcher recognizes those efforts may produce community interest, but they will not produce the necessary wholehearted change, systemic change, that the congregation must endure from its leadership out to the pews.¹⁷⁹

The Impact on Stakeholder Participants

When Faith Church pursues moral development at the ethnic and economic levels, the community can be healed, the country can be renewed, segregation can be obliterated, and Christ will be exalted.¹⁸⁰ Although that is a big vision concept that is potentially out of the reach for this project and the stakeholders of Faith Church to embark upon, it is not beyond God's potential when leaders embrace a stronger sense of morality that impacts their Christian formation. The stakeholders will be encouraged to dream and think substantially about how their actions and

¹⁷⁸ Estep, *Christian Formation*, 147.

¹⁷⁹ Kaemingk, *Reformed Public*, Chapter 18.

¹⁸⁰ Strickland, *For God So Loved*, 17.

responses to this action research project can significantly affect the church and God's Kingdom. The stakeholders will be the catalyst for change. With so many of the nation's churches missing the importance and opportunity to create multiethnic and economically diverse worship experiences, the leaders of Faith Church can help set precedence in Northwest Indiana.

Specifically, the stakeholders will have the opportunity to grow in their concept and lifestyle of being morally impacted in their care for and pursuit of ethnically different people from themselves.¹⁸¹ This is not to say that the current stakeholders do not value other ethnicities, nor does it mean that they are prejudiced towards them. It means they have not grown in their spiritual formation to such a degree that it compels them to pursue the core value of ethnic and economic diversity with intentionality or the church they call home.¹⁸² Therefore, the participants of this action research project will be afforded the opportunity to transform from the blinded lifestyle of the priest and Levite relationship with community members that are different from them into a Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) engagement that goes beyond skin-deep and cultural location.

At this level of engagement, the leaders may not only be impacted in their relationships at the church but could expand to their individual homes, places of work, and the communities in which they live. As such, this project is not just a moral development for how things are done at the church but the development of how each participant can be morally impacted to develop more profoundly in their Christian formation at church and abroad. In the educational phase of the implementation design, the leaders will grow in their spiritual formation as they engage with moral principles around their ethnicity, culture, and economics as they relate to people different

¹⁸¹ Swanson, *Redisciplining*, 4.

¹⁸² Hardwick, *Disability*, 7.

from themselves. In this phase, stakeholders will embark upon an ethical development pilgrimage.

Measuring the Impact

As mentioned, this project is about growth. To determine if growth has been accomplished not just within the congregation becoming multiethnic and economically diverse, it is imperative to track the progress of the stakeholders to see if they have grown morally and in their Christian formation. There will be diverse ways in which this measuring is possible. One measurement is if the stakeholders can be vulnerable (Col 3:9-10) as they evaluate their lives regarding ethnic and economic people who differ from their own ethnicity and cultural background to see if there have been any acts of prejudiced thoughts or actions toward those who are different.¹⁸³ The stakeholders should acknowledge any thoughts or actions that may not have been morally in line with the Scriptures and the will of God and, if so, confess their past sins, repent, and be refreshed by the Lord (Acts 3:19).¹⁸⁴ This is a place where the leaders can be transformed by the renewing of their minds (Rom 12:2). This should happen both on a personal level as well as any past or present sins that have been committed underneath the banner of Faith Church.

Another measurement tool is to evaluate whether stakeholders have increased scores on the Likert survey that participants will take. The data can be compared because the Likert survey will be given at the beginning and end of the project. Additionally, moral and Christian formation growth can be measured if the stakeholders pursue the development of a multiethnic and economically diverse mission statement. During the breakthrough portion of this

¹⁸³ Morrison, *Be the Bridge*, 46.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

implementation phase, the participants will have the opportunity to collectively engage in writing a mission statement for their pursuit of ethnic and economic diversity on behalf of Faith Church. Pursuing this mission statement will be evidence of a moral shift in the participants' hearts. Measuring the impact can be determined by observing if the stakeholders pursue, with intentionality, the development of a vibrant, authentic, growing, and diverse culture within the Faith Church locations.

Personal Philosophy

This researcher believes that pursuing the multiethnic and economically diverse church model design is the most warranted based on current research. This concept leads to a closer aligned biblical perspective of Acts 4 and Revelation 7. For this reason, this action research project focuses on what could be a natural progression and assimilation of transitioning a monoethnic church into a multiethnic and economically diverse church. The best approach to economic diversity and becoming multiethnic is for the development of Christian formation and moral development through the means of discipleship.¹⁸⁵

Economic Diversity

In some parts of the world, caste systems separate people groups; however, in the United States of America, there are class systems. These class systems are often called upper, middle, and lower classes. It is not the norm for all classes to engage at the same living level. For example, those below the poverty line do not regularly get invited to the quarters of the wealthy to engage in tea and conversation. Nor vice versa do wealthy people spend most of their time shopping in poverty-stricken neighborhoods. The church must ask whether there should be an

¹⁸⁵ Swanson, *Redisciplining*, 5.

overlap between all classes within the realm of the church's walls. Should the church look any different than society and the culture in which it is embedded? While there have been many studies on the different classes, the bigger question the church must face is not what has been studied but what it is willing to do to integrate economic differences in its sanctuaries.¹⁸⁶ This is not socialism or any version of a social gospel. There is truth to what DeYmaz said, "Yet the development of relationships, specifically, the development of relationships that transcend ethnic and economic barriers, are essential for building a healthy multiethnic church." Without pursuing and engaging people of different ethnic and economic backgrounds, the church will remain homogenous. To ignore different economic classes of people and not invite them into the church does not seem like the ministry that Jesus left for His disciples to continue. So, the concept is not to teach a social gospel but to invite people into the fellowship of the church so that they also can grow in their relationship with the Lord right alongside the wealthy and middle-class believers. The Scriptures contain the theoretical approaches of economic unity for followers of Christ. As such, the church must create discipleship methods to teach its leaders and members the role of economic and multiethnic diversity.

Multiethnic

In a world that is so divided by opinions, differences, and hate, the church can be a leading example of living in love with "your neighbor" (Matt 22:37-39) when discipleship is cultivated.¹⁸⁷ Christ taught and displayed what it looks like to love, accept, and accommodate people of varying cultures and ethnicities. Currently, the church in the United States allows for many things to disrupt its unity. This disunity must be met by moral and Christian formation that

¹⁸⁶ Hendrickson, *Ending Racial*, 345.

¹⁸⁷ DeYmaz, *Leading*, 25.

includes ethnic minorities in life and leadership.¹⁸⁸ As Faith Church has a vision statement that will "impact the world one relationship at a time," it will be advantageous to recognize the platform it has to love people from ethnic groups around the world by creating an environment conducive and inviting to such ethnic groups. Notice there is intentionality in developing people from their current thoughts of diversity to a monoethnic persona that is indicative of a positive life-giving change. As Faith lives out this great command (Mark 12:30-31), the church will be whole, the community can be healed, the country can be renewed, segregation can be obliterated, and Christ will be exalted. Faith Church can inspire churches and community members to love and treat people who are different in a God-honoring way. The community needs a theoretical example set before them on embracing those who are different, and the church is overdue in providing that model.¹⁸⁹

When the church does not engage in multiethnic gatherings, it is segregated.¹⁹⁰ As long as the church is segregated, it should be remembered how Jesus stated that a house divided cannot stand (Matt 12:22-28). Yes, He used that when He was accused of casting out demons by Satan, but the meaning of separation works against itself is still implied. If the church does not embrace the God-ordained model of every nation, tribe, and people, it cannot have a voice of authority in the world. When the church is whole, it creates a ripple effect in the community. Many evil practices were done in the name of the church and the Bible by hate groups from the 1940s through the 1970s that modern Christians would say were not right.¹⁹¹ Unfortunately, the community and Civil Rights groups began saying it first. Theoretically, the church must

¹⁸⁸ Oyakawa, *Racial*, 502.

¹⁸⁹ Bracey, *Beyond Diversity*, 10.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Tisby, *How to Fight*, 8-9.

understand its potential sphere of influence when transitioning from a homogeneous church to a place of multiethnic and economic diversity because of ethnic and economic discipleship. This is a spiritual and moral responsibility for the church and those who call themselves Christians.

Summary

Wonderful-minded thinkers have helped shape what can be viewed as moral development as it crosses over into Christian formation. Researchers, and most certainly churches and pastors, should focus not just on programs and projects being run but on their members' moral development and spiritual formation. As the leaders and stakeholders of Faith Church carry the *imago Dei*, their voices and actions will lead other members to carry out the great command (Matt 22:34-40) and the Great Commission (Matt 28:16-20) to their community as it is being lived in the church. Estep says that when the church is moral, its members and the community can follow the leader.¹⁹² Therefore, lifestyle concepts from the training must be embraced and taught to secondary stakeholders by the action research project participants who have been morally impacted. These participants will display their improved Christian formation as dialogue continues amongst the stakeholders to develop congregational immersion in ethnic and economic diversity among the congregate members of Faith Church. This powerful transformation of Christian formation will be most possible when the stakeholders passionately “contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:18, New International Version).

¹⁹² Estep, *Christian Formation*, 154.

Conclusion

The church is the most incredible entity on earth when it rises to its potential. The church must not yield its power to the external forces in this world. God has called His church to be a light that is on the hill (Matt 5:14-16). God has called the church to be the salt of the world (Matt 5:13). As such, it is essential that when the world decides to tear itself apart with continual hate and segregation, the church must put its foot down and take the high ground to ensure that those who call on the name of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, are the very people who call on the people of different skin colors, ethnicities, nations, and economic status to no longer tolerate or even worse appreciate segregation. The church is called to be different. Jesus Himself said that it is by being different that people will know who belongs to Him, that they believe in the Father and be saved (John 13:34–35). This action research is biblically rooted in the teachings of Jesus Christ himself (John 13, 17; Matt 25), the examples of the apostles and the first church (Acts 4; Eph 2:11-22), and the depiction of that which is yet to come in heaven as previewed by John on Patmos (Rev 7).

This project can impact one local church, and if it is taught right and shared among other churches that currently find their pews filled with a monoethnic culture, it will increase their theological understanding. Their hearts will be transformed by the renewing of their mind (Rom 12:2). The only way the world can get better is when the church gets better. It is time for the church to stop looking externally to governmental agencies and school systems to provide avenues for inclusion. The church should be the leader in helping a world and its people become redeemed from evil, prejudice, and hatred by the power of Jesus Christ alone, filled by the Holy Spirit alone, by the command of the Father alone. Faith Church must press into giving its

congregants a core value resembling Revelation 7 with intentional multiethnic and economic diversity to represent heaven on earth.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The problem has been articulated: Faith Church is failing to give congregants a core value resembling Revelation 7, with intentional multiethnic and economic diversity. Therefore, this DMIN action research project has created the PRIME Diversity Action Plan to implement the value of being multiethnic. This researcher will work with Faith Church to help its potential to generate a multiethnic, economically diverse church resembling Revelation 7, Acts 2, and Philippians 2. This process will take time and can only move forward with intentionality and incredible detail.

Intervention Design

This action-oriented intervention plan is based on conversations and education. Regarding race, the past, along with church history, and excellent care with caution must be exercised, as they can lead to negativity, blame, and shame. To defeat the longstanding ethnic segregation that exists inside the majority of churches in the United States today, it takes excellent communication, willingness, vulnerability, incredible listening, and intentionality. Implementing this plan at Faith Church will take all those measures. The best avenue for success is astonishing communication infiltrated with willing hearts.¹ Changing culture in an established church is dangerous and can lead to fallout. Churches are most prone to fail at culture change when there is not enough transparent conversation and permission with all stakeholders, when

¹ Pat MacMillan, *The Performance Factor: Unlocking the Secrets of Teamwork* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2001).

members do not believe in the vision of the leadership, when there is no strategic movement, and when the change happens too quickly.²

Table 1. Projected Timeline (After IRB approval)

Week 1	Meet with the senior pastor to get permission to do the research project at Faith Church, get his informed consent signed, and conduct a first interview to clarify his desire for racial diversity.
Week 1 – 2	Meet with the executive pastor to get his permission to do the research at Faith Church and submit a request to the consistory to get their permission. Having the executive pastor's permission and consistory helps ensure that all the leadership is informed and giving consent to this sensitive topic. This helps protect the senior pastor with layers of accountability.
Week 2 – 4	Recruit elders, deacons, leadership teams, and pastors to participate in this action research. Get all participants to sign the consent form, take the Likert survey, and complete the multiethnic questionnaire.
Weeks 4 – 7	Schedule and conduct one-on-one interviews with participants. Arrange, schedule, and conduct two focus groups.
Weeks 7 – 9	Compile all the data and present the findings to the senior and executive pastors. Then, have a second interview with the senior pastor.
Weeks 9 - 11	Determine the participants' willingness to stay engaged in a project for the educational training workshop. If a majority of leaders are still willing to participate, the workshop will commence.
Week 12	Participants who formed focus groups at the workshop will present their breakthrough plan to the rest of their groups and the senior pastor.
Week 13	Participants will engage in the reflective phase of the action research project and decide how they would like to proceed and the intentionality of becoming a multiethnic and economically diverse church.

² Osborne, *Sticky Teams*, 79.

Approvals

The first part of this intervention design is to seek approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The student will submit the proper request form and await approval.³ The first interview with the senior pastor of Faith Church will take place when written approval is granted. This interview aims to gain clarity from the senior pastor who initiated the conversation about the potential of doing this DMIN action research on the development of becoming a racially diverse church healthily. This interview will also generate from the senior pastor a list of leaders, elders, stakeholders, and pastors whose participation he believes would be good to request in this action research. The final purpose of this initial interview is to request his official permission to conduct this action research by asking him to sign off on the approval letter (See Appendix A) and the consent form (See Appendix C).

The following interview will be with the executive pastor of Faith Church. The purpose of this meeting is to present and request approval of this action research project and submit the permission request form to him for signature (See Appendix A). If permission is granted, he will also be asked to sign a consent form so that he may become a participant in this research project.

The final approval will come from the Consistory team of Faith Church. They will also receive the permission request form and be asked to sign their approval for the continuation of this action research project. If all three levels of approval are granted, along with that from the IRB, the recruitment of participants will begin.

³ *Doctor of Ministry Program and Candidacy Handbook*, Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity Doctor of Ministry Program, 2023, <https://www.coursehero.com/file/82222147/Doctor-of-Ministry-Program-and-Candidacy-Handbookpdf/>, 33.

Recruitment

Using the combined list from the senior pastor and any additional suggestions from the executive pastor, this researcher will begin recruiting the mentioned participants using an email participation request form (See Appendix D). It is vitally important that all participants understand the nature of the project and the confidentiality that is expected to be maintained. All willing participants will be given the consent form and required to sign it and return it before they can participate (See Appendix C).⁴ Each participant will be made aware that the facilitator will be taking notes and potentially audio recording the sessions. It will be communicated that the purpose of the notes and recording is for the facilitator's accuracy in capturing their thoughts as intended. Participants will understand that what they share will not be used to set them up or used in any ill will toward them. They will also understand that their names will not be attached to any documents as survey results are compiled.

Additionally, all participants will be informed of how confidentiality will be a part of this research project. They will be informed that confidentiality will be kept unless they permit a specific conversation or written correspondence to be shared with someone they designate. They will be informed that confidentiality will be kept except for three instances: If they mention or indicate a desire for self-harm, if they mention the intent of harming someone else, or if they mention the knowledge of child or elderly abuse (See Appendix C).

To combat the potential dropout potential of all participants once the research project begins, it will be offset by having a larger pool of participants representing the whole. To do this, careful consideration must be made with the senior pastor to identify pastors and stakeholders among elders, deacons, leadership teams, and other lay leaders. This researcher and a senior

⁴ *Doctor of Ministry*, 68.

pastor will target and approach sixty different individuals to participate in this research project. The goal is to have a twenty-five to fifty percent participation success rate. So, this project potentially will have fifteen to thirty participants begin and hopefully complete the process.

Some targeted focus groups will be all the elders from the Highland location as one group and all from the Dyre location as another group. Another focus group will comprise all five worship directors from each location. Individual stakeholders that will be mentioned to the senior pastor to be interviewed will be all location pastors, Highland and Dyer deacons, a representation of the minorities who attend both locations, previous leadership personnel, some current staff members, and a few members from the Consistory. As the data tools used in this research project are geared to generate more profound input levels, the intended sample size of all participants is adequate. Once the IRB permits the proceeding, within two weeks, meetings with the senior pastor, executive pastor, and consistory will be scheduled, and their written approvals will be sought.⁵

Data Collection

Over a month or two following the permission phase, most participants will engage in face-to-face, one-on-one interviews with this researcher. Those same participants will also engage in a Likert scale survey and a questionnaire. The Likert survey will be used at two separate times for the participants. It will be used early in the process to get an initial baseline for the participants, and then it will be used after the available training for the participants to see if they have had adaptive growth. The Likert survey will utilize ten simple reflective questions to gauge each participant's quick baseline of understanding regarding their perception of

⁵ *Doctor of Ministry*, 69.

multiethnic and economic diversity in Faith Church (See Appendix E). Participants will complete the questionnaire after completing the Likert survey (See Appendix F).

Participants will engage in an interview with this researcher. Interviews are used to gain information that cannot be observed by participants, such as their feelings, thoughts, and intentions.⁶ This interview aims to gain an in-depth perspective of the stakeholder's views, desires, and willingness to help pursue being a multiethnic and economically diverse church. Each interview will last 30 to 45 minutes. Most interviews will be conducted inside this researcher's office, which is located at Faith Church Highland. If requested, this researcher is willing to meet with participants at other locations and will also be willing to do the interviews via Zoom. This researcher does not believe that altering the interview location will impact the results and data gained from the participants. All participants will be made aware that this researcher will be taking notes and possibly audio recording the interview session to ensure the accuracy of the participant responses.⁷ They will again be assured that their conversation will be confidential unless they are permitted to share or breach the previously mentioned confidentiality clause statement breakers. Although there may be fillers, follow-up questions, and statements in the interview process, this researcher will follow a seven-question script. That script is below and also contained in Appendix H.

1. What are your thoughts about Faith Church pursuing a multiethnic and economic diversity culture?
2. In your opinion, why don't you think Faith Church pursued it sooner?

⁶ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 104.

⁷ Ibid., 108.

3. What reservations, if any, do you have for pursuing multiethnic and economic diversity in the church now?
4. What steps do you feel are necessary for the church to succeed in becoming multiethnic and economically diverse?
5. How do you believe the majority and minority of current congregants will respond and react if diversity integration becomes a reality?
6. Do you see yourself personally investing the time and effort to help FC become multiethnic and economically diverse? Will you stay and help, or do you see yourself stepping away from the church?
7. Would you attend an educational phase of this research project that taught best practices and the next steps in preparing to be multiethnic and economically diverse? (If yes, would you prefer it to be an eight-hour one-day session or three days three-hour sessions?)

Additionally, there will be four focus groups during this action research phase. Elders from the Dyer and Highland campuses will be in two focus groups set up and run by this researcher. Another focus group made up of the worship directors from each campus location will make up the other focus group and will be run by this researcher. The final focus group will comprise multiethnic stakeholders from within the church. This group will be a mix of individuals on staff and lay people from within the church. This researcher will also run a diverse stakeholder group, but it is to be noted that their questions will be different from those of other groups and individuals (See Appendix G). The purpose of these focus groups is to solicit the exact content of information that the individual interviews will generate but in a group format of like-minded individuals. Sensing says focus groups can generate a type of synergy that provides

richer data than individual interviews can create.⁸ Another reason for this format is to see how well the elders from both locations and the worship directors interact together on sensitive topics. These focus groups will first indicate how the educational phase, if entered, will potentially flow. The same questions from Appendix H will be used.

The final data will come from the use of participation journals. This researcher and potentially the senior pastor will participate in using participant journals. Having a reflective journal to generate the most accurate results and track ongoing progress and failures is best. Utilizing such a journal will help the researcher be aware of implicit biases and other miss-sighted happenings throughout the research. Even with the best minds, data that is not captured has the potential for lost data or, worse, misrepresented data. So, this researcher will utilize a reflective journal throughout the process. It will be highly recommended that the senior pastor also utilize a reflective journal to see where he started in his thoughts and where he finishes after research and educational training are done.⁹

After completing all surveys, questionnaires, and interviews, this researcher will analyze the data and record it in intangible ways for the participants to gain perspective. All participants will be asked to gather for the disbursement and explanation of the findings.

Educational Phase

After the researcher articulates the findings, the participants will be asked if they would like to go through the educational phase of this action research. It is understood that some participants will decline and terminate their time as participants. However, this researcher remains optimistic that more than seventy-five percent of the participants will stay engaged in

⁸ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 120.

⁹ *Doctor of Ministry*, 51.

the project. The remaining participants will be given more information about this project's educational phase and asked how they would like to participate. The participants will be given two options for the educational phase. They can choose to do a one-day training that will last eight hours or a three-day breakdown that will last three hours each day. This researcher will collaborate with the participants to schedule the day or days based on most of the participants.

This researcher will teach the educational phase at the Faith Church Highland location. Snacks will be provided, and this researcher will create and assemble course material. The room will be set up with tables so the participants can take notes while this presenter teaches and facilitates conversation. The classroom must be set up so that no participants have their backs toward one another but can see each other and the presenter. Adequate breaks will be given to the participants so they can stay actively engaged during the teaching and dialogue components of the educational phase. The sessions must begin and end at the stated times to value and validate each participant's time.

Reflectional Phase

After the educational session, the participants will begin the reflective phase and be asked to work on a united breakthrough plan. During the reflective phase, the participants will be given time to outline and brainstorm their desired breakthrough plan. Then, the participants will be separated into three distinct groups. Each group will be asked to generate a detailed written breakthrough plan over two weeks, during which time they will present their plans in front of each other, the senior pastor, and this researcher. The leadership team will now decide to either work toward implementing their breakthrough plans or cease the movement towards a multiethnic and economically diverse church. This decision will be in the hands of the leadership, and that will conclude the scope and reach of this action research project. To measure

the growth of the participants, they will be given and asked to retake the Likert survey to track their belief statements in comparison to where they were when they first began the project. The reflectional phase is the most significant indicator of the success of this diversity action plan. In this phase, the researcher will assess the group to see if there is unity amongst the leaders and stakeholders in an intentional effort to pursue a core value of diversity.

Phases of the Intervention

To understand how the current leadership views the ethnic and economic diversity in the church and what the senior pastor means in his statement that he would like to “see more racial diversity,” a time of listening and evaluating is critical to the success of this action research. Therefore, this action research project utilizes a triangulation model to gather data, establish unity through teaching, and provide avenues for reflective consideration of congregational change.¹⁰

By using the triangulation model, this researcher is looking to ensure the highest level of integrity for the results to capture the most extensive viable data for this action research. This project will utilize qualitative and quantitative approaches that will help assimilate longitudinal studies on behalf of the leadership team of Faith Church.¹¹ This process will have three phases: Observational, educational, and reflective. Those three phases, done correctly, will leave the church with the highest capacity for implementation when this project concludes.

¹⁰ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 75.

¹¹ Ibid., 76.

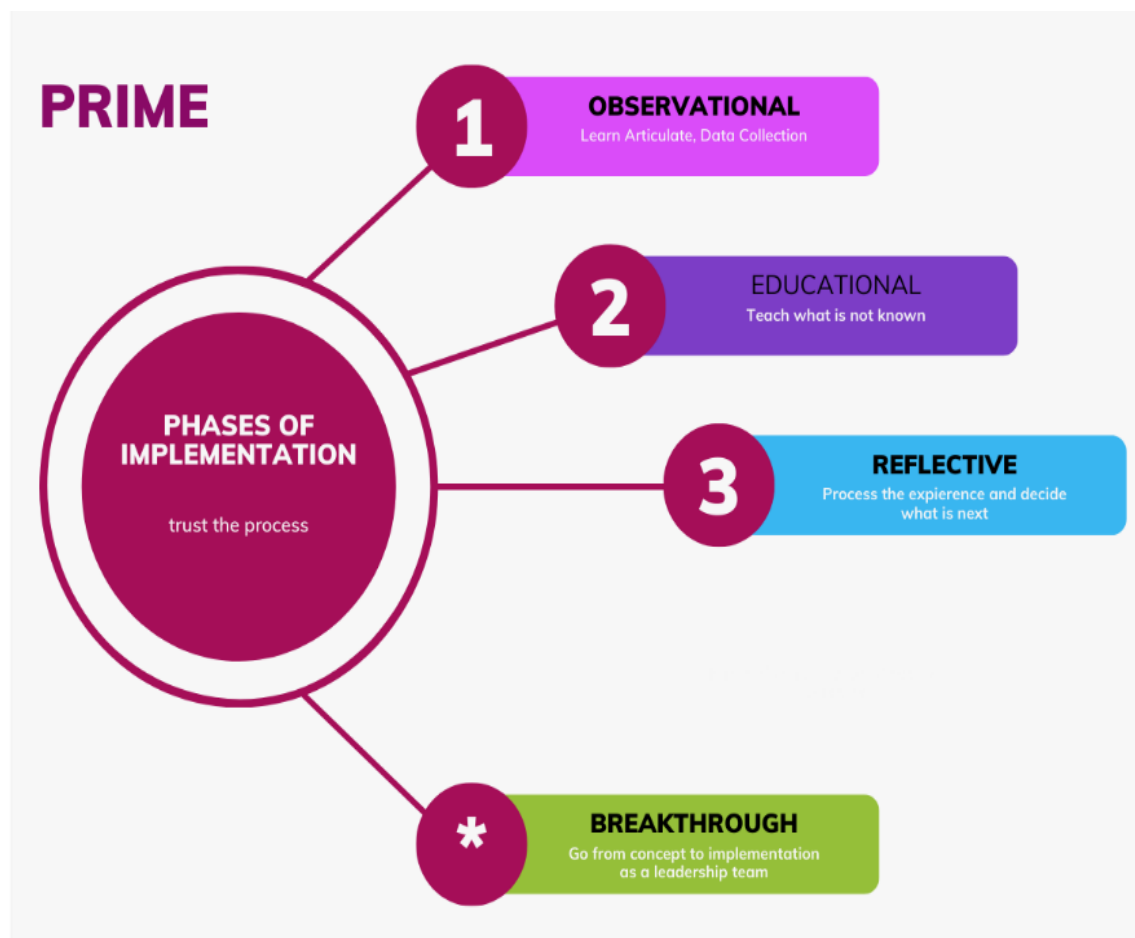


Figure 3.1. Phases of the Intervention Design

The observational phase aims to learn from the leadership what they believe is the current status of ethnicity and economic diversity within the church. It also aids people in understanding what the senior pastor means when he talks about racial diversity within the church, helping him to articulate his vision clearly and paint a picture for others to get behind. This observation phase is solely for data collection.¹² It will be conducted using Likert surveys, questionnaires, and interviews.¹³

The educational phase will utilize the same participants. The results gained during the observational phase will be reflected back to the participants. It will go on to create cross-

¹²Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 76.

¹³ Ibid., 113.

conversational platforms to help foster a unified desire and approach to becoming multiethnic and economically diverse. The teachings here will have an instructing and developing feel (See Figure 3). This educational phase will happen throughout four workshops that foster learning and discussions about Faith Church's past, present, and future. Some of the critical components of the educational phase are blind and outnumbered, systems thinking, a narrative of the past, scenario planning, intentionality, and creating a breakthrough plan (See Figure 4).

Developing:

- Ask for input from followers
- Explain why
- Provide encouragement
- More two-way communication

Instructing

- Specific instructions about goals/objectives
- Decisions made by leaders
- Close supervision
- One-way communication

Figure 3.2. Educational Training Style

Blind and Outnumbered

Blind and Outnumbered is used because it helps participants understand the concepts of identifying hidden factors contributing to the organizational pull that hinders the desired path and its outcomes.¹⁴ In leadership, these external forces can hinder the intended trajectory; however, if they are identified, those same forces can be utilized to help pull toward the trajectory. Starting

¹⁴ Kerry Patterson et al., *Change Anything: The New Science of Personal Success* (London: Piatkus, 2014).

an educational component with this teaching will help create an atmosphere that allows for honest dialogue and reflection. Having discussions and education on matters of race and ethnicity are complex and can immediately generate walls and barriers in the dialogue.¹⁵ For this reason, this intervention design will start with reflection, trust, and teaching *Blind and Outnumbered*.

System Thinking

This portion of the training helps participants to identify the underlying contributions to the stated problem of Faith Church. Participants will learn systems thinking skills instead of merely looking at symptoms to understand how embedded factors contribute to the congregation's lack of multiethnic and economic diversity. Utilizing concepts from the Arbing Institute, the authors of *The Anatomy of Peace*, participants will be asked to reflect on their personal patterns contributing to the problem and ponder on the example that the previous leaders embedded into the church culture.¹⁶ Learning these skills will help the participants construct a healthier platform for the multiethnic and economic diversity relationships they intend to foster.

The Narrative of the Past

The narrative of the past understands that the leadership team participating in this research project must have a time of honesty and reflection regarding race relations and the church. It will have three sections that cover what it was, sin and hurt, and writing a new platform for a better future. It will peer into the history of the United States of America, the

¹⁵ Hardwick, *Disability and the Church*, 7.

¹⁶ The Arbing Institute, *Leadership and Self-Deception: Getting out of the Box* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Incorporated, 2018).

Reformed Church in America, and Faith Church. When the leadership can identify and confess sin and the hurt it has caused, repenting and forgiveness will allow for a new platform that intertwines a multiethnic and economically diverse congregation.¹⁷ This will be demonstrated in what the leadership believes, conveys, and intentionally implements.

Scenario Planning

Scenario planning is a tool that can be utilized to help anticipate potential differing futures while creating alternate strategies amid change. It will challenge the participants to look beyond their comfortable and perhaps narrow view of the future to enable them to see how things may turn out. It is not designed to prevent a lesser desired future but to prepare for whatever the future may bring by looking at the driving forces they have control over. Adapted from Peter Schwartz's *The Art of Creating Scenarios*,¹⁸ this session will utilize The Good, the Bad, the Ugly, Scenario Plots, and the Big Grid. This training helps leadership teams to identify what happens if they do not make changes regarding the problem that has been identified. It highlights best and worst-case scenarios.

Intentionality

The intentionality portion of the educational phase focuses on cultural and economic understanding. It looks at implementing the concepts from the research phase of this research project, and thus, it focuses on distorted views. It has two main components. The first component will engage the participants in walking in and relating to the research, historical undertones, leadership, intentionality, and reconciliation. The second component has three focus areas

¹⁷ Morrison, *Be the Bridge*, 46.

¹⁸ Peter Schwartz, *The Art of the Long View: Planning for the Future in an Uncertain World* (Chichester: Wiley, 2007).

associated with accommodating: empowering leadership, more than music, and marketing. It is to be understood that the change will not become evident without intentionality.

Breakthrough Plan

A breakthrough plan is a process in which the participants take all the insights gained throughout the three phases of this plan and create a strategic, vibrant, achievable, and sustainable plan for change. The breakthrough plan moves beyond the classroom into developing a tangible action plan that the leaders and pastors formulate together to become multiethnic and economically diverse. This concept will be taught, and the leaders will take time to develop their breakthrough plan and present it to the researcher and the senior pastor.

Table 2. Educational Training Workshop Breakdown

Session One	Session Two	Session Three	Session Four
REFLECTION, TRUST, AND BLINDED & OUTNUMBERED	SYSTEM THINKING AND NARRATIVE OF THE PAST	SCENARIO PLANNING AND INTENTIONALITY	BREAKTHROUGH Breakdown
Self-reflection, building trust, and developing people	Looking Back, Deeper, and Ahead	Focusing Question and Driving Forces	Senior Pastor Focus Groups
Blind and Outnumbered	Outward: -Seeing the whole -Ladder of Influence -What are Systems -Seeing vs. Acting Different -The Iceberg Change	Remember the Future Creating Scenarios -Good, Bad, & Ugly -Scenario Plots -Big Grid	Consider Partners -Identify Opportunities -Partnering & Accommodating
	Leveraging Change and Breakthrough: -Revisit the Mission -Identify Roadblocks -Gap Analysis (Between intentions and actions)	Intentionality What must be known: -Walking to the research -Historical undertone -Leadership -Intentionality -Reconciliation	
		Strategic Priorities	

The reflective phase takes all the gathered information in the learning and educational phase. It allows participants to reflect on where they began the project compared to where they have finished. This phase will utilize the Likert survey and questionnaire to generate pre- and post-comparative data. In this phase, this researcher will also interview the senior pastor to evaluate how his perception of racial diversity has been impacted through this project. The reflective phase, through focus groups, also allows all participants to discern their desire to pursue multiethnic and economic diversity within Faith Church. Should the senior pastor and the participants desire to move forward and their approach for establishing intentionality in becoming multiethnic and economically diverse, this researcher will offer support to their endeavor that is beyond the scope of this action research project.

Breaking Down PRIME

This action plan is based on effective communication, helping leadership align, and understanding how the past may influence the current culture of Faith Church. This action plan is called PRIME, as it seeks to move strategically and healthily in establishing a multiethnic and economically diverse church atmosphere. PRIME is an acronym for Posture, Racial Reconciliation, Identified Ideation, Meticulous Methods, and Enlightened Enjoyment. It is imperative that this process is covered in prayer and implemented cautiously and slowly. Rushing the process of unity can split the church.



Figure 3.3. Program Name & Logo

Posture

Posture is an alignment of pastors, leaders, and critical staff to develop a vision statement and mentality that embodies the need for ethnic inclusion through intentionality. This process happens through interviews and the Likert scale survey. The interview process is not a one-and-done process but multiple engagements with the same person or group. It takes time to hear from the individuals to see their posture on multiethnic churches and whether Faith Church should become such a location. When the leadership posture aligns, they can develop a “clear, relevant, significant, urgent, and achievable” purpose.¹⁹ The leadership team's role is unchanging: to “determine God’s will and then see that it is carried out.”²⁰ MacMillan says, “There must be unity of purpose; otherwise, the various elements will pull in different directions.”²¹

¹⁹ MacMillan, *The Performance Factor*.

²⁰ Larry Osborne, *Sticky Teams: Keeping Your Leadership Team and Staff on the Same Page* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 102.

²¹ MacMillan, *The Performance Factor*.

Racial Reconciliation

Racial reconciliation involves walking the church leaders through the painful past to create honesty, lamenting, healing, and celebrating. The reconciliation process begins through the questionnaire and interview phases with different leadership personnel and will be most encountered during the educational phase of the research project. This is a highly delicate implementation phase. Therefore, it must be natural and not forced. If it goes well, it could later be presented to the congregation if there is a need for repentance, lamenting, and reconciliation.

Identified Ideation

Identified ideation is the development of a church culture that depends on the Lord, pursues intentionality, establishes diverse leadership, develops cross-cultural relationships and competencies, and expects an attitude of inclusion. This step uses intentional integrations to carefully launch the ideation methods with the interviews, set focus groups, and this research project's strategically crafted educational phase. If the leadership can move forward with the identified posture and embrace racial reconciliation, they will need guidance to navigate their identified ideation. If this leadership team is going to be successful, it must put aside all personal agendas and preferences while focusing on the more significant task at hand.²²

Although this researcher understands a strategic plan that could benefit the leadership team in moving forward, it is imperative that the leadership team feels empowered to generate their ideas with limited guidance from the researcher. If the leadership team should ever feel that they are being imposed upon, this project can become compromised. When a team believes that

²² Osborne, *Sticky Teams*, 101.

they are the ones who developed, created, and set forth the desired outcomes, they are more likely to own it and pursue it.

Meticulous Methods

Meticulous methods establish teams to strategically work through the newly formed ideations into practical, realistic, measurable, and specific launching points. MacMillan contends that the most effective teams have processes that help them navigate the work, goals, and thinking processes.²³ This section of the intervention will be conducted through educational training. At this juncture, the leadership team has decided what they would look like if they were a multiethnic and economically diverse church. Now, they will need to be trained in multiethnic and economic differences. This will occur in a large classroom-style setting, and this researcher will present. This four-course model is described in more detail below in the educational description of the Phases of the Intervention section. It will include all participants still willing to engage in the process. It is understood that participants at this level may have a complete investment in the culture change and, therefore, desire to continue, as well as some who will disregard the concept and step away from the project.

Enlightened Enjoyment

Enlightened enjoyment is living into the ideation reality and experiencing the power of multiethnic and economically diverse worship with spiritual and life transformational enjoyment. This will happen in numerous ways and at differing periods. If only the leadership teams could embrace the Revelation 7 concept of Christian unity, they would experience enlightened enjoyment. If, upon completing this implementation project, the leadership team declares that it

²³ MacMillan, *The Performance Factor*.

wants to pursue being a multiethnic and economically diverse church, its members will have a chance to engage in enlightened enjoyment. This enlightenment displays the transformation of a people group as they are modified spiritually, as well as their personal growth and theological understanding. Here, the people of Faith Church will experience the nature and character of God vibrantly as He is the author and sustainer of life from all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, for He alone has broken the dividing wall of hostility (Eph 2:14-16) that His people “may glorify Him enjoy Him forever” together.²⁴

Goals and Success

This action research project aims to enhance the multiethnic and ethnic diversity of leaders and congregants within Faith Church. While there are many facets to help a historically Reformed Church become multiethnic, this intervention focuses on gathering insight into what the leaders understand as the reason for the lack of diversity and the education on healthily establishing multiethnic and ethnic diversity within Faith Church. The design of this project is to cultivate an atmosphere within the pastors, elders, leadership teams, and key stakeholders that will give the most incredible opportunity for multiethnic and diverse success. This project does not extend itself to the implementation of congregational adaptation, recruitment, acceptance, assimilating, and accommodation of economically and ethnically diverse community members, as that process will develop over the years. This project will prepare the way for that inclusion.

There are three overall main goals for this intervention. Additional objectives may be achieved outside of this intervention that would be monumental and necessary for the church to become multiethnic and economically diverse. However, for the immediate oversight of this

²⁴ Westminster Assembly, *The Westminster Confession of Faith: Edinburgh Edition* (Philadelphia, PA: William S. Young, 1851), 387.

intervention, success can be measured in the three following ways. One is that the senior pastor, executive pastor, and greater consistory will have a solid motive to move forward with this intervention that deals with economics and ethnicity. It is an additional success if the subject matter is not minimized, along with openness and willingness to pursue the conversation. Faith Church can press into three levels of engagement for being multiethnic and economic diversity: accepting, assimilating, or accommodating. The most extraordinary level that the leadership can desire is accommodation, which is the highest level of success that this project will navigate the leaders towards.

If their desire does not push past accepting or assimilating, but other participants, pastors, and elders do, that would be a successful outcome. Another level of evaluation is having more than seventy-five percent of participants complete the interview process, have growth on their Likert scale, and attend and complete the training portion of this intervention. It is understood that some people will drop out of this program for distinct reasons, but maintaining the majority is a goal. The final measure of success is if the pastors, leadership teams, greater consistory, elders, and members can engage in healthy conversations and strategic plans of implementation of becoming an intentional multiethnic and economically diverse church. It will be beneficial for the senior pastor and the leadership team, both present and from the past, to recognize, admit, and grieve any past actions, statements, or beliefs that have been done or that were held that may have influenced various ethnicities and economic levels that were not the same as Faith Church's majority to stay away or not feel welcomed within its doors and church storyline. All of these are vast levels of efficiency from this intervention. If, over the years, the church begins to implement the concepts taught in training, that would be considered long-term efficiency, which should

result in praise and glory to the Heavenly Father who has created man in His image that remains with no respect for persons (Acts 10:34-38).

Implementation of the Intervention Design

There were many facets this project underwent to generate good academic research and pertinent findings. While the meticulous methods were essential yet meticulous to go through, they were an important part of the process. Some variances and adjustments were necessary from this research project's developmental phase to the design's implementation. This section contains an overview of the process, highlights the alterations made, the multiethnic recruitment process, and establishing the multiethnic training and workshop.

Overview

To comply with the Liberty School of Rawlings Divinity program, this project first got approval from the Institutional Review Board.²⁵ Permission from the Institutional Review Board was granted in April of 2024. This project then sought permission from the senior pastor, executive pastor, and the Governing Consistory of Faith Church. All three gave their consent during the month of May. A one-on-one interview was set up to ensure the senior pastor was thoroughly aware of the project and the components that participants would be going through. This researcher walked through the survey, questionnaire, and interview questions with the senior pastor. Transparency is vitally important to the success and continued support of the project.²⁶ After questions and discussion over language and terminology choices and the

²⁵ *Doctor of Ministry*, 33.

²⁶ Osborne, *Sticky Teams*, 166.

intended course of action for the remainder of the project, the senior pastor continued to support the project.

The project then underwent the recruitment phase by soliciting participants from Highland and Dyer church locations. It was decided that because this researcher has a relationship with the Highland elders, deacons, and leadership team, he would contact those desired participants. Likewise, it was decided that the senior pastor would send out the recruitment email to the Dyer intended participants because he has a relationship with those individuals that this researcher does not have. Most of the Highland and Dyer leadership teams desired to be successful in this project and generate the best buy-in.

Recruitment of Participants

An email letter went out to the elders, deacons, and leadership team of Faith Highland. It generated some initial responses, but the participation level was not high after two weeks of waiting. The lead pastor of Highland encouraged this researcher to follow up by text or phone call, as email has seen slow results in other avenues for the church.²⁷ Within sixty minutes of following up by text, all but three of the recruits responded with apologies for the delay and a commitment to proceeding with the completion of the informed consent, survey, and questionnaire.

Highland: Twenty-three recruitment emails went out.

Accepted invitation to participate	16
Declined	3 (all three noted their current availability)
Unresponsive	1

²⁷ Tim Huizenga, interview by author, Highland, IN, June 17, 2024.

Agreed to participate but no action	3
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Participant Breakdown

Elders	4 (4 male)
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Deacons	7 (7 male)
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Leadership Team	5 (2 male, 3 female)
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Participant	Sex	Ethnicity	Location
1	M	White	Highland

Dyer: Twenty-four recruitment emails went out.

Accepted invitation to participate	3
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Declined	0
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Unresponsive	21
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Agreed to participate but no action	0
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Participant Breakdown

Elders	1 (1 male)
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Deacons	2 (1 male, 1 female)
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Leadership Team	0
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Participant	Sex	Ethnicity	Location
1	M	White	Highland

Alterations

Dyer Delays

During the project, there was a leadership transition at the Dyer location. The senior pastor of Faith Church also served as the Dyer location pastor since 2007, when it began its first multi-site location. In June of 2024, the transition allowed the senior pastor to transfer the role of

both senior pastor and Dyer location pastor, only to be the senior pastor of Faith Church. The executive pastor of Faith Church transitioned into being the Dyer location pastor. During this transition, there was a mix-up and delay in recruiting Dyer participants. The now-current Dyer location pastor sent out the recruitment letter on behalf of this researcher to the elders, deacons, and leadership team. Of the twenty-four recruits, only three individuals agreed to participate, and twenty-one were unresponsive. This researcher asked the new location pastor if a text follow-up similar to what was done in Highland should be done, and the pastor decided it was best not to since participation was voluntary.²⁸

Follow Up

It was proven that because some people are unresponsive to emails in today's culture of Faith Church, a follow-up text message can provide results. At the onset of the project design, the thought was that a follow-up email to unresponsive recruits would suffice. However, texting produces better results. Observed from Highland of the twenty-three recruitment emails, only four initial responses came in from the initial and follow-up emails, with nineteen unresponsive. However, twenty-two responses and one unresponsive recruit were generated after the text follow-up. Dyer, similarly, has twenty-one of the twenty-four recruits as unresponsive, and no text message follow-up went out.

Assessment Tool Adjustments

During the project implementation, adjustments were made to the assessment tools to enhance their usability. Initially, the assessments would be printed and returned to the researcher at the interview stage. However, to facilitate the recruits' participation, expedite the delivery of

²⁸ Jason Devries, email message to author, June 19, 2024.

results to the researcher, and improve tracking, the print-and-fill versions of the assessments were converted into online Google Forms. An electronic signature link was added at the end of the consent form, and the survey and questionnaire were transformed into a user-friendly electronic document.

Outside of the formatting of the assessment tools, there were also minor changes to the recruitment email, consent form, general interview questions, and minority stakeholder interview questions. Point three of the recruitment email changed from “The third task is to participate in an audio-recorded interview that will take no more than 45 minutes” to “... will take approximately 15 minutes.” Similarly, the consent form language changed the third point to mirror the 15-minute interview time. Both were inspired after this researcher conducted the first two interviews and found that both lasted in the fifteen-minute range instead of the predicted forty-five-minute range. The General Interview questions had some minor alterations as well. Question one was altered from “diversity culture” to “diverse culture.” On question five, “ethnic” was added before majority and minority. The Ethnic Minority Interview questions had alterations on questions 2a, 5, and 6. Question 2a was changed from “leadership in the people” to “leadership and the people.” In question 5, the word ethnic was inserted before majority and minority. In question 6, a second portion was added to the question, “Will you stay and help, or do you see yourself leaving the church?”

Elder Focus Group

During the developmental phase of this project, the idea was to generate a focus group with the elders from each location. However, after the recruitment phase, it was determined that getting all the elders together for an additional gathering would be difficult. Therefore, it was

concluded that holding one-on-one interviews with the researcher would not create as much synergy, but it would be as effective in gathering data.²⁹

Multiethnic Minority Recruitment

The recruitment of ethnic minorities required initial conversations with each recruit. Each recruit had a small conversation with this researcher before receiving the recruitment email that was generated for the elders, deacons, leadership team, and minority stakeholders. During each conversation, the participants were verbally willing to participate in the project, which led to sending the recruitment email. Nine ethnic minorities were recruited to participate. Each agreed to participate, even though some were a bit cautious, too.

Accepted invitation to participate	9
Declined	0
Unresponsive	0
Agreed to participate but no action	0
Participant Breakdown	
Black	4 (2 male, 2 female)
Latino	4 (1 male, 3 female)
Other	1 (1 female)

Assessments

Three assessments were used to gather data for this research project. This project utilized a survey, questionnaire, and interview to gather the most qualitative information.³⁰ The survey

²⁹ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 120.

was designed to gather quick, measurable data from the participants before engaging with them. The questionnaire helped to gauge participants' more profound level of thinking by providing short answer opportunities.³¹ The final assessment used was the interview.

Survey

The survey was sent out along with the recruitment email. It was thirteen questions long and asked participants to answer based on five potential answers. The answers ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Most participants submitted the survey soon after they submitted their consent forms. The survey was sent as an attachment that could be filled out and sent back by email, or it could be filled out by clicking a link that would take participants to a Google form that would allow this researcher to track the data. All but two participants chose to use the link.

Questionnaire

Like the survey, the questionnaire was sent as an attachment that could be filled out and sent back by email, or it could be filled out by clicking a link that would take participants to a Google form that would allow this researcher to track the data. The questionnaire contained ten questions. Most responses took multiple days, and some took up to a couple of weeks before they were sent in or electronically done. There were a couple of participants that never completed the questionnaire.

³⁰ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 86.

³¹ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, xxviii.

Interview

Participants were given the opportunity to engage in a one-on-one interview with this researcher by way of in-person or online over Zoom. All in-person interviews were done at Faith Highland and were conducted either in this researcher's office or in one of the church meeting rooms. By utilizing the software and website Doodle.com, this researcher could send out multiple 30-minute time slots for participants to select their best option for the meeting. The participants were given the link to schedule interviews after they had completed the informed consent and survey. A little more than the majority preferred in-person interviews. At the beginning of each interview, this researcher informed each participant that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions they would be asked. He also told them that when the report was written up, their names would be stricken from the data and would be referred to only as a participant number.³² The researcher ensured the participants were free to be honest without worrying about retaliation by themselves or other Faith Church leaders. Participants acknowledge their understanding and gratitude for the confidentiality and freedom to express themselves without feeling they may answer right or wrong.

The interview process typically took about 15 minutes for each participant to answer the seven pre-scripted questions. This researcher stuck to the script with each interview. Although tempted, this researcher refrained from any response feedback after the participant articulated their thoughts on any question. While the participants gave many astounding answers, this researcher did not want to influence or deter participants' answers to future questions. After each interview, the researcher thanked each participant and gave them feedback on what was to come regarding the training and workshop component of this action research project.

³² *Doctor of Ministry*, 69.

Multiethnic Church's Pastor Interview

Contact was made with two churches that are currently operating as multiethnic. After much correspondence, the two pastors of the different churches agreed to participate in a one-on-one interview to discuss their successes, failures, letdowns, and practices. Pastor A was the pastor of an intentional church planted by the Reformed Church in America on the north side of Chicago.³³ This church consisted of approximately sixty attending members weekly. The church started in 2019. Pastor B is the pastor of an established church in the Northwest region of Indiana, in a town called Hammond.³⁴ This was a previous Christian Reformed Church that became an independent, nondenominational church over the past four years since 2020. The church has grown to over four hundred people a weekend for services and has become multiethnic. Here are the gained perspectives from these beneficial interviews.

Personal cost and uncomfortability

Both pastors discussed the cost to them as pastors. Pastor A is Indian, and Pastor B is White. Both pastors described the weight and toll that multiethnic ministry bears on them. Both pastors elaborated on how they were alienated from their ethnic circles. Pastor B said when his White family members and friends show up to the church, they state they do not understand his vision and cannot be a part of the church. Pastor A stated his family and Indian culture treat him as a foreigner because he does not do ministry to the Indian culture exclusively. Pastor A said his own identity has been transformed and “corrupted” into a “multiethnic person for evangelistic purposes.”³⁵ He said that his willingness to focus more on God and letting Jesus be his identity

³³ Pastor A, interview by author, Highland, IN, July 8, 2024.

³⁴ Pastor B, interview by author, Highland, IN, July 18, 2024.

³⁵ Pastor A, July 8, 2024.

has cost him; however, even though he has suffered personal ethnic loss, he said, “Gain comes from loss.”³⁶ Learning and adapting to their ethnically diverse congregants has allowed them to gain God’s people who are different from themselves.

Cultural intelligence

Pastor B talked about the importance of cultural intelligence. He said being a White pastor in a multiethnic community and church requires understanding different cultures.³⁷ Each culture is unique, and there are certain things each culture does that, if not understood, can seem offensive or worse, that he could unintentionally offend. Learning the cultures he is serving is hard work but vitally necessary for success in leading a multiethnic church. He pushes his leaders to learn about various cultures as well. He said leaders must know how to serve people different from themselves. Behind the scenes, they have a lot of uncomfortable conversations, and in that process, they break down barriers based on perceptions. The church has intentionality, but the willingness and openness of the people do not develop in a day.

Facing criticism

Both pastors said that criticism comes at them from many directions. Pastor A says criticism comes to him from his leadership team. He says he has excellent support from his Classis. The Classis in the RCA are ministers and elders who oversee churches in a particular region.³⁸ He likes the support of the Classis, but the elders of the church criticize when different groups of people go into the church. He was criticized when Black people started coming in regularly; then, he was criticized when the homeless population became regulars. He said he and

³⁶ Pastor A, July 8, 2024.

³⁷ Pastor B, July 18, 2024.

³⁸ Efikkert, *The Reformed Church in America*, Government.

the Classis intentionally chose to plant the church in an Irish community, and from the beginning, that rubbed leaders the wrong way, so they complained and criticized the efforts and began calling it an “illegal immigrant church.”³⁹ Pastor B also mentioned the criticism that his church faces for their open dialogue about race, culture, and ethnicities from the front of the church. Both pastors said that although the criticism can be hurtful and discouraging, they are in this calling for the long haul and will keep pushing. It takes thick skin to do this kind of work, so the church and its pastor must be certain this is the journey they want to go down. They carried the sentiment that even though it is hard, it is advantageous.

Power of prayer

During their interviews, both pastors took a great time to talk about the power of prayer and the involvement of the Holy Spirit. Both credited the Holy Spirit for His leadership and guidance in becoming multiethnic and economically diverse churches. When Pastor A was asked if research, demographic studies, and other things were considered before launching the church, he said no, but the Holy Spirit was approached. He said their success is only by God's grace, mercy, power, and His call and leading.⁴⁰ Pastor A mentioned that discerning God's will and Spirit is vital in multiethnic church planting. Pastor B said it has always been prayer that has brought the next ethnic type of people in. Leadership would recognize that they did not have a particular ethnic group attending the church, and they would pray about that ethnic increase.⁴¹ Each time this has happened, they experienced an outpouring of that ethnic group in their services.

³⁹ Pastor A, July 8, 2024.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Pastor B, July 18, 2024.

The reach

Pastor A has experienced that their church plant, which is in the middle of an Irish community in Chicagoland, can minister to various kinds of people. Pastor A said it did not go in the way that other leaders wanted, but it went the way God wanted. They followed God's lead, and in turn, the church was not what they thought it would be, yet now the church is filled with Black, White, Hispanic, rich, poor, mental health issues, and others. Each week, the church ministers to two hundred economically diverse people who are homeless. He said people from the streets are being baptized.⁴² Pastor B started with a majority White congregation, but now, each Sunday, the growing church experiences Latinos, Blacks, Muslim converts who have been baptized in their church, and Whites. They recently said publicly that they now need more White people. Pastor A is about a year away from sending out a church plant a few towns over in Merrillville.

Training and Workshop

The participants were given a choice to participate in a one-day, eight-hour, or three-hour training over three different days. Most of the participants selected to do a one-day training course of eight hours. With leaders who are also volunteers, this seems to be the most practical. The multiple days would run a higher risk for absenteeism. The workshop was conducted on Saturday, July 20, 2024. The workshop lasted from eight in the morning until three-thirty in the afternoon. After consultation with the Governing Consistory, the senior pastor decided not to participate in the training but to be informed of the results and findings from the project.⁴³ This decision ensured the most beneficial use of his time in his senior pastor role.

⁴² Pastor A, July 8, 2024.

⁴³ Bob Bouwer, email message to author, June 21, 2024.

The training layout began with materials placed on the tables before participants arrived. Circle tables were arranged to have seven people at each table. The four circle tables were arranged in a U shape to ensure no one was behind anyone else. Having eye contact with other participants is vital to the success of the training. The tables were arranged to have two elders, two deacons, one leadership team member, and two ethnic minorities at each table. Each seat was preconditioned with a name holder and participant materials.

Continental breakfast supplies that could be enjoyed for the morning and snacks that could be enjoyed throughout the day were set up neatly for the participant's arrival. To ensure participants felt welcomed and valued, gestures like this help create a conducive learning atmosphere of hospitality and professionalism. At the beginning of the training, the facilitator encouraged participants to take bathroom breaks as needed and to help themselves with two snacks and beverages throughout the day. He informed them that there would be some scheduled breaks and a time for lunch throughout the day. The researcher arranged for a volunteer to come in and set up breakfast before the workshop and lunch at the appropriate time. After spending some moments going over hospitality and allowing people to gather food and beverages, the facilitator began the time in prayer, and then the workshop started.

There was a minor shift in the development of the workshop training from the development of this project. This researcher wanted to enhance the workshop content so that the participants could learn not only about pursuing ethnic and economic diversity but also be imparted with practical tools for developing leadership strategies and competencies for doing so. The training workshop combined both a training component for teaching on ethnic and economic inclusion and a workshop component that taught how to make strategic leadership changes. The workshop was divided into four sections. Sessions One, Two, and Three were before lunch. After

lunch, the conclusion of Session Three happened, and then Session Four began. Each session engaged the participants at another level of the multiethnic church journey.

Session One focused on the importance of communication among leadership teams and with those who would potentially come into the church from the implementations the leadership team could take. Regarding communication, Osborne says, “Our fiercest battles are seldom fought over theology. They’re fought over change, especially any change that comes as a surprise, alters a comfortable tradition, or represents a symbolic changing of the guard.”⁴⁴ Accountability was another section of the training that focused on being accountable to themselves, the ethnic minorities who currently attend, and most importantly, God for following through on the potential goal of church diversity. The last element of Session One was teaching about having an agenda for change.

Session Two focused on a biblical foundation for diversity within God’s kingdom and His local church. Then, the training showed how the leadership would face blinders in implementing changes and the importance of marketing the intended changes well. The training covered the thorny subject of the reality of the past and present within America's history and the church. While this content was eye-opening for many of the participants, a lot of depth and discussion was able to happen at each table. The ethnic majorities were leaning into the words and shared church hurt from the ethnic minorities at their tables.

Session Three covered Systems Thinking and then went into what ethnic and economic diversity in the church setting is not. Afterward, it discussed what it is and what ethnic and economic minorities will need as they try to emerge into Faith Church. Some of those sub-sections were Reflection, Authentic Relationships, and Welcoming: Accepted, Assimilated, and

⁴⁴ Osborne, *Sticky Teams*, 172.

Accommodated. Session Three also had more Value teachings of empowerment, interdependence, leverage, and healthy change. This led to the importance of their need to develop a robust collaborative approach to change that includes ethnic and economically diverse people. To help the leaders not only hear ethnic and economic content, they were also taught a leadership approach of Scenario Planning to guide them into making changes within the church.

Session Four was when the participants got to think through their breakthrough plans for achieving ethnic and economic diversity in Faith Church Highland. This session was shorter than intended due to falling behind on the schedule. After the sessions were completed, a discussion on the next steps was held, followed by taking the exit survey, praying, and dismissing. The following is a schedule from the workshop training.

Table 3. Training & Workshop Schedule

8:00	Welcome	15 Minutes	Get food
8:15	Session One	90 Minutes	Communication, Accountability, Agenda for Change
9:45	Break	5 Minutes	
9:50	Session Two	80 Minutes	Biblical Foundation for Diversity, Blind & Outnumbered, Reality of the Past & Present
11:10	Break	5 Minutes	
11:15	Session Three Start	45 Minutes	Systems Thinking, Glancing Ahead, Values,
12:00	Lunch	30 Minutes	
12:30	Session Three Resumes	30 Minutes	Collaboration, Scenario Planning
1:00	Break	5 Minutes	
1:05	Session Four (Teaching)	25 Minutes	Breakthrough Planning
1:30	Session Four (Development)	35 Minutes	Breakthrough Planning Table Development
2:05	Presentations	25 Minutes	Breakthrough Presentations
2:30	Next Steps	15 Minutes	Participants discuss what the next steps will be, if any
2:45	Exit Survey, Prayer & Dismissal		Take an exit survey and then dismissed

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

After generating the methods for this action research project, it is vitally important to track its results. This project set forth to assist the problem contained within Faith Church that it lacks establishing a core value that pursues multiethnic and economic diversity within its locations. This action research tried to generate change by utilizing the prime diversity action plan to help the leadership, pastors, elders, deacons, worship leaders, and various stakeholders to become united in their posture, walk through racial reconciliation, have a united identified ideation that is generated through meticulous methods, which is evidenced by having enlightened enjoyment. To illustrate the effectiveness of this plan, below is the comparative qualitative data collected and measured from the project's duration. This section utilizes graphics and charts to demonstrate the effectiveness of this action research project.

Collective Results

This project gathered information in different ways. To gather the most qualitative data, this project benefited from participants engaging in a survey at the start of the program. To engage the participants at a deeper level, participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire, which was followed by a one-to-one interview with the researcher. After the workshop training, participants were asked to engage in two more surveys. The first post-survey compared the before and after rankings of concepts taught during the training. The other post-survey was to track the desire of Faith Church to pursue being multiethnic and economically diverse.

Participant Overview

The following is a list of the different participants in the project. The participants range from elders, deacons, individuals from the leadership team, staff, two pastors, and ethnic minorities from Faith Highland to one pastor and three deacons from Faith Dyre. Three non-Faith Church pastors from Reformed backgrounds were also interviewed to learn from their successes, struggles, and failures in leading multiethnic churches. It should be noted that not all participants did all phases of the data collection process. Although it would be beneficial to have a 100 percent retention rate for all participants, the data that was collected in the areas where each participated gives ample data to process, generate findings, and track results. Viewing the participant overviews helps the researcher track patterns of participant responses. Some questions and answers will identify which participant made particular statements.

Participant #1 - Is a female staff member who has been a part of Faith Highland for more than four years. She has seen the change in leadership and has worked with hospitality within the church. She ensures that people feel welcomed and greeted when they come into the church.

Participant #2 - Is a male pastor who was influential in the 2014 merger of First Christian Reformed Church into Faith Highland. He was an influential part of the transition. He has been on staff for eight years and in the lead pastor role for almost three years. He participated in the survey, questionnaire, interview, and workshop training.

Participant #3 – Is a male deacon who has been a part of the church since 2015. He has been a part of the Christian Reformed church most of his life. He has experienced diversity and is excited to help the church move forward. He participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview.

Participant #4 - Is a male Deacon who has been a part of the church since 2018. He has worked with economically distressed individuals since he started his role as a deacon. He participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview.

Participant #5—He is a male on the Highland leadership team. He became a member in 2014 when the CRC enfolding of Faith occurred. He has been on the leadership team for two years. He participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview. He wanted to participate in the workshop, but having surgery the week before prevented his attendance.

Participant #6—He is a male on the Highland leadership team. He became a member in 2014 with the CRC enfolding of Faith and has been on the team for three years. He participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview.

Participant #7 is a newly elected deacon at Highland. He became a member in 2014 with the CRC Enfolding of Faith. He participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview.

Participant #8—He is a pillar on the deacon team at Highland. He became a member in 2014 with the CRC Enfolding of Faith and has been on the deacon team for five years. He participated in the survey, questionnaire, interview, and workshop training.

Participant #9 – Is a male pastor at Highland. He has been on staff for two years. He participated in the survey and workshop training.

Participant #10 – Is a female deacon at Dyer who has been a member since 2004. She participated in the survey, questionnaire, interview, and workshop training.

Participant #11 – Is a male deacon at Dyer who has been a member since 2016. He participated in the survey, questionnaire, interview, and workshop training.

Participant #12 – Is a newly elected male Deacon for Highland. He became a member in 2014 when the CRC enfolded by Faith took place. He participated in the survey, questionnaire, interview, and workshop training.

Participant #13 – Is a male Deacon at Highland for the past two years. He became a member in 2014 when the CRC was enfolded by Faith church. He participated in the survey, questionnaire, interview, and workshop training.

Participant #14—He has been a male Deacon at Highland for the past three years. He became a member in 2014 when the CRC was enfolded by Faith Church. He participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview.

Participant #15 – Is an ethnic minority female who has been coming to Highland for the past year. She receives pushback from her family for coming because not many people in the church look like them. She participated in the survey, questionnaire, interview, and workshop training.

Participant #16 – Is an ethnic minority female who has been coming to Highland for the past two years. She has been a catalyst for diversity, inclusion, and acceptance within the church. She participated in the survey, questionnaire, interview, and workshop training.

Participant #17 – Is an ethnic minority female who has been coming to Highland for the past two years. Originally from the Dominican Republic, she is often mistaken for being Black instead of Latina. She participated in the survey, questionnaire, interview, and workshop training.

Participant #18 – Is an ethnic minority female who has been coming to Highland since 2017. She is a Latina who is often mistaken for White. She is married to Participant #7. She participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview.

Participant #19 – Is an ethnic minority female who has been coming to Highland since 2021. Her husband is on staff, and she has spent some time helping in Faith Students. She participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview.

Participant #20 – Is a female on the leadership team. She has been coming to Highland since 2013 and is very active in the Moms of Littles ministry. She participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview.

Participant #21 – Is an ethnic minority Latino who has been coming to Faith Highland since 2019 and is on staff. He participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview.

Participant #22 – Is an ethnic minority female. She and her family have been coming to Faith Highland since 2023 and recently become church members.

Participant #23 – Is a deacon at Faith Dyer and has been a member since 2017. He is new to his role as a deacon. He participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview.

Participant #24 – Is an ethnic minority Latina female. She has been coming to Faith Highland with her husband, sister, and children since 2023. She has not become a member but is actively involved. She participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview.

Participant #25 – Is an elder at Faith Highland. He has been attending Faith Highland with his wife since 2014. He is married to Participant #28. He participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview.

Participant #26 – Is a pastor at the Dyer location. He has been involved in various leadership capacities and has been attending Faith since 1985. He participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview.

Participant #27 – Is a female on the leadership team at Faith Highland. She became a church member in 2023 and has been highly involved. She participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview.

Participant #28 – Is a female on the Faith Highland leadership team. She is married to Participant #25. She participated in the survey, questionnaire, interview, and workshop training.

Participant #29 – Is a new elder at Faith Highland. He has been attending Highland since 2014. His wife and children are involved in many capacities in the church. He participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview.

Survey Responses Summary

This beginning survey helped to establish a baseline of participants' thoughts regarding Faith Church's past and current involvement with being multiethnic and economically diverse. The thirteen questions and answers show that participants had varying views on many questions. Questions 10, 11, and 12 show the most commonality among the participants.

1. There has not been an intentional focus on bringing racial diversity to FC.

24 responses

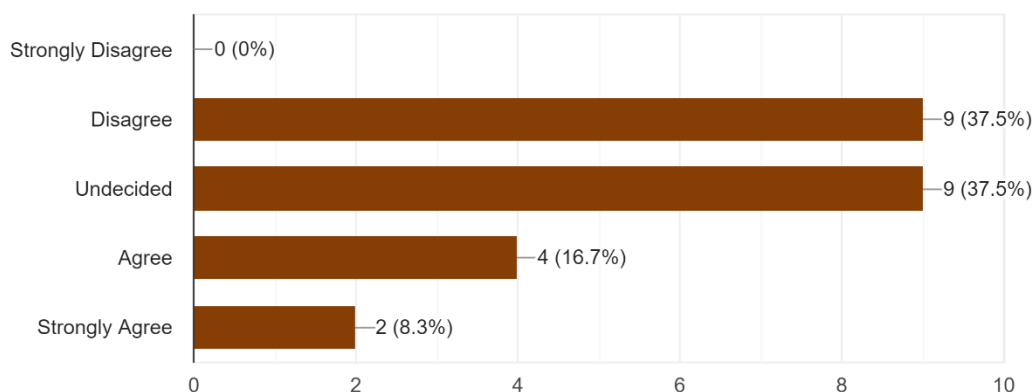


Figure 4.1. Question 1 of Survey with Participant Answers

2. Faith Church values the lives of ethnically diverse people, for there is evidence that it does.

24 responses

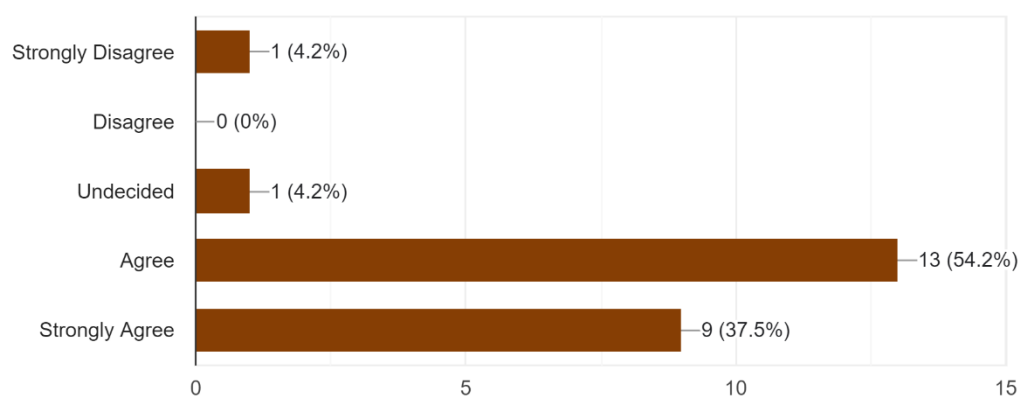


Figure 4.2. Question 2 of Survey with Participant Answers

3. Faith Church has significant and essential core values outside the realm of race.

24 responses

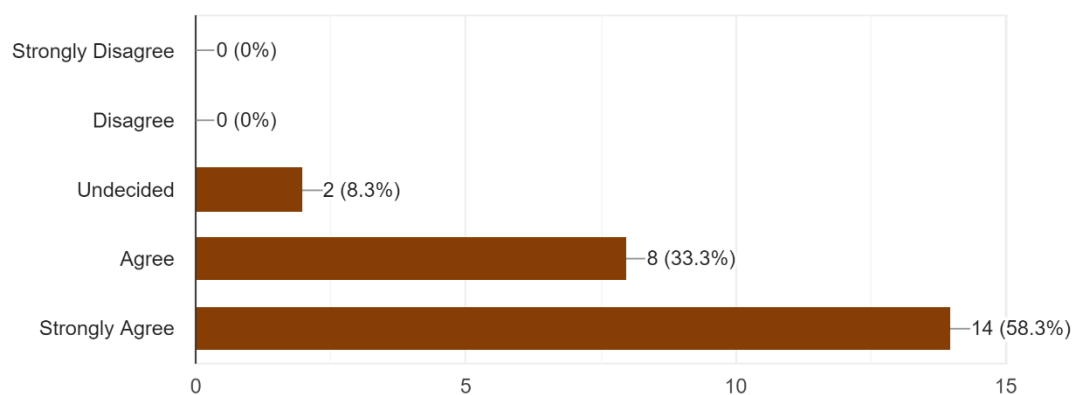


Figure 4.3. Question 3 of Survey with Participant Answers

4. One of the core values of Faith Church has not been the continual pursuit of those who are ethnically different to be pursued, welcomed, embraced for membership, volunteerism, and leadership.

24 responses

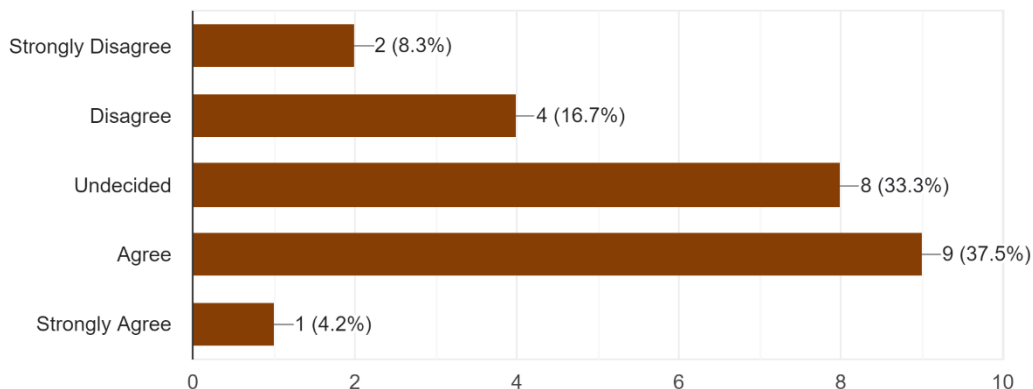


Figure 4.4. Question 4 of Survey with Participant Answers

5. I do not believe Faith Church has restricted minorities from membership and leadership simply because of being a minority.

24 responses

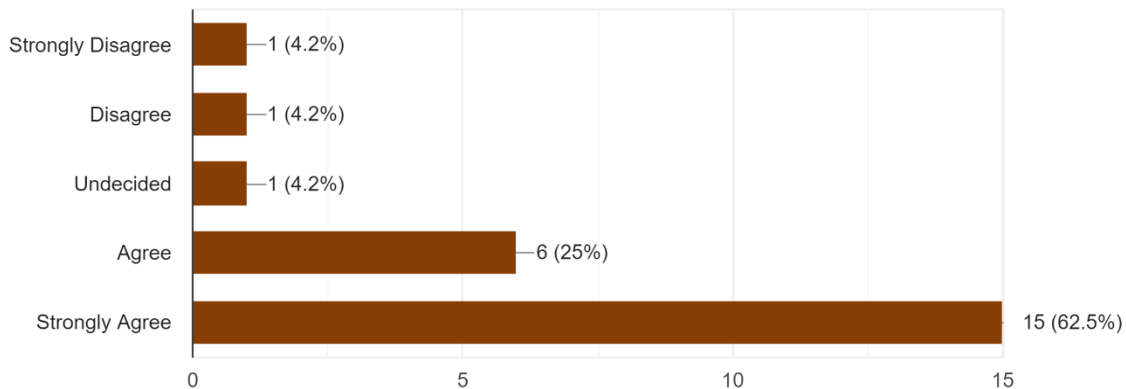


Figure 4.5. Question 5 of Survey with Participant Answers

6. Faith Church sees value in worshipping in a racially diverse setting. A setting that FC has actively tried to create.

24 responses

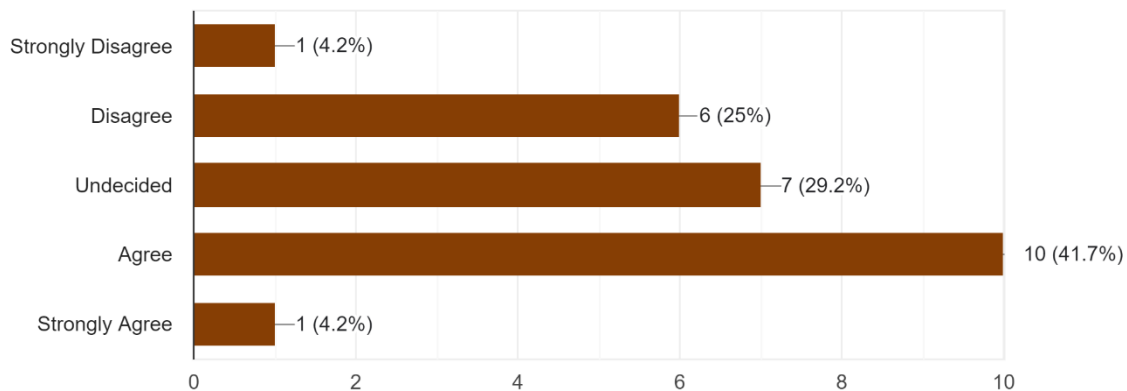


Figure 4.6. Question 6 of Survey with Participant Answers

7. I think about race and culture when I attend Faith Church.

24 responses

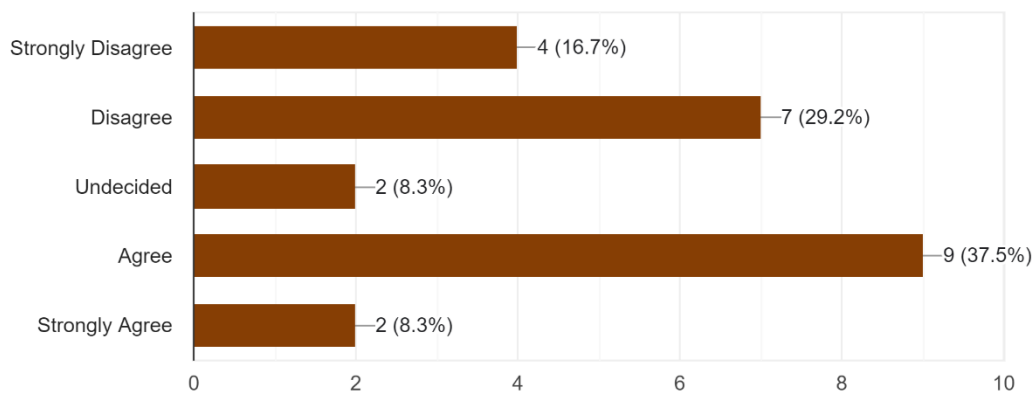


Figure 4.7. Question 7 of Survey with Participant Answers

8. I would personally like to see more ethnic diversity in worship services.

24 responses

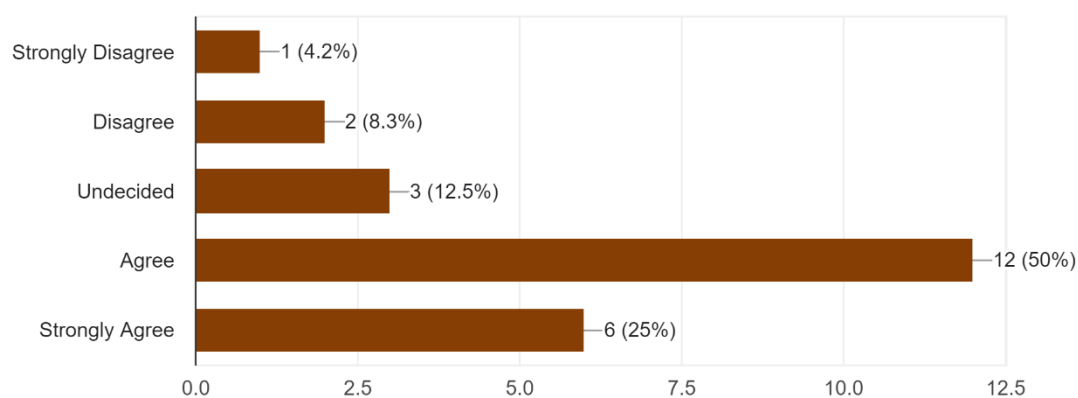


Figure 4.8. Question 8 of Survey with Participant Answers

9. I could articulate the difference between accepting, assimilating, and accommodating people who are different ethnically and economically.

24 responses

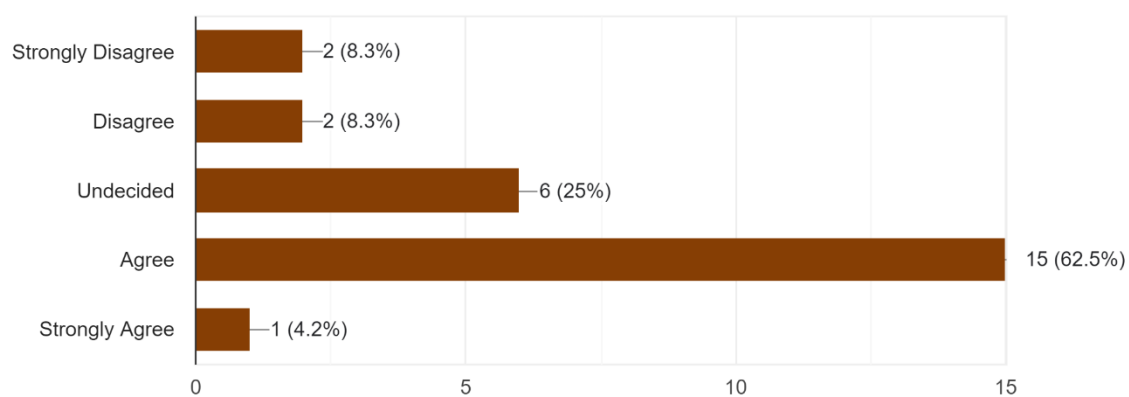


Figure 4.9. Question 9 of Survey with Participant Answers

10. I would be happy if Faith Church could learn how to be more ethnically and economically diverse and then move intentionally forward in pursuing this goal.

24 responses

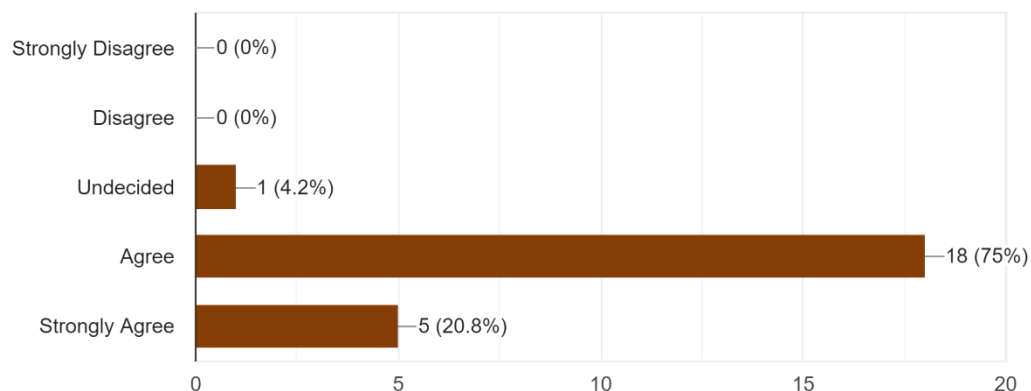


Figure 4.10. Question 10 of Survey with Participant Answers

11. I would happily help Faith Church become more ethnically diverse.

24 responses

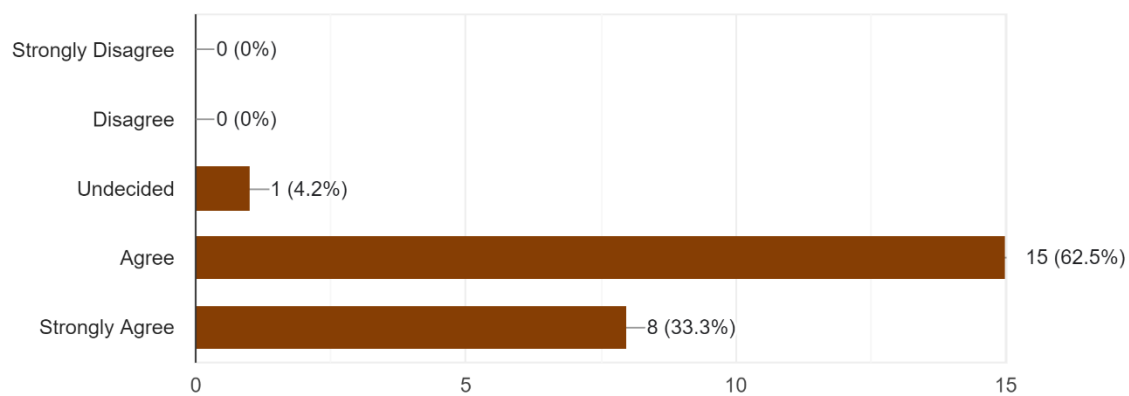


Figure 4.11. Question 11 of Survey with Participant Answers

12. Race and ethnicity have no business in the church. The church is better when it remains segregated.

24 responses

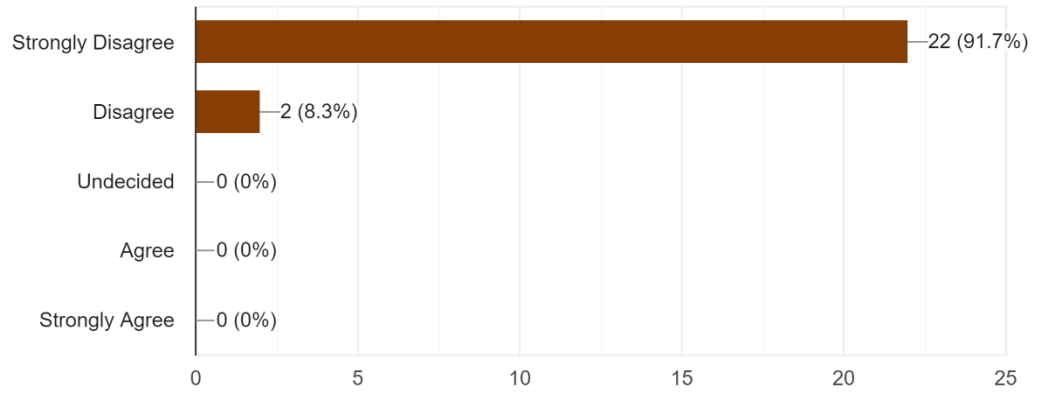


Figure 4.12. Question 12 of Survey with Participant Answers

13. I have thought about the potential beauty of living a Revelation 7:9-10 on earth before going to heaven. ("After this I looked, and there was a vast ...od, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!")

24 responses

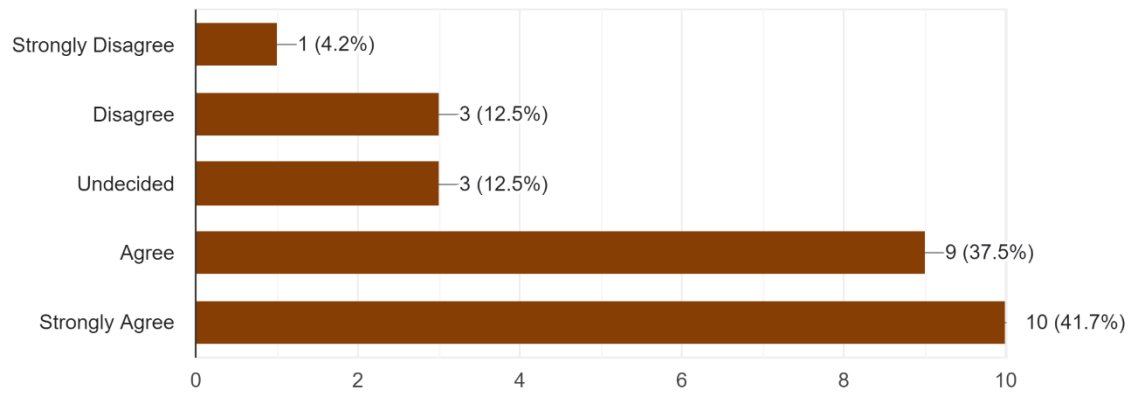


Figure 4.13. Question 13 of Survey with Participant Answers

Questionnaire Response Summary

All participants were asked to take a 10-question questionnaire. Twenty-two participants answered the questions on the questionnaire. Below is a summary of the participants for each question. Some participants gave more substance in their answers than others, but all of what was collected has been impactful to this research project. This summary is a compilation of both the general and ethnic minority responses. Participants were allowed to submit the questionnaire without identifying themselves, so it is not possible to detect which participant was responsible for which comment. The purpose of the inclusion here is to see what common themes emerge from all participants. The responses here will be sifted through to see if there are any crossovers from the literature review or introduction sections of this project. At the end of the summary, there will be a conclusion section that identifies themes that are congruent with the literature review.

Below are responses to the questions. Question one provides a general summary of all participants, while questions 2-10 provide the most notable and unaltered (meaning no changes of spelling or grammar were made) responses.

1. Why is the church not currently representing that diversity?

Participants shared many thoughts on this question. They can be summarized as follows: The leadership and people up front do not represent diversity. There is no intentional pursuit of diversity. There are cultural differences in the setting and style of worship. Faith has a history of Dutch ancestry at its core. This leaves a deep community of Dutch people who grew up together, and even though there are positives to this, the church is seen as a Church of Dutch people. Some participants felt that an aggressive approach would be necessary. There is a lack of knowledge on how to reach, and the lack of diversity is holding the church back. While some participants said

they are looking forward to the change, one Latina participant feels the church is already ethnically diverse. Ethnic people do not return because there is not a big enough representation of them within the congregation. Some participants attributed it to the community that the church is located in, and there is a need for new members who are ethnically different, along with worship style, music, and personal preferences. Some believe that people are more comfortable with their ethnic styles and that breaking away requires intentional effort, which is not natural. One participant stated that diversity is difficult to talk about, so people just do what is easy and skip out. It was mentioned that the CRC and RCA denominations have hindered ethnic growth. One final participant gave four reasons for the lack of diversity. 1. There are numerous churches in Highland, so there may be other options that more aptly meet the needs/wants of more ethnically diverse populations. 2. Faith Church is historically populated primarily by white/Caucasian members, so it already has that reputation preceding itself. 3. It hasn't been a priority to expand diversity within the church in this way until recently. 4. Historically, Faith has always had white pastors until now, which naturally lends itself to followers of the same race/ethnicity.

2. Why now? It is excellent to pursue this now, but what stopped it from being a focal point in previous years?

To show the varying perspectives, here are five answers from different participants.

“Race divides people. It has for thousands of years for various reasons. In the case of Faith Church, there location and background of the people that attend the church part of the reason. These churches are located in predominantly white neighborhoods with predominantly white attendees (congregation members). Most people of color will not attend or go within a vicinity where they don’t see people that look like them.”

“Our mission has been to “reach the disconnected and grow the connected” for many years. And we’ve been faithful to that mission! Becoming more ethnically diverse has not happened yet because it’s been a lesser priority than our mission. And as I mentioned in my response to question one, becoming ethnically diverse takes intentional effort and

doesn't happen accidentally. There are still many white members, but if you look at Faith Church's ethnic makeup now compared to 20 or 30 years ago, we are far more multiethnic now than at any other point in our history."

"I believe Faith Church has been intentionally focused on drawing in new people and providing a welcoming atmosphere for everyone who enters our doors for many years. However, while this is good and has been successful for growing the church, it does not guarantee that this growth will be representative of the diversity of the community."

"As mentioned previously, there is likely an intimidation factor to certain groups or a difference in worship style preferences if the church is currently majority white. In order for Faith Church to specifically target ethnically or economically diverse groups for future growth, it will likely have to speak with or survey those people groups to target areas where they may feel uncomfortable, unrepresented, or the church simply did not fit their personal preferences for worship."

"Since 2020 race and diversity have been in the spotlight in our country, we are following suite. I think 20 or 30 years ago people were far less open to going to a church or social gathering and being in the minority. People are not as bothered now, diversity is more doable. Attitudes on race are a lot different now."

3. Part of the perception in 2002 when Faith left the racially changing community of South Holland was that they were leaving because of "White Flight." In your mind, was there some, even if only a little bit of truth to that notion?

To show the varying perspectives, here are five answers from different participants.

"Probably a little bit, the church wanted to move to where 'Our people are moving to.'"

"I was part of the First CRC congregation, and pretty young at the time. But from my general understanding of regional history and how it lines up with national history, I'm sure there is some truth to that statement. A lot of Dutch families starting moving away from Lansing and South Holland. Was that due to white flight? I'm sure to some degree, there is accuracy to that statement, even if it was not intentional."

"I would take issue with characterizing specifically Faith Church's move to Dyer as being white flight, as that phrase ascribes ill-intentions or prejudice to the church leadership of the time when they were making difficult decisions which I'm sure they believed to be in the best interest of the church ministry for continuity and growth. They were faced with a challenge caused by trends outside of their control. South Chicago suburbs such as South Holland and Lansing have faced population exodus, increased crime, and lack of economic growth for decades, while northwest Indiana has grown in population and economy. Faith Church would almost certainly not have the same ministry capacity, influence or impact that it has today if it stayed in South Holland, which leads me to believe they made the correct decision. Others could certainly have the opinion that that churches should stay and serve the community they are in no matter the

circumstance, but I think church leadership is wise to build new facilities where they will have the most attendance/use, financial sustainability, and ministry impact.”

“No, I don’t think so. When we left South Holland, we intended to form a partnership with Christ Community Church, the church that bought the building. I remember Pastor Bob and Pastor Carl King presenting a united vision for a partnership between the two congregations. But for whatever reason that partnership didn’t take off, and I don’t remember the two congregations actively partnering on much together. We have always been focused on reaching the disconnected and growing the connected, and we were out of space in the South Holland building to welcome in more people. This was after experimenting with ways to continue growing in that building like having three services Sunday morning.”

“Absolutely! white flight is a real concept NOT a theory. There is statistical data to prove it. However, in the case of Faith church, it was taught to me during a members class that they left South Holland for a bigger space because they had growing membership. So, for me, the bigger question is, was Faith church growing in diversity before they left South Holland? In other words, did they notice growing numbers of ethnic minorities attending/visiting their church? If so, did these individuals count for the growing number of members?”

4. How do you feel the RCA denomination has done over the years in its pursuit of intentional racial diversity globally and at the local church level?

To show the varying perspectives, here are five answers from different participants.

“The denomination has represented well in connected with many different cultures, expressions, locations around the globe.”

“I think over my lifetime racial diversity has not been pursued with much energy. It's main focus has been the discipleship and teaching of those who attend.”

“I don't think that the RCA has ever been intentionally racially diverse or the church for that matter. I think the church has been intentional about being in the community.”

“I am not aware of any strategies or initiatives the RCA took specifically to increase diversity. Membership demographics alone may be evidence that the RCA did not do enough over the years in this area. I do not have enough knowledge of RCA history specifically to comment, although I am glad to see Faith Church leave the RCA and help found the Kingdom Network for a variety of reasons.”

“I feel as they have done amazing things!”

5. Has FC ever had a sense of pride (in a good way) of being Dutch?

To show the varying perspectives, here are six answers from different participants.

“I didn't know much about the dutch community until I came to FC but I quickly learned the saying, "If you ain't Dutch, you ain't much." I think this is a negative sense of pride of the dutch community, but I also see a good sense of pride in dutch families that spend much time together inside and outside of the walls of the church.”

“Yes! My experience with the Dutch environment within northwest Indiana is very negative. Pride in what they know about life and the environment around has always be very condesending and arrogant.”

“Growing up their was much more pride in being Dutch. Lots of Dutch desserts etc. Dutch grandmothers not giving their blessing to grandchildren not marring a Dutch person. But their was a tighter sense of community and belonging. If you did something naughty, word would get back to your parents and extended family and you would get in trouble.”

“I know many of the members are Dutch, but I can't say I've ever noticed the church promoting that. Frankly, most conversations I've been a part of regarding the Dutch history of FC is how thankful people (including it's Dutch members) are of it no longer being seen as a "Dutch church.””

“There is still a mentality that the foundation of our church is Dutch Reformed”

“Atleast at the Highland Campus, yes. Many of the families that came to Faith via First CRC have family origins from the original Dutch settlers in the area.”

6. During the Civil Rights Era, what stances did the RCA take for or against segregation? What about Faith Church (FC)?

To show the varying perspectives, here are six answers from different participants.

“I wish I could answer this question better, but I cant give an educated answer.”

“I don't know the answers, but I think I would be disappointed if I did.”

“I'm confident the RCA was very proactive against segregation and continues to be so. Faith Church faithfully preaches the Word of God which is inclusive and not exclusive in race or ethnicity”

“I don't know what stances the RCA took during the Civil Rights Era. In the early 60s when Faith was founded, South Holland had little ethnic diversity. (The nursing home in town was named The Holland Home!) I don't remember hearing about any stances taken during the Civil Rights Era but haven't asked about it either.”

“The RCA General Synods have been working toward ethnic healing and dismantling racism since 1957. They continued this work in other Synods as well throughout the 60s, 70s, 80s, 90s, 00s, and presently. To my knowledge FC takes these credos seriously against racism.”

“They did not agree with segregation and they said “it harms God people.”

7. In the history of FC, have any undertones of exclusivity existed?

To show the varying perspectives, here are five answers from different participants.

“Not in the time I’ve been a member.”

“Yes. As a child at the Highland campus, we were one of two or three families that were publicly educated. On top of that, only one half of our family is Dutch, and we don't have a Dutch last name. I would not say people were rude because of that, but I very much felt as an outsider from my peers. Those are such minor complainants compared to matters of racial/ethnic exclusivity, but with my small observation from my experience, i could only imagine how a non Caucasian, person would have felt at the time.”

“Yes, male only leadership position. The Dutch heritage or culture over what the bible says.”

“In my experience at Faith church, which began when they enfolded First CRC of Highland in 2013, I have always felt that Faith Church is intentional about outreach and providing a welcoming environment to visitors of all kinds. Therefore, I cannot say I have experienced any undertones like this. In my experience, the membership and leadership of Faith Church are people who love Jesus and want to spread the Gospel to anyone and everyone who will accept it.”

“No.”

8. If the Lord brought an equal number of minorities as there are majorities to FC this week to stay, would the majority be excited, uncomfortable, consider leaving, or feel that “their church” was in jeopardy?

To show the varying perspectives, here are five answers from different participants.

“I believe there would be feelings of discomfort initially but that those feelings would grow into ones of joy and acceptance as more people come to know Christ and we learn how to grow in our relationships with the Lord and with one another on more intimate levels.”

“I believe the majority would be uncomfortable. I think skin color wouldn't have impact as long as they acted like everyone around them. However, if the Lord brought minorities that were culturally different with different mannerisms and a different dialect, it would make people uncomfortable.”

“As a whole I think everyone would stay, and would be excited, yet experience some level of being uncomfortable.”

“5-10 years ago I would say in jeopardy. Today I hope people would be excepting and excited that people are walking with God and a church body.”

“I think the majority would be uncomfortably excited. I think it'd be a repeat of when we changed from singing hymns to contemporary songs. During that change, the people who felt like “their church” was threatened left. Almost all of my grandparents' friends left. I think a similar thing would happen here. Those who think it's “their church” would feel very uncomfortable and probably leave. But there would remain a significant group who has already endured other changes at church and would remain through that change.”

9. How would FC respond to seeing more minorities in leadership?

To show the varying perspectives, here are six answers from different participants.

“I believe FC members would welcome that and appreciate that FC would respond positively.”

“I think most want qualified leaders, not picked based on race.”

“To the extent that Faith has had minorities in leadership positions (Pastoral staff, worship leaders, elders) to my knowledge they have been received well and treated with respect. I believe and would hope that this would continue in the future.”

“Mmmmm.....it will be with great difficulty.”

“I believe the leadership team specifically would be accepting. Part of why the leadership team works so well is because it is comprised of people of all ages, genders, and races so that we hear the opinions and voices of the church as a whole represented by a smaller sample size. I believe members would also be accepting.”

10. If minorities were to become more prevalent, would they be allowed to be who they culturally are, or would there be a desire for them to embrace/adopt the worship styles of the majority?

To show the varying perspectives, here are ten answers from different participants.

“I think we have seen and experienced that minorities are comfortable to worship as they are comfortable. Worship planning teams work to incorporate different styles and ways to worship.”

“I'm not sure how they could "not be allowed to be who they culturally are". I think the worship style, in the case of music has been pretty set for years. And a major shift in it would be decisive and unproductive.”

“I think the worship style, in the case of music has been pretty set for years. And a major shift in it would be decisive and unproductive.”

“My stance would probably be that they stay culturally who they are and we as a church keep our culture as well. Both individuals and church making allowances for each other.”

“Good question. I think there would be a bit of both. I think the desire for cultural acceptance is high right now but I do think there's a smaller portion of people that would expect others to adopt the style of the majority.”

“I think that we all worship differently. I for one can't clap on a beat but I am not upset when someone does in church. If someone were to stand on their head to worship, I would think that do be weird. I for one don't feel the need to adopt other people worship style, our church has a worship lead that sets the tone of worship. If our worship leader was one of the head standers, I would find a church with a different worship style/leader.”

“I believe with coaching they styles could influence each other.”

“I believe that the church would allow minorities to share their culture.”

“I think the current membership would be accepting of new worship styles, although certainly it may cause some discomfort, adjustment or unfamiliarity at first. I think with time people generally become used to change and adapt to new styles. As an example, people from a Dutch/Reformed background are probably used to remaining silent during a message, so they may be uncomfortable with people calling out amen. However, with time this becomes familiar and causes less discomfort. The ongoing challenge would be for Faith worship leaders to find a mix of music & worship that appeals broadly to the congregation, while also making sure it is God-honoring and has sound Biblical doctrine.”

“My first thought is there would be a desire for them to embrace the worship styles of the majority.”

Conclusion of Questionnaire

The questionnaire revealed some deep thinking and passion from the participants. Some themes arose from the answers that pointed back to the literature review, which mentions the need for leadership diversity.¹ The questionnaire shows that some participants understand the need for diversity in leadership and more representation of diverse people in the worship spaces. However, some indicated that inclusion, while most would welcome it, there are some who would not. This is another theme from the literature review that talks about the levels of welcoming as accepting, assimilating, and accommodating.² There were undertones in the questionnaire that showed it is believed that the diverse people who come need to act and accept the way the majority does things. Consider the responses from question 10 by one participant who said, “My stance would probably be that they stay culturally who they are, and we as a church keep our culture as well. Both individuals and church making allowances for each other.” Without recognizing this is a divisive language that can hurt attempts to pursue diversity, there is a reality that preferences, fear, and being uncomfortable are a threat to that call.³ A statement like this makes minorities feel like outsiders.⁴ If this is an unspoken language, it could be contributing to the difference in how the ethnic minorities referred to the church as “they” and “their,” while the ethnic majorities in the interview used “we” and “our.”

While the questionnaire captured the notion that many participants do not know how to pursue multiethnic and economic diversity, there was a strong sense that resonates with the

¹ Oyakawa, *Racial*, 502.

² Brace, *Race*, 286.

³ Osborne, *Sticky Teams*, 101.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 291.

literature review on the importance of intentionality.⁵ Some participants suggested that the church's lack of intentionality has prevented it from moving forward. Participants in the questionnaire also described what can be called historical narratives that make it difficult for a church to forgo its Reformed, and in this case, Dutch heritage.⁶ If Faith Church holds onto a pride of what it used to be and a pride for what remnants remain, some ethnic minorities will hear and be treated with the expression that the participant quoted from hearing, "If you are not Dutch, you are not much." In order for Faith to move forward, the participants referenced the importance of relationships in bridging gaps and bringing unity. Research agrees with the importance of relationships above all else.⁷ What will help with this movement is what was underscored several times in the participant's answers. The participants hold a positive view of the church and believe it has pure intentions.

Interview Summary

Elder, deacon, and leadership participants were asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with this researcher. The participants were asked seven questions. Even though these leaders are in leadership, from a research perspective, they are serving as outsiders in the triangulation of data. The reason for this is they have indicated their lack of knowledge and ability to generate the next steps for cultivating change, and they are not ethnically nor economically diverse, so they do not possess an insider voice in this research conversation. After the summary below from nineteen participants, there is a conclusion section that shows how their

⁵ Branson, *Churches*, 12.

⁶ Bracey, *Race*, 285.

⁷ DeYmaz, *Building*, 83.

responses tie into data collected in the literature review. Note that the ethnic minorities had a different interview; those summaries are in the next section of this paper.

Interview Questions (General) Summary

1. What are your thoughts about Faith Church pursuing a multiethnic and economic diversity culture?

Participants used the words Love it, excited, good, honorable goal, genuinely excited, there is not a better thing we could do, exciting and anxiety rising, a good thing, awesome, cautious optimism, and great. Something that we should always strive for. The Bible gives a call for it, and it is something God would want us to do. It is good to have all cultures from economic and ethnic backgrounds. Participant #6 said, “In the same way Jesus talked with the Samaritan and others, it is time for this Dutch church to get on board. It will not be quick and easy, but it is worth pursuing. Participant #20 said, “Expanding our church’s variety allows us to have opportunities for growth. It allows us to learn from others who do things differently. And our kids can be so much better when they get to be around others.” Given a bit of caution, Participant #3 said he would hate to see the pursuit of tokenism. Participant #11 described his love for diversity and exposure to living in a diverse community and articulated he would like to attend a church that does not look all like him. Participant # 12 had much to say to this question as he began with the church should always bring Christ glory, and when a church is homogenous, the church should ask why that is happening and not representing the community that it is located in because a church that is diverse brings glory to God. He said the current congregants must know that it is not a push like this because the church would rather have someone else than them because they are important. He finished by saying diversity brings a good reputation to the church. As a language teacher, Participant #5 weighed in, saying there is so much that can be learned from other cultures, so people will need to open their minds and see the beauty that can

come from it. He said that it seems we are going to experience it in heaven, and they should practice it now. After describing that this pursuit of diversity is something that the church could learn from, Participant #10 said, "The problem is we don't know how to do it." Carrying a similar sentiment, Participant #7 pondered whether the problem was negligence or not knowing how to do it. He said it is going to take intentionality, and that is not something that has not happened yet. He also said this journey will make him uncomfortable, and that is a good thing. After describing himself as a logistics person, Participant #14 said at a high level that he thinks there is room for pursuing ethnic diversity, and from an economic perspective, he believes it is already happening. Participant #28 articulated that things are changing in the area, and the church needs to accommodate those changes.

2. In your opinion, why don't you think Faith Church pursued it sooner?

Answers to this question by the participants had some commonalities. Responses such as there was not a need or purpose for it, it is easier to invite people who are closer, maybe they were not opposed to it, but it just was not a top priority, and people stick together were some underlying themes that were stated. Additionally, there was a second concept of fear of the unknown of what could happen to the church if it happened. Participant #14 said, "People left over hymns and contemporary music; the pursuit of ethnic diversity is a level up from that." Participant #10 believes that up to this point, the church has not wanted to. Participant #8 said, "Faith Church was in its comfort zone." Participant #27 said that because diversity is such a hard topic, it is easier to skip right over it. Other participants indicated that maybe the previous focus was only on those who came through the doors instead of targeting people outside of the cultural sphere of comfort. Participant #12 said, "Faith does a good job of welcoming the people who come in, but it may have to do some intentional things to offer what is appealing to other

demographics.” Participant #26 gave a historical insider's point of view, “There was a willingness to have it and to accept it if it came. I just don’t think there was a proactive approach in going for it. I think a fear of the unknown and the changes it would bring, and if those changes would slow down the ministry. I don’t think anyone was against it.” On the opposite end of the spectrum was Participant #11, a newer member who discussed not knowing Faith Church's history well enough but wondered why the move from South Holland and if there was any racial motivation. Participant #3 said there had been conversations about it but no intentionality with it. Participant #20 wondered if it was because of Faith Highland's CRC background that hindered diversity and the transition to the Kingdom Network will have more outlook and desire for ethnicity. Participant #25 paused and then began speaking from his heart and said, "I feel bad when an ethnic person comes into the church, and they are the only one here. I wonder if they feel comfortable. Have I and others done enough to make them want to feel comfortable? I think bringing you on board was a right step. Desire is there, but knowledge and experience are not there. We are a culture that is used to being around itself.” Speaking also from the heart, Participant #6 said, “I was invited into an all-Black event, but I was the only White person there. I felt the discomfort.” He also elaborated on his time before First Highland became Faith and said, “Before Faith, we were comfortable with our little group of people who are like us. Lots of things we did back then that I don’t agree with now.” Participant #2 indicated that he believes they have pursued it before but not to the extent it could have. He said there could be more success if there was training, coaching, and staffing to help.

3. What reservations, if any, do you have for pursuing multiethnic and economic diversity in the church at this time?

Most of the reservations came back the same, as participants indicated that they did not have many reservations about it happening, only about how it happens and that it is long

overdue. They want to make sure that it is done the right way without getting too overzealous. A couple of participants talked about their own preferences, which may be a reservation, but they must remember the church is not about themselves and their preferences. Participant #20 said it is important that once people are in the church, we do a good job of placing people in places where they fit and can serve. Participant #10 underlined that the church should be open to everyone, and by welcoming others, the church can learn. Participant #14 had a good reflection as he stated, “As long as it is clearly communicated that we are continuing to be committed to our core values, making Jesus known, and others, everything else falls in line. The rest are just preferences. My real hesitation is to just make sure the main thing is the main thing.” Participant #25 was empathetic as he stated, “I put myself in someone’s shoes. If I went to a church in a black community and I was the only person that was there, I would struggle.” Participant #2 illustrated that clarity on the end goal will be important because everyone has a different perspective of what it looks like. Participant #28 stressed the importance of making sure that no one of ethnic or economic diversity feels like a project. Participant #12 stressed the caution of making sure current members do not feel blamed. He reflected on the fact that, in 2020, when the church made some videos on diversity, they rubbed people the wrong way. Mentioning how sensitive and triggered the culture is, Participant #26 said, “People have lost the ability to have honest conversations.” The overall consensus is to make sure this is not just a check box on the cultural idea of diversity and that the church has good intentions.

4. What steps do you feel are necessary for the church to succeed in becoming multiethnic and economically diverse?

While many of the participants started this answer with a long sigh, followed by a statement of “This is a hard question,” and then the culmination of “I have no idea,” there were some participants who were able to weigh in on the steps. Participant #20 said some steps have

been happening in the past ten years since she started attending. She said doing the block parties has made the church more visible, and bringing PC on staff has helped the church become more diverse. She believes “Having more diversity in our leadership and on the platforms helps those who come in to feel more welcome. Having more resources for other people and things to get involved in allows for more diversity in multiple ways. Being present in different ways within the community, such as the schools and fire department, helps bring people in.” Participant #8 also believes that getting out into the community is important and possibly crossing over into Hammond. He also wondered what would happen if ethnic and economic diversity was pushed as hard as the church’s disability ministry would make a difference. Participant #26 said it would most likely come down to education and relationships. He said, “When relationships are infused, it can help bring commonality to people from different cultures.” Participant #29 pointed out the reality that Faith Church will not be for everyone, and that, too, is okay. Participant #3 and some others talked about the importance of intentionality, even though the project will be easier said than done because it would mean the people would have to begin associating with more people who look different than themselves. Participant #12 had many thoughts. He said surveying the minorities of the church to get their perspectives, considering different styles of worship and music that can be mixed in, targeted marketing, continuing to build a welcoming and friendly environment, and understanding that there may be intimidation for minorities not seeing people who look like them. Participant #5 also had a lot of thoughts on this question. He said, “Black churches have more participation, and we need to get used to this kind of stuff. It is hard to be accommodating to all styles, but maybe mix it up enough to be accommodating to multitudes.” Others articulated that it takes more than a meeting, acting more like Jesus while doing life with others, noticing the people who are moving in and inviting them, knocking on doors, loving

others like Jesus to all the people, including the tax collector, the zealot, prostitute, women with true unconditional love. Participant #2 stated powerfully, “Accountability. Buy-in from all levels of leadership. The congregation needs to be taught and given the tools to accept/learn how to do it. Accountability and leadership.” Participant #25 also mentioned the importance of leadership being on board and then went on to discuss the importance of building diversity in the small groups of the church. Participant #14 stated, “If the people who come through our doors feel welcomed into what we are doing, it will go a long way.”

5. How do you believe the ethnic majority and ethnic minority of current congregants will respond and react if diversity integration becomes a reality?

Many participants missed responding to how they perceived the ethnic minorities would respond. Staying true to the format of the interview, the researcher opted not to have a mid-question crosstalk and continued on to the next question. For those who did respond about the ethnic minorities, most said they believe the minorities will be happy with the efforts and the opportunity to see people who look like themselves in services. Regarding the ethnic majorities, many participants believe most congregants will go along with it. Participant #26 believes only a small number of people will leave. Participant #8 said the Highland location will accept it with open arms as they understand the changes that need to happen. Participant #29 said, “There are some who won't notice or have a concern if we become 25% ethnic,” and Participant #3 said people will be really happy about and celebrate it. Participant #12 said people who are resistant to change in the church have most likely already left. He went on to say, “If there were intentional changes to the service like music and style, there will probably be uncomfortable people. It will take time, but people will respond well to it.” Participant #5 said, “It depends on how they are prepped and how we lead them. If we teach that we are all image bearers and we will all be together in heaven. People will see that we need them with open arms. It is part of the

leadership's job to teach that it may be uncomfortable at times, but Jesus made people uncomfortable all the time. If there is negative feedback we need to point them to Jesus."

Participant #13 said, "Mostly people will say with their mouths it is a great thing, but some will struggle in their heart and actions. He went on to say it is possible for the ethnic majority to wonder what is in it for them." Participant #6 had some historical thoughts with his response.

"Our church used to not be very welcoming. I have been going to church for 66 years. It is a testimony to how much Jesus is influencing the members. The majority of the people will embrace the idea." Participant #14 mentioned that some people will possibly leave. Those who believe their church is leaving them then and acting like the church is more of a social club may not stick around. Participant #10 is optimistic as she believes that as long as the church sticks to its biblical foundation, it can get it right and be a model for other churches. Participant #11 spoke from past experiences and concerns. He mentioned he was around during the time of Faith Schererville and the youth group it had. He went on to say, "It was awesome to see some of the kids from the camp that started attending the church and then some people were expressing their reservations about it. I'm sorry to say that even from some of my own friends, there would be reservations. We probably, like many churches, miss the boat on welcoming outside ethnicities."

6. How do you see yourself personally investing the time and effort to help FC become multiethnic and economically diverse? Will you stay and help, or do you see yourself stepping away from the church?

A common theme here was that all participants stated they would not step away from the church if it pursued multiethnic and economic diversity. Participants shared their different gift sets that they would be willing to contribute to the pursuit of ethnic and economic diversity. While some stated they had no idea what they could offer, most mentioned a couple of ways. A compilation of those gifts included making people feel included and heard, helping ethnic

minorities feel connected, modeling and teaching it, helping to facilitate the changes, welcoming people, being more mindful of the ethnic and economic side of the church and its people, try not to have assumptions into conversations and church life, intentionally pursue conversations with others of diversity, encourage people to be in all types of ministries where they share their testimonies, give me some guidance and I can help, educate me so I can educate others, and use my niche in this area if given the opportunity. Participant #12 said he is called to serve the church and its people, so he is on board. Participant #5 said he is a language teacher and will utilize those skills to help. Participant #13 gave a fantastic point of view as he stated he has no idea how to help, but he is a helper, so give him a task, and he can do it. He went on to state that the church cannot discount people's experiences and race. Therefore, he is willing to make sure church members are treating people the way God would. One beautiful attitude was given by Participant #6, who said, "What God has planned for this church, I have no business stepping away from it."

7. Would you attend an educational phase of this research project that taught best practices and the next steps in preparing to be multiethnic and economically diverse? (If yes, would you prefer an eight-hour one-day session or three-hour sessions on three different days?)

While three participants said either, and two said over the course of three days, the majority said they preferred to do a one-day training. Participant #7 left this question in a positive way, stating, "The conversation in itself is important enough. Without the next steps, it is all locker room talk."

Conclusion of Elder, Deacon, and Leadership Interviews

There were six meshing themes from the interviews that were in congruence with concepts from the literature review. The first was the importance of pursuing ethnic and

economic diversity from a biblical basis.⁸ When the Bible is the reason why, it will allow the members of Faith Church to support the efforts. A second theme was the importance of welcoming.⁹ The leaders want to make sure that the reason for pursuing this diversity is not tokenism or a cultural check box.¹⁰ Another area of crossover was in the inclusion of leadership diversity.¹¹ It was dictated that ethnic minorities be represented in areas of leadership and on staff. The leaders stated that the only way to pursue this would be with intentionality, and this concept mirrors the literature review by Bracey.¹² The leaders indicated that the fear of the unknown, comfort zones, and people sticking together has most likely held Faith back in previous years and possibly now. This sentiment is similar to what Hardwick conveyed.¹³ One final congruent theme with the literature review was the limited beauty and impact of the homogenous church.¹⁴ The question was asked, “Why is Faith Church still homogenous in comparison to the community it is located in? This is the sentiment that was described in the literature review that asks, “If the Kingdom of heaven is not segregated, why on earth is the church?”¹⁵ When there is diversity in the church, it brings beauty, and that is something to strive for.¹⁶

⁸ DeYmaz, *Building*, 9.

⁹ Bracey, *Race Test*, 297.

¹⁰ Hendrickson, “Ending Racial Profiling,” 345.

¹¹ Oyakawa, *Racial*, 502.

¹² Bracey, *Beyond Diversity*, 56.

¹³ Lamar Hardwick, *Disability and the Church: A Vision for Diversity and Inclusion* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 7.

¹⁴ Bracey, *Race*, 290.

¹⁵ Mark DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multiethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of a Diverse Congregation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2020), 4, Kindle.

¹⁶ Ince, *The Beautiful*, 11.

Ethnic and Economic Minority Interview Summary

The willing ethnic minority participants were asked seven questions in a one-on-one interview. The researcher informed them that their responses would be kept confidential, and they could share honestly without fear. For many of the participants, that brought a sense of comfort. To ensure no biases or persuasions by the researcher onto the participants, the researcher refrained from any follow-up statements during the interview in between questions. Five interviews were done on Zoom, two in person, and one by phone due to technological issues.

The purpose of the ethnic and economic minority participants is they, along with the lead pastor, serve as insiders in the triangulation data gathering. To understand what it is like for minorities to be a part of Faith Highland, it is necessary to have them as part of the research process. Looking into their summarized answers below gives the leadership teams, pastor, and researcher tangible data to see what overlaps with the data from the literature review. The concluding review of data is after the summary responses. The following responses are a summary of the participant answers.

1. What are your thoughts about Faith Church pursuing a multiethnic and economic diversity culture?

All participants had strong feelings about this question and resounded with emphatic yeses, feeling it was a noble cause. It was reported that because the world is a melting pot, the church should mirror it. Participant #22 said, “We all deserve acceptance in God’s church.” Participant #17 believes Faith Church wants to reach the community and expand the Kingdom of God, but they may not know what it takes to do it ethnically diverse, but she does think they should pursue it. Participant #21 thinks that there is an attempt at it being done because it is in

the writings of the church, but he doesn't think it is being done. Participant #15 believes it should be done but has great concern about the execution of it because of her past church experiences when it did not go well. One note of slippage here was from Participant #24, who said she had not noticed that it was not multiethnic and economically diverse. She said when she comes, she hears the Word of God being preached and does not notice the lack of ethnicities, but she would love to see more Latinos. Participant #19 said she struggles with great difficulty that it is not there.

2. In your experience at Faith, do you feel:

- a. Accepted – Meaning, do you feel like leadership and the people of the church welcome you with open arms and get excited that you come?**
- b. Assimilated – Meaning, do you feel that the leadership and the people of the church allow you to use your gifts to serve in various capacities? Have you been asked to participate?**
- c. Accommodated – Meaning do you feel like the leadership provides vibrant ways for you to express your worship in the culture that represents you?**

The majority of participants said they felt assimilated. A few mentioned they were asked to participate in one task since coming. Participant #19 said she was only asked by her husband, who is on staff, to participate in a role at church. Only Participant #21 said he felt he was at C – accommodated. He alluded that maybe it was because he was on staff. Participant #18 said she has felt accepted and assimilated more after First CRC was enfolded by Faith Church as she did not feel very welcomed before that transition. Participant #15 started with a strong “None!” However, after a bit of reflection, she said that maybe she had assimilated because she had been asked to do one thing since being at the church.

3. Why did you choose to attend and be a part of a church in which you are an ethnic minority?

Three of the ethnic minorities said they were there because their spouses either were on staff or were there when they got married. Participants #24 and #22 both acknowledged that they fell home because the Word is being preached, which is the primary reason for coming, and if they could feel accepted, that is a secondary bonus. Participant #17 said she didn't feel her culture would threaten the Faith community and felt welcomed.

4. What steps do you feel are necessary for the church to succeed in becoming multiethnic and economically diverse?

All but one participant offered thoughts on practical steps for achieving multiethnic and economic diversity. Participant #24, who was not sure what to do, joked and said, "Are they supposed to have a Cinco De Mayo celebration or a Juneteenth party." Concepts such as better social media presence because it currently represents one ethnicity, reaching out to diverse people, and welcoming them were common threads. Participant #19 gave accolades for the hiring of ethnic staff as being a great first step and then challenged as many other participants did for going into the communities of Gary, East Chicago, or South Chicago to do ministry and welcome them. Participant # 15 suggested partnering up with other predominant Black or Latino churches and pastors. The ethnic minorities shared a common theme of cultural conversations that can help remove the barriers of ethnicities not understanding each other in the church. They articulated that this type of effort starts with making sure the people are educated. Participant #22 shared the most tangible content for this question. She said people get comfortable with how things are, and even if the leadership desires it, the people may not be ready for it. She also indicated the need for resources to accomplish this kind of goal, and she believes Faith Church has them. She went on to describe the passion the church has for reaching the parents of LGBTQ

people and the ministry to those with disabilities. The church does do ministry to others, so this could be a good foundation to build on. She discussed the importance of experiences in a worship service as she reflected on the joy her husband, a Black man, had when the worship team did a blended worship style. She stated that acknowledging and representing different ethnicities and including them is important. After a long sigh, when asked the question, Participant #15 shared similar thoughts to Participant #22 as both of them referenced how in a previous church they were in, they had the desire to become multiethnic but were not able to execute it. She said she was hurt in the process. She finished this question by articulating as others did about the intentionality and then stated, "You can't just sit back and wait for Black people to come. People want to see themselves in the crowd when they come in."

5. How do you believe the ethnic majority and ethnic minority of current congregants will respond and react if diversity integration becomes a reality?

A positive theme from this question was how several participants indicated they do not feel that racism or judgementalism is happening in the church, as most people seem open-minded. Most participants said they believe the majority of the ethnic majority will be open to it and embrace it even though some of them will be weary. Again, the participants articulated the importance of training and educating the people ahead of time. It was stated that, unfortunately, race matters, and therefore, some will have mixed emotions, causing some to leave over it while it will cause others to come. Participants #21 and #19 both indicated that the skin color of people who look right may be accepted, but they have reservations about people who come in from Gary and East Chicago or with an "urban feel" being acknowledged and invited into circles of conversation. Participant #17 had an interesting viewpoint as she said Faith was excited when it transitioned from First CRC into Faith, but she is not sure that the church will have the same kind of excitement for this type of change. She went on to caution that the change will have to be

gradual and not drastic as that will cause division, leaving this change to be tricky and difficult. Participant #22 said it is one thing to say you want it, but it is another to actually get it because some people will not recognize that the manifestation of ethnic and economic diversity is what they prayed for, and they may not like what answered prayers look like. She went on to say that she thinks Faith has something good going for it as there are open-minded and younger people there, so they do not have the same historical race narrative as older members do. Participant #24 left a beautiful concluding thought for this question as she stated, "We are there for one purpose and Person to worship; if people have a problem with more diversity, then Faith Church has a big problem."

6. How do you see yourself personally investing the time and effort to help FC become multiethnic and economically diverse? Will you stay and help, or do you see yourself leaving the church?

All participants but Participant #15 said they would be willing to help in various ways. Participant #15 said she may be after having a conversation with the leadership, but her hesitancy is because she was burned before by a church in this concept.

7. Would you attend an educational phase of this research project that taught best practices and the next steps in preparing to be multiethnic and economically diverse? (If yes, would you prefer an eight-hour one-day session or three-hour sessions on three different days?)

All participants said they would attend if it fit in their schedules. Most participants indicated a one-day session would be best for them.

Conclusion of Ethnic and Economic Interviews

There were six crossover themes from the literature review that the ethnic and economic participants spoke on. The participants were not aware of the research done in the literature review before participating in the interview. The responses flowed naturally from them. One

theme was the need for intentionality, as reflected by Bracey in the literature review.¹⁷ The participants identified Faith Church will have to move forward with intentionality if they want to make a change, for even if it is stated in their literature, and they do not take intentional steps, things will stay the same. A second theme dealt with the reality of past hurts that have come from their previous churches. The past church hurts were discussed by Morrison in the literature review.¹⁸ Some participants described deep wounds that have accrued in the pursuit of diversity. A third theme that goes along with what Oyakawa identifies in the literature review is the need for shared leadership.¹⁹ The participants stated the need for leadership to reflect diversity. They indicated it would be helpful and beneficial to see people like themselves up front, in leadership, on social media posts, and represented. The participants articulated they would like to feel acknowledged, represented, and included in the life and leadership of the church. Along with MacMillan, the participants stated that communication is going to be key.²⁰ Communication brings training and education. Communication, they said, helps people from different backgrounds to understand each other's differences. Then, just as Ince and Pastor A described the internal struggles of being ethnically different in a predominant church environment, the participants shared the same feelings.²¹ They described the cost of being different and even the difficulties their families place on them for choosing to be in a place where people do not look like them.

¹⁷ Ince, *The Beautiful*, 56.

¹⁸ Morrison, *Be the Bridge*, 46.

¹⁹ Oyakawa, *Racial*, 502.

²⁰ Pat MacMillan, *The Performance Factor: Unlocking the Secrets of Teamwork* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2001).

²¹ Irwyn L. Ince Jr., *The Beautiful Community: Unity, Diversity, and the Church at Its Best*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 2.

The sixth theme that ties into the literature review has to do with acceptance.²² The participants stated that they felt accepted and possibly assimilated but did not feel accommodated. The researcher should have asked a follow-up question to explore the depth of their emotions by asking, "How do you feel not being accommodated?" Some participants were so used to adapting to ethnic majority circles that they said hearing the Word preached accurately was the focus, and if they could be accepted in the process, that would be a bonus. A positive takeaway from the ethnic minority participants regarding acceptance was the number of responses indicating that they did not feel that Faith Church Highland had undercurrents of racism. However, it was stated that there is a sense that colors and economic differences will be welcome, just as long as the people act like the majority. Participants indicated that if people come from Gary and East Chicago communities and do not act polished, they will not be accepted.

An area of oversight in this interview was the deviation from discussing and framing more questions around economic inclusion. Although participants touched on this, a more focused engagement with the subject matter is necessary. Several deacons from Faith Highland indicated that the church has been walking with a larger number of economically diverse people. They asked the researcher how they can walk better with the economically diverse in a way that is honoring and uplifting to the people while being faithful in stewardship with the finances.

Training and Workshop Summary

Only nine of the twenty-five participants were able to attend the workshop due to work schedules, vacations, and injuries. Many of those who could not participate requested materials

²² Bracey, *Race*, 286.

and consideration for the training to be recorded. After some investigation, it was determined that Zoom could handle an eight-hour recording session after two days of digital processing. Materials and access to the recording were given to the absent participants who requested it. The workshop had a good flow. The training and workshop booklet contained sixty pages of material for participants to follow along with and take notes as the presenter spoke. Each participant was also given a journal to capture additional thoughts and notes. There was time for training on the multiethnic and economically diverse church and a workshop component for the leaders to learn the necessary skills to implement the desired changes. The time together was filled with lectures, small group dialogues, questions, supporting videos, practical and engaging participation illustrations, and feedback. All participants remained thoroughly engaged throughout the training and workshop.

To gauge the level of received training, participants were asked to do an assessment at the end of the training before leaving. There were three sections to the assessment. Session one covered the core values of Accountability, Empowerment, Leverage, and Interdependence. Section two covered the workshop components of Communication, Making Healthy Change, Scenario Planning, Systems Thinking, and Collaboration. Section three covered training components regarding ethnic and economic diversity, which included Biblical Rationale, Reality of Past and Present, Glancing Ahead, and Ambition.

Participants were asked to use the scales to enter two ratings of their understanding and performance in each section. They were asked first to rate themselves on where they thought they were at the beginning of the Multiethnic Workshop Training, then rate where they were at the end of the workshop training. They were encouraged to be honest in their reflection. The scale for each question ranged from 1 Poor, 2 Fair, 3 Acceptable, 4 Good, and 5 Excellent. The

assessment reveals that the majority of the participants experienced an increase in their start and finish knowledge and understanding of the taught competencies. The following are the breakdowns.

Section One

Accountability

Before Workshop Training Average 3.25

After Workshop Training Average 4

Empowerment

Before Workshop Training Average 3.37

After Workshop Training Average 4

Interdependence

Before Workshop Training Average 3.12

After Workshop Training Average 4.12

Leverage

Before Workshop Training Average 3.12

After Workshop Training Average 4.25

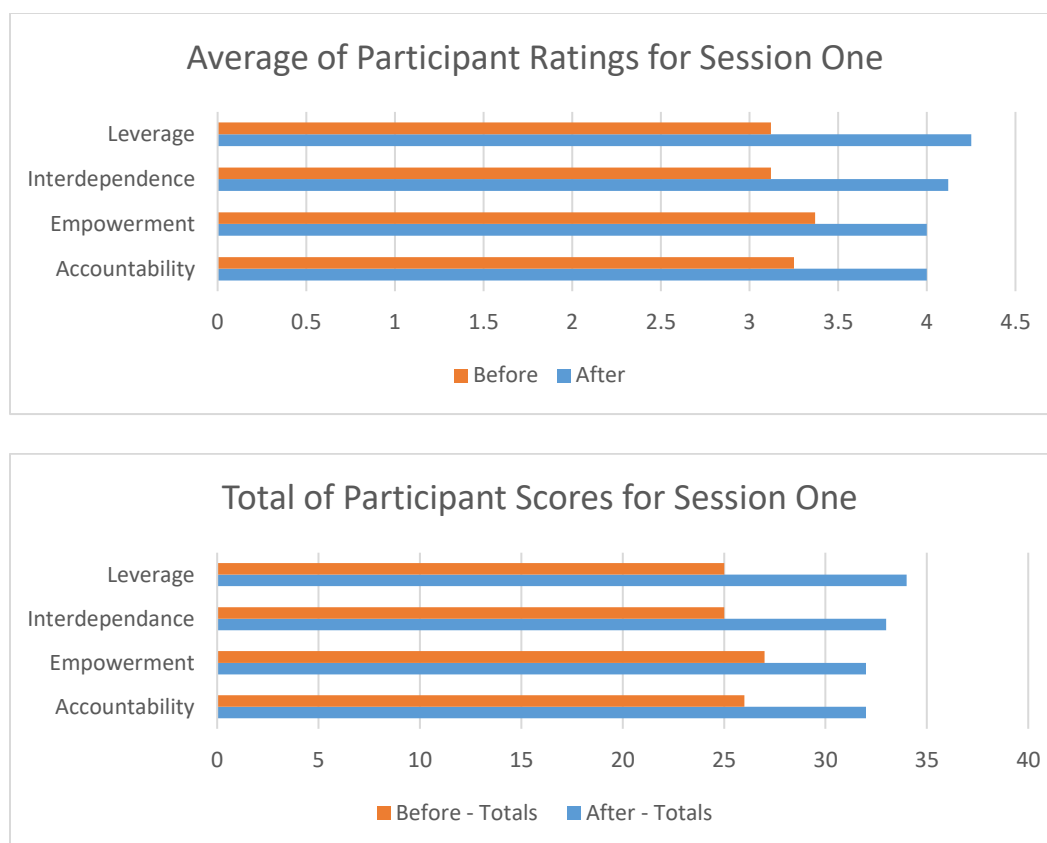


Figure 4.14. Exit Survey Comparative Results for Pre and Post-Workshop–Session One

Session One grew from pre to post by 41 points over the five content areas, starting with 64.3% and concluding with 81.2%, leaving a 16.9% increase. Session One had the lowest competency improvement of the three sections.

Section Two

Making Healthy Change

Before Workshop Training Average 3.12

After Workshop Training Average 4

Systems Thinking

Before Workshop Training Average 2.5

After Workshop Training Average 3.87

Scenario Planning

Before Workshop Training Average 2.87

After Workshop Training Average 3.75

Collaboration

Before Workshop Training Average 3.25

After Workshop Training Average 4.25

Communication

Before Workshop Training Average 3.12

After Workshop Training Average 4.12

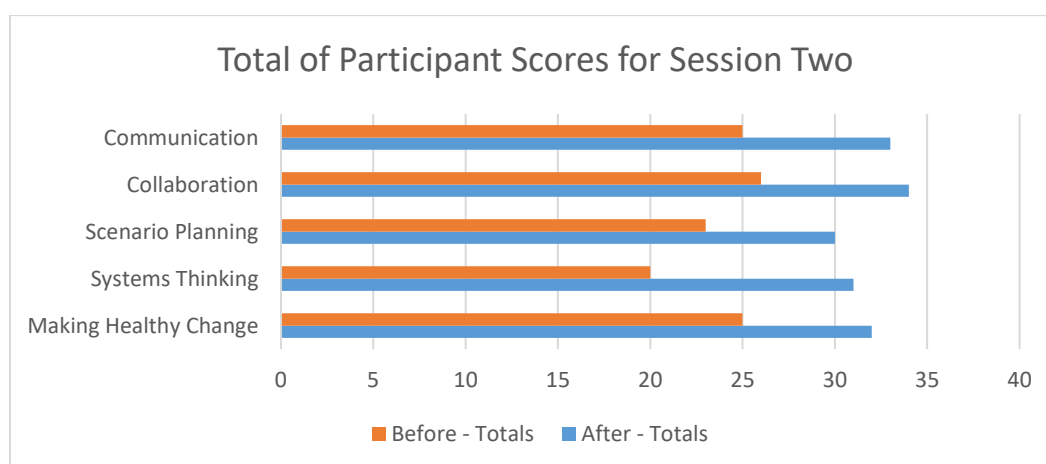
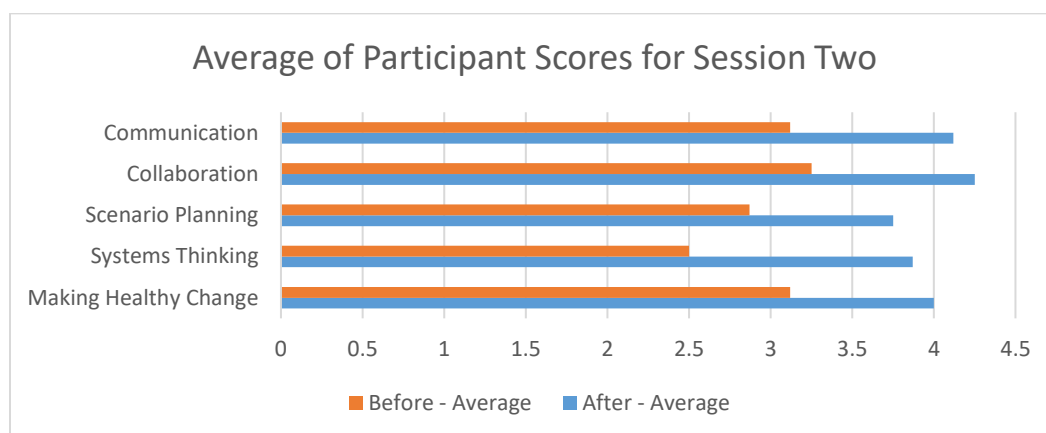


Figure 4.15. Exit Survey Comparative Results for Pre and Post-Workshop–Session Two

Session Two grew from pre to post by 41 points over the five content areas, starting with 59.5% and concluding with 80%, leaving a 20.5% increase. Session Two had the second-highest competency improvement of the three sections.

Section Three

Biblical Rationale

Before Workshop Training Average 3.87

After Workshop Training Average 4.5

Reality of Past and Present

Before Workshop Training Average 2.87

After Workshop Training Average 4.25

Glancing Ahead

Before Workshop Training Average 2.87

After Workshop Training Average 4.25

Ambition

Before Workshop Training Average 3

After Workshop Training Average 4.37

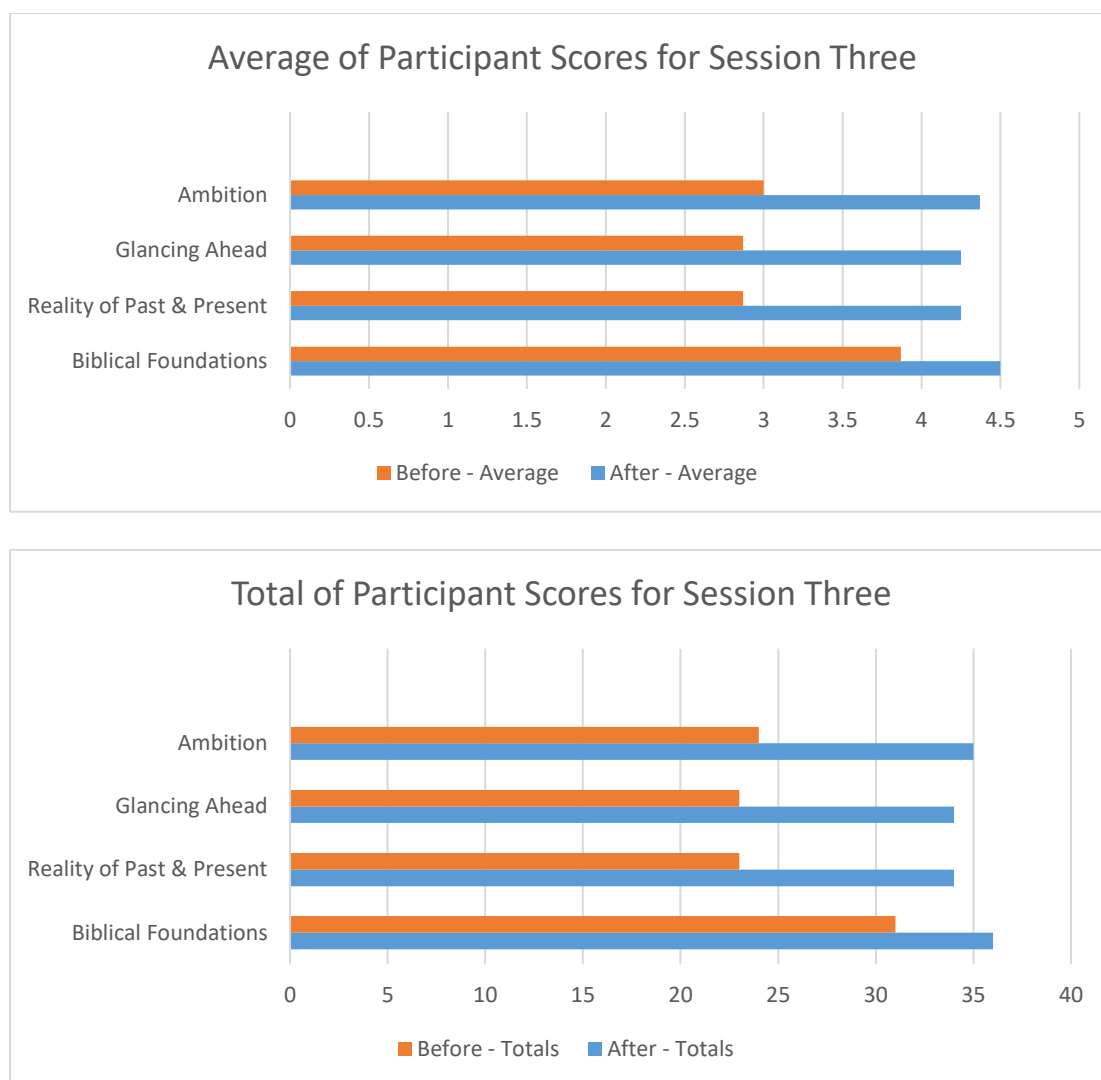


Figure 4.16. Exit Survey Comparative Results for Pre and Post-Workshop–Session Three

Session Three grew from pre to post by 38 points over the five content areas, starting with 63.1% and concluding with 86.8%, leaving a 23.7% increase. Session Three had the highest competency improvement of the three sections.

Exit Surveys

An exit survey was given to participants after they left the workshop training to complete. The purpose of this survey was to track and compare progress in their ethnic and economic

diversity awareness and desire for church implementation. All nine of the workshop training participants completed the survey. The exit survey shows the participants' growth in their understanding of multiethnic and economic diversity in the church (See Figure 4.17). The exit survey also revealed that participants had a 100% agreement and strong agreement rating for growth in pursuing being a multiethnic and economically diverse church with intentionality (See Figure 4.18). Of the population, 77.8% said they strongly agree with helping Faith Highland become multiethnic and economically diverse (See Figure 4.21). While not all participants indicated that Faith Church should pursue developing a core value of being multiethnic and economically diverse, 88.9% believed it should (See Figure 4.22).

I feel I have a better understanding of multiethnic and economically diverse church mentality.

9 responses

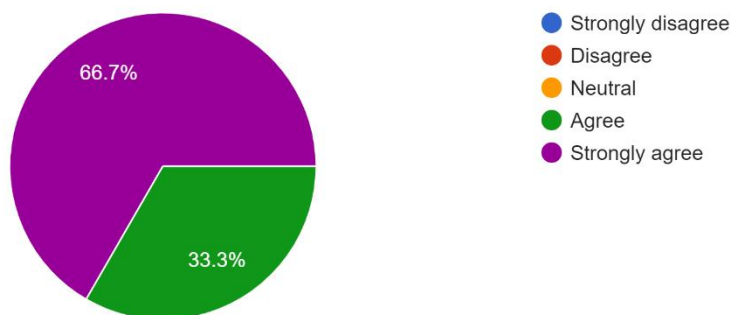


Figure 4.17. Exit Survey Question 1 with Participant Responses

I have grown in my willingness to pursue it with intentionality.

9 responses



Figure 4.18. Exit Survey Question 2 with Participant Responses

I feel confident that Faith Church Highland can accomplish this in the near future.

9 responses

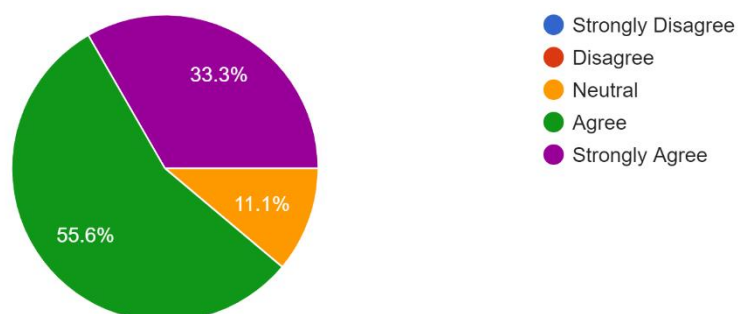


Figure 4.19. Exit Survey Question 3 with Participant Responses

I desire the multiethnic and economically diverse populations to not just be accepted, but assimilated and accommodated as well.

9 responses

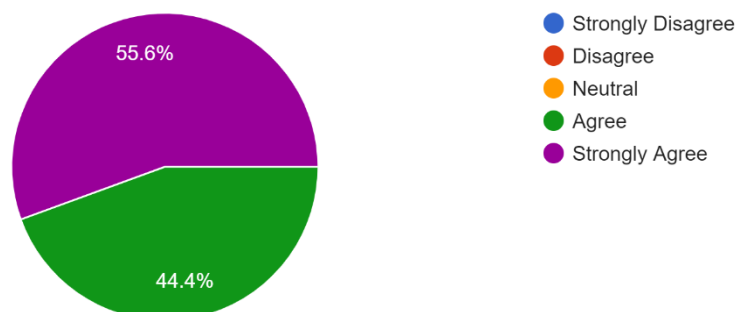


Figure 4.20. Exit Survey Question 4 with Participant Responses

I am willing to help Faith Church Highland become multiethnic and economically diverse.

9 responses

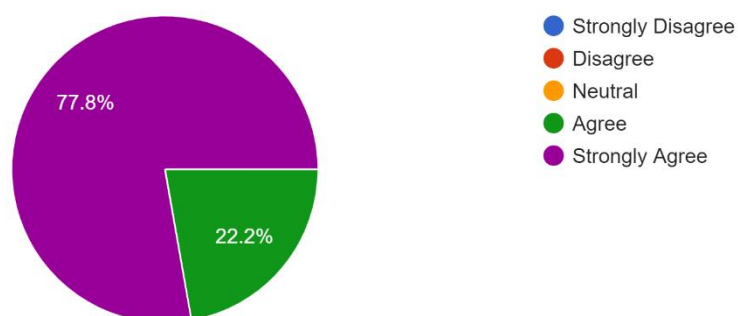


Figure 4.21. Exit Survey Question 5 with Participant Responses

Faith Church Highland should not pursue multiethnic and economic diversity and further.

9 responses

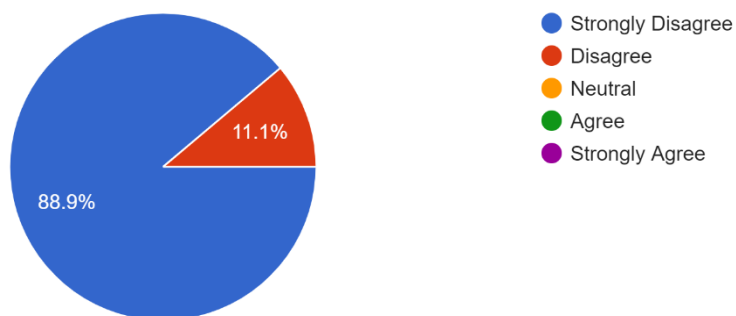


Figure 4.22. Exit Survey Question 6 with Participant Responses

Faith Church Highland should create a core value of intentionally pursuit of economic and ethnic diversity.

9 responses

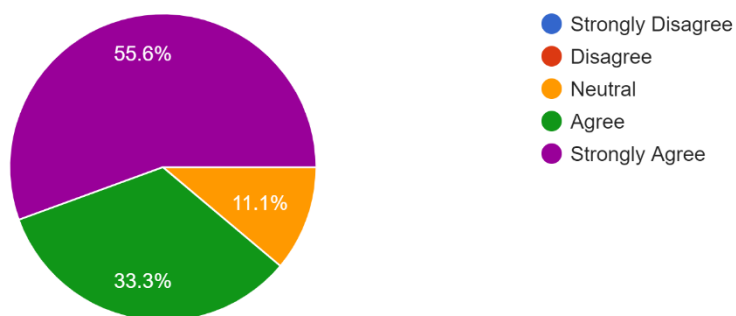


Figure 4.23. Exit Survey Question 7 with Participant Responses

I may have been blinded to the restrictions and obstacles multiethnic people have at connecting to Faith Church Highland.

9 responses

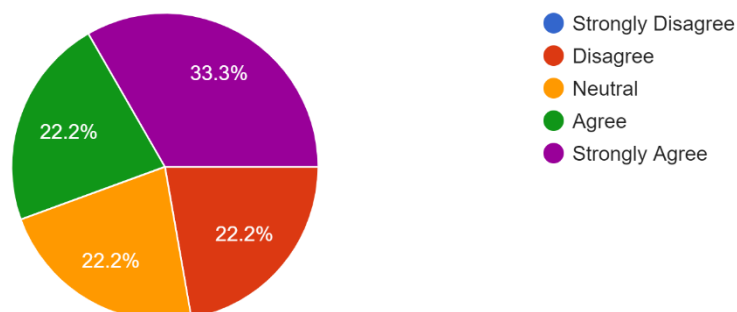


Figure 4.24. Exit Survey Question 8 with Participant Responses

Faith Church Highland could actively pursue racial diversity and inclusion in its worship services.

9 responses

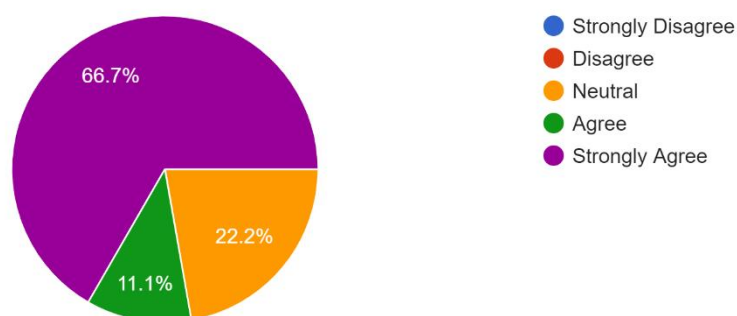


Figure 4.25. Exit Survey Question 9 with Participant Responses

I am getting excited about Revelation 7 being experienced and lived out on earth and at Faith Church Highland.

9 responses

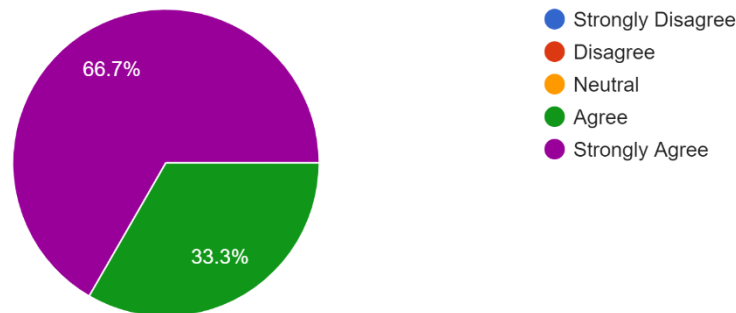


Figure 4.26. Exit Survey Question 10 with Participant Responses

Highland Lead Pastor Exit Interview

The purpose of the lead pastor going through the project was to serve as the insider of the triangulation research method. He has the most knowledge of where Faith Highland is as a church, where it has the potential to go, and what the likelihood of it pursuing multiethnic and economic diversity is. This is the summary of his exit interview. The pastor said he agreed with the stated Problem Statement that Faith Church Highland does not currently have a core value for intentionally pursuing ethnic and economic diversity. He said the level of intentionality is pretty low at this point, even if the topic enters into conversations sometimes; not much else happens. We could be better, and after the workshop training, I see the need to be more intentional. Reflecting on filling a vacant leadership position, he indicated that if we had had the training before the leadership team meeting, he would have recommended diversity to be a part of the discussion and that he would have made nominations in a different way.

When asked to reflect on his time at the workshop training, he said he thought it was good. It was a smaller group than I thought would attend. He said he really enjoyed that there were three types of people at each table. He said he talked with some of the ethnic majorities after the training, and one deacon reported that even though they have diversity training at work, “It was above what I get at work. It was enjoyable.” The pastor was informed and asked to share his thoughts on the theme from the interviews that when referring to the church, the ethnic majorities referred to it as “My” and “Our” church, while the ethnic minorities referred to it as “Their” church. He replied, “It makes me sad. I would wrestle with what is meant by that. Lament.” He spent some time justifying why it was possible that people responded the way they did, and then he paused and said, “Me trying to rationalize this is a symbol of something deeper that needs attention. We have to do better in language. It is our church for all people, and we have to teach it in new member classes. I should take notice of it. The challenge is to break down the language.”

The pastor was then asked some next-step questions in order to gauge the efficiency of the PRIME Diversity Action Plan. The researcher asked, “Would you like the leadership teams to continue to work for ethnic and economic inclusion?” He said, “Yes. That is something that should stay in the front of the mind. It shows intentionality.” The researcher asked, “What intentional steps will you take as the lead pastor to pursue it with intentionality?” He responded by saying, “It has to go on the Leadership Team agenda. We have to pray for it. Challenging our leadership to engage and ask these questions. ‘Do you feel accepted, assimilated, and accommodated?’ The leaders have to get to know the people of diversity. Elders cannot come to meetings and say, ‘I don’t know who that is.’ Is not acceptable for an elder after three meetings. I want to do it in a grace-filled way. It starts with leadership and flows down. Creating the three

minutes after service for people to talk to someone they don't know. Intentional creative ways to break it down." Finally, the researcher asked, "Would you like this researcher to spend time teaching the next steps with your leadership team and elders?" The pastor responded, "Yes. I wonder what it would look like. We do evaluations when we ask about VGAD (a term used to describe ministries as being vibrant, growing, authentic, and diverse) so we can check in on it. Diversity is so broad that maybe we need to hone in on multicultural and economic issues and not use the term generically anymore. After the training, I know that involving ethnicities in Sunday services is key."

Data Analysis

Each level of the PRIME Diversity Plan produced comparative data from the participants, allowing for evaluation and further discussion. The collected data is being analyzed using themes, slippages, and silences. The interview questions and answers are also being examined to aid in the data analysis.

Themes

Looking at all the data gathered from each collection avenue, some themes arose. Themes can be described as "the structures of experience."²³ It was interesting to note that in the interview portion of this research project, the ethnic minorities consistently referred to Faith Church as "They," while the ethnic majorities referred to it as "We." Another theme was ninety-five percent of the participants reported on the survey agreed or strongly agreed that they would be happy if Faith Church could learn how to be more ethnically and economically diverse and intentionally move forward in pursuit of that goal. In the questionnaire, participants strongly

²³ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 198.

indicated that if more minorities were present in the church, it would make the current ethnic majority a bit uncomfortable. However, most participants believe that after some time, the ethnic majority will be excited and embrace it. A theme that emerged from the ethnic minority interviews was that all but one participant reported not feeling accommodated at Faith Church Highland. All felt accepted, and some felt assimilated, but there was a solid emphatic “No” to being accommodated. In the interviews, all but one ethnic minority had various thoughts about what steps they felt were necessary for the church to succeed in becoming multiethnic and economically diverse, compared to most of the ethnic majorities on the elder, deacon, and leadership team who sighed and pondered before stating they had no idea on what steps could be taken.

Slippages

There were not many slippages in the data analysis, but some are worth pointing out. Slippages can be questioned as “What is not congruent in the data?” or “What is contradictory in nature?”²⁴ On question two of the survey, one person strongly disagreed that Faith Church values the lives of ethnically diverse people. This answer was a strong outlier from the rest of the participant results. Another slippage was from Participant #24, who said she had not noticed that it was not multiethnic and economically diverse. She said when she comes, she hears the Word of God being preached and does not notice the lack of ethnicities, but she would love to see more Latinos. She was the only ethnic minority who said she had not noticed that there were not many minorities in the church.

²⁴ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 200.

Silences

Discussing silences, Sensing says silences ask the question, “What is left unsaid that needs to be examined?”²⁵ Interestingly, during the interview portion of the project, participants continuously did not comment on how they believed the ethnic minorities would respond. This could be because they spent time contemplating how the ethnic majority would respond that they forgot to speak about the ethnic minorities. Not all participants missed addressing this question, but more than the majority did. Many of the elder, deacon, and leadership team members did not have ideas for what steps could be taken to move the church forward in the pursuit of ethnic and economic diversity.

Another silence emerged during the interview portion of the project. Of all the interviews, only one participant spoke about what he called “mini cultures.” He talked about the role that mini cultures take in every person and come from the community they have come from. He discussed how a church could keep a culture focused on the pursuit of God but, in the process, allow people to bring their mini-cultures with them. This silence from the others could be studied in future research.

Summary of Results

The incoming survey revealed an openness to Faith Church pursuing ethnic and economic diversity. There is agreement amongst the participants that Faith Church values the lives of ethnically diverse people, and the church has good core values outside of the realm of race. Even though the participants felt Faith Church had good values, the results were divided mainly into the responses to Faith’s intentionality of pursuing ethnically diverse people to be

²⁵ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 200.

pursued, welcomed, and embraced for membership and leadership. Again, there was division amongst the participants regarding Faith Church seeing value in worshiping in a racially diverse setting, a setting that Faith has actively tried to create. While seventy-five percent of the participants said they would like to see more ethnic diversity in worship services, twelve percent said they would not. To conclude, more than ninety-five percent of the participants said they would both like to see Faith Church learn how to be more ethnically and economically diverse with great intentionality, and they themselves would be willing to help in the process.

The interview and questionnaire revealed strong leaders who are committed to Faith Church. While ethnic minorities may not currently feel that Faith Church is “their” church, they are willing to help achieve diversity. The ethnic majority in leadership roles have a solid commitment to the church and a desire to help it move forward; the majority just wish they knew how. This was evidenced in the interview assessment that asked if they would attend a workshop training to teach the next steps, and all participants said they would if they did not have scheduling conflicts.

A third of the participants attended the workshop training. Many of the participants who could not participate wanted to be there but were unable to due to other previous engagements. Some asked for the workshop to be recorded so they could watch it later. Evidenced by the after-training assessment and the exit survey, it was revealed that the attending participants had growth in their understanding of ethnic and economic diversity and the intentionality that it will take to make it a reality at Faith Church. The participants were excited to think of the next steps to pursue the goal actively. An encouraging growth factor was the number of participants who rated a stronger desire to pursue ethnic and economic diversity. There was a 23.7% increase from pre- to post-survey results from the third training session that covered ambition, the way forward,

the reality of the past, and a biblical rationale for ethnic and economically diverse churches (See Figure 4.16). Of the participants, 55.6% reported they strongly agree with their growth in their willingness to pursue diversity with intentionality (See Figure 4.18). Additionally, 89.9% of the participants believe that Faith Church Highland can accomplish ethnic and economic diversity in the near future (See Figure 4.19), and 100% of the participants now desire for multiethnic and economically diverse people to be accepted and accommodated (See Figure 4.20).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

With all research projects, the question at the conclusion should be asked, “What is next?” The purpose of an action research project that focuses on qualitative data instead of a quantitative study is to answer what can be done to make a change. It can be seen that some churches have had success and are becoming multiethnic and economically diverse, as identified by other research and church biographies. The research conducted here for Faith Church has helped illustrate the need for intentional interventions and the lack of them. This chapter will focus on the project overview, research implications, the research applications, the research limitations, and the need for further research.

This project set out to answer an emerging question: Can a Reformed church succeed in enfolding ethnic and economic diversity if it intentionally pursues it? When looking at the diverse worship scene depicted in Revelation 7, churches across all denominational lines need to feel a solid prompting to generate an environment in their worship spaces welcoming to differing ethnicities and demographics. While examining the ministry of Jesus Christ, Peter, and Paul to the marginalized, economically displaced, and varying ethnicities, the church in local communities today should ask if they are reaching and ministering similarly. That task, however, leads to another question: How can a church with a historical narrative of seclusion arise from its past storyline that repelled difference into a new chronicle that welcomes and embraces?

This action research project walked with a historically Reformed Church called Faith Church to cultivate a conversation and workshop training that would entertain the concept of a

worship experience that tolerates ethnically and economically diverse people and accommodates them. This plan sought to help transition Faith Church from concept to its feasibility and, if possible, to actuality. The problem is that Faith Church fails to give congregants a core value resembling Revelation 7 with intentional multiethnic and economic diversity.

The purpose of this research project was to create and deploy the PRIME Diversity Action Plan to implement the value of being multiethnic. The plan was designed to help Faith Church overcome a historical narrative that has hindered its intentional pursuit of becoming a multiethnic church. PRIME is an acronym for Posture, Racial Reconciliation, Identified Ideation, Meticulous Methods, and Enlightened Enjoyment. This training was designed to help the location pastors, elders, deacons, leaders, and ethnic stakeholders be better prepared to minister to people of different ethnicities and economic statuses than themselves.

By utilizing the PRIME Diversity Action Plan, the Faith Highland location identified the need for creating a new core value that will generate a multiethnic and economically diverse church, resembling Revelation 7 and Philippians 2. Participants heard each other's stories and were embracing and appreciating each other's differences. Growth from the toleration of ethnic and economically diverse people into a thought process of how to make this happen was emerging.

PRIME was executed. In its observational phase, it learned from leading scholars on ethnic and economic diversity and how to infuse it into the life of the church. It was determined that there are seven key factors and contributors to ethnic and economic success: Starting with a biblical foundation, challenging distorted views, understanding historical undertones including church segregation, and strong leadership that moves with intentionality, as they create an atmosphere of welcoming and empathy. Therefore, the beginning of data collection got

underway to see what church leaders, ethnic participants, and the researcher could detect as hindrances and probable components of stagnation along with potential compulsion into becoming a multiethnic and economically diverse church. After the observational phase, the researcher develops an educational component of the project to teach the participants. In the educational phase, the participants were taught thirteen concepts that were broken into three categories. Each component was designed to either bridge the participant's awareness of current literature to provide a pathway for ethnic and economic church unity or to act as a chopping block to allow participants to remove ideations and distorted realities of thought for perceived church diversity of ethnic and economic inclusion. The first two phases of PRIME set the participants up successfully to have reflective and breakthrough phases of the program.

Research Implications

Research findings suggested that leadership teams with intentionality can generate a complicated conversation towards ethnic and economic diversity for a church.¹ This research supports that claim. Members of the leadership team assembled along with ethnic minorities and discussed how people of lower economic status and people of differing ethnicities should be treated in the church. While the conversation was complicated, it was productive and produced good fruit for establishing a foundation.

The research showed that pursuing a multiethnic church should not be based on a shift in the community or cultural trends.² The multiethnic and economically diverse church should be pursued from a biblical, theological, and theoretical foundation.³ This teaching was incorporated

¹ Bracey, *Beyond Diversity*, 56.

² Estep, *Christian Formation*, 154.

³ Swanson, *Redisciplining*, 5.

into the workshop and training component of this project, and the participants were grateful for the biblical foundation on which these efforts must be made. Looking at the data results, there was a growth swing in the participants' competency in Biblical Foundations from 3.87 to 4.5 after taking the exit survey. Failure to build upon biblical principles for the purpose of mirroring Christ's love beyond a homogenous people group is like chasing the wind, vanity (Eccl 1:14).

Church leaders and pastors can learn how historical narratives of racial segregation in the United States and the local churches have and still do play a role in the segregated church today.⁴ Furthermore, the leader needs to understand how economically distraught people were discouraged and sometimes prohibited from going to church because they lacked a means of giving.⁵ By learning these truths, those leaders and pastors can help lead the church in overcoming any past racial sins, and they pursue a multiethnic and economically diverse future. As the leaders from Faith Highland gathered with ethnic and economic minorities from the church and the historical past of ethnic and economic segregation was discussed, there was a deep sense of respect and comfort that was given to each other. This implies that when conversations are done well and people are listened to, bridges are made, and hostility walls are torn down.⁶ Research states that empathy is necessary to understand the lives of the economically downtrodden, and this project showed it to be true.⁷

As leaders learn, adapt, and grow, they will be catalysts for the change that can come into the hearts and lifestyles of the congregants.⁸ This project gave biblical and practical reasons for

⁴ Willis, *The Multicultural Church*, 11.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 48.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Kaemingk, *Reformed Public*, Chapter 18.

having larger hearts for the economically distressed and ethnically different to become more prominent in the church. Participants discussed their desire to see those changes inside of the members of the church.

A church that navigates becoming multiethnic and economically diverse well is not just a church with a cultural checkmark of compliance. It becomes "a city on the hill" (Matt 5:14, ESV), so to speak, a church that demonstrates the heart, love, and light of Christ to the community around it.

Strengths of Program Design

There are three strengths worth noting for this research design. The first is the use of triangulation of data. Instead of doing a quantitative research design to only see statistically what was missing from the church, this research design utilized a qualitative approach that not only utilized research to identify the problem but also to help create solutions to the problem. Three methods of gathering data were used: surveys, questionnaires, and interviews. This data was used to help generate a comprehensive workshop training to help facilitate conversations, teach the biblical mandates of ethnic and economic inclusion, and provide healthy avenues and strategic plans for making change.

A second strength was the use of diversified table discussions. During the workshop training component of the project, individuals were predetermined on where they would sit and who they would sit next to. The program design called for individuals to be placed with different types of leaders and different ethnic groups. Therefore, to ensure that the conversation was not one-sided during discussion moments, each table had an elder, a deacon, and an ethnic minority. This fostered great communication, empathy, feeling heard, and unity. Having that unity going

into the breakthrough plan was beneficial as the participants wanted to hear each other's perspectives.

The final area of strength was the utilization of the pre and post-test to measure growth. To track the significance of the program, participants were asked to track their growth over the thirteen teaching components from the three sessions of the workshop training. There were significant and noticeable changes in participant responses.

Weakness of Program Design

The project design has three main weaknesses that are worth pointing out. The first is related to the time frame. The time frame presented three areas of weakness throughout the project. The first was a limited number of participants able to attend the workshop training. Had more calendar time been available, more participants would have attended. Those participants would have been able to aid in additional comparative data. The second time constant was during the workshop training. The time on the clock forced a rush for completion during the breakthrough plan. The breakthrough plan is a vital component of the program, and due to the time constraints, it was rushed. The third area of time is regarding the lack of ability to conduct longitudinal studies on the implementation of taught and learned concepts that the leaders, elders, and deacons went through into the reality of congregational change.

A second weakness of the program is the lack of additional emphasis on economic diversity in the surveys, questionnaires, and interview questions. The focus unintentionally shifted to more conversation and realities of ethnic inclusion and seclusion than intended. The initial design, in the researchers' minds, was to have a 60-40 balance on ethnic and economic teachings and question engagements. This oversight became more prevalent during the reviews of participant answers.

The third area of weakness is the lack of development of Part Two of the project. Part Two would walk leaders and pastors through the continual development and implementation of their breakthrough plans. It would further walk with a strategic plan for launching their diversity plan into the church. This research project, although it taught how to go about making ethnic and economic changes, did not walk the pastor and leaders into doing it.

Research Applications

This action research project can be applied in many ways to various types of churches, organizations, pastors, and leaders. The content, surveys, questionnaires, and workshop training can be customized to help bring ethnic and economic diversity into not only a Reformed Church but a variety of churches. This action plan can also help leaders and organizations grow in their ability to make changes with strategic steps and concepts to achieve that change in a healthy way.

The PRIME Diversity Action Plan effectively gets leaders to think about the ethnic and economic health of the church and minorities. Utilizing surveys and questionnaires that ask questions about the ethnicities and economics of the members and community allows leaders not just to have a passing conversation about it but to cognitively process what may be going on in their church and community. Before talking to leaders about change, it is beneficial for the leaders to begin to gather their thoughts on it. The survey and questionnaire do an excellent job of that for churches that are looking to make changes.

Also, it has been revealed that this project does not only need to be for the Reformed churches. It is a tool that can be modified to bring diversity to any church denomination. It is not only the Reformed church that needs to pursue ethnic and economic diversity within its walls. Research has identified that only 5.5 percent of churches in America are multiethnic, and

denominations and churches around the country must develop a core value of the intentional pursuit of loving like Christ with ethnic and economic diversity.⁹

The values section of the workshop can help churches and leaders in churches and organizations walk in accountability. Leaders need to be accountable for their stated intentions and moral living. This project teaches what accountability looks like and how to establish it. It shows why it is needed and the pitfalls of not having it. Before the leadership team makes a statement or promise, it must understand the impact of false promises and vain words. Systems of accountability will help the leaders be honest and transparent in their efforts for diversity.

The Historical Past and Present sections of the workshop training and the Glancing Ahead sections will allow any church to speak informedly and honestly about where the country has failed to achieve racial harmony well and how the church has also fallen short in this area. When churches use this model, they can have hard conversations about the past but then begin to focus on where they have the potential to go in the future. It is vital for a church of any ethnicity to be honest about where it may have failed regarding ethnic unity and repent of any sins it may have committed in the process. The content of these two training sessions is a compilation of the literature review research from this project.

The Scenario Planning and Strategic Thinking sections from the workshop training will help a church to push past daydreaming of what would be nice into practical steps for pursuing their future. Too many leadership teams are stagnant in their desire to do more in their communities because they have not learned how to integrate solid leadership practices that can catapult them from where they are to where they would like to be. Using Scenario Planning and Strategic Thinking will significantly enhance their ability to get unstuck and move in the

⁹ DeYmaz, *Leading a Healthy*, 24.

direction of not only ethnic and economic diversity change but any change that the Lord calls them to for the next chapter of their ministry.

Living in ethnic diversity to display the love of Christ that transcends any racial, cultural, ethnic, language, or disability in such a hostile world is available to any church that wants to be a Christ model of inclusion to ethnicities and the marginalized. However, it will not happen by accident. A plan is needed. The Pursuing Healthy Change component of the training can help pastors navigate the difficult conversations and tasks of change. This section can aid not only pastors and churches but also any leader or individual who recognizes that the Lord is calling them to a different journey.

When pastors and churches decide to move forward in a Revelation 7-style church, they will need guidance to not split the church, flip the church, or remain stagnant in their diversity efforts. Using a tool such as the PRIME Diversity Action Plan will foster conversations and assist in moving forward healthily. Splitting the church in the name of unity makes no sense and looks rather disgraceful. So, the church will need to walk with care and patience. It also is not good to flip the church. Research shows that half of the 5.5% of multiethnic churches are in a transitional period of flipping from one homogenous ethnicity to another.¹⁰

The leadership components of the workshop training can be utilized in schools and other organizations. This action plan impacts the leaders so they can impact others. Lee Iacocca has said, “The speed of the leader is the speed of the team.” Craig Groeschel has been quoted as saying, “Everyone gets better when the leader gets better.”¹¹ Making a change in an organization or church is courageous, and when race, culture, and ethnicity are involved, it requires even more

¹⁰ Harvey, *Dear White Christians*.

¹¹ Craig Groeschel, GLS18 session notes—“becoming a leader people love to follow,” (2018).

courage and wisdom. So, the leader will need to be prepared for the obstacles they may face in which they cannot see. This is why the workshop training teaches the concept of being Blind and Outnumbered. Understanding this concept will help any leader minimize pitfalls that may be in front of them.

By engaging with this model, churches have the ability to strive to show peace on earth by loving all people in their communities. But that requires knowing what other ethnicities are in the community. The senior pastor of Faith set an obtainable goal of having diversity in the church that represents the diversity outside of the church within its community. However, as this research project gathered from its participants, the leaders and the people do not know how to go about making that change. Thus, guidance is required, or research will have to be done on the church's part. However, the church, its pastor, and its leadership teams are typically not geared to do such research, so having and utilizing a training plan such as that contained in this research project can prove to be extremely beneficial to the healthy pursuit of mirroring the community economically and ethnically.

Churches can utilize this research project to teach leaders various values and skills necessary for making changes and maintaining healthy dynamics at the church. This plan was successful in raising awareness among the participants in Accountability, Leverage, Interdependence, Empowerment, and Collaboration. Skills like these help organizations run smoother and leaders to lead and not manage people. To become an ethnically and economically diverse church, leaders who can navigate into the future will be required. Managers will only keep the church where it is at. Therefore, this plan can help leaders lead.

Many churches and organizations have internal conflict, unnecessary conflict at that, because values such as these are not put in place. As churches and organizations use this plan,

they can become healthier, diverse bodies of people who are living in intentionality that embraces the love of Christ and places it on display for the whole community to observe and give glory to God. For that reason, this action plan is larger than one Reformed Church in Northwest Indiana; this plan is customizable and trainable for multiple types of denominations and organizations who want to resemble Revelation 7.

Furthermore, the researcher concluded that the PRIME Diversity Action Plan can be used as more than a tool for helping a historically Reformed church learn how to develop a core value for intentional ethnic and economic diversity. PRIME is a leadership model that can cross over from diversity in a Reformed church to walk with various churches and organizations to cultivate change. The change happens by using the model of erecting a posture, pursuing reconciliation, forming a new ideation, and establishing meticulous methods, thus allowing the organization to move forward with enhanced enjoyment.

Research Limitations

Sensing was correct when he said, “Limitations may exist in your methods of approach due to sampling restrictions, uncontrolled variables, faulty instrumentation, and other compromises to external validity.”¹² This project faced five limitations in its implementation phase. Some of these limitations were anticipated during the design phase of the research project. However, two limitations were observed during the implementation phase. Without the limitations, more data could have been gathered, which would have led to better internalization of the participants and an understanding of how ethnic and economic differences are impacting the Reformed Church.

¹² Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 21.

Recruitment

The first level of limitation was in the recruitment phase of the project. During this phase, the researcher was limited in the willingness of the senior pastor to engage elders, deacons, and leadership team members from the Dyer location to be a part of the project. Because the researcher did not have a prior relationship with those individuals, the recruitment email went out from the Dyer lead pastor, who did not feel it was necessary to follow up with the recruits. This limited Dyer participants to three deacons and the senior pastor. This lower number of starting participants proved to impact the number of attendees at the workshop training component of the project, as there was only one from Dyer. While all four of the Dyer participants participated in the survey, questionnaire, and interview, three of them, by not attending the workshop training, did not get the opportunity to learn and grow from the top concepts at the workshop. Having only one Dyer participant will make it harder for their campus to initiate the substantial change necessary for ethnic and economic inclusion that comes best from collaboration.

Retention of Participants

A second limitation of this project revolved around retention. Going into the project, it was forecasted that retention could be a possible limitation. During the project, it was proved evident that retention was a factor. Not all participants participated in all four levels of the project. Although the number was small, some participants did not complete the questionnaire, and others did not complete the survey. However, the research was limited during the workshop training as only nine participants attended. Trying to coordinate a date and time frame for all participants created an obstacle that led to a higher dropout rate from the program. Even though some participants who could not attend the workshop training requested to have materials and

access to a recorded video that they could view later, their absence at the training impacted their completion. This retention limitation is comorbid with the one-day training workshop limitation.

Training Scheduling

When the researcher observed the data, most participants indicated that they preferred to participate in a one-day training instead of a three-day one. July 20, 2024, a day in the middle of the summer calendar, was chosen, and not all participants could attend. Essentially, this project was limited to participant schedules, vacations, work hours, and other commitments. All participants are volunteers and received no compensation for participation, so that may have limited the ability to demand attendance. Even though all participants were given more than a month's notice of the workshop training, most were already scheduled for other engagements. If training is done in the future, running in the fall or spring is recommended.

Biased Answers

Another observed limitation was regarding participant honesty and articulating unbiased or favorable answers during the project's survey, questionnaire, and interview portions. Participants may have given pleasing answers to the researcher to impress him or not be embarrassed because of their honest responses. To help remove this limitation, the researcher articulated multiple times that their answers were confidential and their names would be taken from any reports. While it is speculative to assume that participants either gave true honesty or distorted the truth for whatever reason, the researcher holds the matter unknown. It is believed that because of their Christian background, the people asked to participate were honest in their feedback with no intentional lies, even if they experienced uncomfortableness in the process.

Selected Participants

A final observed limitation was the restriction that was placed on participants. Participants either needed to be elders, deacons, or on the leadership team to participate, limiting lay members' opportunity to participate. There was participation from lay members who were ethnic minorities. Not having the general population hinders a better sample size that would have produced better data for comparison. At the conception of this project, the thought was to allow the general population, which is the ethnic majority, to participate after the leaders determined they would like to go forward. This would be a phase two part of this project, which is not an aspect of this current project.

Further Research

Although this research project had different forms of success in aiding a Reformed Church into a multiethnic and economically diverse church, there are many takeaways that, if aided by more research, could apply in other settings. Some concepts that emerged during this study warrant future research. Although this project was created for one particular church, the researcher from this project would like to make adjustments so the material and concepts can be used in various denominations and homogeneous churches, regardless of their color and ethnicity, around the country.

Understanding How Race Impacts White Non-Reformed Churches

While this project's scope was to aid the Reformed Church in becoming multiethnic, more research needs to be done to understand how race impacts White non-Reformed churches. The study must not be limited to one denomination or category of denominations. The multiethnic church is a concept and display of “loving thy neighbor” (Matt 22:37-39, ESV) on “earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10, ESV) that is available to all churches across the world.

What Can the Black Church Do to Be More Inclusive

This current research is focused on the Reformed Church becoming like Revelation 7 in its pursuit of multiethnicity. In the same way, the “Black Church” (labeled that for simplicity of reading, for it has been concluded there is not a White or a Black church; there is only one Church, and that is the Church of Jesus Christ) should learn how it, too, can shake off its homogenous roots and embrace the harrowing plight of being multiethnic.

Understanding the Ethnic Patterns of Asian and Latino Churches

Understanding the culture and climate of Asian and Latino churches would assist Reformed and various other denominational churches that are trying to be multiethnic. By studying Asian and Latino churches, the researcher could help identify preferences, customs, and service trends that, if somehow, are embedded or referenced in the homogenous church that desires to become multiethnic.

Decreasing the Shock Value of the Congregation Embracing Ethnic and Economic Inclusion

Because many of the participants indicated their perceived thoughts on the majority of the congregants not being comfortable and some uneasiness when ethnic and economic diversity begins to emerge at Faith Highland, it would be beneficial to do research that identifies how to decrease the shock value of congregants who are facing change. Research that can identify how pastors and churches can better prepare their churches for the upcoming change in order to avoid the disastrous church split would be beneficial.

Longitudinal Research of Churches Who Implement the PRIME Diversity Plan

Even though this project has witnessed the lead pastor, core leadership personnel, and some ethnic minorities desiring to intentionally establish a core value of multiethnic and

economic diversity, more should be observed. A longitudinal study on how Faith Highland progresses over the next few years will help to identify the long-term effects of the PRIME Diversity Plan.

Churches that Failed at Becoming Multiethnic

While much can be learned from the success stories of pastors and churches that have been able to plant or transition into multiethnicity, the same could be said for pastors and churches that have failed in their attempts. Research is valid even from failed attempts at the intended goal. Learning from their mistakes, failures, and wishes for do-overs can lend to forested wisdom in this field of study on multiethnic churches.

The Impact of a Non-Staff or Pastor

It would be good to find out how a different researcher would interact with participants who were not connected in any way. Could the researcher from this project run the PRIME Diversity Plan in a different church with no ties? This should be investigated. Would an outside researcher have the limitation of potentially biased answers from participants removed?

Larger Sample Size

A larger sample size of participants is warranted. The population of elders, deacons, leadership teams, and ethnic minority representatives was a great start. However, more inclusion of church members who are not in leadership or ethnic minorities would add another layer of information that would give insight into the readability of ethnic and economic inclusion for a particular church.

APPENDIX A
PERMISSION REQUEST

February 23, 2024

Pastor [REDACTED]
Senior Pastor
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

As a graduate student in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is Aiding a Reformed Church into a Multiethnic and Economically Diverse Congregation. My research aims to understand the desire or need to become a multiethnic and economically diverse church. This study is determining the desire, possibility, and steps that would be necessary if the leadership team of Faith Church decided to pursue such diversity.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at Faith Church and to recruit elders, deacons, leadership teams, ethnic-minority stakeholders, and pastors as participants for my research. For your protection, I will also request permission from the Executive Pastor and Consistory.

Participants will be asked to complete the attached survey and questionnaire and contact me to schedule an interview. Some participants will be a group interview also known as a focus group. If the majority of your leadership team, along with yourself, desire to continue in this study after the interview/focus group phase, there will be an educational training workshop to help facilitate potential next steps for racial diversity. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Participating in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval or respond by email to [REDACTED]. A permission letter document is attached for your convenience.

Sincerely,

Leroy Childress
Pastor & Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX B
PERMISSION RESPONSE

Please provide this document on official letterhead or copy and paste it into an email. Permission response letters/emails should be returned to the researcher, not the IRB.

[Date]

Leroy Childress
Pastor & Doctoral Candidate

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]:

After a careful review of your research proposal entitled Aiding a Reformed Church into a Multiethnic and Economically Diverse Congregation, I have decided to grant you permission to contact our elders, deacons, leadership teams, ethnic-minority stakeholders, and pastors and invite them to participate in your study.

Check the following boxes, as applicable:

- ☐ I grant permission for Leroy Childress to contact our elders, deacons, leadership teams, ethnic stakeholders, and pastors to invite them to participate in his research study.
- ☐ I will not provide potential participant information to Leroy Childress, but we agree to send his study information to the description of potential participants on his behalf.
- ☐ I am requesting a copy of the results upon study completion or publication.

Sincerely,

Pastor [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

APPENDIX C

LETTER OF CONSENT – GENERAL

Consent

Title of the Project: Aiding a Reformed Church into a Multiethnic and Economically Diverse Congregation

Principal Investigator: Leroy Childress Jr., Doctoral Candidate, Rawlings School of Divinity, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study
--

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be in a leadership role at Faith Church, e.g., elder, pastor, deacon, on a leadership team, or an ethnic-minority stakeholder. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about and why is it being done?
--

The purpose of the study is to understand the desire or need to become a multiethnic and economically diverse church. This study is determining the desire, possibility, and steps that would be necessary if the leadership team of Faith Church decided to pursue such diversity.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. The first task is to participate in taking a 5-minute survey that will be emailed to you.
2. The second task is to fill out a questionnaire that will take about 15 to 20 minutes that will be emailed to you.
3. The third task is to participate in an audio-recorded interview that will take approximately 15 minutes.
4. The fourth task is conditional, meaning it will only happen if most participants desire to continue the study after interviews. If the participants desire to move forward, you will be asked to participate in an educational training workshop with all of them. This workshop will last 8 hours. Depending on the consensus of the group of participants, it can be a one-day session or broken into three days of mini-sessions.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from participating in this study.

Benefits to society include reputable church leaders making decisions about the future of Faith Church regarding race relations.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The expected risks from participating in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. The risks involved in this study include the possibility of psychological stress from being asked to discuss racial barriers that exist in churches across the United States and in Faith Church. To reduce risk, I will monitor participants, discontinue the interview if needed, and provide referral information for counseling services.

During the interview process, it should be understood that I am a mandatory reporter. During this study, if I receive information about child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others, I will be required to report it to the appropriate authorities.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential by replacing names with pseudonyms.
- Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus groups or workshop settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a locked drawer. After five years, all electronic records will be deleted, and all hardcopy records will be shredded.
- Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer until participants have reviewed and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and then deleted. The researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is the researcher in a position of authority over participants, or does the researcher have a financial conflict of interest?

The researcher serves as a pastor at Faith Church. To limit potential or perceived conflicts, data collection will be anonymous, so the researcher will not know who participated. This disclosure lets you decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate or not participate in this study.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or Faith Church. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher using the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Leroy Childress. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, [REDACTED].

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the IRB. Our physical address is Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515; our phone number is 434-592-5530, and our email address is irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

APPENDIX D
RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Elder,

As a graduate student in the Rawlings School of Divinity at Liberty University I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree. The title of my research project is Aiding a Reformed Church into a Multiethnic and Economically Diverse Congregation, and the purpose of my research is to understand the desire or need for becoming a multiethnic and economically diverse church. This study is determining the desire, possibility, and steps that would be necessary if the leadership team of Faith Church decided to pursue such diversity. This is exciting, and I am writing to invite you to join my study.

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be in a leadership role at Faith Church, e.g., elder, pastor, deacon, on a leadership team, or an ethnic-minority stakeholder. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

1. The first task is to participate in taking a 5-minute survey that will be emailed to you.
2. The second task is to fill out a questionnaire that will take about 15 to 20 minutes that will be emailed to you.
3. The third task is to participate in an audio-recorded interview that will take approximately 15 minutes.
4. The fourth task is conditional, meaning it will only happen if most participants desire to continue the study after interviews. If the participants desire to move forward, you will be asked to participate in an educational training workshop with all of them. This workshop will last 8 hours. Depending on the consensus of the group of participants, it can be a one-day session or broken into three days of mini-sessions.

Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but participant identities will not be disclosed.

To participate, please click [here](#) to complete the attached survey and return it by email contact me at [REDACTED] to schedule an interview.

A consent document is provided as the first page of the survey and is also attached to this email. The consent document contains additional information about my research. If you choose to participate, you will need to sign the consent document and return it to me with the submission of the survey, or if you do not participate in the questionnaire, submit it at the time of the interview/focus group.

Sincerely,
Leroy Childress
Pastor & Doctoral Candidate
[REDACTED]

APPENDIX E

MULTIETHNIC SURVEY

1. There has not been an intentional focus on bringing racial diversity to FC.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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2. Faith Church values the lives of ethnically diverse people, for there is evidence that it does.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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3. Faith Church has significant and essential core values outside the realm of race.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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4. One of the core values of Faith Church has not been the continual pursuit of those who are ethnically different to be pursued, welcomed, embraced, and empowered for membership, volunteerism, and leadership.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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5. I do not believe Faith Church has restricted minorities from membership and leadership simply because of being a minority.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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6. Faith Church sees value in worshiping in a racially diverse setting. A setting that FC has actively tried to create.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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7. I think about race and culture when I attend Faith Church.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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8. I would personally like to see more ethnic diversity in worship services.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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9. I could articulate the difference between accepting, assimilating, and accommodating people who are different ethnically and economically.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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10. I would be happy if Faith Church could learn how to be more ethnically and economically diverse and then move intentionally forward in pursuing this goal.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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11. I would happily help Faith Church become more ethnically diverse.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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12. Race and ethnicity have no business in the church. The church is better when it remains segregated.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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13. I have thought about the potential beauty of living a Revelation 7:9-10 on earth before going to heaven.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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APPENDIX F

MULTIETHNIC QUESTIONNAIRE

The senior pastor expressed that he would like to see each Faith Church location represent the community's diversity in percentages. Given that statement, please answer the following questions of reflection based on your thoughts, experiences, and personal beliefs.

1. Why is the church not currently representing that diversity?
2. Why now? It is excellent to pursue this now, but what stopped it from being a focal point in previous years?
3. Part of the perception in 2002 when Faith left the racially changing community of South Holland was that they were leaving because of "White Flight." In your mind, was there some, even if only a little bit of truth to that notion?
4. How do you feel the RCA denomination has done over the years in its pursuit of intentional racial diversity globally and at the local church level?
5. Has FC ever had a sense of pride (in a good way) of being Dutch?
6. During the Civil Rights Era, what stances did the RCA take for or against segregation? What about FC?
7. In the history of Faith Church (FC), have any undertones of exclusivity existed?
8. If the Lord brought an equal number of minorities as there are majorities to FC this week to stay, would the majority be excited, uncomfortable, consider leaving, or feel that "their church" was in jeopardy?
9. How would FC respond to seeing more minorities in leadership?
10. If minorities were to become more prevalent, would they be allowed to be who they culturally are, or would there be a desire for them to embrace/adopt the worship styles of the majority?

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ETHNIC-MINORITY STAKEHOLDERS

1. What are your thoughts about Faith Church pursuing a multiethnic and economic diversity culture?
2. In your experience at Faith, do you feel:
 - a. Accepted – Meaning, do you feel like leadership and the people of the church welcome you with open arms and get excited that you come?
 - b. Assimilated – Meaning, do you feel that the leadership and the people of the church allow you to use your gifts to serve in various capacities? Have you been asked to participate?
 - c. Accommodated – Meaning do you feel like the leadership provides vibrant ways for you to express your worship in the culture that represents you?
3. Why did you choose to attend and be a part of a church in which you are an ethnic minority?
4. What steps do you feel are necessary for the church to succeed in becoming multiethnic and economically diverse?
5. How do you believe the ethnic majority and ethnic minority of current congregants will respond and react if diversity integration becomes a reality?
6. How do you see yourself personally investing the time and effort to help FC become multiethnic and economically diverse? Will you stay and help, or do you see yourself leaving the church?
7. Would you attend an educational phase of this research project that taught best practices and the next steps in preparing to be multiethnic and economically diverse? (If yes, would you prefer it to be an eight-hour one-day session or three days three-hour sessions?)

APPENDIX H

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What are your thoughts about Faith Church pursuing a multiethnic and economic diverse culture?
2. In your opinion, why don't you think Faith Church pursued it sooner?
3. What reservations, if any, do you have for pursuing multiethnic and economic diversity in the church at this time?
4. What steps do you feel are necessary for the church to succeed in becoming multiethnic and economically diverse?
5. How do you believe the ethnic majority and ethnic minority of current congregants will respond and react if diversity integration becomes a reality?
6. How do you see yourself personally investing the time and effort to help FC become multiethnic and economically diverse? Will you stay and help, or do you see yourself stepping away from the church?
7. Would you attend an educational phase of this research project that taught best practices and the next steps in preparing to be multiethnic and economically diverse? (If yes, would you prefer it to be an eight-hour one-day session or three days three-hour sessions?)

APPENDIX I
SESSION ONE TRAINING MATERIAL

Overview

Why We Are Here

Leaders United

Self-Reflection

Build Trust

Develop People

Communication

Biblical Foundations

Proverbs 13:17

Proverbs 25:13

Ephesians 6:14-15

Ephesians 4:29

Why it is Important

What Prevents It

Debate

Polite Discussion

Skilled Discussion

Dialogue

Ladder of Inference

Describe It

Play Video

Get in Groups to Discuss Scenario

Blind and Outnumbered

Describe It

Play Video

Blinded to Adversaries

Identify what is pulling against multiethnic and economic diversity success
Getting Adversaries to Become Alliances

Teaching Manual

Note: If the workshop is done in four separate sessions, session one can be maximized to its potential at 100 120 minutes by giving more time for group discussions. However, if the workshop is done in one day, session one should last 75 to 95 minutes.

Be prepared and know your content. You should plan to spend two to three times more preparation than presentation. Be well enough prepared that if you encounter a technology issue, you can improvise without a problem.

Notice the participants' energy level. Blend teaching with interactive engagement. If it appears your group needs a break, give them one.

Open in Prayer

Why We Are Here (10 Minutes)

Explain the importance and purpose of the gathering. (7 Minutes)

Give the stated goal of the Senior Pastor

Give a clear view of where we are currently in diversity

Using demographic statistics and one personal story that captures the experience of an ethnic person who did not return due to a lack of acceptance.

Ethnic breakdown: Dyer, of the 1430 attendees, respectively, should experience 37.18 Asians, 36.6 Blacks, 77.21 Hispanics, and 25.16 Others. Highland, of the 634 attendees, respectively, should experience 12.42 Asians, 27.51 Blacks, 90.02 Hispanics, and 10.33 Others.

Economic breakdown: Dyer has 7.6% of the population in the lower bracket, with 3.2% in poverty. Highland has 14% of the population in the lower bracket, with 3.2% in poverty.

Explain the intended goals for the workshop.

Describe the purpose of your presentation: to report on what you learned, to facilitate others' learning, to engage your participants in a discussion, and to challenge them to consider significant changes.

This workshop will include:

Team learning

Personal assessments

Ministry reflection

Beginning the journey

Set expectations and Ground Rules (3 Minutes)

Respect, confidentiality, housekeeping, snacks, breaks, schedule, contribution expectations,

Leaders United (5 Minutes)

Self Reflection

Build Trust

Develop People

Communication (45 Minutes)

Biblical Foundations (10 Minutes)

(Divide the people into four groups and assign each Group One verse. Each group gets 3 minutes to discuss and produce a response to the following question. What does this passage suggest about the nature and importance of constructive communication in our relationships? Have one spokesperson share the group's consensus in under a minute. The facilitator should summarize all that has been said.)

Proverbs 13:17

Proverbs 25:13

Ephesians 6:14-15

Ephesians 4:29

Types of Approaches (2 Minutes)

Debate, Polite Discussion, Skilled Discussion, Dialogue

Why it is Important (5 Minutes)

(Ask this question and allow for feedback. Have a scribe capture keywords on a whiteboard or flipchart.)

What Prevents It (5 Minutes)

(Ask this question and allow for feedback. Have a scribe capture keywords on a whiteboard or flipchart.)

Ladder of Inference (20 Minutes)

Describe it (2:00 Minutes)

Play Video (5:30 Minutes)

Play the Ladder of Inference video by using the link. Be ready to summarize the video in case you have technical difficulties.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJLqOclPqis>

Get in Groups to Discuss Scenarios (10 Minutes)

Create your own or share the following scenario, and then divide the people into two groups. One group will identify steps going up the ladder with the worst intention- in other words, the person has no excuse. The other group will identify steps that have the best intentions; in other words, the person's actions are legitimate. Have the groups discuss each potential action step on the ladder. After some time, have one participant from each group share the group's responses.

Scenario: Imagine an ethnic minority walking into the church on a Sunday morning and bumping into a hospitality team member on his way in. Without saying excuse me, he continues his way into the sanctuary and sits down in the back. After looking at his phone for a few moments, he grunts, gets up, and leaves.

Possible answers (worst intentions - no excuse):

I select data: He is on his phone instead of paying attention.

I add meanings: He does not care about the people around him

I make assumptions: He does not care because he does not think that people who do not look like him should be in his way.

I draw conclusions: He must not have known the majority ethnic group of this church.

I adopt beliefs: I need to start being guarded towards ethnic people who differ from me because they may not respect my space and run me over without caring.

I take action based on my beliefs: I share with others my new beliefs that ethnic minorities are selfish and will knock you over if you get in their way.

Possible answers (best intentions - legitimate):

I select data: He is on his phone instead of paying attention.

I add meanings: His wife is fighting cancer, and he was getting updates.

I make assumptions: He will need the church's support as he has to make major choices about her extended care.

I draw conclusions: He may need to know of the care services and meal train support at the church.

I adopt beliefs: I need to be on the lookout for him to see if I can connect with him.

I take action based on my beliefs: I ask others if they have his contact information and try to establish contact.

Summarize any insights as appropriate (3 Minutes)

Blind and Outnumbered (52 Minutes)

Illustration (7 Minutes)

Set this session up by having a tug-of-war rope on the ground and selecting one person as your example. This should be one of the smaller people in the group. Tell the entire group you could get your chosen participant to out-pull anybody else in the room with some coaching. Select three individuals of more significant sizes who can compete against your chosen participant one at a time. Let all participants know that they will be blindfolded during the pull. Have the two non pulling contenders step into the hallway and ensure they cannot watch the first contestant pull. Tell the chosen participant to trust you, believe in themselves, and pull with all their might while visualizing what it could look like to win. Blindfold both participants, place the rope in their hands and give them some safety measures (such as not letting go of the rope during the pull). Once both participants are ready to pull, motion for three or four additional group members to silently come and grab the rope towards the middle and help pull in the direction of your chosen participant. After the pull is complete, have the additional helpers quietly sit back down before removing the blindfold of the first contender. Ask the contender what they think happened that caused them to lose

so badly to someone half their size. Bring in the next contender and let the first contender watch what happened while motioning them to be quiet. After the remaining contestants have their opportunity to pull, have a time of debriefing.

Discussion Questions (7 Minutes)

Tell participants to take a minute or two to answer the following questions.

Why is it often difficult to follow through on change, even when we believe we need it?

What affects the success of a change effort?

Offer that initiating and sustaining change most likely happens when a particular stage of readiness is engaged. That stage of preparedness can be called preparing for action. Then, share a personal story of successful change.

Summarize that willpower may not be enough to make change because change is difficult.

Stages of change (7 Minutes)

Pre-contemplation: unwilling to change. May think it is something negative. May not be able to see its need.

Contemplation: It's possible that there should be more thought about it. Perhaps there is a problem. Thinking about it, but no action.

Preparation: something needs to be done. Where do I begin? Intending to take an action step imminently.

Action: walking before running, but at least there is progress. This is not done alone, but we are succeeding as a team—new behaviors and environment. Much time and energy is spent here.

Setbacks: Aww, man! The problem was almost solved; we needed to dust ourselves off and restart.

Maintenance: Confidence in the success, but staying focused and aware while continually learning and taking steps to prevent relapse.

Trust the process: Identify, equip, mobilize, then support.

Ask: Is God concerned about the diversity gap in His church? What is His plan?

Play the video Blind and Outnumbered (7 Minutes)

Play the Blind and Outnumbered video by using the link. Be ready to summarize the video in case you have technical difficulties.

<https://vimeo.com/41101790/465758f835>

Blinded to Adversaries (12 Minutes)

Break participants into three groups and give them 8 minutes to discuss the potential adversaries that would be pulling against becoming a multiethnic and economically diverse movement of Faith Church. Have each group send a representative to share highlights from the group. Have a scribe capture critical comments on a whiteboard or flip chart.

Getting Adversaries to Become Alliances (12 Minutes)

Break participants into three groups and give them 8 minutes to discuss the potential of turning adversaries into allies for becoming a multiethnic and economically diverse movement of Faith Church. Have each group send a representative to share highlights from the group. Have a scribe capture critical comments on a whiteboard or flip chart.

Time of Prayer

APPENDIX J
SESSION TWO TRAINING MATERIAL
Redacted

APPENDIX K
SESSION THREE TRAINING MATERIAL
Redacted

APPENDIX L
SESSION FOUR TRAINING MATERIAL
Redacted

APPENDIX M
MULTIETHNIC SURVEY

1. I feel I better understand the multiethnic and economically diverse church mentality.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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2. I have grown in my willingness to pursue the church being multiethnic and economic diversity with intentionality.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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3. I feel confident that Faith Church Highland can accomplish this in the near future.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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4. I desire the multiethnic and economically diverse populations to be assimilated and accommodated along with being accepted.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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5. I want to help Faith Church Highland become multiethnic and economically diverse.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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6. Faith Church Highland should not pursue multiethnic and economic diversity any further.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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7. Faith Church Highland should create a core value of intentionally pursuing economic and multiethnic diversity.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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8. I may have been blinded to the restrictions and obstacles multiethnic people have had and do have at connecting to Faith Church Highland.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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9. Faith Church Highland could actively pursue racial diversity and inclusion in its worship service.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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10. I'm getting excited about Revelation 7 being experienced and lived out on earth and at Faith Church Highland.

5: Strongly Agree	4. Agree	3. Undecided	2. Disagree	1. Strongly Disagree
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APPENDIX N

EXIT SURVEY

Directions

Using the scales on the next few pages, enter two ratings of your understanding and performance on each of the Core Values and Breakthrough Skills.

1. First, rate yourself on where you think you were at the beginning of the Multiethnic Workshop Training.
2. Then, rate where you are now.
3. Be honest in how well you have integrated what you have learned into your life and ministry.

After completing your ratings, make an entry in your journal by answering these questions:

4. Where have you grown, and where do you still need to grow?
5. In what areas of your personal life and ministry are you doing well in applying the Core Values and Breakthrough Skills?
6. What challenges do you still face?
7. Provide examples of each, along with ideas you have for making improvements or building in success.

Accountability – effective leaders regularly seek feedback and guidance from trusted sources.

Beginning Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5
	Poor	Fair	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
Current Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5

Empowerment – effective leaders recognize the importance of bringing out the best in others.

Beginning Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5
	Poor	Fair	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
Current Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5

Interdependence – effective leaders are strong collaborators, aware of the rich resources present in their organizations and communities.

Beginning Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5
	Poor	Fair	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
Current Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5

Leverage – effective leaders know how to use the positive potential of change, knowing that seemingly small actions can have significant impact.

Beginning Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5
	Poor	Fair	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
Current Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5

Healthy Change – effective leaders understand the importance of creating healthy change, which means balancing the demands of organizational change with the transition needs of individuals as they implement change.

Beginning Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5
	Poor	Fair	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
Current Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5

Systems Thinking – effective leaders see the bigger picture and find ways to solve interconnected problems at a systems level, rather than reacting to isolated events.

Beginning Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5
	Poor	Fair	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
Current Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5

Scenario Planning – effective leaders recognize the importance of preparing for the future, especially in times of turbulent change and significant unknowns.

Beginning Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5
	Poor	Fair	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
Current Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5

Collaboration – effective leaders are committed collaborators, who recognize that the ability to work together productively with other like-minded people can produce results that are clearly more than just the sum of the parts.

Beginning Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5
	Poor	Fair	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
Current Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5

Self-Assessment, Feedback and Communication – effective leaders know how to give and receive feedback.

Beginning Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5
	Poor	Fair	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
Current Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5

Biblical Rationale – understanding how Scripture points to ethnic inclusion.

Beginning Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5
	Poor	Fair	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
Current Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5

Reality of Past and Present – understanding the historical narrative and how it is currently impacting the church.

Beginning Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5
	Poor	Fair	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
Current Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5

Glancing Ahead – understanding key components for fostering multiethnic and economic diversity.

Beginning Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5
	Poor	Fair	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
Current Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5

Ambition – your breakthrough plan has you excited to strategically push into aiding Faith Church into being multiethnic and economically diverse.

Beginning Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5
	Poor	Fair	Acceptable	Good	Excellent
Current Rating: (circle one)	1	2	3	4	5

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IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

April 18, 2024

Leroy Childress
Richard McGee

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY23-24-1679 Aiding a Reformed Church into a Multiethnic and Economically Diverse Congregation

Dear Leroy Childress and Richard McGee,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds that your study does not meet the definition of human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study/project is not considered human subjects research because

(1) it will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46. 102(l).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application. Any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

For a PDF of your IRB letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study Details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. **If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.**

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

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office