

2-1-2017

Making the World a Better Place: The Praxis of Christian Community Development as a Church Planting and Multiplication Strategy in Urban Poor Communities in the United States

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Recommended Citation

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE: THE PRAXIS OF CHRISTIAN
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AS A CHURCH PLANTING AND
MULTIPLICATION STRATEGY IN URBAN POOR COMMUNITIES
IN THE UNITED STATES

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY IN LEADERSHIP AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

BY

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PORTLAND, OREGON

FEBRUARY 2017

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

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The Scripture quotations contained herein are taken from the New International Version, unless otherwise indicated.

How we attend to our ideas, questions, and relationships will be the greatest determiner of our lives.

- Dr. Caroline Ramsey

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ABSTRACT

The topic of this dissertation centers on church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities in the United States. The ministry problem being addressed is the fact that The Wesleyan Church denomination does not have a strategy for church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities. In Section One, the complexity of this problem will be explored by: first, considering The Wesleyan Church's predominantly rural-based, white-evangelical past; second, considering the effects of urbanization and globalization, which have created an increasingly urban, multiethnic, and socioeconomically divided mission field in the United States; and last, gaining a deeper understanding of systemic racism and poverty and the white-evangelical church's contribution to creating and embedding these injustices in American society. Section Two will introduce other possible solutions by exploring current, popular church planting and multiplication approaches being used across the United States. This section will be broken into four parts: Theory and Theology, Church Planting Models, Denominational Approaches, and Focused Networks. In Section Three, the thesis of this dissertation will be developed, exploring the praxis of Christian community development as a church planting and multiplication strategy for The Wesleyan Church within urban poor communities across the United States. This section will introduce the vision and mission of the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) by describing the origin and development of the CCDA, exploring the five dimensions of a holistic gospel and the eight components of the CCDA philosophy, and lastly developing a potential model that could be considered as a church planting and multiplication strategy for The Wesleyan Church in urban poor communities. Finally, Sections Four through Six describe and

outline the dissertation artifact of a film and website produced to provoke engagement in exploring the praxis of Christian community development as a church planting and multiplication strategy in urban poor communities.

SECTION ONE: THE PROBLEM

The Stories

Broadview Wesleyan Church is located in the village of Broadview, Illinois, just outside the city limits of Chicago. Once a growing white-evangelical Wesleyan church, for the past eight years, Broadview Wesleyan has struggled to survive as the surrounding community has become predominantly African-American and suffers as an urban poor community. Both the church and community of Broadview are marked and marred by systemic racism and poverty.

Westland Community Church, located in Westland, Michigan, a part of the greater metropolitan ring of Detroit, closed its doors in 2011. Westland Community Church was originally located within the city limits of Detroit before relocating in 1968—a part of the white-flight of the day. Westland Community Church had moments of growth after relocating to the then-rural community of Westland, but eventually collapsed as the lives and issues “within the city limits” moved outward among the urban sprawl of the 1990s and early 2000s. Through the effects of such urbanization, compounded by great job loss due to globalization, Westland continues to become an increasingly urban poor community. Similar to Broadview, Westland struggles with the crippling effects of systemic racism and poverty.

Overflow Church is located in Benton Harbor, Michigan. Benton Harbor is also an urban poor community comprised of an 89% African American population with one of

the highest rates of poverty in the United States.¹ The persons and community of Benton Harbor struggle as a result of systemic racism and poverty in America. Overflow Church was started in 2008 through the best practices of church planting and Christian community development. Until Overflow was planted, The Wesleyan Church did not have a church located in Benton Harbor.

While each of these three stories represent separate churches and communities, they collectively represent a face of church planting and multiplication in The Wesleyan Church denomination in urban poor communities across the United States. In the few urban poor communities where there are Wesleyan churches, they are struggling and closing; and in most urban poor communities, where the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized reside, a Wesleyan church does not currently exist.

The Problem

The topic of this dissertation centers on church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities in the United States. The ministry problem being addressed is the fact that The Wesleyan Church denomination does not have a strategy for church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities. The complexity of this problem stems from three primary factors. First, The Wesleyan Church's past is predominantly a rural-based, white-evangelical denomination.² Secondly, with the reality of urbanization and globalization, the mission field of the United States continues to become increasingly

¹ Thomas C. Frohlich and Alexander E.M. Hess, "America's Poorest Cities," *24/7 Wall St* (blog), October 15, 2014, accessed June 27, 2016, <http://247wallst.com/special-report/2014/10/15/americas-poorest-cities-2/>.

² Jon Wiest, Kyle Ray, and Wayne Schmidt, "A Wesleyan View On Racial Reconciliation" (a positional paper for The Wesleyan Church, Indianapolis, IN, August 22, 2013), accessed September 1, 2016, <https://www.wesleyan.org/748/a-wesleyan-view-of-racial-reconciliation>.

urban, multiethnic, and socioeconomically divided.³ And lastly, systemic racism and poverty are the predominant issues of injustice in urban poor communities.⁴ Therefore, in this section the complexity of The Wesleyan Church lacking a strategy for church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities across the United States will be explored.

A Rural Based, White-Evangelical Past

The Wesleyan Church is a rural based, white-evangelical denomination. The Wesleyan Church is aware of the call to the urban poor, but ultimately lacks a strategy to equip, empower, and mobilize as a denomination. Urban Urgency has been the most recent attempt by The Wesleyan Church to call the denomination to reach urban poor communities. Urban Urgency was an initiative started in 2006 with a vision for urban evangelism and church planting. A fund, known as the Hope & Holiness Fund, was established to generate resources for the special projects developed through Urban Urgency. As stated on the web page, “Hope & Holiness projects for Urban Urgency empower Wesleyans to minister effectively to lost people in the urban centers of North America by establishing new churches that impact the community through compassionate service.”⁵ While numerous Urban Urgency projects experienced strong success, the broad scope for the vision of Urban Urgency lacked a strategy for sustainability. The Hope & Holiness Fund has since been depleted and Urban Urgency no longer exists as a

³ Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 12.

⁴ Peter Drier, “The Struggle for Our Cities,” Planners Network - The Organization of Progressive Planning, accessed June 27, 2016, <http://www.plannersnetwork.org/magazine-publications/case-studies-and-working-papers/the-struggle-for-our-cities-putting-the-urban-crisis-on-the-national-agenda/>.

⁵ “Give through Hope and Holiness,” The Wesleyan Church, accessed July 2, 2016, <https://www.wesleyan.org/737/give-through-hope-holiness>.

prevailing initiative. Urban Urgency did help with the call and vision to reach urban poor communities, but because of the lack of a holistic understanding of the complexity of the issues of the urban context, The Wesleyan Church is reassessing its approach and strategy for reaching urban poor communities.

One of the major influences informing The Wesleyan Church as it reassesses its approach to reaching urban poor communities is the positional paper of The Wesleyan Church denomination entitled, “A Wesleyan View of Racial Reconciliation.” This paper provides a way for The Wesleyan Church to look at its past as it prepares to move into the future. The complexity of developing a strategy for church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities becomes quite apparent as this paper probes the denomination’s history of racial reconciliation.

The positional paper explores the shortcomings in the lack of racial diversity throughout the denomination when the mission field of the U.S. has become an increasingly multiethnic society. From the book *Divided by Faith*, the paper identifies The Wesleyan Church, similar to the white-evangelical culture in America, as an institution that is perpetuating and preserving racism in America. Statistically supported, “The Wesleyan Church has been unable to reach, connect, and integrate with African-Americans in meaningful and sustainable ways.”⁶

The paper continues with a review of the biblical beliefs, theological foundations, and social stances of The Wesleyan Church, concluding with the view and conviction that “Racism is not simply one sin among many, but rather a radical evil that divides the

⁶ Wiest, Ray, and Schmidt.

Church and humanity, corrupts institutions and undercuts the new creation of a redeemed world.”⁷

The Wesleyan roots and passion founded in the fight against slavery and the abolitionist movement somehow dissipated by the late eighteenth century as the denomination began to focus on personal holiness, no longer concerned for social holiness. By the time of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s:

The Wesleyan Church had altogether lost the spirit of its abolitionist heritage and at times even found itself on the wrong end of the movement. A study of the district journals of The Wesleyan Church in the 1960s shows either indifference or even opposition to the Civil Rights Movement and a glaring absence of any stance on racial reconciliation.⁸

While this conclusion has led to collective repentance, the current lack of diversity reflects serious shortcomings in racial reconciliation and indicates a lack of reaching the existing mission field of urban poor communities across the United States. The paper states:

With over 60% of the African-American population now living in urban centers and with a majority of Wesleyan churches established in rural areas or suburbs, there are geographical challenges to meaningful integration. Complicating the issue is the structural evil that has been left in the wake of racism and slavery. This has manifested itself in the persistent residential segregation that often isolates African-Americans and whites and concentrates poverty and social problems in African-American neighborhoods.⁹

A heightened acknowledgement, understanding, and reconciliation of the injustice of systemic racism continues as a requisite for The Wesleyan Church.

Beyond the reality of systemic racism, there exists the major issue of its resulting poverty. Ray, Schmidt, and Wiest write,

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Economic inequality is also a significant issue that has been well documented. According to data from the US Census Bureau in 2010, the median net worth (all assets minus all debts) among whites is \$43,800 and among African-Americans the figure drops drastically to only \$3,700. In fact, in the past 25 years, this disparity has quadrupled proving that these issues will not simply go away over time. Beyond the above issues, there also exists a racial divide with respect to lack of integrated social networks, access to health care, television viewing habits, music and worship preferences. This last point is verified by the fact that the seven major black denominations account for more than 80% of African-American religious affiliation in the United States with the other 15-20% scattered among the Roman Catholic Church and mainline denominations.¹⁰

The Wesleyan Church's story of racial reconciliation quickly surfaces the complexity of a rural-based, white-evangelical past colliding with an urban, multiethnic culture where race relations are tense and the economics look to be far from equitable or just. While efforts such as Urban Urgency have not been as successful as desired, The Wesleyan Church continues to declare the need for a strategy. The paper concludes:

Finally, at the district and denomination level, the leaders of The Wesleyan Church are responsible for responding to our growing multiethnic society and providing leadership with regards to race relations. By drawing on the best aspects of our history as a movement when it comes to fighting for reconciliation, The Wesleyan Church can reclaim its role as a pioneer for social righteousness as it addresses many of the social inequalities mentioned earlier in this paper. There should also be a targeted effort to plant churches in urban centers and offer strategies, tools and resources to better integrate those churches with whites and African-Americans.¹¹

Although The Wesleyan Church desires to reach urban poor communities, it is currently ill-equipped to do so, in great part due to its rural based, white-evangelical past.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

The Effects of Urbanization and Globalization

The Urban Poor

Juxtaposing the rural-based, white-evangelical past of The Wesleyan Church sits the reality of urban poor communities in the United States of America. It is this contrasting position that is a significant share of the problem for The Wesleyan Church, and much of the white-evangelical church as a whole, when desiring to join God's work in urban poor communities. As conveyed in the *Lausanne Occasional Paper on Christian Witness to the Urban Poor*, "Despite the universal and growing presence of urban poor people in the world and the biblical mandate compelling concern for the poor, there is often a great gulf between the church and the poor."¹²

As much as the current social, religious, and political climate in the U.S. presents the opportunity, there is notable risk involving the white-evangelical church's ability to adequately serve and be a part of addressing the real issues facing urban poor communities. Scott Eugene writes in *Evangelizing in the Inner City: The Role of White Evangelical Churches in Urban Renewal*, "The church as a whole is trapped in an ignorance about the urban poor, the causes and consequences of their poverty, and the extent and gravity of our complicity in it."¹³

Stephen Mattson, in his article "Urban Legends," writes, "Mission agencies (and churches and denominations) need to understand, then help to educate and communicate that the world is increasingly urban and that our contemporary response to mission needs

¹² Jim Punton and Colin Marchant, "Christian Witness to the Urban Poor" (Lausanne Occasional Paper 22 drafted by MiniConsultation of Reaching the Urban Poor, Pattaya, Thailand, June 16-27, 1980), accessed June 27, 2016, <https://www.lausanne.org/content/lop/lop-22>.

¹³ Eugene Scott, "Evangelizing in the Inner City: The Role of White Evangelical Churches in Urban Renewal," *Kennedy School Review* 15 (2015): 23, accessed June 15, 2016, *Academic OneFile*.

to adjust as a consequence.”¹⁴ Far too often, many churches and denominations employ a rural mission paradigm when approaching the urban context. A response is needed, but it must be an informed, educated, and intentional response. Because of its rural-based, white-evangelical past, The Wesleyan Church is predominantly equipped with such a rural mission background and sits challenged to become educated, equipped, and mobilized for the urban poor context.

The Urban, Multiethnic, and Socioeconomically Divided Reality

The ever-changing face of the United States is greatly reflected in the history of urbanization and globalization. From the urban growth and development created by the industrial boom and the great concentration of mass populations in city centers, to the economic splintering of much of the manufacturing industry due to globalization, the development of the urban, multiethnic, and socioeconomically divided reality becomes apparent, as do the ways it creates urban poor communities in the United States.¹⁵

As Edwin Gaustad and Leigh Schmidt write in their text *The Religious History of America*, “The face of the United States altered radically between 1850 and 1900. Two forces especially drove that alteration: first, the massive growth of cities; second the increasing industrialization of the economy and the workplace epitomized in the mushrooming of factories.”¹⁶ An example of this type of growth was identified by Gaustad and Schmidt who report, “By 1900 Chicago had become the nation’s second

¹⁴ Stephen Mattson, “Urban Legends,” Sojourners, March 15, 2013, accessed June 27, 2016, <https://sojo.net/articles/urban-legends-rethinking-inner-city-ministry>.

¹⁵ Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 12.

¹⁶ Edwin S. Gaustad and Leigh Eric Schmidt, *The Religious History of America*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), 231.

largest city; it had grown from a mere 29,963 people in 1850 to 1.7 million at the end of the century.”¹⁷ This was not unique to Chicago; Detroit, Minneapolis, Indianapolis, Cleveland, Kansas City, Denver, and Omaha also rapidly expanded in this era. While the density of these urban centers radically increased through the growth, so did the diversity.

As evidenced by Nancy Koester in her book *Fortress Introduction to the History of Christianity in the United States*, the growth was dynamic in the U.S. and the diversity of the consolidation in cities was stunning. According to Koester, “Twenty-five million immigrants came to the United States in the years between the Civil War and the First World War.”¹⁸ In addition to the great volume of primarily southern and eastern Europeans, the Great Migration of African-Americans took place, with more than six million lives moving from the agricultural South to the industrial boom of the Northeast and Midwest. The diversity within the increasingly dense cities created a true melting pot of religious, ethnic, and cultural groups from views, values, and beliefs far and wide. The sheer volume of humanity being consolidated could not help but create incredible personal and social pressure.

It was this type of explosive growth of density and diversity that gave rise to a multitude of urban centers across the U.S., creating a massive concentration of social issues and tensions. As Gaustad and Schmidt continue,

Such transformations, hallmarks of modern order, were made rough, even jagged, by mounting antagonism between capitalist owners and wage laborers and by profound cultural ambivalence toward both the urbanization and industrialization. Symptoms of social stress came in the form of strikes, financial panics, riots, slums, sweatshops, poverty, bribery and graft. Rural America, Jefferson’s land of

¹⁷ Ibid. 231.

¹⁸ Nancy Koester, *Fortress Introduction to the History of Christianity in the United States* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 101.

the yeoman farmer, was rapidly disappearing. Many were uneasy about its passing and quite unsure about its successors, the modern city and the factory system.¹⁹

The Wesleyan Church, by nature of its past, would vividly identify with Jefferson's land and the uneasiness being created with the shifting of America.

While this initial urban boom in the United States began in the mid- to late nineteenth century and took place until the early to mid-twentieth century, as Radhika K. Fox and Sarah Treuhaft write in their report *Shared Prosperity, Stronger Regions*, the added effects of globalization would soon compound the greatest tensions, ills, and issues of the amassing of populations into city centers. They write,

Older core cities were once thriving economic centers and major destinations for people seeking economic opportunities. Over the past several decades, complex economic transformations and shifting metropolitan development patterns have eroded the economies of these cities, hastened neighborhood decline, and widened racial and income disparities between cities and suburbs.²⁰

While many of the shifts in patterns of development were created by local and domestic influences, globalization was and is a profound influence affecting the prevailing picture.

Fox and Treuhaft go on to explain,

Over the past several decades, the economic base of the United States has shifted profoundly from one fueled by manufacturing and industrial development to one increasingly driven by services, finance, and technology. The information technology revolution has facilitated this shift, transforming traditional industries and giving rise to new enterprises in high-tech, knowledge-based sectors such as biotechnology. With the rapid globalization of production, firms have spread their operations across the world map, often moving their production facilities to developing countries with the lowest labor costs.²¹

¹⁹ Gaustad and Schmidt, 231.

²⁰ Radhika K. Fox and Sarah Treuhaft, *Shared Prosperity, Stronger Regions: An Agenda for Rebuilding America's Older Core Cities* (New York: PolicyLink, 2006), accessed December 4, 2016, <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/about/conplan/pdf/sharedprosperity.pdf>, 10.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

Urbanization and globalization have not only consolidated great masses of diversity in urban centers but have directly been a part of creating the socioeconomic disparity that exists in these locations. The condition of lives and communities left behind as manufacturing and industrial development shifted to the global scene compounded the socioeconomic divides being created. As captured by the Lausanne Occasional Paper on *Christian Witness to the Urban Poor*,

In North America, one estimate indicates that 40/45 million Americans are within the ranks of the urban poor. Black people in the city centres, driven northwards by the revolution in Southern agriculture and lack of work opportunities, face discrimination and live in frustration. Migrant Hispanics suffer all the disadvantages of the black population with the added problem of language. Native Indians live alongside the undocumented aliens seeking anonymity, the abandoned elderly, the incoming refugees (from Laos, Kampuchea, Vietnam, Haiti, and Cuba) and the transients (alcoholics, single men, and seasonal workers). The lack of jobs, the collapse of the low-rent housing market and the cutback of public welfare services lead to a culture of despair.²²

A composite snapshot of the current urban, multiethnic, and socioeconomically divided reality in the United States is noted by the fact that 82% of Americans live in urban centers²³ (roughly 260 million of 320 million). In 2015, there was no ethnic or racial majority for children under the age of five²⁴ and current estimates project by 2055 there will be no ethnic or racial majority in the whole of the United States population.²⁵ Giving evidence of the socioeconomic division, the poverty rate in the urban context is

²² Puntun and Marchant.

²³ “The World Bank,” accessed December 12, 2016, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS>.

²⁴ Sarah Jo Peterson, “American Demography 2030: Bursting with Diversity, yet a Baby Bust,” *Urban Land*, January 15, 2015, accessed December 12, 2016, <http://urbanland.uli.org/industry-sectors/american-demography-bursting-diversity-yet-baby-bust/>.

²⁵ D’Vera Cohn and Andrea Caumont, “10 Demographic Trends That Are Shaping the U.S. and the World,” Pew Research Center, March 31 2016, accessed December 12, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/31/10-demographic-trends-that-are-shaping-the-u-s-and-the-world/>.

20%, most adversely effecting ethnic minorities, with blacks experiencing a poverty rate of 27.2% and Hispanics 25.6%, while non-Hispanic whites experience a rate of 9.7%.²⁶

Such a snapshot reveals the complexity of combining the urban, multiethnic and socioeconomically divided context of urban poor communities with The Wesleyan Church's rural-based, white-evangelical past. There is, therefore, a paramount challenge for The Wesleyan Church as they seek to develop a strategy of church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities.

Systemic Racism, Poverty, and The Role of the White-evangelical Church

Systemic Racism

In the seminal book *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem with Race in America*, Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith dissect the relationship between racism in America and the white-evangelical church. Emerson and Smith claim America is a racialized society, defined as “a society wherein race matters profoundly for differences in life experiences, life opportunities, and social relationships.”²⁷ At the heart of their claim is that racism is socially constructed and has been systemically embedded in American society. Emerson and Smith make the case that racism is also embedded in and aided by the white-evangelical church. To comprehend the real issues and complexities of reaching urban poor communities in the United States, it is important to understand how systemic racism and poverty developed in America and the role that the white-evangelical church has played.

²⁶ Austin Nichols, “Poverty in the United States,” Urban Institute, 2013, accessed December 12, 2016, <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/412898-Poverty-in-the-United-States.PDF>.

²⁷ Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001), 7.

In further defining a racialized society, Emerson and Smith quote Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Amanda Lewis: “A racialized society can also be said to be ‘a society that allocates differential economic, political, social and even psychological rewards to groups along racial lines; lines that are socially constructed.’”²⁸ The research of Emerson and Smith gives clear evidence that race in America statistically matters when it comes to marriage, neighborhoods, housing, education, criminal justice, boardrooms, unemployment, income, wealth, health, death, television viewing habits, entertainment, and religious affiliation.²⁹ The racial lines are vivid in each demographic category and uncover an expansive inequality between whites and blacks.

The claim that race is socially constructed is rooted in two main reasons.

First, only certain physical characteristics are used to classify people. Foot size and ear shape are not used by Americans to classify people by race, even though people vary on these physical characteristics. Second, race is socially constructed insofar as selected physical characteristics have social meaning. On meeting someone for the first time, Americans often assume that a white person is middle class or higher. They also often assume that a black person or an American Indian is lower class. They may or may not be correct in their assumption, but race is socially constructed at these points because selected physical characteristics are associated with selected social characteristics.³⁰

To understand the systemic and structural racism claim, the creation of race and its structural and systemic development must be acknowledged. In his work *The Next Evangelicalism: Freeing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*, Soong-Chan Rah outlines the creation of race. Rah reports, “The category of race has no scientific

²⁸ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Amanda Lewis, *The “New Racism”: Toward an Analysis of the U.S. Racial Structure, 1960s-1990s* (n.p.: Unpublished manuscript, 1997), 474, quoted in Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Oxford University Press, 2001), 7.

²⁹ Emerson and Smith, 11-17.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

justification. ... While different theories abound regarding the origins of the category of race, it is largely acknowledged that race is a sociologically created category, rather than a scientifically created one.”³¹ Rah illuminates that race is a social construct a part of Western social history and does not exist in the Bible.³²

Rah continues, explaining, “The category of race was created by American society in an attempt to justify and regulate the social injustice of slavery.”³³ Race became a necessary category to justify one group of people (white) enslaving another group of people (black) for the benefit and advantage of the one (white) to the detriment and oppression of the other (black). With the category of white and black distinguished, sociological values could be developed to attribute to each group. Whether physical, mental, emotional, or even moral, judgments were made based on the selected physical attribute of skin color, which became the inception of creating race. As Rah expounds, “Racism, therefore, ends up creating social values and norms that become the way our culture conducts business.”³⁴ It is the nature of the social construct of race—created, structural, and systemic—that Emerson and Smith claim creates the racialized society in America.

With this understanding of the inception of racialization and the creation of race, many historical lines can be traced that show the systemic development and advancement of racism and racial inequality into American society. In an interview between Michael Stewart and Propaganda, an advocate of and activist for racial justice, one such historical

³¹ Rah, 65.

³² Ibid., 67.

³³ Ibid., 66.

³⁴ Ibid., 68.

line is drawn. Stewart maps out a path of legislation and programs in American history that demonstrate the systemic advantage and discrimination that have taken place along the racial lines. Stewart reports:

From the 1830 Indian Removal Act that forcibly relocated Native Americans for the benefit of whites, to the 1862 Homestead Act that gave away millions of acres of land for free to the benefit of whites, from Jim Crow Laws that benefited whites, from redlining where minorities were excluded from home loans which benefited whites, from immigration laws that benefitted whites, and post World War II subsidies for returning soldiers that were pretty much meant only for whites, white people have benefited from generations and generations of accrued wealth, accrued access, and accrued privilege that as white people we neither acknowledge or decry.³⁵

According to Rah, this structural and systemic process creates white privilege.

“White privilege is the system that places white culture in American society at the center with all other cultures.”³⁶ Within the development of white-privilege, the physical, social, and economic benefits disproportionately grant power to white Americans.

While truly a historical process, urban poor communities in the United States primarily exist today as a result of this systemic sorting, which creates racial and economic segregation in society. Emerson and Smith explain, “Segregation is not merely separation but, in the contemporary United States, is hierarchical. Residential segregation by race, researchers show us, isolates African Americans, and concentrates poverty and social problems in their neighborhoods. This is more evidence of a black-white racialized society.”³⁷

³⁵ Michael Stewart, “Understanding the Problem: Racial Injustice,” YouTube video, 10:21, July 8, 2016, accessed July 28, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p3erYUuvqtk>.

³⁶ Rah, 76.

³⁷ Emerson and Smith, 12.

Poverty

Understanding that in a racialized society, not only are races separated socially through segregation, but economic separation and isolation is a vital dimension to understanding the poverty in many urban poor communities. Emerson and Smith note that understanding this economic inequality is paramount and is what most white evangelicals fail to see and comprehend. Emerson and Smith write:

For white evangelicals, the race problem does not include economic inequality. Although most evangelicals are aware of the inequality, often through the visual images presented by the media, inequality is a separate issue from the race problem. Yet, because racial inequality is central to what is meant by a racialized society, we must explore how white evangelicals explain this reality. How people explain racial inequality shapes how they vote, what policies they support, and the solutions they advocate. The way evangelicals explain racial inequality helps us assess evangelicalism's influence on black-white relations.³⁸

Emerson and Smith describe the way white-evangelicals explain this inequality, which ironically is the source that creates and perpetuates a racialized society. Borrowed from a term developed by sociologist Ann Swidler, Emerson and Smith refer to what they call the “white-evangelical cultural toolkit.” In order to interpret and explain racial inequality, white evangelicals turn to the cultural tools of accountable freewill individualism, relationalism, and antistructuralism.³⁹

Emerson and Smith describe accountable freewill individualism as a belief that every individual has equal opportunity to make their own choices to shape their destiny according to what they believe is divinely right and wrong.⁴⁰ An accountable freewill individualist concludes that racial inequalities exist because of good and bad personal

³⁸ Ibid., 94.

³⁹ Ibid., 76.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 77.

choices. If individuals made better personal choices, their lives and society would become better. To reduce, alleviate, or eliminate social inequalities, the individual must be transformed.

Demonstrating the embedded connection to the white-evangelical church,

Emerson and Smith write:

Contemporary white American evangelicalism is perhaps the strongest carrier of this freewill-individualist tradition. The roots of this individualist tradition run deep, dating back to shortly after the sixteenth-century Reformation, extending to much of the Free Church tradition, flowering in America's frontier awakenings and revivals, and maturing in spiritual pietism and anti-Social Gospel fundamentalism.⁴¹

This individualism connected with relationalism makes for an even stronger hold on the white-evangelical interpretation and even justification of racial inequality. "For evangelicals, relationalism (a strong emphasis on interpersonal relationship) is derived from the view that human nature is fallen and that salvation and Christian maturity can only come through a personal relationship with Christ."⁴² It is this accountable freewill choice of the individual that puts them in right relationship with God and then continues as they make moral choices individually and in their relationships with family, friends, work, and recreation. The white evangelical assumes if you make the right accountable freewill choices individually, you will choose a right relationship with Christ and right relationships with others. Such a choosing pattern by the individual leads to a better society because everyone possesses the equal opportunity to make the right choices and relationships.

⁴¹ Ibid., 77.

⁴² Ibid.

When accountable freewill individualism is coupled with relationalism, it naturally leads to the third component of antistructuralism. Emerson and Smith explain antistructuralism in the following way:

Absent from their [the white-evangelical] accounts is the idea that poor relationships might be shaped by social structures, such as laws, the ways institutions operate, or forms of segregations. Again, understanding evangelicals' cultural tools illuminates why this element [understanding structural and systemic racism] is missing. White evangelicals not only interpret race issues by using accountable freewill individualism and relationalism, but they often find structural explanations irrelevant to or even wrongheaded.⁴³

In the book *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, Lowell Nobel and Ronald Potter share in their chapter entitled "Understanding Poverty" two predominant theories for explaining poverty. Nobel and Potter write:

One theory emphasizes the personal responsibility of those who are poor. Personal dysfunctions are blamed: lack of motivation, laziness, little education, poor family structure, or cultural values that no longer contain a sense of morality. The second theory blames society for poverty—the rich and powerful who control the political and economic institutions discriminate against or exploit the poor; the poor are created by and damaged by oppression.⁴⁴

According to the first theory, economic inequality exists because the poor are ultimately at fault. Defective individuals create a culture of poverty that produces social problems leading to a broken society. Similar to Emerson and Smith's white-evangelical cultural toolkit, the first theory of understanding poverty describes the white-evangelical perspective of individualism, relationalism, and antistructuralism that creates, justifies, and perpetuates a racialized society of racial and economic inequality leading to systemic racism and poverty.

⁴³ Ibid., 78.

⁴⁴ John M. Perkins, *Restoring At-Risk Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 47, iBooks edition.

The White-evangelical Church's Role

Soong-Chan Rah's framework of Western, white cultural captivity demonstrates the tight relationship between systemic racism and poverty in the United States and the white-evangelical church. "For most of its history (but particularly in the last fifty years), American evangelicalism has more accurately reflected the values, culture and ethos of Western, white American culture than the values of Scripture."⁴⁵ Similar to Emerson and Smith's cultural toolkit and Noble and Potters' poverty theory, Rah claims individualism, consumerism, and materialism sit at the center of Western, white culture and have been adopted, embedded, and advanced in and by the white-evangelical church, creating and perpetuating systemic racism and poverty in the United States.

"The American church, in taking its cues from Western, white culture, has placed at the center of its theology and ecclesiology the primacy of the individual."⁴⁶ To Rah, if sin is only personal and a personal issue, then the full brokenness of a fallen world will fail to be realized.

With only an individualized theology as a reference point, American evangelicalism fails to understand the power of corporate sin, especially as it relates to racism. Racism is an individual issue that needs to be resolved by focusing on individual prejudice. But by focusing on individual prejudice, we limit the understanding of racism to strictly a personal issue. As individuals we may feel guilty about an individual act, but we do not feel the debilitating shame of the corporate sin of racism. If I merely have to confront individual prejudice, then I simply right this personal wrong (a prejudiced thought, a racial slur) by doing a positive thing to confront individual prejudice (serving at a soup kitchen, taking the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday off). I don't have to confront the shame of corporate [structural and systemic] racism, which is not so easily undone.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Rah, 20.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 43.

Related to individualism, Rah states the white-evangelical church is held captive by the materialism and consumerism of Western, white culture. “We are captive to the Western, white captivity of the church in our materialistic and consumeristic bend, more accurately reflecting American culture and society than Scripture.”⁴⁸ A consumeristic and materialistic culture and mindset breed a belief that the individual must take in goods and services to have value and add value to society. Rah states, “To be a good American Christian means to be both a good capitalist and a good consumer within that capitalist system.”⁴⁹ This message and belief runs deep into the human identity and fosters power, greed, and exploitation. Rah writes, “Excessive materialism has the power to corrupt a society. Materialism becomes the pursuit of individual gain at the expense of what is best for society as a whole.”⁵⁰ Rah goes on to explain, “Materialism and consumerism reduce people to a commodity. An individual’s worth in society is based upon what assets they bring and what possessions they own.”⁵¹ Rah adds to this detrimental potential, stating:

The succeeding generation of churches has begun to recognize that an affluenza and market-driven church that appeals to the materialistic desires of the individual consumer has resulted in a comfortable church, but not a biblical church. The church’s captivity to materialism has resulted in the unwillingness to confront sins such as economic and racial injustice and has produced consumers of religions rather than followers of Jesus.⁵²

Ultimately, through this cultural entanglement, the individualism, consumerism, and materialism of our culture become an inherent social structure of the church that ends up both accommodating and breeding structural and systemic racism and poverty.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 47.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 49.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 48.

⁵¹ Ibid., 49.

⁵² Ibid., 63.

While the cultural tools and influences of individualism, relationalism, antistructuralism, consumerism, and materialism have deeply impacted the church and its contribution to systemic racism and poverty, John Perkins names two specific factors for the white-evangelical church to consider at the heart of the problem. Perkins names participation in “unbridled capitalism” and “white accommodation” as the way the white-evangelical church has most pointedly contributed to the racial injustice and socioeconomic inequality in urban poor communities. Like Rah, Perkins points to a culture of capitalism that has bred individualism, consumerism, and materialism that has placed the individual’s gain at a higher value than the good of society. In Perkins’ words at the Institute of Faith and Public Life held at Princeton Theological Seminary,

We have deified capitalism and that is the evil of our day. We have claimed it has morality within it. But morality has to come from something outside of capitalism. Capitalism is not immoral but it is amoral and if the immorality of a culture of power and greed is who runs it then it will be an oppressive system. Greed and absolute greed then leads to unequal distribution of wealth and the heart of the economic inequality that exists in neighborhoods, communities, and cities across the United States.⁵³

It has been this power, greed, and corruption that have oppressed, exploited, and dominated urban poor communities across the United States. Again, the cultural entanglement of the white-evangelical church and the American Dream make the church complicit in this unbridled capitalism and results in racial injustice and economic inequality.

In addition to contributing to the growth and development of unbridled capitalism, it is the accommodation of racial injustice and economic inequality that further implicates the white-evangelical church. As mentioned previously in the work by Wiest, Ray, and

⁵³ John M. Perkins, “Christian Community Development” YouTube video, 49:11, February 11, 2013, accessed April 3, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duCvy6YTT_o.

Schmidt, a blatant example of this kind of accommodation was discovered in The Wesleyan Church denomination.

This shift in direction took place at the same time that a series of laws were passed, enacting the segregation of public schools, public places and public transportation as well as the segregation of restrooms, restaurants and drinking fountains for whites and blacks. These Jim Crow laws systematized a number of economic, educational and social disadvantages for African-Americans. During this time, Wesleyans were for the most part silent. When we fast forward to the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's it seems that The Wesleyan Church had altogether lost the spirit of its abolitionist heritage and at times even found itself on the wrong end of the movement. A study of the district journals of the Wesleyan Church in the 1960's shows either indifference or even opposition to the Civil Rights Movement and a glaring absence of any stance on racial reconciliation.⁵⁴

This indifference and passive opposition is the silence toward injustice and inequality that accommodates the continued creation and perpetuation of systemic racism and poverty. From Perkins work, the ultimate problem for the white-evangelical church in reaching urban poor communities is overcoming its own participation in unbridled capitalism and the accommodation of the injustice.

In their book *Radical Reconciliation*, Allan Aubrey Boesak and Curtiss Paul DeYoung use the terms “political pietism” and “Christian quietism” to name and further describe the white-evangelical church’s accommodation to systemic racism and poverty in America. Boesak and DeYoung describe political pietism in the following way.

Far too many initiatives for reconciliation and social justice stop short of completing the work required. In our work and engagement with reconciliation we have discovered how often reconciliation is used merely to reach some political accommodation that did not address the critical questions of justice, equality, and dignity that are so prominent in the biblical understanding of reconciliation. Such political arrangements invariably favor the rich and powerful but deprive the powerless of justice and dignity. Yet more often than not, this

⁵⁴ Wiest, Ray, and Schmidt.

reconciliation is presented as language that sounds like the truth but is, in fact, deceitful. This we call “political pietism.”⁵⁵

It is such a political pietism that can align with unbridled capitalism and claim to be a voice of justice and reconciliation, but in its deceitfulness, it is actually contributing to and perpetuating racism and poverty. Political pietism is reflected in its starkest sense by Judas’ betrayal of Jesus as he aligned with the power, greed, and corruption of his day.⁵⁶

Similarly, Boesak and DeYoung describe Christian quietism as,

Christians measure these matters [justice and reconciliation] with the yardstick of the gospel and therefore know better. When we discover that what is happening, is in fact, not reconciliation, and yet for reasons of self-protection, fear, or a desire for acceptance by the powers that govern our world seek to accommodate this situation, justify it, refuse to run the risk of challenge and prophetic truth telling, we become complicit in deceitful reconciliation. We deny the demands of the gospel and refuse solidarity with the powerless and oppressed. This we call “Christian quietism.”⁵⁷

It is such a Christian quietism that is what Perkins refers to as accommodation, that is, the silence that lets racial injustice and socioeconomic inequality prevail, while the true power of the gospel for justice and reconciliation sits silent. Christian quietism, in its starkest sense, is reflected by Peter and his denial to stand in solidarity with Jesus at the risk of being identified as one of Jesus’ followers and losing his life.⁵⁸

The tragedy of the white-evangelical church, as articulated by Allan Boesak and Curtis DeYoung, is that we have been more consumed with a political pietism and a

⁵⁵ Allan Boesak and Curtiss Paul DeYoung, *Radical Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism and Christian Quietism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 1.

⁵⁶ Mark 14:10-11.

⁵⁷ Boesak and DeYoung, 1.

⁵⁸ Mark 14:66-72.

Christian quietism than with a true pursuit of justice and reconciliation. Ultimately, the reality of systemic racism and poverty in urban poor communities that has been aided and accommodated by the white-evangelical church gives rise to the need for a voice of justice and reconciliation. This voice of justice and reconciliation must be deeply explored as a church planting and multiplication strategy is considered for urban poor communities across the United States of America.

Summary

In summary, the problem of The Wesleyan Church not having a church planting and multiplication strategy for urban poor communities across the United States is threefold. First, The Wesleyan Church is historically a rural-based, white-evangelical denomination that has struggled with racial diversity in an increasingly diverse landscape. Secondly, because of this background there sits a large gap between The Wesleyan Church and its ability to approach the urban, multiethnic, and socioeconomically divided context of urban poor communities. Finally, compounding this problem is the entanglement of the white-evangelical church in the American culture of capitalism that embeds and accommodates racial injustice and economic inequality into American society. Through this embedding and accommodating, the white-evangelical church has been a part of creating and perpetuating the systemic racism and poverty that exists in urban poor communities and finds itself in need of rediscovering a voice of justice and reconciliation.

SECTION TWO: OTHER POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Introduction

The topic of this dissertation is church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities across the United States. Currently, The Wesleyan Church denomination does not have a strategy for church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities. The praxis of the Christian Community Development Association as a strategy for church planting and multiplication will be explored later. In this section, however, other possible strategies and approaches for planting and multiplying churches in urban poor communities will be explored. It should be noted that while church planting and multiplication resources and strategies abound in the current North American culture, specific resources and church planting and multiplication strategies for urban poor communities are limited. Traditionally, mission work accomplished by ministry extensions and agencies has been the primary form of outreach to urban poor communities by the church. The planting and multiplying of churches has been focused on resourced areas and communities, not the urban poor. Therefore, the alternative solutions explored in this section represent the best available and most likely to be used by a church, network, or denomination attempting to plant and multiply in urban poor communities. This section will be broken into four parts: Theory and Theology, Church Planting Models, Denominational Approaches, and Focused Networks.

Theory and Theology

The first category of other solutions for strategies of church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities can be described as theory and theology. This is a resource-centered strategy where leading practitioners have developed their

experience into a book, network, or organization to help others. Two prominent examples of this strategy are Ray Bakke and his lifelong work in urban ministry, most clearly identified through his book entitled *A Theology as Big as The City*, and Eric Swanson and Sam Williams' research on city-centered work identified in their book *To Transform a City*.

Ray Bakke

As best described in Bakke's words, "My hope is that my stories will encourage the next generation of pastors, missionaries and agency directors to join me on this journey of learning what God has to say about the nature and mission of the church in a rapidly urbanizing world..."⁵⁹ Bakke focuses on the reality of the urban challenge demonstrated by the sheer numbers, the migration of peoples taking place, the limits and potential of the church's ecclesiastical structures, and the funding challenge that will ultimately test the theory and theology of practice in the church across the United States.

Bakke hopes his life, ministry, and resources produced will challenge the evangelical church to expand from a narrowed personal and individualized story of the gospel to a greater social concern that acknowledges the individual and the structures of the whole of society. Bakke writes, "The schism in the church that has pitted social and personal ministries against each other in the city ... still marginalizes the church's ministry in the rapidly urbanizing developing world."⁶⁰ *A Theology as Big as the City* represents a basic resource a denomination could use to raise awareness and create a curiosity for reaching the urban context.

⁵⁹ Ray Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1997), 12.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

Eric Swanson and Sam Williams

Eric Swanson and Sam Williams, in their book *To Transform a City: Whole Church, Whole Gospel, Whole City*, state the mission for their lives as, “To change the world by engaging the church worldwide in the needs and dreams of their communities so as to bring about spiritual and societal transformation.”⁶¹ Swanson and Williams write of their experience discovering how the church is not so much called to reach, convert, or transform a city as much as it is called to love a city. Focused by the verse Jeremiah 29:7,⁶² Swanson and Williams found the key to transforming a city to be the development of partnerships and collaborative efforts that help the church become an agency within the structures of a city or community that collectively bring about transformation. Swanson and Williams claim their book is written at a strategic level designed to help develop a theology of asset-based development as opposed to charity. Similar to Bakke’s work, Swanson and William’s work is a strategic resource that could help raise awareness, and it demonstrates a model for ministry in the urban context.

The tension within Bakke’s and Swanson and Williams’ work, and other solutions to the problem in theory and theology, is that they reflect a dominant culture model that aligns with a culture of capitalism and fails to address the real issues of justice and reconciliation. While collaboration and learning are key components of both models, the use of these resources could miss acknowledging and exploring the complexities of the urban context. It is quite possible that through the use of these resources alone, efforts to join God’s redemptive work in the urban context would lead to involvement in

⁶¹ Eric Swanson and Sam Williams, *To Transform a City: Whole Church, Whole Gospel, Whole City* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 22.

⁶² Jeremiah 29:7 reads, “Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”

mainstream urban renewal that is entangled with systemic racism and poverty, accelerating gentrification and further marginalizing the poor, vulnerable, and oppressed.

Church Planting Models

Church planting models are a common strategy for church planting and multiplication within many churches and denominations. In *Planting Missional Churches: Your Guide to Starting Churches that Multiply*, Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im describe five of the most common models being used to plant and multiply new churches. A summary and example of these most common models are given below.

Leadership-Focused Models

Planting leadership-focused churches is a strategy some denominations turn to for church planting and multiplication. Leadership-focused models emphasize the importance of the vision and primary role of the planter. The three primary models can be described as apostolic, where the planter starts one congregation and then raises up leaders to take over before going off to plant another congregation; founding, where the planter starts and stays with the congregation, sending out other teams to plant additional churches; and shared-leadership, where a team comes together and equally shares in the development of the vision and strategy of planting.⁶³ An example of a leadership-focused model is Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas' book, *Launch: Starting a New Church From Scratch*. In their text, Searcy and Thomas place the true rise and the fall of the church plant on the leader and her ability to sense her call and effectively become the

⁶³ Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, *Planting Missional Churches: Your Guide to Starting Churches That Multiply*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 63-77.

leader God is calling her to become.⁶⁴ In leadership-focused models, the recruiting, assessing, coaching, training, and network systems for church planters become essential for healthy multiplication.

Missional/Incarnational Models

Planting missional/incarnational churches is another strategy churches and denominations use for planting and multiplying churches. The missional/incarnational model emphasizes the lifestyle of a planter and the people more than the executing of a master plan developed to accomplish the vision of starting a new church. As opposed to the leadership-focused model, where a planter's vision is the predominant focus, the missional/incarnational model emphasizes the living out of a mission among a community of people who are taking on the same lifestyle. The mission is two-fold, focusing on moving outward to reach others and going deeper for transformation, accomplishing mission, and engaging culture.⁶⁵

Hugh Halter and Matt Smay are leading proponents of missional/incarnational planting, and their book *The Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Community* is an account of their story of spending seven years traveling around the world training church planters, leaders, and dreamers. Halter and Smay write,

These two words [missional and incarnational] together describe an orientation toward the ancient faith communities described in the Book of Acts and throughout the history, who lived in countercultural, communal experience that always influenced the cultures they found themselves in. These missional/incarnational communities were therefore the natural framework God's

⁶⁴ Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas, *Launch: Starting a New Church from Scratch* (Ventura, CA: Baker Books, 2007), 45.

⁶⁵ Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, 86.

church was and must still be built upon if we are to continue their rich legacy of making apprentices of Jesus worldwide.⁶⁶

Simple Church Models

The simple church model can be a strategy denominations utilize for planting and multiplying churches. Im and Stetzer comment, “Essentially the term ‘simple church’ describes churches that emphasize a common life in Christ. This is achieved theoretically by prioritizing certain values and practically by limiting group size.”⁶⁷ Face-to-face relationships become the emphasis and act as the governor on group size. Because of the relational emphasis and group size limitations, the functioning of the church differs considerably from traditional forms of church. The greatest break from the traditional church is a distinct move away from church buildings as the central point of gathering. The simple church model uses the measurement of the number of people functioning as the church as the primary metric of health as opposed to the number of people attending a weekly large group worship service.⁶⁸

Neil Cole, author of *Organic Church* and a leading proponent of the simple church model, describes the need for the simple model as a corrective effort to reshape the church to more effectively reach the culture all around it. Cole writes, “Under the good intentions of well-meaning leaders, the church has fallen back on its heels in a defensive posture, seeking refuge in its own fortresses of buildings, programs, and

⁶⁶ Hugh Halter and Matt Smay, *The Tangible Kingdom: Creating Incarnational Community* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2008), xix.

⁶⁷ Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, 91.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 94.

‘Christian’ businesses, schools, and ministries.”⁶⁹ Cole and the simple church model focus on the broader Kingdom of God, taking church out of buildings, programs, and institutions and into the homes, streets, and life of a community.

Multi- and Monoethnic Models

Intentionally planting and multiplying multiethnic or monoethnic churches is a strategic model denominations can adopt as a strategy. As the urban context becomes the focus of a church or denomination, the reality of the diversity of the urban context must be addressed. A multiethnic and/or monoethnic strategy acknowledges and addresses the tensions of a more pragmatic monoethnic approach that operates within cultural boundaries and therefore has the potential to grow more efficiently verses a more idealized multiethnic approach that focuses on a Kingdom vision of the new-earth centered on the unity of the full body of Christ.⁷⁰ As Stetzer and Im write, “There has to be balance. Christ did not come just to liberate people, and he did not come just to respect and celebrate particularity. He did both with unity being the driving force. In other words, Daniel and I believe monoethnic and multiethnic churches can both be faithful to the biblical vision.”⁷¹

An example of an intentionally monoethnic strategy in the urban, multiethnic context is captured by Michael J. Cos and Joe Samuel Ratliff in their book *Church Planting in the African American Community*. In Cos and Ratliff’s words, “The purpose of this book is to present a theology and strategy for church planting and growth in the

⁶⁹ Neil Cole, *Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 5.

⁷⁰ Stetzer and Im, 104-106.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 107.

black community.”⁷² Cox, as the national leader of church planting for the American Baptist Churches, centers on three strategic reasons for focusing on monoethnic black communities. First, he believes there was a lack of intentionality in church planting in African-American communities. Secondly, Cox is aware of the high percentage of unchurched lives among the black community. Thirdly, he saw the lack of resources available for strategically planting churches in African-American communities. Focusing on nine case studies, Cox and Ratliff provide a topical guide for overcoming the greatest obstacles of church planting in African-American communities.

Bridging the Diversity Gap by Alvin Sanders is a strong resource reflecting a multiethnic strategy for churches and Christian organizations to more accurately reflect the diversity of God’s Kingdom. While not specifically focused on church planting, Sanders identifies the key challenges and shifts necessary for developing multiethnic churches and organizations. The challenges Sanders pinpoints are ethnic borders, racialization, and unintentionality.⁷³ The shifts identified are from secular to spiritual, moving from tweaking to transformative leadership, and moving from accidental to accountability and alignment.⁷⁴ Sanders’ text ultimately helps church and Christian organization leaders engage in a process of reconciliation in order to work through the obstacles and make the shifts necessary to lead their organizations toward becoming more multiethnic.

⁷² Michael J. Cox and Joe Samuel Ratliff, *Church Planting in the African American Community* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Pr., 2002), 10.

⁷³ Alvin Sanders, *Bridging the Diversity Gap: Leading Toward God's Multi-Ethnic Kingdom* (Yorkshire: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2013), 27.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

Multisite Models

Finally, planting and multiplying churches through the multisite model can be a strategy for some churches and denominations. Multisite planting and multiplication is defined by one church developing worship gatherings and church facilities in more than one location. As Stetzer and Im report, “denominations are beginning to see the validity of multisite as a church multiplication strategy.”⁷⁵ With an Acts 1:8 vision to reach the immediate community, the surrounding communities, other communities in a region, and communities around the world, the multisite strategy provides a way to reach targeted populations and geographies with churches that are established, healthy, and growing.

The Multi-Site Church Revolution, by Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird, gives an overview of the development, practice, and future of multisite churches in the United States. At the heart of the multisite strategy is the spreading of the gospel, the raising up of leaders, and the church reaching its full potential. As Surratt, Ligon, and Bird state, “The multisite ride has most often been about opportunities—reaching more people with the gospel, developing more leaders, and influencing other churches.”⁷⁶ As one account given in the text describes, there is great potential for multisite planting and multiplication in urban cores and corridors. As Erwin McManus describes in the forward, “We became a two-campus congregation, one English-speaking and one Spanish-speaking. One was predominately African-American, the other was first-generation Latinos. We realized the tremendous potential in penetrating the urban corridor, if we could somehow partner with established churches that were quickly declining and that

⁷⁵ Stetzer and Im, 120.

⁷⁶ Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird, *The Multi-Site Church Revolution: Being One Church—In Many Locations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 66.

would sometimes leave behind even massive facilities.”⁷⁷ With many denominations facing the closing of many churches in larger urban centers, the multisite strategy is a real option for planting and multiplication that offers possible renewal and revitalization to denominations across America.

The solutions to the problem of church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities offered through the various models of church planting provide a great variety of methods for the urban context, yet are vulnerable to error toward church-centric results. When planting and multiplying begin with a model in mind, even if it is missional/incarnational and hoping to develop from within a local context, a planting model approach can lead to colonial and imperialistic mission practices perpetuating a paternalistic approach of rural mission practices from the past. In the urban, multiethnic, and socioeconomically divided context of urban poor communities, such paternalism and practices can cause greater damage than good to the lives and communities involved. While ultimately some model will be used or emerge, significant care and concern for a community-centric approach that focuses on empowering the lives and community is needed in approaching urban poor communities with a holistic gospel.

Denominational Strategies

A second category of other solutions for strategies for church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities can be classified as denominational approaches. The first example of what many denominations use as a strategy can best be described as a general systems approach, and is best represented by Robert E. Logan’s *Be Fruitful and Multiply: Embracing God’s Heart for Church Multiplication*. Secondly, with

⁷⁷ Ibid., 7.

more specificity to the urban context, some denominations have developed major initiatives and devoted significant resources to addressing the problem through denomination-wide efforts. The SEND North America strategy of the Southern Baptist denomination is such an example.

Robert E. Logan

With a systems approach, Robert E. Logan purposes his book *Be Fruitful and Multiply: Embracing God's Heart for Church Multiplication* on heightening the awareness of the biblical call for the church to not just make disciples, but to also multiply churches. This text and its accompanied resources are designed to help denominations develop church planting systems that create a culture of multiplication. Logan lays a biblical foundation for the vision of church planting and multiplication and identifies and describes many ways churches can participate in the systems approach. Beyond awareness and foundations, Logan helps to spell out the *why* and the *how* of church multiplication at a basic level, allowing most denominational leaders to cast vision and begin to implement the basic structures of recruiting, assessing, coaching, training, and networking to begin to create a culture of church planting and multiplication. A systems approach is a necessary approach for a denomination, but similar to other church planting and multiplication literature and resources, *Be Fruitful and Multiply*, along with Logan's other resources, are not specific to, and therefore do not take into consideration, the unique challenges of the urban poor context.

Send North America

Send North America is a denominational initiative of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) through its mission arm known as the North American Mission Board

(NAMB). Send North America identifies the cities of North America as true mission fields, with 83% of the North American population living in metropolitan areas across the continent.⁷⁸ The Send mentality is built on the idea that if the cities are reached, the nations will be reached. The Send Network therefore intentionally targets cities as part of a regional strategy that broadens the process of equipping and mobilizing planters through collaboration and a robust network of assessing, coaching, training, resources and care. While urban-targeted, the Send Network strategies are more focused on resourced communities than the urban poor.

The denominational strategies for church planting and multiplication presented here represent the best practices of church planting and multiplication from the church growth era. Robert E. Logan and Send North America represent the standard of the denominational church planting and multiplication culture across the United States. While their strengths are solid and proven, the weaknesses of the white-evangelical church are a result of the systems of the church growth era that focus on individualism, consumerism, and materialism. The analysis from Section One demonstrates great concern about the practices that have produced a white-evangelical church in America that suffers from Western, white cultural captivity. The individualism, consumerism, and materialism of Western, white culture actually become embedded through the system approach used by Logan and Send North America. A primary purpose in developing a strategy for urban poor communities must address and even confront such practices with careful scrutiny of the culture and the systemic influences driving the measurements and success indicators that ultimately interface with decision-making, resources, and power.

⁷⁸ "Send Network," North America Missions Board, accessed October 3, 2016, <https://www.namb.net/send-network>.

A Network Approach

The third category of other solutions for church planting and multiplication strategies in urban poor communities can be described as a network approach. Mosaix and World Impact both represent national networks that have been created in order to equip and mobilize the church to more effectively reach multiethnic and urban poor communities, respectively. Mosaix and World Impact represent the strongest other solutions, offering denominations a strategy for church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities.

Mosaix

According to founder Mark DeYmaz, “Mosaix is a relational network of local church pastors and planters, denominational, network, and ministry leaders, educators and researchers alike, that exists to establish healthy multi-ethnic and economically diverse churches for the sake of the gospel throughout North America and beyond.”⁷⁹ Mosaix offers coaching, consulting, leadership conferences, and cohort learning models to help others engage in their vision and mission of a multi-ethnic church movement. One of the most effective tools of Mosaix is *The Multi-Ethnic Christian Life Primer: An Eight Week Guide to Walking, Working and Worshiping God Together as One*. This primer, produced by DeYmaz and Oneya Okuwobi, serves as “...the first individual daily and small group study on multi-ethnic life and church designed not only for leaders but also, more specifically, for the people in the pews.”⁸⁰ The primer is an excellent guide for

⁷⁹ “Foundations,” Mosaix Global Network, accessed October 7, 2016, <http://www.mosaix.info>.

⁸⁰ Mark DeYmaz and Oneya Fennell, *The Multi-Ethnic Christian Life Primer* (Little Rock, AR: Mosaix Global Network, 2013), iv.

leaders who are trying to lead others to ministry in the urban, multi-ethnic context across the United States.

World Impact

The vision of World Impact is to be an organization that catalyzes church planting movements by “evangelizing, equipping and empowering the unchurched urban poor.”⁸¹ The strategy of World Impact is to focus on evangelism in neighborhoods, discipleship training that enables those who have been discipled to disciple others, and empowerment of indigenously led, church-based ministries to transform communities.⁸² Beyond the three missional priorities of evangelism, equipping, and empowerment, World Impact focuses on planting healthy urban churches, developing missional partnerships, resourcing urban leaders, and demonstrating compassion and justice.

World Impact’s greatest training arm, making training and education affordable and accessible to the indigenous leaders being reached and raised up, is accomplished through The Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI). The TUMI model creates satellite centers across the U.S. and beyond and “equips leadership for the urban church, especially among the poor, in order to advance the Kingdom of God.”⁸³ Currently, there are 227 TUMI satellites in 16 countries, with more than 2,500 students taking classes worldwide. World Impact is by far the closest other possible solution, using many practices of Christian community development, for denominations desiring to identify a strategy for church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities.

⁸¹ “Our Vision,” World Impact: Transforming Communities Together, accessed October 6, 2016, <http://worldimpact.org/our-vision>.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ “Our Mission,” The Urban Ministry Institute, accessed October 6, 2016, http://www.tumi.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=692&Itemid=332.

The network models, as other possible solutions, come the closest to addressing the major concerns created in church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities. The specificity of targeting the multiethnic or the socioeconomic realities are strengths of these two approaches but the fact that both networks are organized as external networks outside of denominations and outside of a church-based approach leaves them without long-term sustainability. Both network approaches rely heavily on outside funding and support and function in great part as mission organizations. While incredible work takes place through mission organizations, church planting and multiplication takes place ideally in and through local churches, not larger organizations. A key component to a possible solution for church planting and multiplication in the urban context will be a local reproducible strategy that becomes self-sustaining, supporting itself and perpetuating on its own or a part of a collective working together.

Thesis Differentiation

As mentioned in the introduction of Section Two, in the current North American church planting and multiplication culture, specific resources and strategies for urban poor communities are limited. Most church planting and multiplication efforts, especially at the denominational level, focus on resourced communities and basic practices of the church growth era and movement. Many of the resources and strategies unintentionally continue to perpetuate the same mistakes of the past that ultimately commodify the gospel and contribute to a capitalistic culture of individualism, consumerism, and materialism being embedded in the church and society as well as accommodating the

injustice and inequality that results.⁸⁴ An evangelism and discipleship emphasis that ends up commodifying the gospel prevents the church from using its voice of justice and reconciliation for the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized. On the other hand, traditional ministry to the urban poor misses out on the presence of local churches. Many times, in urban poor communities, ministry is accomplished by “missions” or “ministry extensions.” While being a voice for justice and reconciliation for some dimensions of the gospel, missions and ministry extensions lose the embodiment of the whole gospel through a local church as a long-term solution to the restoration and development of urban poor communities.

The uniqueness of this dissertation is the possibility of combining the best practices of church planting and multiplication with the best practices of ministry in the urban poor context. The hope of Section Three is to explore the praxis of the Christian community development by integrating the Christian Community Development Association’s vision, mission, holistic framework, and philosophy with the best practices of church planting and multiplication as a church planting and multiplication strategy for The Wesleyan Church in urban poor communities across the United States.

⁸⁴ Efrem Smith, *The Post-Black and Post-White Church: Becoming the Beloved Community in a Multi-Ethnic World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 34.

SECTION THREE: THESIS

Introduction

The Wesleyan Church denomination does not have a prevailing strategy for church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities across the United States. In Section One, it was identified that The Wesleyan Church is historically a rural-based, white-evangelical denomination that has struggled with racial diversity in an increasingly diverse landscape. Because of that past, there sits a large gap between The Wesleyan Church and its ability to engage in church planting and multiplication in the urban, multiethnic, and socioeconomically divided context of urban poor communities. Compounding this problem is the entanglement of the white-evangelical church in the American culture of capitalism that accommodates racial injustice and economic inequality in American society. As a result, The Wesleyan Church denomination finds itself in need of a strategy that will address these key issues.

The praxis of Christian community development is being defined for the purpose of this paper as the integration the Christian Community Development Association's vision, mission, holistic framework, and philosophy, with the best practices of church planting and multiplication. First, the vision and mission will be presented through introducing the origin and development of the CCDA. Second, an understanding of the five dimensions of the holistic framework will be described. Next, the eight key components of the CCDA philosophy will be outlined. And last, a potential model of integration with the best practices of church planting and multiplication will be suggested as a model of implementation for a prevailing church planting and multiplication strategy for The Wesleyan Church in urban poor communities across the United States.

It is the premise of this paper that with the praxis of Christian community development as a church planting and multiplication strategy, The Wesleyan Church will be able to: 1. Acknowledge and increase its understanding of its rural-based, white-evangelical past; 2. Approach the urban, multiethnic, and socioeconomically divided context of urban poor communities with an intentional and informed position and platform; and 3. Become a greater part of God’s redemptive work in urban poor communities by the planting and multiplication of churches through a voice of justice and reconciliation that addresses systemic racism and poverty in America.

What is the Christian Community Development Association?

Origin

In his contribution to the book *Restoring At-Risk Communities*, Phil Reed writes, “It is not difficult to get agreement on the fact that American society and culture are in a state of crisis. Most people would acknowledge that our institutions, communities, and personal lives are experiencing an unprecedented social and moral breakdown.”⁸⁵ At the center of this reality sit the urban poor and at-risk communities. John Perkins, the founder of the Christian Community Development Association, believes, “The desperate conditions that face the poor call for a revolution in our attempts at a solution.”⁸⁶ It is this deeply embedded conviction that the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized must be at the center of the vision and mission of the church that distinguishes the CCDA’s origin. Ultimately, the solution Perkins suggests is what has become the vision of the CCDA for an uprising of “people transformed by the love of God, who then respond to God’s call to

⁸⁵ Perkins, 24.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 15.

share the gospel with others through evangelism, social action, economic development, and justice.”⁸⁷

The CCDA, with its deep conviction for reaching the poor, vulnerable and marginalized, is a network of Christians engaged in the transformational work of a holistic gospel. The CCDA is made up of grassroots leaders and practitioners committed to a holistic framework of incarnational ministry focusing on the proclamation and formation of the gospel, the demonstration of compassion, restoration and development, and the confrontation of injustice to see at-risk and disadvantaged communities holistically restored.⁸⁸ The vision statement of the CCDA is to see “Holistically restored communities with Christians fully engaged in the process of transformation.”⁸⁹ Its mission statement is “To inspire, train, and connect Christians who seek to bear witness to the Kingdom of God by reclaiming and restoring under-resourced communities.”⁹⁰ At the heart of the practice of the CCDA is what is referred to as the eight key components of the CCDA philosophy. The eight components are relocation, reconciliation, redistribution, leadership development, listening to the community, church-based, holistic, and empowerment.⁹¹ While the holistic framework and eight components of the philosophy represent the building blocks of the CCDA, the genesis of the vision and

⁸⁷ Ibid., 19.

⁸⁸ Wayne Gordon and John Perkins, *Making Neighborhoods Whole* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), iBooks edition, Afterword.

⁸⁹ “Vision,” Christian Community Development Association, accessed April 16, 2016, <http://www.cdda.org/about/vision-mission>.

⁹⁰ “Mission,” Christian Community Development Association, accessed April 16, 2016, <http://www.cdda.org/about/vision-mission>.

⁹¹ “Philosophy,” Christian Community Development Association, accessed April 16, 2016, <http://www.cdda.org/about/ccd-philosophy>.

mission go much deeper into the social, political, and economic conditions of the twentieth century.

Wayne Gordon, one of the leading practitioners and the first president of the CCDA, points to the deepest origins of the CCDA being rooted in the life of John Perkins. “The context of poverty and injustice in which John was reared became the cauldron in which was formed the concept of Christian community development and the core principles that define the Christian community development movement today.”⁹² In agreement with Gordon, CCDA practitioner and author Shane Claiborne writes, “the roots of the CCDA are in the civil rights movement, its mission of reconciliation originating from helping black folks and white folks see each other as more than equals, as family.”⁹³

Two predominant forces created the poverty and injustice experienced in Perkins’ life. First, the personal and institutional racism experienced by Perkins, which he attributes to the deification of a greed-based capitalism, and second, the accommodation of racism and injustice by the white evangelical church.⁹⁴ Perkins’ exposure to and experience with the civil rights and social gospel movements were critical to the vision, mission, and philosophy he would set for the CCDA.

In the article “A Quiet Revolution and Culture Wars,” Peter Slade refers to the origins of the CCDA in the civil rights and the social gospel movements.

The story of the Civil Rights movement dramatizes the moral failure and cultural captivity of the white evangelical church in the United States of America.

⁹² Gordon and Perkins, *A Tale of Two Activists*.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ John M. Perkins, “Christian Community Development,” YouTube video, 49:11, February 11, 2013, accessed April 3, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duCvy6YTT_o.

Evangelicals' active resistance to integration in the 1960s stemmed from their rejection of the social gospel movement and separation from modernist and progressive Protestants earlier that century.⁹⁵

John Perkins' unique experience, having been raised in Mendenhall, Mississippi and returning there in the 1960s to start the Voice of Calvary Ministries, placed him in the middle of the collision of the civil rights and the social gospel movements. The context Perkins found himself in was where, Slade writes, "The notion that the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news not just to an individual's soul but also to his or her whole person and community ..."⁹⁶ The reality, however, was the social injustice of personal and systemic racism was being accommodated by the greater part of the white evangelical church in the South, and in spite of being a gospel that calls the church to be a voice of justice and reconciliation, the church sat silent and unengaged. It is in this context of racial injustice and an accommodating white-evangelical church that the CCDA began.

A vision and mission centered on taking the gospel to the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized addressing the injustices of racism and poverty in America is a needed anecdote for The Wesleyan Church as it considers a strategy for urban poor communities. The origin of the CCDA being rooted in justice and reconciliation addressing the social evils of racism and poverty is key. Through the CCDA vision and mission, The Wesleyan Church can begin to acknowledge its rural based, white evangelical past and begin to pursue the reconciling of its contribution to the aiding and embedding of systemic racism and poverty in the church and American society as described in Section One. In doing so, the ability to approach the urban, multiethnic, and socioeconomically divided mission

⁹⁵ Peter Slade, Charles Marsh, and Peter Goodwin Heltzel, *Mobilizing for the Common Good: The Lived Theology of John M. Perkins* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 60, Kindle edition.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

field significantly increases. Therefore, through the praxis of Christian community development, integrating the CCDA's focus on the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized and the addressing of the injustices of systemic racism and poverty in America, The Wesleyan Church has the potential to create a strategy for a church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities.

Development

John Perkins' ministry in Mendenhall is where the three "R's" of the CCDA first developed. Through the ministry philosophy of relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution, a holistic gospel that was true to both the social gospel and civil rights movements was able to come against the racial and social injustices taking place. Over the next two decades a voice and practice of hope emerged in the ministry amidst such injustices. Perkins began networking with other leaders from across the country engaged in similar work with the urban poor and at-risk communities. Perkins soon found himself surrounded by many like-minded leaders, with a strong majority of them being from the white evangelical church. As a result of the informal networking connections developing, a group of leaders surrounding John Perkins advised him to hold several events on a national scale. The initial events were called Jubilee. In 1980 and 1982, the first two gatherings of leaders and practitioners took place, drawing 500 and 700 people, respectively, to Jubilee.

The initial success of the Jubilee events led to regional mini-conferences developing from 1985 to 1988. The regional mini-conferences led to the eventual convening of an organizational meeting of what would officially become the CCDA. This organizational meeting took place in Chicago, Illinois in 1989 and set the stage for the

first CCDA National Conference. Over the next ten years, the gatherings of the CCDA National Conferences grew to a peak of 3,500 hopeful leaders and practitioners sharing in the vision, mission, and philosophy of a holistic gospel being carried to broken, urban communities through evangelism, compassion, development, and the confrontation of injustice.

From 2000 to 2010, the CCDA experienced numerous growth pains. The National Conferences continued as the critical rallying point but, as Gordon writes, “Realizing that we had arrived at a point where we could no longer operate informally and without something that at least resembled a business plan, we hired R.K. Nobles & Associates to do an organizational audit. That process proved extremely helpful in moving our organizational structure toward a true association.”⁹⁷

While acknowledging some threat of institutionalization from the organizing and addition of structure, the CCDA continued to develop and grow. In 2010, the annual conference drew 2,500 participants, and approximately 15,000 leaders and practitioners were engaged in the expansion of the vision, mission, framework, and philosophy of the CCDA. As of 2016, the CCDA is going through another season of transition, having hired an additional organizational consulting firm that is currently recommending changes to the organizational structure. The hope for the next season of the CCDA is to stay true to its grassroots social gospel and civil rights movement origins, while continuing to develop a greater uprising of a holistic gospel against the racial and social injustices of the urban poor and at-risk communities across America.

⁹⁷ Gordon and Perkins, *Christian Community Development Comes Together*.

Ultimately, what could be deemed a social movement within the church emerged across the country through the development of the CCDA. With the ideology of the vision, mission, holistic framework, and CCDA philosophy, along with the organizing and meeting patterns consisting of leading grassroots leaders and practitioners, a prophetic voice emerged in the church in North America and around the world, speaking up for the urban poor, vulnerable, and marginalized with a vision of hope and restoration.

The story of the development of the CCDA is key to the praxis of Christian community development due to the structure, meeting patterns, and organizing that emerged through the spread of the vision and mission. The nature of the growth of the CCDA is more reflective of a social movement than a corporate strategy. The structure of the CCDA is decentralized. The meeting patterns take the shape of grassroots gatherings. The organizing is focused on empowerment and mobilizing which proves to be vital to the expansion of the vision and mission. Through integrating the structure, meeting patterns, and organizing the CCDA used to develop, a decentralized, grassroots, and empowerment based model of implementation can be determined for The Wesleyan Church denomination.

Understanding the Five Dimensions of a Holistic Gospel

Understanding the five dimensions of a holistic gospel is a critical component in developing the praxis of Christian community development as a church planting and multiplication strategy for The Wesleyan Church. It is the five dimensions of a holistic gospel that create a learning journey that has the potential to mobilize The Wesleyan Church from its rural-based, white-evangelical past to approach the urban, multiethnic, and socioeconomically divided context of urban poor communities. By integrating a

holistic approach to the best practices of church planting and multiplication, a voice of justice and reconciliation to combat the injustices of systemic racism and poverty is developed. Noel Castellanos is a leading practitioner and current CEO of the CCDA. In recent years, he has fashioned five dimensions of a holistic gospel, essential to ministering the whole gospel, to the whole person, for the good of the whole of society. The five dimensions are: 1. incarnation; 2. proclamation and formation; 3. demonstration of compassion; 4. restoration and development; and 5. confrontation of injustice.

Incarnation

The first dimension of Castellanos' framework of a holistic gospel is incarnation. In Castellanos' words, "At the center of God's salvation narrative is the amazing idea that through Christ God invades our human reality—*en carne*, or in the flesh—to rescue and restore creation."⁹⁸ Wayne Gordon, in his book *Making Neighborhoods Whole Again: A Handbook for Christian Community Development*, notes, "The incarnation—God's coming to earth in human form to live and breathe and walk and work and minister among us—illustrates God's desire to be present with those he has created. We read in Matthew 1:23 that among the names Jesus would be called is 'Immanuel,' which means 'God with us.'"⁹⁹ Following God's salvation and restoration model, ministry to the urban poor should reflect this same entering into the full reality of the lives and community desiring to be loved and served.

Castellanos's scriptural foundation for incarnation is from John 1:14: "The Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and

⁹⁸ Ibid., Afterword.

⁹⁹ Ibid., Relocation.

faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son."¹⁰⁰

The holistic dimension of the incarnation identifies Jesus as the model for the church to follow. To reach the urban poor, the church must go to the urban poor, live among them, identify with their pain and suffering, and enter with a posture of servanthood. As Castellanos writes in the Afterword of *Making Neighborhoods Whole*, "We conclude that in the incarnation of Christ, God not only enters human reality but a social and political reality rooted not in the center of religious and political power but among the poor and marginalized."¹⁰¹

Castellanos describes proximity, relationship, solidarity, and humility as key elements for the church, or for anyone being called to reach urban poor communities, to consider when living out the dimension of incarnation. Proximity is the consideration of the physical distance between those wanting to reach urban poor communities and their residential location. Relationship is the consideration of social distance. Is true friendship being pursued or are the lives in urban poor communities just targets to be hit? Solidarity is the consideration of distance from the true pain and injustices of the lives in urban poor communities. And humility is the consideration of *posture* as urban poor communities are entered. Is a paternalistic approach taken or a true servant-learner attitude that believes in the potential, dignity, and capacities of the lives going to be reached?

The dimension of incarnation as described by Castellanos is a radical calling that sits at the start of a journey to reach the urban poor and truly identifies the extreme cost

¹⁰⁰ John 1:14.

¹⁰¹ Gordon and Perkins, Afterword.

of following the Jesus' model for reaching the world. It is truly this approach that is at the founding roots of the CCDA, as described by Castellanos:

In my estimation, what has made John Perkins' life and teaching so powerful is the fact that the biblically informed philosophy of Christian community development he has championed was developed from within the context of rural and urban poverty in the United States; that is, it has not been imported into our communities from the outside. Instead of imposing a theology and methodology on the poor, this movement has sprung up from the difficult soil of the 'hood and the barrio, which makes it authentic and relevant to our leaders and our neighborhoods.¹⁰²

The integration of the incarnational dimension of the holistic framework is the beginning of the praxis of Christian community development for The Wesleyan Church. As determined in Section One, with its rural-based, white-evangelical past, there are currently very few Wesleyan churches in the urban, multiethnic, and socioeconomically divided context. An important consideration of the incarnational dimension will be to determine how to overcome the proximity challenge in the new context of urban poor communities. A model of implementation must consider how church planters, leaders, and teams will work to initiate relationships, network in a community, and establish a presence. Considering the need to join in solidarity with the lives facing the issues of urban poor communities will take substantial time and therefore financial resources. Finally, to approach a new community with a humble posture, avoiding charity-based or paternalistic practices, will be a significant issue to address when developing a model of implementation of the praxis of Christian community development.

¹⁰² Noel Castellanos, *Where the Cross Meets the Street: What Happens to the Neighborhood When God Is at the Center* (Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2015), 17.

Proclamation and Formation

The second dimension of Castellanos' framework of a holistic gospel considers the proclamation of the gospel and the practices of spiritual formation. Castellanos claims the biblical basis is rooted in the Great Commission. "Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."¹⁰³ At the heart of this dimension sits what the church would traditionally term evangelism and discipleship.

However, Castellanos describes the traditional proclamation pattern of the church toward urban poor communities as "drive-by evangelism." This type of evangelism is an uniformed blitz by a mission team or outreach effort that brings individuals equipped with a basic salvation message and method, such as being able to share the "bridge illustration" based on Romans 6:23, to an urban poor community to "evangelize the lost." This mode of evangelism, according to Castellanos, does more damage than good. Over time as the social, physical, and economic conditions of a community are left in ruin and there are not any relationships or follow-up processes to the evangelism that takes place.

Directly related to the lack of relationships and the void of any follow-up, the lack of an authentic and true discipleship method becomes unfaithful to the Great Commission. Castellanos writes, "Our Great Commission task is to make disciples and to reinforce the teachings of Jesus in the lives of his followers."¹⁰⁴ To be faithful to the Great Commission, having discipleship relationships that allow a journey of formation to

¹⁰³ Matthew 28:19-20.

¹⁰⁴ Gordon and Perkins, Afterword.

be experienced is essential. Castellanos believes the role of incarnation is essential for the gospel to be spread and formed in others. The gospel proclaimed through a life that has come to live in a neighborhood and a life that offers a relationship of formation that teaches obedience to the teachings of Jesus is the great need for evangelism and discipleship in urban poor communities.

The integration of the proclamation and formation of the holistic framework is critical to a model of implementation for the praxis of Christian community development as a church planting and multiplication strategy. The strength, depth, and longevity of relationships are essential to evangelism and discipleship in urban poor communities. An evangelism style that is abrupt, delivered in a one-time encounter is not sufficient. A discipleship process that does not offer a relational investment over a substantial period will fall short of the need in the context of urban poor communities. A planting or multiplication strategy must be faithful to the Great Commission, establishing a presence that not only shares the gospel relationally but also offers a life-on-life discipleship journey to follow. For The Wesleyan Church to approach and become a greater part of God's redemptive work in urban poor communities, a model of implementation that takes a relational approach to the proclamation and formation of a holistic gospel is needed.

Demonstration of Compassion

Castellanos' third dimension of the framework of a holistic gospel is the demonstration of compassion. Castellanos says, "To have compassion toward humans is not to pity them for their misfortune or situation, but to acknowledge the connection we have to their pain. It means coming alongside them to temporarily ease their pain and

suffering in a manner that does not take away their dignity, knowing that one day they may do the same for us.”¹⁰⁵

Castellanos builds a scriptural basis for this dimension from James 1:27 and the stories of the Good Samaritan and the goat and sheep sorting that will come at final judgment.¹⁰⁶ James 1:27 reads, “Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.”¹⁰⁷ The story of the Good Samaritan¹⁰⁸ challenges the hurried and busied with noticing and acting towards others in need, and Jesus’ teaching on final judgment¹⁰⁹ declares that what is done for the “least of these” is what is “done to him.” A holistic gospel lives out such a compassion among the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized.

Robert Lupton, in his book *Compassion, Justice, and the Christian Life: Rethinking Ministry to the Poor*, considers the Church’s historical tendency of demonstrating compassion with a needs-based as opposed to an asset-based approach. Lupton writes that traditional works of charity do more damage than good. Acts of compassion must bring dignity and reciprocity into practice if individuals and communities as a whole are going to be truly transformed.¹¹⁰ Castellanos acknowledges the limits of this dimension with the risks of charity and dependency being created. Yet a

¹⁰⁵ Castellanos, 117.

¹⁰⁶ The use of these scriptural references is to report the biblical basis Castellanos and the CCDA claim for the framework of a holistic gospel. A critique of the proof-texting nature of Castellanos biblical basis will follow later in this section.

¹⁰⁷ James 1:27.

¹⁰⁸ Luke 10:25-37.

¹⁰⁹ Matthew 25:31-46.

¹¹⁰ Robert D. Lupton, *Compassion, Justice, and the Christian Life: Rethinking Ministry to the Poor* (Ventura: Regal Books, 2007), 31.

holistic gospel must embody the demonstration of compassion. Castellanos again emphasizes the centrality of incarnation, writing, “Compassion without incarnation can devastate the people we seek to serve by making them into objects or targets. . . . By contrast, when compassion is rooted in incarnation, and when the goal of our ministry efforts is both individual and community empowerment, we can better discern the effects of our actions.”¹¹¹

The demonstration of compassion is key to the integration of the holistic framework into the praxis of Christian community development. A model of implementation in urban poor communities must create a concern for dignity instead of charity, an asset-based approach to ministry instead of a needs-based, and an understanding of the reciprocity that takes place when a right posture of compassion is assumed. Ultimately, the view of urban poor communities must change. The praxis of Christian community development as a church planting and multiplication strategy in urban poor communities should integrate the demonstration of compassion as a critical component of a model of implementation.

Restoration and Development

Restoration and development is the fourth dimension of a holistic gospel. The CCDA often refers to the biblical account of Nehemiah when describing this dimension. In referring to Nehemiah, Castellanos writes, “His calling is instructive for those who feel a call to the work of restoration and development. In the same way God called Jeremiah and other prophets to speak truth to the people of Israel—in the same way he called Ezra

¹¹¹ Gordon and Perkins, Afterword.

to rebuild the temple—God called Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem.”¹¹² This emphasis on the rebuilding of a neighborhood, community, or city sits at the heart of restoration and development.

Castellanos’ biblical basis for this concept is found in Jeremiah 29:7. “Work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare.”¹¹³ The emphasis is placed on how the welfare of the city determines the welfare of the church. Castellanos points out how too many times churches focus on their internal ministries to determine their success and effectiveness, sometimes to the exclusion of all other metrics. There are many examples of where churches have deemed themselves successful while the community they are located in sits unimproved, left alone, or perhaps even worse off because of the presence of the church.

Castellanos claims, “Perhaps the greatest contribution the CCDA has made to the body of Christ is to elevate the kingdom ministry of restoration and development in the most under-resourced neighborhoods of the United States.”¹¹⁴ Castellanos continues, “Economic and community development were central to the strategy of Christian community development from the early days; we saw the connection between adequate housing, employment, and quality education and the presence of local churches, and a family’s ability to thrive and flourish.”¹¹⁵ The ability for the body of Christ to think about

¹¹² Ibid., Afterword.

¹¹³ Jeremiah 29:7.

¹¹⁴ Gordon and Perkins, Afterword.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

and contribute to the holistic restoration of urban poor neighborhoods and communities is essential to a holistic gospel.

The key to the restoration and development dimension of the holistic framework is the consideration of the whole community. Moving beyond proclamation, formation, and the demonstration of compassion for the individual, the state of families, education, jobs, housing, transportation, health care, and other broader dimensions of neighborhoods, communities, and cities should all be taken into account. To attempt to approach and become a greater part of God's redemptive work in urban poor communities necessitates a holistic approach that goes beyond the individual, to help the community as a whole become restored and rebuilt. A model of implementation of the praxis of Christian community development must consider how restoration and development will become a great part of the process of planting and multiplying churches in urban poor communities.

Confrontation of Injustice

The last dimension of a holistic gospel is the confrontation of injustice. This fifth dimension is probably best described by the long-time practitioner of the CCDA, Mary Nelson. Nelson often uses the illustration that, while it is important to continually pull drowning people out of a river, at some point it is important to go see what is pushing them into the river in the first place.

The scriptural basis Castellanos uses for the need to confront injustice is rooted in Amos 5:11-12.

“You trample the poor,
stealing their grain through taxes and unfair rent.
Therefore, though you build beautiful stone houses,
you will never live in them.

Though you plant lush vineyards,
 you will never drink wine from them.
 For I know the vast number of your sins
 and the depth of your rebellions.
 You oppress good people by taking bribes
 and deprive the poor of justice in the courts.”¹¹⁶

Confronting injustice can be a challenge, since most of the time injustice occurs at a systemic or structural level. Castellanos writes of this challenge,

Most Christians have an easy time acknowledging individual human sinfulness. But when it comes to the sinfulness of institutions, systems and structures, things seem less clear. . . . The more serious believers get about addressing the needs of the poor and marginalized, the more we are able to see that it is not just the bad behavior of individual people that creates poverty and despair but also the oppressive systems at play.¹¹⁷

Alexia Salvatierra, in her book *Faith-Rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World*, expresses the need for a holistic gospel to confront injustice.

Salvatierra believes while development is needed, the church must go beyond development and demand organizing and strategic advocacy. Organizing is defined as bringing people together to create systemic change. Advocacy is the process of creating accountability by working with governmental and corporate leaders for them to make public commitments to the use of their power to create necessary change.¹¹⁸ While merely introductory, Salvatierra provides a clear path to pursue for deeper exploration and understanding of how the church can be a part of effecting systemic change.

A model of implementation of the praxis of Christian community development should consider the dimension of confronting injustice. Systemic brokenness affects

¹¹⁶ Amos 5:11-12.

¹¹⁷ Gordon and Perkins, Afterword.

¹¹⁸ Rev. Alexia Salvatierra and Peter Heltzel, *Faith-Rooted Organizing: Mobilizing the Church in Service to the World* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2013), 8.

individuals and communities and must be addressed to bring about transformation. Whether through organizing, advocacy, or activism, a strategy for church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities necessitates a means of confronting the root causes of systemic racism and poverty. For The Wesleyan Church to acknowledge its white-evangelical past, approach the urban, multiethnic, and socioeconomically divided context, and to become a greater part of God's restorative work in urban poor communities a praxis that integrates the confrontation of injustice is needed.

Through this dimension of confronting injustice, Castellanos illustrates the full scope of a holistic gospel. "Our work is not simply to put Band-Aids on issues that affect the poor but to dig deeper to address the root causes of poverty and injustice as essential components of kingdom ministry."¹¹⁹ From the initial concept of incarnation to the full-orbed organizing and activism of confronting injustice, a journey through the basic framework of a holistic gospel is critical to a prevailing church planting and multiplication strategy in urban poor communities for The Wesleyan Church. Castellanos concludes,

When we minister in under-resourced communities and only focus on proclamation and formation, it is not enough. When we simply focus on the demonstration of compassion, it is not enough. When our efforts only address restoration and development, it is not enough. And, no matter how important, when we only strive for the confrontation of injustice, it is not enough. But when we embrace a kingdom approach to ministry alongside our neighbors, our life and our message truly become good news. With Jesus as our example, may we become pioneers who heed God's call to incarnate ourselves as agents of the kingdom.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Castellanos, 139.

¹²⁰ Gordon and Perkins, Afterword.

The Eight Key Components of the CCDA Philosophy

While the five dimensions of a holistic gospel comprise an essential framework of the Christian Community Development Association, the eight key components of the CCDA philosophy create a path that could further develop a prevailing church planting and multiplying strategy for the urban context. The eight components are, again: relocation, reconciliation, redistribution, leadership development, listening to the community, church-based, holistic, and empowerment. Following the path of the CCDA philosophy demonstrates the development of a prevailing church planting and multiplication strategy that helps The Wesleyan Church acknowledge its past, approach the urban poor communities, and become a great part of God’s redemptive work through a voice of justice and reconciliation.

Relocation

The first component of the CCDA philosophy is relocation. Closely connected to the dimension of incarnation, relocation is the paramount component of the CCDA philosophy. Charles Marsh and John Perkins, in the book *Welcoming Justice: God’s Movement Toward Beloved Community*, define relocation as follows, “Relocation means incarnational evangelism, the lived expression of the great Christological theme that Jesus Christ ‘did not consider equality with God something to be grasped’ but took on ‘the very nature of a servant (Philippians 2).’”¹²¹ Relocation is the first phase of a strategy for considering planting and multiplying in urban poor communities.

The greatest challenges to relocation are the issues of fear and economics. When considering relocating to a socially and economically oppressed community, significant

¹²¹ Charles Marsh and John Perkins, *Welcoming Justice: God’s Movement Toward Beloved Community* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 2009), 28.

commitment and sacrifice is required to fully enter into the lifestyle of the poor and vulnerable. The challenge and sacrifice is only compounded when relocation involves a family. Personal sacrifice is difficult, but to bring children into unfamiliar and disadvantaged neighborhoods and schools knowing the trajectory of their relationships and educational opportunity could change significantly is another depth of consideration.

The significance of developing the component of relocation is it helps to restore the theologies of community, neighboring, and place that the “American Dream” and a capitalistic culture of individualism, consumerism, and materialism seem to strip.¹²² First, a theology of community, defined as realizing the need for and value of interdependence as opposed to independence, confronts individualism. Relocation develops a theology of neighboring, where the person next door matters and is a part of the interdependence of lives that are intertwined, not merely living on parallel tracks that never cross. And a theology of place is developed through the component of relocation by expanding the thoughts and intentionality of where someone chooses to live beyond cultural comfort and convenience to focus on Kingdom purposes. Where Christ-followers live can be a part of gospel-purpose in their lives.

While paramount to the CCDA philosophy, relocation also has the potential to do great damage to poor, vulnerable, and marginalized lives and communities. “We must take great care to ensure that our Christian community development philosophy of relocation does not inadvertently encourage the kind of gentrification that will ultimately work to the disadvantage of the poor.”¹²³ Similar to gentrification, relocating with a

¹²² Perkins, 77.

¹²³ Ibid., 85.

paternalistic or imperialistic attitude will have far greater negative impact than the hope and help that was intended. A posture of interconnectedness and humility is required.

An additional aspect of relocation is what can be described as social relocation. While a physical relocation of moving from a rural or suburban neighborhood or relocating from one urban community to another is the primary emphasis of relocation, the idea of socially relocating by changing where you drive, shop, eat, get gas, and spend your leisure time can have a significant impact on entering a different social reality. Who you spend time with, where your relationships are built, whose home you are in, and who you have into your home are significant ways of relocating into the issues and situations that lead to transformational relationships through interconnectedness and an entanglement of lives with the urban poor.

Reconciliation

The second component of the CCDA philosophy is reconciliation. According to Gordon and Perkins, “Within the CCDA, we pursue three related but distinct forms of reconciliation: people with God, people with other people, and people groups with other people groups.”¹²⁴ Relocation with a message of reconciliation brings the possibility of new relationships in all three forms. Personal salvation can be found through reconciliation with God. Healing of relationships, marriages, households, and families can take place among “one another.” And peacemaking can occur across gender, class, cultural, or political lines. As Marsh and Perkins write, “Reconciliation means

¹²⁴ Gordon and Perkins, Reconciliation.

embodying the message that ‘ye are all one in Christ Jesus’ and that Christ has ‘destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility’ in lived social experience.”¹²⁵

According to the CCDA philosophy, reconciliation is a three-step journey of admitting, submitting, and committing. Admitting is the acknowledgement of broken relationship. Whether between the individual and God, between neighbors, or between people groups, when issues exist between two parties and relationships are different than how God intended, confession is needed. Next, submitting acknowledges that only God can heal broken relationships, yielding to him as the restorer of all. Submission to God and to one another is essential in reconciliation. And thirdly, committing to a lifestyle of reconciliation that involves lasting trust and partnership sustains the journey.¹²⁶

A significant dimension of reconciliation as a phase in the process of a prevailing church planting and multiplication strategy considers reconciliation in the context of the deep relational need to bring about true restoration. Perkins and Gordon describe this depth in the following way,

Reconciliation in the context of the US church is of course not only a black and white issue. People of many different cultures and ethnicities now live, work and worship in close proximity, especially in urban areas, presenting significant opportunities to be a witness for Christian unity. Reconciliation happens when people are open to listening to one another and to changing their attitudes and beliefs. As we listen to other people’s stories and get to know their hopes and concerns for the present and future, we begin to identify one another’s deepest felt needs—those hurts and longings that bring opportunities to connect with people on a deeper level, which is always necessary for true reconciliation.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Marsh and Perkins, 29.

¹²⁶ Perkins, 141.

¹²⁷ Gordon and Perkins, Redistribution.

Redistribution

A third component of the CCDA philosophy is redistribution. Redistribution, as defined within the context of CCDA, is about people, community, economics, and justice. The concept of redistribution can begin to be understood through the basic concepts of helping people, summarized by the popular sayings, “Give a person a fish, and she will eat for a day. Teach a person to fish, and she will eat for a lifetime.” The CCDA philosophy takes this line of thinking one step further, asking the question, “Who owns the pond?” At the heart of redistribution is the reality of creating opportunity and access to the resources necessary for under-resourced lives and neighborhoods to be restored in holistic and sustainable ways.

A primary means of redistribution in the CCDA philosophy is through economic development. Economic development starts with identifying needs for goods and services and then starting or supporting businesses that will meet those needs.¹²⁸ Whether through job training and creation, affordable housing, or social enterprise, redistributing the access and opportunity to obtain and invest financial resources is key. As stated by Mary Nelson, “The clear goal of redistribution is economic viability, defined as ‘the capacity of a community, through productive, interdependent relationship, to sustain itself.’”¹²⁹

While economic development is a primary means of redistribution, addressing educational access and opportunity might be the most significant resource that can be redistributed. Gordon and Perkins write, “One could easily make the case that the single most important avenue for creating fair opportunity is education. Education is the great

¹²⁸ Ibid., Redistribution.

¹²⁹ Perkins, 153.

equalizer, a major pathway to redistribution.”¹³⁰ Whether through after-school tutoring, neighborhood reading programs, or summer remedial opportunities, increasing the access, opportunity, and quality of an education creates a true hope in urban poor communities.

As redistribution takes place in urban poor communities, the holistic gospel is put to test, as not only is there great opportunity for the demonstration of compassion and restoration and development, but redistribution should lead to the confrontation of injustice. Gordon and Perkins explain, “Redistribution means sharing talents and resources with the poor, but it also means observable changes in public policy and voting habits. Public policy would need to be accompanied by a Christ-shaped willingness to offer one’s skills and knowledge as gifts to others.”¹³¹ Gordon and Perkins go on to assert that the heart for justice is best expressed through redistribution.

Redistribution for the CCDA means, in part, striving for justice—especially in underserved communities. It means working to bring justice to our criminal courts and prison system, to hiring practices and housing policies, to the educational system. We need to work to change laws, policies and attitudes that give some people unfair advantages over others. Justice should not be available only to those with the economic means to acquire it. Redistribution cannot be separated from efforts to pursue social justice.¹³²

Leadership Development

Next, the component of leadership development becomes essential to the CCDA philosophy. According to Gordon and Perkins, “Leadership development flows naturally

¹³⁰ Gordon and Perkins, *Redistribution*.

¹³¹ Marsh and Perkins, 29.

¹³² Gordon and Perkins, *Leadership Development*.

out of the three R's—relocation, reconciliation and redistribution.”¹³³ As relocation can lead to reconciliation, and reconciliation can lead to redistribution, the opportunity to develop, or intentionally allow for the development of, the lives within the community is a significant piece of the philosophy of CCDA.

The challenge of leadership development is poverty. Financial poverty is not the only poverty in urban poor communities. A poverty of leadership exists from the systemic brokenness of families, neighborhoods, welfare, incarceration, and so on. According to Gordon and Perkins, “The void of leadership is among the most significant characteristics of struggling communities. In many urban communities, leadership—defined in terms of having influence—is confined mostly to the church and to drug dealers.”¹³⁴

A process of developing leaders that expresses the CCDA philosophy in the urban poor communities is outlined by Gordon, having been developed through his experience in the neighborhood of Lawndale in Chicago, Illinois. Gordon lists eleven components to growing leadership: 1. See fifteen years into the future; 2. Never go anywhere alone; 3. Be available/socialize with them; 4. Expose them to role-models; 5. Have your family be a part of your ministry; 6. Travel with them; 7. Love! Love! Love!; 8. Be positive and affirm them; 9. Give them responsibility and let them fail; 10. Make them feel important; 11. Having an education is not the same as being a leader. This outline emphasizes the need for leadership development practices that develop indigenous leaders as well as emphasizes the life-on-life relationship that is necessary.

¹³³ Ibid., Leadership Development.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Additionally, a key component of leadership development is the need to focus on children and youth. Because of the generational nature of the decay of leadership in urban poor communities, having a long-term plan that raises up leaders out of the brokenness they have experienced is important. Developing ways for them to be able to live and lead others to flourishing and fulfilled lives is key. A long-term vision helps to not only raise up leaders to “get out” and “escape” the neighborhood, but sets a foundation for them to remain or return after college to the neighborhood to break the cycle of the leadership void.

Listening to the Community

The fifth component of the CCDA philosophy is listening to the community. As described by Gordon and Perkins, “In sum, listening to the community enables us to build relationships and to uncover the qualities, talents and abilities the community has to address and eventually solve its problems.”¹³⁵ The dynamic of who identifies, problem-solves, and ultimately ends up providing solutions to the issues and opportunities in urban poor communities is a significant element of the philosophy. ““The CCDA philosophy, rooted in the conviction that the people with the problems have the best solutions, affirms the dignity of individuals and encourages the community to identify and use its own resources and assets to bring about sustainable change.”¹³⁶ A very different dynamic is created in an urban poor community when outsiders feel they know the strengths and weaknesses or the needs and opportunities of the community better than the community itself.

¹³⁵ Ibid., *Listening to the Community*.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

This unfavorable dynamic is most simply identified as paternalism.

We [the CCDA] define paternalism in terms of outsiders—usually people who have achieved some measure of success in the eyes of the world—coming into a community and communicating, in their approach and general attitude, “We are successful. We have the answers. We know what works and what doesn’t work. Just listen to us, and eventually everything will be fine.”¹³⁷

This approach and attitude is toxic and great efforts must work to intentionally avoid any expressions of paternalism.

An approach that helps avoid actions and interactions of paternalism is an asset-based approach. As reported by Gordon and Perkins,

CCDA ministries have increasingly taken an approach to listening popularized by John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann, cofounders of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute ... In contrast to grant-providing foundations, which typically want to hear about a community’s needs, McKnight and Kretzmann focus on a community’s assets—its resources.¹³⁸

Far too many churches believe only needs exist in urban poor communities and are blind to their great resources. Ideas, dreams, attitudes, gifts, talents, and skills abound in urban poor communities. The component of the CCDA philosophy of listening to the community gives such human capacity the potential to be discovered.

Church-Based

The next component of the CCDA philosophy is church-based. The church-based philosophy helps to keep a holistic gospel rooted in the local church. This component is important to help prevent organizations and ministries that may focus on incarnation, demonstration of compassion, restoration and development, and/or the confrontation of injustice from missing the proclamation and formation responsibilities of the whole

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

gospel. Being church-based keeps the message of salvation and responsibility of disciple-making central to the philosophy of the CCDA and focuses on the local church in accomplishing the preaching of God's word and the equipping of Christ-followers.

The work of community developers apart from a church or group of churches lacks long-term viability and sustainability. Gordon and Perkins write,

The church—followers of Christ gathered as a community—is God's chosen change agent for ministry. The church consists of people, and of course all people are flawed. But imperfect though it is and always will be this side of heaven, the church is nevertheless the blueprint God has ordained for his people to gather as a worshiping community and to minister and witness to the world.¹³⁹

The parish model sits at the center of the CCDA's philosophy for being church-based. Gordon and Perkins point to the uniqueness of a church's presence in a community: "The community of God's people—the church—is uniquely capable of affirming the dignity of the poor, which includes providing people with the skills and opportunities they need to meet their own needs."¹⁴⁰ Efforts to accomplish God's work apart from the local church have limited value. While centered on proclamation and formation, the parish model helps live out an incarnational presence, aiding the whole of the community.

Holistic

The seventh component of the CCDA philosophy is holistic. As emphasized by the five dimensions of a holistic gospel, the holistic component of the philosophy emphasizes the gospel's implications beyond the individual and their spiritual needs to include the whole person and the whole of society. Conversely, as much as a person's

¹³⁹ Ibid., Church-Based.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

physical, mental, and emotional needs must be supported and a community needs broad solutions to complex problems, salvation and spiritual matters can't be left out of the picture. Evangelism, social action, economic development, and justice must all be attended to. The holistic component of the CCDA philosophy helps bring accountability to the balance of exercising the full implications of the gospel to urban poor communities.

The holistic philosophy addresses the individual's felt needs and broadens to addressing family, education, job, housing, transportation, and health care issues. In turn, a holistic approach offers broad solutions to social issues in urban poor communities. Gordon and Perkins explain, "There are no simple solutions because the problems are so complex and interrelated: the breakdown of the family, crime, drug addiction, unjust social structures, substandard education, lack of morality, counterproductive government programs"¹⁴¹ all must work together to help restoration and transformation take place for the individual and community. Gordon and Perkins write, "CCDA's emphasis on a holistic approach goes beyond loving people. It includes taking a holistic approach to solving a community's problems."¹⁴²

Empowerment

Lastly, empowerment is the eighth key component of the CCDA philosophy. Empowerment in CCDA terms is about "an attitude of humility and generosity. It's about sharing resources and giving away power in responsible ways for the sake of God's

¹⁴¹ Ibid., Holistic.

¹⁴² Ibid.

kingdom and for the sake of the poor and voiceless, who occupy a special place in that kingdom.”¹⁴³ Empowerment helps to restore God’s image in urban poor communities.

The CCDA philosophy of empowerment has three important aspects, in order to enact to be regarded as true empowerment rather than subtle charity. First, people must have the opportunity to have their needs met. Second, they must have the opportunity to contribute to having their needs met. Third, when a sustained path of having needs met and being able to contribute for those needs is established, helping others have their needs met is essential. Whether basic human needs of food, shelter, and clothing, to needs of love, belonging, purpose, and significance, empowerment is needed in urban poor communities. Empowerment taking place at these three levels allows a God-created dignity and purpose to be made visible in those who have had their basic human dignity and purpose stripped by the realities of urban poor communities.¹⁴⁴

A Moment of Critique

Through the study of the foundations of the CCDA vision, mission, holistic framework, and philosophy much of the theology appears to be rooted in personalities and personal stories. The vision and mission, as told through the origin and development of the CCDA, are fully embodied by the life and ministry of Dr. John Perkins and his personal story of growing up in the Deep South and being personally devastated by racial violence and injustice. Developed out of his lifelong study of God’s word, Perkins developed the initial philosophy of relocation, reconciliation, and redistribution and later added the additional five components to the CCDA philosophy. While often viewed as a

¹⁴³ Ibid., Empowerment.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

strength, the CCDA is often referred to as a lived theology due to the nature of the vision, mission, and philosophy emerging through Perkins life.

Similar to the vision, mission, and philosophy of Perkins, the holistic framework of the CCDA appears to be embodied in the life and story of Noel Castellanos.

Castellanos' five dimensions of a holistic gospel seem to have a theological basis rooted in his personality and personal story of growing up a legal immigrant while watching and experiencing many of the injustices of racial, political, economic, and social inequality. Castellanos' framework, aimed at holistic personal and social transformation, is primarily developed through his story and experience.

Again, similar to Perkins, Castellanos has a strong biblical basis through the study of God's word that he builds to support each dimension of his framework, but academically it appears more as proof-texting. The use of proof-texting is a significant concern due to the vulnerability of eisegesis in the development of the vision, mission, philosophy, and holistic framework of the CCDA. It should be noted that further hermeneutical work should be explored in the process of integration and implementation of the praxis of Christian community development as a church planting and multiplication strategy in urban poor communities that due to the limits of purpose, length, and scope, this dissertation will not be able to cover.

In addition to the continued hermeneutical work needed as a model of implementation of the praxis of Christian community development is explored, the organizational alignment of the holistic framework and the CCDA philosophy must be carefully integrated. There is substantial overlap between the five dimensions of the holistic framework and the eight key components of the philosophy. For example, the

incarnational dimension and the key component of relocation primarily address the same principle of the importance of location and emphasize the need for a presence in urban poor communities. Additionally, within the components of the philosophy there is redundancy and overlap that complicates the process of developing a model of implementation. The component of leadership development and empowerment illustrate this concern. Both components instill the importance of the investment in people and the need to recruit, equip, and train local leadership in urban poor communities without significant differentiation between the two components.

Overall, the concern of alignment does not negatively affect the effectiveness of the praxis of Christian community development. However, it should be noted that considerable work and effort will need to be put into developing a model of implementation that is clear and coherent in aligning the holistic framework and the key components of the CCDA philosophy.

The Praxis in Action – A Powerful Example

Benton Harbor, MI is an urban poor community that suffers from the ill effects of systemic racism and poverty in America. Overflow Church was planted in Benton Harbor in 2007. Led by Pastor and planter Brian Bennett, Overflow relied heavily on the vision, mission, holistic framework, and philosophy of the CCDA as a church planting strategy. From a healthy start and first nine years of growth, by 2016 Overflow Church had over three hundred people participating in weekend services. Overflow saw hundreds of individuals accept Christ, be baptized, and begin their lifelong journey of following Jesus and his life, message, and mission. Through following the principles of Christian community development, Overflow was able to start four social enterprise businesses.

Harbor Shine (a full-service lawn care and landscape company), Mosaic Cafe (a full-service coffee and sandwich shop), the Harbor Market (a weekly farmers market), and the Mosaic Resale Store (a retail store focused on mentoring and employment opportunities) were each central to Overflow's planting strategy.

The overarching learning from the story of Overflow Church is that the best practices of the CCDA, as a church planting strategy, ultimately equip and mobilize the planter, team, and community with a holistic gospel. The CCDA vision of the holistic transformation of people and communities was essential. Brian and the members of the leadership team believed the vision of a whole gospel was very compelling to new individuals who wanted to see the church as an agent of change. Many of the first team members who became a part of Overflow were de-churched. Being de-churched refers to Christians, who were once a part of the church, but who have walked away because of the lack of relevance of the church to the issues of their lives and the community. Brian and the team repeatedly noted how compelling the vision was, but also discussed its difficulty and challenge. Brian used the word messy many times. As Overflow became multiethnic and socioeconomically diverse, the challenge of loving one another and the community radically increased. Overflow consistently experienced a high level of people initially engaging in the vision, but quickly leaving when relationships became arduous. The leaders of Overflow continually referred to the key to the vision being the high degree to which Brian and his family lived out the vision. Brian and his family had relocated from Battle Creek, MI to Benton Harbor to follow God's calling to start Overflow Church.

The mission of the CCDA was also critical to the launch, growth, and success of Overflow Church. The key word surrounding mission was discipleship. The Overflow

team referred to discipleship being focused on immersive relationships. The term immersive was used to describe the all-consuming nature of being a part of the body of Overflow and the community of Benton Harbor, primarily due to the degree of relational depth required. The emphasis on reclaiming and restoring the lives and community of Benton Harbor required close relational proximity. The inspiration and training weren't formal, being offered through classes, seminars, and workshops, but occurred from the substantial amount of time committed to being a part of the community. Again, the Overflow leaders referred to the initial attraction, excitement, and involvement of many people who would then leave the team when life circumstance and ministry became challenging. Nonetheless, through the praxis of Christian community development, Overflow Church impacted hundreds of lives and developed many strategic relationships and partnerships in the community of Benton Harbor.

For each of the eight key components of the philosophy of the CCDA, the Overflow team gave the following critical insights:

Overflow's application of the component of relocation provided significant insight. Overflow Church found social relocation to be just as, if not more important than geographic relocation. Overflow, in the first several years of ministry, experienced people geographically relocating. Unfortunately, because the people were not originally from the Benton Harbor when challenges became overwhelming, they would move back from where they came. Because of the CCDA's emphasis on this critical component many have misunderstood and misapplied the concept.

The misapplication of this principle is very costly financially, relationally, and to the morale of a planting team. To the community, the effects can be even more

devastating as gentrification instead of restoration takes place, dislocating and displacing many individuals and families. Many community members in Benton Harbor and the neighboring community of St. Joseph who were becoming a part of Overflow lived isolated from their local surroundings. Many people worked, shopped, and spent their leisure time in neighboring communities for most of their social interactions and activities. Social relocation became the process of helping people to relocate in their social circles to engage with the people and community of Benton Harbor. Overflow's primary emphasis for relocation became "change where you are."

As for reconciliation, the Overflow team considered this component of the CCDA philosophy to be the highest priority. Reconciling people to people was identified as the greatest challenge. One team member specifically shared that social distrust in Benton Harbor was their biggest obstacle to reconciliation. Over the years the distrust between the police and community was intense and often occurred along racial lines. The team members spoke of the importance of time, relationships, and the building of trust as the key variables to seeing reconciliation take place through the CCDA philosophy.

Redistribution, a part of Overflow Church's planting strategy, centered on access and opportunity for the marginalized. While finances were a part of the picture, Overflow's approach emphasized influence and decision-making power as the primary assets of redistribution. This redistribution primarily took place through the sharing networks of relationships of influence. Redistributing influence and decision-making power was key to creating a voice for the marginalized and powerless. Through the planting of Overflow, most of the redistribution that took place was evidenced by church and community leaders becoming a part of one another's boards and leadership teams.

The key component of leadership development was an essential cultural element of planting Overflow Church. The principal of indigenous wisdom was fundamental. Intentionality in developing local leaders was critical and led to the sustainable health and success of Overflow and its vision and mission. While intentionality is necessary, most of Overflow's leadership development paths and training came from being immersed in the body, work, and culture of overflow.

Listening to the community helped Overflow avoid the paternalism and the imperialistic tendencies that often take place in under-resourced communities. Brian created a listening culture within the leadership of Overflow by intentionally starting every meeting and leadership gathering with the question "How has God been at work around you this week?" This emphasis formed a DNA at Overflow of listening. The other key to Overflow's success was developing the team with indigenous leaders as mentioned before. When the people in the community become your leaders, the process of learning the real stories, needs, and opportunities to serve the community becomes a natural process.

Being church based was a dynamic component of the CCDA philosophy for the planting of Overflow Church. Initially, this element came naturally for Overflow as the church plant and the community programs developed under one identity. As the programs of the Mosaic Resale Store, Mosaic Cafe, Harbor Shine, and Jobs for Life formed, it was evident these programs developed for the community but were rooted in the starting of the church. As the programs grew, it became necessary to separate the non-profit from Overflow to better collaborate with other churches to serve the community. This

separation of the church and the programs was significant for the health of the church and the impact of the programs on the community.

The holistic component of the CCDA philosophy helped Overflow Church develop a broad base of programs that ministered to families, became a part of the schools, taught life skills, and partnered with many organizations in the community. For Overflow, the practice of being holistic was described as stewardship. The Overflow team referred to stewardship as taking responsibility for the discipleship of the whole person and community. The discipleship of the individual often started with basic life skills of family, education, and work. The discipleship of the community involved working with the private, public, and social sectors of the community. Through a holistic approach, Overflow Church's impact established meaningful and transformational relationships.

Empowerment, while being inherent in several of the other components, allowed Overflow to fully live out the practice of the CCDA vision, mission, holistic framework, and philosophy. The significant learning Overflow experienced was the importance of establishing trust with leaders, letting leaders lead, and giving the autonomy necessary to succeed or fail. Overflow did an exceptional job of recruiting, equipping, and empowering many indigenous leaders. The ministries of Overflow were developed and led, primarily by individuals from the Benton Harbor community. While Overflow created a culture of empowerment, the team believed one of the greatest opportunities for empowerment in Benton Harbor would be a micro-financing and banking system for new business start-up. The hope for such system was to create economic development and sustainability for individuals and the community as a whole.

The story of Overflow Church provides an excellent example of the potential for the praxis of Christian community development as a church planting strategy in urban poor communities. Through Overflow's integration of the vision, mission, holistic framework, and philosophy of the CCDA, Benton Harbor, MI experienced significant transformation from the planting of a church. From this successful example, the hope is that a broader model of implementation, adopted by The Wesleyan Church denomination, will help initiate a movement of more churches like Overflow being planted and multiplied.

A Model of Implementation

A model of implementation for the praxis of Christian community development as a prevailing church planting and multiplication strategy emerges as the vision, mission, five dimensions of a holistic gospel, and eight key components of the CCDA philosophy are integrated with the best practices of church planting and multiplication. The best practices of church planting and multiplication are broadly identified as the recruiting, assessing, coaching, training, and networking of churches and planters for the purposes of church planting and multiplication.¹⁴⁵ Nitrogen, a church planting and multiplication network, has been a developing network within The Wesleyan Church over the past four years with a primarily regional strategy and a city-centered focus. As a church planting and multiplication network, Nitrogen has developed relationships and methods of working throughout the Wesleyan denomination that create the model for implementing the praxis of Christian community development, leading to a prevailing church planting

¹⁴⁵ Ed Stetzer and Warren Bird, *The State of Church Planting in the United States: Research Overview and Qualitative Study of Primary Church Planting Entities* (Christianity Today, 2007), accessed November 1, 2016, www.christianitytoday.com/assets/10228.pdf.

and multiplication strategy for The Wesleyan Church in urban poor communities across the United States. A significant percentage of the research of this dissertation has come from the living laboratory of this time, and this dissertation has been strategic in the redesigning and reorganizing of Nitrogen to focus on urban poor communities

Below is an initial plan for the further development of Nitrogen as a model of implementation.

1. Create a strategic plan for the development of Nitrogen
2. Identify the leaders and practitioners who are already integrating Christian community development and the best practices of church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities across the United States
3. Develop and align equipping and training literature, materials, and resources through leaders and practitioners
4. Create a national map by region and city of current and potential urban communities of focus
5. Organize existing and potential urban community works to align regionally and nationally
6. Create and form an initial 3- to 5-pilot network centers nationally
7. Integrate best practices of church planting and multiplication with vision, mission, the five-fold framework of a holistic gospel, and the eight key components of the CCDA philosophy into an equipping and training journey
8. Create multiple training delivery systems of prayer and vision tours, immersive learning experiences, internships, residencies, and institutes
9. Develop tools and resources to communicate prevailing vision

10. Organize and mobilize for a movement

Nitrogen: A Strategic Plan

Nitrogen is a church planting and multiplication network dedicated to planting and multiplying churches in the urban context through the practice of Christian community development with a voice of justice and reconciliation.

The VISION of Nitrogen is to see the church rise by becoming a greater part of God's redemptive movement in the urban context.

The MISSION of Nitrogen is to plant and multiply churches through the practice of Christian community development with an evangelism and discipleship rooted in justice and reconciliation.

Nitrogen's STRATEGY:

1. Creating network centers,
2. Engaging in Christian community development, and
3. Planting and multiplying churches

The STRATEGY applied:

1. Creating network centers of disciple-making, leader-raising and church-multiplying among entrepreneurial ministry and business leaders with a heart for the urban context
2. Engaging in Christian community development through the launching of centers of urban discipleship and ministry training
3. Planting and multiplying churches by taking responsibility for the
 - a. Raising-up planters, pastors, and leaders;
 - b. Identifying sites, cities, and communities; and

c. Empowering resources of prayer, renewal, and capital ...
to fuel the movement of God's redemptive work in our world.

We believe the vision, mission, and strategy of Nitrogen looks like an initial presence established in 10 cities by 2020 and 40 cities across the U.S. by 2040.

Why Nitrogen?

We must accelerate our rate of becoming the church we will be in 2040.

We must raise up the next generation of the church and leaders by empowering the edges and grassroots of the church.

We must develop a robust vision for the urban context to become a greater part of God's redemptive work in our world.

A Narrative of the Strategy

The prevailing strategy of Nitrogen is to 1) create network centers, 2) engage in Christian community development, and 3) plant and multiply churches. A description of each of the steps will be useful to demonstrate the integration of CCD and the best practices of church planting and multiplication.

Creating Network Centers. Network centers sit at the epicenter of organizing for a prevailing strategy. Network centers are initially defined by three to seven churches committing to a journey of disciple-making, leader-raising, and church-multiplying. Disciple-making is the dynamic where like-minded leaders band together for iron-sharpening-iron growth and accountability for their lives and callings. Leader-raising is the dynamic in which the leaders engage in the transformational journey of Christian community development, leading to the discovery of a voice of justice and reconciliation. Lastly, the church-multiplying dynamic, in its simplest form, takes responsibility: raising

up new planters, for new places, with the resources to help send them. A network center is organized by identifying monthly and annual meeting patterns, determining collective discipleship, leadership, and multiplication growth plans, and by committing to a shared resource model for planting and multiplication.

Engaging in Christian Community Development. While the leaders who are a direct part of the network center personally engage in a journey of the praxis of Christian community development, a network center becomes a living laboratory of Christian community development, offering urban discipleship and ministry training on a broader and more formal scale. Essential discipleship methods and immersive and experiential learning, centered on a vision of Christian community development, the five dimensions of a holistic gospel (incarnation, proclamation and formation, demonstration of compassion, restoration and development, and confronting injustice) and the eight key components of the CCDA philosophy (relocation, reconciliation, redistribution, leadership development, listening to the community, church-based, holistic, empowerment) become the guiding path, equipping and mobilizing the praxis of Christian community development. Through the development of network centers and engaging in Christian community development, centers of urban discipleship and ministry training emerge.

Planting and Multiplying Churches. Network centers that develop into centers of urban discipleship and ministry training become the primary arena for applying the best practices of church planting and multiplication. From the very informal times of a network center monthly huddle where a new potential planter or leader is brought to meet other like-minded, practicing leaders, to the more formal times of a thirty-person

equipping event focused on urban ministry coaching, the recruiting, assessing, coaching, training, and networking best practices have an ideal breeding ground. There are three overarching responsibilities that lead to the planting and multiplying of churches. The first responsibility is the raising-up planters, pastors, and leaders, which is expressed most pointedly in the recruiting, assessing, coaching, training, and networking practices. The second responsibility is the identifying of potential sites, cities, and communities reflected by geographic and demographic mapping. Finally, the third responsibility is the empowering of the resources of prayer, renewal, and capital demonstrated through grassroots prayer movements, renewal taking place in existing churches, and the aligning of financial capital for the prevailing church planting and multiplication strategy in the urban context.

Through the website being created as an artifact for this dissertation, a further development of Nitrogen as a model of implementation can be discovered.¹⁴⁶

Conclusion

The hope of this dissertation is that the praxis of Christian community development will inspire, equip, and mobilize The Wesleyan Church with a prevailing church planting and multiplication strategy to consider. The belief of this dissertation is that the vision, mission, five dimensions of a holistic gospel, and the eight key components of the philosophy of the Christian Community Development Association, being integrated with the best practices of church planting and multiplication, provide a journey of growth, intentionality, and transformation for The Wesleyan Church. With an integrated model of implementation such as Nitrogen, The Wesleyan Church can

¹⁴⁶ “Home,” Nitrogen, accessed December 12, 2016, <https://www.nitrogennetwork.net>.

continue to acknowledge its rural-based, white-evangelical past while approaching the urban, multiethnic, and socioeconomically divided context of urban poor communities, offering a voice of justice and reconciliation for the most poor, vulnerable, and marginalized lives being affected by systemic racism and poverty in America. Through this strategy, the planting and multiplying of churches in urban poor communities ultimately leads to change and transformation in the church and society that makes the world a better place.

SECTION FOUR: TRACK 02 ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

The dissertation artifact is twofold. First, a provocative film telling the story of a life and community living in the realities of systemic racism and poverty in America has been produced. The film tells the story of Benton Harbor, Michigan, an urban poor community that exists as a result of systemic racism and poverty in America. While once a booming community inspired by the American Dream, the realities of a racialized society and a globalized world have left behind a racially and economically oppressed community. Sharon Henderson is a 44-year-old lifelong resident of Benton Harbor, whose incredible life story illustrates the development of many urban poor communities.

Sharon's family came to Benton Harbor Township in the 1940s a part of the Great Migration when her grandmother's family and more than six million African Americans moved from the rural South to the industrial North. Sharon's mother was one of the first black females to move from "picking" (agricultural work) to "making" (manufacturing work) as she pursued the new opportunities created by an industrial boom and a rapidly growing work force. With factory work came the opportunity to participate in the "American Dream," but that opportunity for black people was met with great reluctance and resistance in the community.

As many black families began to move to the predominantly white, affluent community of Benton Harbor, white flight exploded locally, while globalization accelerated nationally, collapsing the local economy with massive job loss and unemployment. Ultimately the urban poor community of Benton Harbor was created, leaving thousands of lives and an entire community in ruin. Sharon was profoundly impacted by this history as she grew up in a community marred by the extreme injustices

of racism and poverty, only to emerge as an organizer and activist for justice and reconciliation.

The purpose of the film will be to drive people to the website, the second part of the artifact, being developed as a part of the strategy to help inspire, equip, and mobilize The Wesleyan Church with a prevailing church planting and multiplication strategy in urban poor communities. The website will articulate the purpose, vision, mission, and strategy of Nitrogen and will be a major tool and resource center for planters, pastors, and leaders throughout The Wesleyan Church to engage in a journey of the praxis of Christian community development as a strategy for church planting and multiplication in the urban context.

The main goals of the dissertation artifact are to 1) bring dignity to the story and lives of urban poor communities, 2) inspire, equip, and mobilize the church on the social injustices of systemic racism and poverty, and 3) provoke engagement in the praxis of Christian community development as a prevailing church planting and multiplication strategy in urban poor communities across the United States.

SECTION FIVE: ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

Artifact Description

- My research topic will focus on church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities across the United States.
- A provocative film/documentary will be produced, telling the story of a life and community living in the realities of systemic racism and poverty in America.
- Additionally, a webpage will be created as a primary tool to help inspire, equip, and mobilize The Wesleyan Church with a prevailing church planting and multiplication strategy for urban poor communities across the United States.
- Specifically, this film and website will be used across the country to raise awareness, educate, and provoke engagement in church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities.

Audience

- The primary audience will be The Wesleyan Church denomination. The denomination primarily consists of districts from across the U.S. made up of 40 to 60 churches. The pastors, planters, and key leaders in the churches and districts are the primary audience of the film and are expected to engage with the website as they become a part of the network/strategy.
- An additional audience will be other rural-based, white-evangelical churches and denominations, due to the common issues faced when considering engaging the urban, multiethnic, and socioeconomically divided reality of the urban context against the issues of systemic racism and poverty.

Goals and Strategies

- The main goals of the dissertation artifact are to 1) bring dignity to the story and lives of urban poor communities, 2) inspire, equip, and mobilize the church on the social injustices of systemic racism and poverty, and 3) provoke engagement in the praxis of Christian community development as a prevailing church planting and multiplication strategy in urban poor communities across the United States.
- A “beta-version” will be tested by a panel of practitioners who are currently engaged in various levels of ministry in urban poor communities. The panel will formally critique the film on the criteria of bringing dignity and education, and they will critique the website on the criteria of clarity, coverage, and usefulness.
- The evaluation forms and reports of the practitioner panel will serve as the success indicator.
- The film and website will be designed with a three-year timeline in mind.

Scope and Content

- The scope and content of the film will be a story of a life and an urban poor community, demonstrating the social injustices of systemic racism and poverty. Sharon Henderson and the community of Benton Harbor, Michigan will be the central characters of the film. Sharon’s personal story of growing up in Benton Harbor as a lifelong resident is told in her own words while a visual tour of Benton Harbor tells its story through its current condition.
- The scope and content of the website will be the full virtual resource center of the model of implementation referred to as Nitrogen.

Key Terms, Concepts, and Issues

- The terms, concepts, and issues introduced and underlying the film are: systemic racism; poverty; racial inequality; political pietism; Christian quietism; white-evangelical accommodation; white privilege; white captivity; systemic racism; unbridled capitalism; individualism; consumerism; materialism; civil rights; reconciliation; social justice; biblical justice; the social gospel; and human dignity.
- The terms, concepts, and issues introduced and underlying the website are: Christian community development; church planting and multiplication; a network approach; the Nitrogen vision, mission, strategy; the five dimensions of a holistic gospel; the eight components of the philosophy of the CCDA; the urban context; and urban density, diversity, and disparity.
- The film will be eighteen minutes in length, telling the story of the life and community reality with the hope of reconciliation through the praxis of the vision, mission, and eight key components of CCD through the church.
- The film advisor will be Eric Mortinson through George Fox Evangelical Seminary.

Dissertation Skill-set Assessment

- Film producing, directing, and editing
- Website design, development, and launching
- I will need to develop my communication skills to be able to effectively work with a team from the film industry and others with web design backgrounds

- My dissertation artifact will require a team. I have a strong network of relationships with people in the arts and connected to film, web design, and storytelling that should allow for the producing of a successful film and website artifact

Standards of Publication

- Official standards for film production will be determined and followed through my advisor and the team developed for the dissertation
- Exposure and training for film production was experienced in field research in the spring of 2016

SECTION SIX: POSTSCRIPT

The praxis of Christian community development is a dynamic strategy for church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities for The Wesleyan Church. By combining the vision, mission, holistic gospel, and philosophy of the CCDA with the best practices of church planting and multiplication, a transformational passage is created through the wilderness between a rural-based, white-evangelical denomination and the ever-increasing urban, multiethnic, and socioeconomically divided mission field of the United States. The injustices of systemic racism and poverty in America are the excruciating heat and aridness of the wilderness. A discipleship and evangelism that moves beyond the American culture of individualism, consumerism, and materialism and introduces, develops, and exercises a voice of justice and reconciliation is the opportunity for the praxis of Christian community development as a church planting and multiplication strategy ultimately provides.

The study and research for this dissertation over the last four years have provided the initial path and approach to the wilderness. The two works *Divided by Faith* and *The Next Evangelicalism* afforded the greatest portion of academic rigor. These two texts surfaced the primary routes of inquiry and investigation of the white-evangelical church and its cultural reality in America related to racism, poverty, and Western, white culture. The field research and application that took place in the artifact creation of the film and webpage have made the study and research personal and authentic. Discovering the real life story of Sharon Henderson and the community of Benton Harbor, Michigan made the issues of systemic racism and poverty in America personal and humanized. The creation of the website forced the managing and the processing of all learning and theory to

become real-world and not remain in a conceptual state. The exposure to and the experience gained from being a part of the CCDA have created a new look at a way forward. By attending national conferences and weeklong immersions, engaging in numerous case studies, and developing dynamic relationships with many leaders and practitioners, the vision, mission, holistic gospel, and philosophy were deeply investigated and experienced. Combined with the living laboratory of leading a national church planting and multiplication network within a rural-based, white-evangelical denomination, a vortex was created for the true learning, development, and application of this dissertation.

While the praxis of Christian community development is a viable solution to the problem of church planting and multiplication in urban poor communities, the wilderness between the rural-based, white-evangelical church and the urban, socioeconomically divided context of urban poor communities is full of landmines. The three most predominant landmines detected through the study and research of this dissertation are the great debates surrounding the social gospel, the church and culture, and the errors in global missions approaches and the risk of them being applied in the urban context in the United States. While each of these landmines can be initially detected through this dissertation, they were not approached because of the expanse of the debates. Each of these topics create a significant need for further study and research and will not be able to be avoided as one sets out to fully cross through the stated wilderness.

As Nitrogen has been outlined as a possible model of implementation, great anticipation is created for the opportunity of making the world a better place through the exploration of the praxis of Christian community development as a prevailing church

planting and multiplication strategy within The Wesleyan Church in urban poor communities across the United States of America.

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