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Reframing urban Black historic church leadership's view of the mission of God: increasing African American legacy congregations' relevance for effectively ministering in their changing communities of the twenty-first century

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Project Thesis

**REFRAMING URBAN BLACK HISTORIC CHURCH LEADERSHIP'S VIEW  
OF THE MISSION OF GOD: INCREASING AFRICAN AMERICAN LEGACY  
CONGREGATIONS' RELEVANCE FOR EFFECTIVELY MINISTERING IN  
THEIR CHANGING COMMUNITIES OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

by

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the most sacred institution known to African Americans across the United States, the Black Church, especially to its oldest urban Baptist church in Washington D.C., the historic Nineteenth Street Baptist Church. May the spirit and praxis of our ancestors continue renewing and transforming your works.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work would not be possible without the help of a traditional, congregational, local family of Christ followers, called Full Gospel Baptist Church, especially the Rev. Charles Y. Davis, Jr. who functioned as a friend and pastor for me and my family, encouraged and supported my ministry, and kept me involved in meaningful leadership experiences, while I studied offsite in doctoral residency. Also, I am thankful for the historic Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, D.C., as the place of my doctoral residency, the Christian Education Department who laid bare the traditions of this legacy church, and the Prayer Ministry who kept me in prayer to God. A special acknowledgment to Rev. Dr. Darryl Roberts, pastor of Nineteenth Street, who modeled the balance of being a leader who faithfully observes certain traditions of an urban Black historic church, while responding to God's radical call in transforming some of the body's practices for increasing its relevance in the 21st Century society.

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about and experiencing, which I was. Thank you. To Dr. Eileen Daily, thank you for keeping me aware of the doctoral process at BU, challenging me to places of humility where I discovered the richness in rigorous writing, and for being prayerfully supportive throughout the entire doctoral process. To Dr. Mary Elizabeth Moore, whose prophetic insight into my research fostered the vital inspiration that enabled me to increase in clarity and bring resolution to this doctoral project thesis. It was within your spiritually affirming literary dialogue and theological writing for congregations' experience that gave significance and permission for me to add something that had been missing throughout the entire research and writing process... my own voice. This project was brought to its written closure, before enactment, in tears: God was Present. Thank you.

Finally, and most importantly, I am grateful for Theresa, my wife, who is my air, my life partner, and my ministry colleague; and our children, Storee, Jimmie, and Troy Jr., whose very existences, and giftedness inspired me to lay a solid foundation for them to soar in service to God, their families, and the beloved community, in their day.

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**ABSTRACT**

This transformational leadership project addresses the numeric decline of historic Black churches in urban centers across the United States. The focal church of this task, Nineteenth Street Baptist Church (NSBC) in Washington, D.C., which was the founder of seven Black historic congregations in the District, and home of several revered pastors who started Postbellum churches on the Atlantic Coast, has joined dialogs about Black Church declines since the year 2000. Speaking to the concern, this work builds on Robert L. Smith's Black Existential Theological Hermeneutic, called *the BETH approach*, a practical theology method that assists leaders in African American church revitalization.

Using NSBC's Christian Education Ministry as the focal ministry, this project engaged the three stages of Smith's BETH approach: Analyze, Assess, and Act. The outcomes of these stages led to offering a transformative framework for assisting the ministry's leadership in the practices of creating a prophetic mission statement. Chiefly, this development will lead to developing and/or renewing practices authentic to Black Church witness, faithful to the mission of God in the Bible, consistent with Christian history, and relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century society, all from a People of Color perspective.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

BETH	Black Existential Theological Hermeneutic
NSBC	Nineteenth Street Baptist Church
POC	People of Color
UBHC	Urban Black Historic Church

## PROLOGUE

After a lifetime of membership in urban Black historic churches (UBHC), which included a study of four in D.C. while determining the relevance of embarking on this doctoral project, I found these local African American congregations as multifaceted: encouraging, family-driven, a formidable foe against social ills, friendly, inspiring, resourceful, generous, and reflective; the churches are providers of food for the soul and temporal rest for the weary one, and the list goes on. In response to societal changes, this transformational leadership project created an opportunity for authentic self-evaluation of the Black Church, and most importantly, for assisting in increasing the relevance of urban Black historic churches to the U.S. 21<sup>st</sup> Century society. For this reason, I am grateful for my most recent location, Nineteenth Street Baptist Church in D.C., where I have been the Resident Theologian, carrying out a residency to study an urban Black historic church that was earnestly seeking increased relevance in transitioning from the 20<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries, while being surrounded by communities that no longer reflect the congregation's cultures.

About the topic of this project because, to some, it may seem a bit simple. The first part of the title, *Reframing Urban Black Historic Church Leadership's View of the Mission of God*, refers to the universality of Yahweh, whereas the *Missio Dei* can be understood as everlasting, far-reaching, overarching, and thus does not change. Thus, the title's second part, in conversation with God's mission as constant, posits that at certain points in time, such as the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the Church must reframe its view for grasping an increased awareness of the *Missio Dei*, and how to participate.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **The Need for Revitalizing Urban Black Historic Churches**

African American historic churches located in urban centers across the United States have played vital roles in the escape, and freedom of enslaved Africans, in their growth as a culture, and in thriving as citizens, all while making possible Black peoples' immeasurable contributions to the nation throughout its history. Despite these churches' vital roles, this transformational leadership project reports a significant decline in urban Black historic church (UBHC) numbers in the 21st Century. In response to the declines of this beloved church body in the cities and town centers of the U.S., I applied a Practical Theology method, called *the BETH approach*,<sup>1</sup> which provided a framework for assisting the UBHC in studying the problem, and forming relevant ways of living into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century setting, faithful to the Bible, and authentic to their Black Church witness.

In the year 2000, approximately a hundred Black Historic Churches in the District of Columbia consisted of at least a hundred members; however, over the last twenty years, an average of one has closed per year.<sup>2</sup> A twenty percent decline in the number of churches reflects a decline in the number of African Americans living in the District but it also bespeaks a loss of their rich historical identity in D.C.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert L. Smith, *From Strength to Strength: Shaping Black Practical Theology for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 183. The acronym BETH stands for *Black Existential Theological Hermeneutic*. It is a Practical Theology method for addressing issues relevant to the Black Church, and utilizes three stages (Assess, Analyze, and Act) for assisting leadership of predominantly African American churches in either developing or calibrating their congregations' practices that are relevant to society but yet germane to the Afrocentric culture and its Christian witness.

<sup>2</sup> See Figure 1 in Appendices, *Table Listing Urban Black Historic Churches in D.C. Closed or Relocated Since the Year 2000* (Graph by Troy L. Denson, Sr., Boston, Massachusetts: Boston University, 2021), 156.

The following recent popular press describes these church declines and closures as emblematic of the ramifications that Black churches in urban centers across the nation are facing since the turn of the century that are instances of the kinds of changes happening in DC. The Washington Post daily newspaper reported the closure of the historic Lincoln Memorial Temple United Church of Christ in 2018.<sup>3</sup> I assert that the closure illustrates how “postmodern”<sup>4</sup> and “globalized”<sup>5</sup> gentrification have led to residential, and structural replacements in D.C., as well as in similar cities throughout the country. Lincoln Memorial Temple, which once seated 1200 attendees, had dwindled to 10 to 12 regular members by 2017, reflecting a demographic change: “From 1990 to 2010, the percentage of African American residents in the historically black Shaw-Logan Circle area plunged from 65 percent to 29 percent.”<sup>6</sup> Likewise, in “DNA Info,” a popular online news source in New York City, a 2019 article described how relocations and involuntary displacements of people have caused low church attendances, and their

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<sup>3</sup> DeNeen L. Brown, “The End of Our Journey: A Historic Black Church Closes its Doors in a Changing D.C.,” *The Washington Post*, published September 30, 2018, accessed on May 26, 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/the-end-of-our-journey-a-historic-black-church-closes-its-doors-in-a-changing-dc/2018/09/30/b2f3f222-c1c5-11e8-a1f0-a4051b6ad114\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/the-end-of-our-journey-a-historic-black-church-closes-its-doors-in-a-changing-dc/2018/09/30/b2f3f222-c1c5-11e8-a1f0-a4051b6ad114_story.html)

<sup>4</sup> Brian Duignan, “Postmodernism,” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, published September 20, 2019, accessed on May 20, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/postmodernism-philosophy>. “...a late 20th-century movement characterized by broad skepticism, subjectivism, or relativism; a general suspicion of reason; and an acute sensitivity to the role of ideology [religion] in asserting, and maintaining political, and economic power.”

<sup>5</sup> Robert Stiglitz, *Globalization, and Its Discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2003), 9. “Globalization is the closer integration of the countries, and peoples of the world which has been brought about by technology, and the enormous reduction of costs of transportation, and communication, and the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge, and (to lesser extent) people across borders.”

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

edifices being preyed upon by real estate developers, who are paying millions of dollars for the properties in bustling cities as Harlem, New York.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, a 2017 edition of the “San Francisco Chronicle” daily news reported how new residents, dissimilar to those who comprised the African American flocks, are filling the communities, and neighborhoods but not the churches in Oakland, California.<sup>8</sup> While city developers ascribe the advantageous city sites of historically Black churches in urban centers as problematic to their renovations, my project’s research concurs with Black Entertainment’s studies, which find the good these churches have done as important and worth saving.<sup>9</sup> After a close analysis of the situation, regarding the present-day dilemmas of the African American population, and the nation’s growth, my’s thesis became clear: Renewing the worldviews of the Urban Black Historic Church ancestors, re-grounding Jesus' message, and reframing understandings of God's mission would help leaders and the congregation to rethink their narrative in the present setting, to renew and transform their practices in meaningful ways, and to flourish in their neighborhoods and local communities.

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<sup>7</sup> Solis Gustavo, “MAP: Harlem's Black Churches Cash in on Gentrification,” *DNA Info/ New York*, published October 9, 2019, accessed on May 26, 2020, <https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20171009/central-harlem/gentrification-harlem-churches-selling-out-or-surviving/>

<sup>8</sup> Laura Newberry, “Oakland’s Black Churches Struggle as African Americans Leave,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, published Jan. 1, 2017, accessed on May 26, 2020, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Oakland-s-black-churches-struggle-as-African-10828939.php?psid=8QReX>

<sup>9</sup> “Historically Black Churches That Closed Their Doors,” *BET News*, published July 18, 2014, accessed on May 26, 2020, <https://www.bet.com/news/national/photos/2014/07/historically-black-churches-that-closed-it-s-doors.html>.

## The Significance of Black Historic Churches Founded in Urban Centers

Historians partly ascribe Black churches in townships to the freedom of large numbers of former enslaved Africans in the U.S., and their freed heirs have added to the nation in great ways. Researchers posit that through the initial work of only around 60,000 freed Black people in cities and townships during the year 1790, by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Black churches in collaboration with abolitionists' homes, businesses, and schools, all as hiding places and locales for resources, had led to the freedom of half a million African slaves in the U.S.<sup>10</sup> Also, during the 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Black churches and their paternal organizations in urban centers gave speaking opportunities, rallies, and platforms for Black women's dialogue. The dialogues were led by ladies such as Hallie Quinn Brown, which this research asserts, significantly promoted the social liberation of all women in the U.S.<sup>11</sup> Then, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Civil Rights movement, chiefly led by UBHCs, aided in shaping U.S. human rights, and immigration policies.<sup>12</sup> In hindsight, recognizing all of the historic organizations' sacrifices towards U.S. progress, numerous UBHC buildings yet standing are recognized as national memorials.<sup>13</sup> Also,

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<sup>10</sup> C. Eric Lincoln, and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in U.S. History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 26-27, 115-118, 313, and 339-341.

<sup>11</sup> Martha S. Jones, *How Black Suffragists Fought for the Right to Vote, and a Modicum of Respect*, Humanities: The Magazine of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Humanities (Summer 2019) Volume 40, Number 3. D.C, accessed on December 14, 2020, <https://www.neh.gov/article/how-black-suffragists-fought-right-vote-and-modicum-respect>

<sup>12</sup> Todd Scribner, *How the Civil Rights Movement Influenced U.S. Immigration Policy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Bishops, 2019), accessed on December 14, 2020, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/african-american/civil-rights-and-immigration.cfm>

<sup>13</sup> *Federal Historic Preservation Laws – (2006): Historic Sites Act of 1935*, (Aug. 21, 1935, Ch. 593, Sec. 1.49 Stat. 666), accessed on December 14, 2020, [https://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/hsact35.htm#:~:text=It%20is%20declared%20that%20it,people%20of%20the%20United%20States](https://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/hsact35.htm#:~:text=It%20is%20declared%20that%20it,people%20of%20the%20United%20States;) ;

considering UBHCs' contributions to the local communities and their 21<sup>st</sup> Century social action for all peoples' Human Rights, this study advocates the need for renewing their power in local communities, which can begin a reversal of the UBHC decline in town centers across the U.S.

Regarding the roles of the UBHC in U.S. History, an educator of Pan-African Studies, and editor of *Encyclopedia of the Underground Railroad*, C. Blaine Hudson, provides an exhaustive anthology of 18<sup>th</sup> Century Underground Railroad locations that includes Black churches in townships across the U.S. Northern states, and their borders with Canada that assisted escaped, and freed Africans. At the time, the "Underground Railroad,"<sup>14</sup> was fortified by scores of bodies that are now the UBHC. This leadership project posits that cities, and township settings of Black churches, during the Antebellum Era, best situated them for functioning in the role of refuge, and resource missions for escaped slaves who were en route to places of freedom in select U.S. northern states or Canada. Under the freedom of religion laws, Black churches in urban centers covertly served as refuges/safe hiding places for escaped slaves from bounty hunters who sought runaways, considering them the assets of slave-owners. Also, for the escaped and freed Africans, these UBHCs functioned partly as resource missions that provided clothes, food, equipment, medical services, and refreshment from the vast resources in cities, and townships. Blaine's list of Black churches consists of most in townships: Second Baptist

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National Parks Service, *NPS Archeology Program: The Story of the Antiquities Act*, accessed on December 14, 2020, <https://www.nps.gov/archeology/pubs/Lee/index.htm>

<sup>14</sup> Hudson, J. Blaine, *Encyclopedia of the Underground Railroad* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc, 2006).

Church in Detroit, Michigan, Metropolitan A.M.E. in D.C. (formerly Israel A.M.E.C., and Union Bethel A.M.E.C.), Mt Zion United A.M.E. in D.C. (prior location of Montgomery Baptist Church), Bethel A.M.E. Church in Greenwich, New Jersey, Bethel A.M.E. Zion Church in Reading, Pennsylvania, Bethel A.M.E. Church in Indianapolis, Indiana, and St. James A.M.E. Zion Church in Ithaca, New York.<sup>15</sup> This list underscores the numerous UBHCs that yet exist and are significant Historical Landmarks in U.S. History. In review, freed Black peoples' travel, and African slave routes to freedom were best served by their churches in urban centers.

Subsequently, whether ethnically diverse African groups lawfully found freedom via Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation (1863) or through the U.S. post-Civil War's mass defections from slave plantations (1865), many migrated from the U.S. South to the U.S. North and West and were embraced by black churches in townships. Newly freed Black people received legal services from abolitionist groups of non-African descent, such as the Pennsylvania Abolition Society or New York Manumission Society; however, the assimilation of emancipated peoples in urban Black churches led to personal elevation and a reduction in the emotional sufferings of displacement. Churches gave support in several ways.

First, the diverse sects of urban churches focused on freedom and formed a new culture, the Black Church culture, in which their ministries and their multifaceted secular works were derived from their former African customs, and their new Americanized

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<sup>15</sup> Blaine, *Underground Railroad*, 246-254; Lincoln, and Mamiya, *Black Church in U.S. History*, 26-27, 57-58, and 117-118.

mission. Next, though freed, the people became further unified by the fact that they entered an unwelcoming U.S. society. Consequently, their congregations, though distinct in their polity, led the nation's Black culture near seamlessly throughout the U.S. as one church, the Black Church, through which the hybrid African populaces, whether in membership or not, addressed their social concerns in near unison.

Second, and relevant to freedom, the postbellum Black Church shaped UBHC practices and their multifaceted work in the areas of education, law, and practical socialization into the U.S.'s free society, as well as through their sponsored organizations (fraternal groups, schools, and societies). They were responding to Black people who were not given U.S. citizenship, were denied voting, and were thus not granted civil rights needed for thriving. Scholars and historians of the Black Church in U.S. History emphasize how Black people's migrations to urban centers expedited their freedom. They highlight ways that the development of Black religious associations, conventions, and schools reinforced Black people's voices and supported their economic mobility.

Third, urban township centers/cities became the most convenient place for gathering different sects of U.S. Black people and uniting them under significant movements (faith, mission, or social action). The seven historic Black Church bodies could gather in these centers as the Black Church.<sup>16</sup> These gatherings and collaborations were significant to African Americans and the developing country. They increased the organizations' resourcefulness, their accessibility to the people of the city or town, and

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<sup>16</sup> The National Baptist Convention, the National Baptist Convention of America, the Progressive National Convention, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church and the Church of God in Christ.

their access to government hubs near the churches' urban center locations.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church (1815) was founded at Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church (1794),<sup>17</sup> in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (1821),<sup>18</sup> Mother Zion Church (1800), was formed in New York City. And in the U.S. South, the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (1870) was formed in Jackson, Tennessee, whereas the first local church was Miles Memorial C.M.E. (1872), in the city of Marshall, Texas.<sup>19</sup> Similar to the social action of Methodist Episcopal churches, Black Congregational groups organized helpful collections of churches in urban centers. The National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc. was a development of three unique Black Baptist bodies. In the U.S. South, the Foreign Missions Baptist Convention of the U.S. was organized in 1880 at First Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama, with the sole interest of connecting with Africa.<sup>20</sup> In 1886, American National Baptist Convention was formed at First Baptist Church in St. Louis, Missouri,<sup>21</sup> which was originally formed by a free slave named John Berry Meachum, and an American Baptist

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<sup>17</sup> Adrienne Warrts, *Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church*, accessed on December 14, 2020, <https://www.Blackpast.org/african-american-history/mother-bethel-african-methodist-episcopal-ame-church-1794/>

<sup>18</sup> Sabrianna Sgambelluri, *African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) Church (1821-)*, accessed on December 14, 2020, <https://www.Blackpast.org/african-american-history/african-methodist-episcopal-zion-amez-church-1821/>

<sup>19</sup> Othal Hawthorne Lakey, *History of the CME Church*, accessed on December 14, 2020, <https://thecmechurch.org/history/>

<sup>20</sup> National Baptist Convention of America International, Inc, *Our History*, accessed on December 14, 2020, <https://nbcainc.com/about-us/>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

missionary named John Mason Peck in 1817.<sup>22</sup> Also, the Baptist National Education Convention was formed in the District of Columbia, in 1893.<sup>23</sup> Collaboratively, at Friendship Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, these three entities came together in 1895 and formed the National Baptist Convention.<sup>24</sup> However, in 1915, a disagreement regarding the independence of the convention's Publishing Board led to a split which formed the National Baptist Convention of America in Nashville, Tennessee and the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Inc.<sup>25</sup> The sixth African American convention was the development of Progressive National Baptist Church (PNBC) in 1961 at a founding meeting at Zion Baptist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. Black Church leaders from across the U.S. grew tired of the status quo of segregation policies, which the predecessor organizations (N.B.C.-America, and N.B.C.-U.S.A) supported, even as Black people, though free, continued to suffer. It was in the PNBC that Civil Rights leaders, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., found denominational support because this convention addressed issues of freedom, civil, and human rights, and progressive ideas. "The PNBC became a new Christian movement which included an array of social, and political concerns

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<sup>22</sup> Roderick Wilbon, *First Baptist Church of St. Louis, oldest African-American Church West of the Mississippi River, Celebrates its 200th Anniversary*, The St. Louis American, accessed on December 14, 2020, [http://www.stlamerican.com/news/local\\_news/first-baptist-church-of-st-louis-oldest-african-american-church/article\\_52102f1c-2c1a-11e7-9379-c7067d5e7f4b.html](http://www.stlamerican.com/news/local_news/first-baptist-church-of-st-louis-oldest-african-american-church/article_52102f1c-2c1a-11e7-9379-c7067d5e7f4b.html)

<sup>23</sup> National Baptist Convention of America, <https://nbcainc.com/about-us/>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> The National Baptist Convention, U.S.A, Inc, *History of the National Baptist Convention U.S.A, Inc*, accessed December 14, 2020, <https://www.nationalbaptist.com/about-nbc/our-history>

embodied in its founding principles of Fellowship, Progress, Service, and Peace.”<sup>26</sup> Then, unlike the previous Black denominations, who formed as separatists from Eurocentric (White) Churches, the Church of God in Christ (C.O.G.I.C.) was officially founded in 1907 by a Black Baptist evangelist, Charles H. Mason, who became a Holiness Elder then Bishop in a gin house that was converted to a church in Memphis, Tennessee.<sup>27</sup> This project proposes that despite the founding causations, and missions, the founding Black sects of the Black Church hold one aspect in common: they were all founded in cities or urban centers.

Finally, and what this study deems most important, Black churches formed in major cities symbolized the Negroes’ social liberation via education.<sup>28</sup> Pursuing liberation instantly following the Civil War in 1865, freed Black people, abolitionists, and Protestant churches’ home missions all aided in the development of schools and colleges for Black people. In Richmond, Virginia, the Richmond Theological School for Freedmen – now called Virginia Union University – was founded in 1865 at Ebenezer Baptist Church; in Augusta, Georgia, the Augusta Institute – now called Morehouse University – was founded 1867 in the basement of Springfield Baptist Church; and, in Atlanta, Georgia, the Atlanta Baptist Female Seminary – now called Spellman College – originated in 1881 in the basement of Friendship Baptist Church. Admittedly, some

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<sup>26</sup> Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc, *History of the PNBC*, accessed on December 14, 2020, <https://www.pnbc.org/about/history>

<sup>27</sup> Ithiel Clemmons, *Bishop C.H. Mason, and the Roots of the Church of God in Christ*, (Christian Living Books Inc. 2012), 10.

<sup>28</sup> Lincoln, and Mamiya, *The Black Church in U.S. History*, 251-252.

White people in the Methodist Episcopal Church (M.E.C.) who believed in the freedom of Black people aided in founding the majority of HBCUs. In 1856 – nine years before the Civil War’s ending, and during the early time of the Ohio Underground Railroad – Wilberforce University was founded by the Methodist Episcopal Church; however, due to the war, its doors were closed. In 1863, an A.M.E. bishop, Daniel Payne, led in purchasing and opening the school. Similarly, Tuskegee Institute – now Tuskegee University – in Tuskegee, Alabama, the largest township in Macon County, initially was a small school purchased from Methodist teachers, by Butler A.M.E. Zion Church, and was started by Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver in 1881. A few HBCUs were founded solely by freed Black people. In 1872, Morris Brown was founded in the basement of “Big Bethel” A.M.E. Church in Atlanta, Georgia. Likewise, in 1872, Paul Quinn College was started by a group of African Methodist Episcopal preachers at Metropolitan A.M.E. in Austin, Texas. Although abolitionists aided in many Black school and college openings, the urban church was often the common denominator. Simmons College in Louisville, Kentucky, and Miles College in Marshall, Texas, were formed by black churches in urban centers during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Interestingly, although Xavier College in New Orleans, Louisiana, was founded by a white Catholic nun (Katherine Drexel), it was done so in dialogue with the Black Catholic churches in New Orleans, which included six Black parishes in New Orleans at the time. This college was beneficial for educating Black Catholic men, who were otherwise shut out of educational opportunities. Notably, Mother Katherine Drexel was an outsider (from Philadelphia) who heard about the problem and came down to New

Orleans, had someone buy the property on the sly, and opened the school. She was recognized as a Catholic saint in 2000. Nonetheless, the predecessors of contemporary urban Black historic churches were the founders of the oldest and premium Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the U.S. In reflection, considering the contributions of urban Black historic churches, this investigation suggests that the numeric reduction of these congregations has harmful impacts to African American residents and the country.

The history, cultural significance, and important contributions and enduring commitments of these churches have permeated the U.S. society through their historic actions on behalf of persons, places, and communities. Their contributions were recognized in 1935 when the United States Secretary of the Interior, guided by the Congress, signed into Law the “Historic Sites Act of 1935.”<sup>29</sup> This Act enforced the preservation of buildings, land, and objects in which historical information could be found. The Historic Sites Act dovetailed with President Theodore Roosevelt’s “Antiquities Act of 1906,”<sup>30</sup> for protecting and preserving cultural and natural resources in the U.S. Under these laws, urban Black historic churches, and other legacy edifices, either birthed by the country’s initial settlers during the country’s infancy, formed by the cultural growing pains of this new multicultural society, or withstanding the test of time as this country endured early wars are celebrated and financially preserved as Historic Landmarks. An exhaustive list of 1,686 weblinks to hundreds of Black churches

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<sup>29</sup> National Parks Service, *NPS Archeology Program*, <https://www.nps.gov/archeology/pubs/Lee/index.htm>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

celebrated as Historic Landmarks can be found on the National Parks Services website.<sup>31</sup>

### The Purpose and Overview of this Church Transformational Leadership Project

Given that this transformational leadership project takes seriously the vital lifetime contributions of urban Black historic churches to their local vicinities across the U.S., and given the legacy congregations' decline in membership since the year 2000, alongside the contemporary social peril of the country, this work focuses on the dilemma of decline. The project views the dilemma through the lens of a major local African American place of worship that is addressing the problem in Washington D.C., Nineteenth Street Baptist Church (NSBC). More explicitly, due to NSBC's being one of the major historic African American churches in D.C., this project will use the BETH approach to aid further work. BETH is an authentic Afrocentric method that offers a framework to assist the congregation's ministry leadership to reframe their understanding of the mission of God for their community, and to do so in ways that are contextually relevant and theologically informed, then to live into that vision in ways germane to their Church. This purpose was carried out succinctly.

The Introduction of this project, Chapter One, presents the problem of decline in urban Black historic churches, noticed since the year 2000. In reviewing the vital roles of the Black Church throughout U.S. History, the study deemed UBHC decreases as a harmful impact to the country, and its African American citizens. Hence, this chapter

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<sup>31</sup> National Parks Services, accessed on May 12, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/search/?affiliate=nps&query=Black+Church>

presented a Practical Theology method, called *the BETH approach*, as a most fitting way for assisting Black churches in urban centers' leaders in addressing the problem.

Chapter Two will present the claim that UBHC decline is largely caused by social gentrification and structural renovations in urban centers across the U.S. I will present a multilayered investigation of the focal church (Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, D.C.) in this chapter. I conducted a postmodern cultural analysis, a social structural analysis, and a thematic investigation. This chapter's analysis points to ways by which the UBHCs can become increasingly relevant in their communities/neighborhoods. These are the churches' renewal of their ancestors' heterogeneous worldview, remodeling the ministries' ecclesial image for intercultural ministry, and rethinking the congregations' narrative, more reflective of African Americans' and new residents' collective experiences. Given the shifts in ideologies, this chapter ends with a question, What will the Urban Black Historic Church's message, mission, and story become?

Chapter Three represents the BETH approach's second stage, Assess, and will address the impending question(s), all for assisting UBHC leadership in increasing the churches' relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century society. This chapter's will briefly survey biblical assessment methods and discuss postmodern biblical discourses for re-centering the Black Church's social gospel scripture, re-grounding its message, and locating normative faith texts that can reframe the UBHC leaderships' views of the body's mission. Due to the supplemental connection but vastly different functions between the message and

mission, throughout the remainder of this project, a Sheffer's stroke “|”<sup>32</sup> was used for indicating the disjunctive normal form/ relationship between the two (message | mission). Then, the chapter's third section compares several missiological views of the mission of God and indicates a preference for integral mission as representative of a holistic understanding of the *Missio Dei*. Based on the findings and the new situations of UBHCs in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, this chapter's final section rethinks the Black Church narrative and proposes a People of Color theme. The aim will be for enabling the UBHC to explore their new context and name their new problems and opportunities for crossing cultural boundaries, closing generation gaps, and identifying prospective new participants. The summary of this chapter will present a model of the transformed dialect (message | mission) to a trialect (message | mission | theme<sup>33</sup>) as an appropriate framework for assisting the NSBC and other UBHC in creating a vision of contextual practices, responsive to a changed view of the *Missio Dei*.

Chapter Four, called Act, which is the final stage of the BETH approach, and will act on the outcomes of the first two stages (Analysis, and Assess) to assist UBHC leadership in converting their envisioned context praxes to informed practices. This chapter will present a five-plane step approach, called inside - out, for working from the inside of ecclesial discussions to outside in order to manifest new or renewed practices

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<sup>32</sup> “Disjunctive Normal Form and the Sheffer Stroke,” Accessed on March 10, 2021, <https://human.libretexts.org/@go/page/1672>; William R. Jones talked about the disjunctive duality regarding the weakness vs. the strength of Jesus' suffering on the cross as an argument against divine racism in William R. Jones, “Theodicy and Methodology in Black Theology”, ed. James H. Cone & Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Black Theology a documentary history volume one: 1966-1979*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 145-151.

<sup>33</sup> narrative or story

that are authentic for Black Church witness, yet welcoming and relevant to those not of African descent, and communicative of the gospel of Christ. The second part of this chapter will talk about the need for healthy discussions regarding the underlying culprits that hinder change, particularly fear-driven tensions. Though tensions will be explained in the Third Chapter, Chapter Four discusses pressures and resistance from a perspective that calls for “Black Phronesis”<sup>34</sup> in assisting the Urban Black Historic Church to engage the mission of God in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The last section of Chapter Four will offer limitations in UBHC leadership’s attempts to draw from African customs as means of contemporary informed praxis.

Chapter Five, the Conclusion, discusses probable impacts within and external to the urban Black historic churches as they engage the mission Dei in their legacy congregations. In finality, this transformational leadership project will warn against wandering from the message, mission, and narrative, and will discuss action plans that can move my framework from theory to UBHC practice.

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<sup>34</sup> Black Phronesis, also called phronesis in this project, “...practices which reflect the values, and meaning that shape the praxiological faith response to the historical black thematic universe. ...bridge between theory, and praxis”; Smith, 61, 94, 141, 198, and 201.

## **Chapter Two: Analyze**

### **Analyzing The Context and Challenges of the Urban Black Historic Church in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

The church analysis explores the claim that Black folks' historic churches in urban centers are declining and studies the underlying factors influencing that decline. Relevant to recent reports, a think tank journal in the District of Columbia, frequently read by governors, and mayors, *Governing the Future of States, and Localities*, maps/charts the 51.9% of the city's land tracts that began the gentrification of the city's demographics since the year 2000.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, J. B. Wogan, awardee of Washington Newspaper Publishers Association's "News Writer of the Year Award" in 2010, reported that planned turnarounds in D.C., in communities such as Columbia Heights, occurred through new home buildings, and renovations, constructions of new retail stores, and remodeling schools, which all resulted in escalations of home and rental values, as well as a population increase in the city to 90,000 residents.<sup>36</sup> Also, Wogan maintained that entering dwellers were/are ethnically and/or socially dissimilar to the prior Black residents.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, Dan Reed, a journalist in D.C.'s locally revered magazine, *Washingtonian*, described the city's preference for increased daily retail customers, and

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<sup>35</sup> Michael Maciag, "Washington, D.C, Gentrification Maps, and Data," in *Governing the Future of States, and Localities*, published January 15, 2015, accessed on May 26, 2020, <https://www.governing.com/gov-data/washington-D.C.-gentrification-maps-demographic-data.html>

<sup>36</sup> J.B. Wogan, "Why D.C.'s Affordable Housing Protections are Losing a War with Economics," *Governing the States, and Localities*, published February 2015, accessed on May 26, 2020, <https://www.governing.com/topics/urban/gov-washington-affordable-housing-protections-gentrification-series.html>

<sup>37</sup> J.B. Wogan, "Why D.C.'s Affordable Housing," <https://www.governing.com/topics/urban/gov-washington-affordable-housing-protections-gentrification-series.html>

more nightlife businesses that will raise revenues, and taxes, rather than the once or twice per week customary events of churches, their low tax base, and unsafe bare streets when closed.<sup>38</sup> In summary, my analysis' exploration of these, and other local reports substantiate the allegation of D.C.'s present-day version of gentrification's harmful impacts on local UBHCs are representative of the causations of church declines across the U.S.

Most importantly, the changes in D.C., noticed since the year 2000, have altered or removed many customary places, and populaces of mission for local UBHCs, which raises questions about these congregations' view of their identity, practices, and the "mission of God,"<sup>39</sup> in the new era. Without such inquiry, African American flocks, and their historic edifices – proofs of God's ways for giving freedom to Black ancestors enslaved in the U.S. – will continue dissolving. Given the critical changes in the District, and their impacts on local UBHC, this transformational leadership analysis explored the history of NSBC, and examined the cultural, structural, and theme/narrative changes of its surrounding community. The purpose of this analysis was for increasing the self-understanding of the Black Church faith identity in U.S. history, and for self-studying NSBC's contributions in decolonizing society. Such analysis can assist UBHC leadership in renewing certain traits in their body as a people of God, transform their role as agents

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<sup>38</sup> Dan Read, "Why Developers are Eyeballing D.C. 's Churches as their Next Project," *Washingtonian*, published May 4, 2017, accessed on May 20, 2020, <https://www.washingtonian.com/2017/05/04/developers-eyeballing-D.C.s-churches-next-project/https://static-l3.xvideos-cdn.com/v3/img/player/icon-pause.svg>

<sup>39</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011), 248, 349, and 401.

of God in the emerging communities of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### Multilayered Investigation of the Urban Black Historic Church Context

The first stage in responding to the crisis and purpose of the UBHC is the BETH approach of analyzing, which is called Analyze.<sup>40</sup> The aim is “...to make explicit the assumptions, values, and meanings that inform all praxis, but which largely remain hidden, and to identify the particular thematic contexts that generate them.”<sup>41</sup> Thus, this transformational leadership research project carries out a multilayered investigation via a zoom lens view that unearths archived public data about NSBC, and a wide-angle lens view for revealing demographical data of the church’s surrounding neighborhoods. Looking from these lens/views, the research conducts a postmodern cultural analysis solely for exploring cultural changes, a social structure analysis for studying transitions in institutions and relationships, and a thematic investigation for examining ways that the theme/narrative will transform as a result of the prior studies, all for guiding the NSBC leaders in making actionable mission decisions for the church’s future.

#### *Zoom Lens View of Nineteenth Street Baptist Church*

As stated above, the focal church of this analysis is Nineteenth Street Baptist Church (NSBC) in Washington, D.C. Initially, formed by a split from a predominantly Caucasian congregation, the First Baptist Church of Washington, in the year 1838,

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<sup>40</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 165, and 183.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 184-185.

Nineteenth Street Baptist Church consecrated its edifice in the year of 1839.<sup>42</sup> Presently, 181 years later in the year 2020, the congregation still serves as one of the city's major advocates for Civil Rights, and exists as one of the local African American residents' foremost expressions of the Christian faith, in a unique Black Church perspective. Formerly called "The First Negro Baptist Church" in D.C., NSBC was located in a majestic sanctuary on the corner of 19<sup>th</sup> and I Street NW, and later relocated to a regal edifice on Sixteenth Street in the same vicinity.<sup>43</sup> Being among the first Black Baptist churches in D.C., NSBC founded six other distinguished historic Black Baptist churches in the District.<sup>44</sup>

I selected NSBC as the focal church of my analysis due to its long continuity, its geographical location in the District, and the congregations' immense contributions to the city throughout the church's history. A zoom lens view of NSBC's leadership, and congregational history reveals that the congregational beliefs, culture, practices, and vision were visible in the work of its pastors. As a result of the pastors' works throughout NSBC's history, its congregants have represented some of wealthiest African Americans, and it has been one of the larger Black Baptist churches in the city until around 2000 when the harmful effects of gentrification became noticeable in the Black community and

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<sup>42</sup> John W. Cromwell (John Wesley), b. 1846, "The First Negro Churches in the District of Columbia", *Journal of Negro History* 7, no.1 (January 1922), 64-106 and 76 – 80. accessed on May 2020, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/cromwell/cromwell.html>.

<sup>43</sup> Audrey E. Kerr, *The Paper Bag Principle: Class, Colorism, and Rumor, and the Case of Black Washington, D.C.* (Nashville, Tennessee: Univ. of Tennessee Press: 2006), 105 – 107.

<sup>44</sup> John W. Cromwell, *The First Negro Churches*, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/cromwell/cromwell.html>

in its historic churches in D.C.<sup>45</sup> In accomplishing the aim of Analyze, this zoom lens view highlights NSBC's five most impacting pastors, and their work, which reveal their outlooks of the mission of God. This kind of analysis can help contemporary UBHC leaders in envisioning practices for the present moment that are contextually relevant and theologically informed. It can also guide congregants to cast a meaningful vision and live into it authentically, within the contexts of postmodern and globalized communities.

From Slavery to Freedom. Nineteenth Street's founding pastor, Rev. Sampson White, led this congregation twice (1839-41, and 1849-53), and also led four of the foremost Black Church's congregations from slavery to freedom, to prominence, and to leadership in the community: Gillfield Baptist Church, Petersburg, Va. (1837-38), Abyssinian Baptist Church, Harlem, NY (1841-46), and Concord Baptist Church of Christ, Brooklyn, NY (1847-51).<sup>46</sup> Later, he led a Sunday school mission in Camden, NJ (1851-57), and founded Kaighn Avenue Baptist Church (1857-63).<sup>47</sup> White was aware that church led to freedom, and reading led to socialization. At present, these churches still thrive and are among the famous UBHCs in U.S. Black Church History.

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<sup>45</sup> Jacqueline M. Moore, *Leading the Race: The Transformation of the Black Elite in the Nation's Capital, 1880 – 1920* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 1999), 20-21, 38, 73, and 79; Larry Murphy, *Down by the Riverside: Readings in African American Religion* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 101; Paul Finkelman, *Encyclopedia of African American History: 5-Volume Set* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009), 428, and 449; Andrea D. Lewis, and Nicole A. Taylor, *Unsung Legacies of Educators, and Events in African American Education* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2019), 12.

<sup>46</sup> Concord Baptist Church of Christ. *History of the Concord Baptist Church of Christ*, accessed on June 1, 2020, <http://www.concorD.C.ares.org/about-us/history>.

<sup>47</sup> Carter G. Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, (D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1921), 140; Kaighn Avenue Baptist Church, *Our History*, accessed June 1, 2020, <http://kaighnavenuebaptistchurch.org/History.htm>

From Socialization to Productive Citizens. In the next era, NSBC ascended to socialization and productive citizenship through reading, led by Dr. Walter H. Brooks. An advocate for reading, and the successor of eleven pastors, Dr. Walter H. Brooks,<sup>48</sup> served as a Sunday School Missionary in the American Baptist Publication Society for two years (until 1878), and was called to pastor NSBC for 63 years (1882-1945).<sup>49</sup> During this time, he focused the church membership on reading and socialization. Thus, Brooks baptized 1500 of 3500 people who joined NSBC under his leadership (mostly ex-slaves migrating from the south). Brooks led temperance ministries that impacted D.C. and he authored several notable writings about Black Baptist History. Also, Brooks led NSBC in ordaining, and sending more than 10 clergy to lead churches and ministries with the same ethic. Among those sent under Brook's tenure were Jennie Deane, founder of the Manassas Industrial School, in Virginia; Nannie H. Burroughs, founder of National Training School for Women and Girls, in D.C.; and Laura Queen, one of the founders of Stoddard Baptist Home. In reflection, NSBC exuded a culture of socially and professionally advancing African Americans to be productive citizens.

Civil Rights Era Transition. The next era focused on Civil Rights. In the period 1946 - 1994, NSBC called and was led by Rev. Jerry A. Moore Jr.,<sup>50</sup> a graduate of

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<sup>48</sup> Karen Ruffle, *Documenting in the American South: Walter H. Brooks (Walter Henderson), 1851-1945*, accessed on June 1, 2020, [https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/brooks/bio.html#titles\\_by\\_author](https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/brooks/bio.html#titles_by_author)

<sup>49</sup> John W. Cromwell, *The First Negro Churches*, <https://docsouth.unc.edu/church/cromwell/cromwell.html>, 79-80; Samuel Wallace Culp, *Twentieth Century Negro Literature*, (Naperville, Ill: J. Nichols & Co.) 314-316.

<sup>50</sup> The History Makers, *Reverend Jerry A. Moore, Jr.*, (Chicago, Ill: The HistoryMakers, 2007), published April 27, 2007, accessed on June 2, 2020, <https://www.thehistorymakers.org/biography/reverend-jerry-moore-jr>

Howard University. Moore greatly assisted D.C.'s African Americans through Civil Rights issues in jobs and employment. Moore's service on the D.C. City Council, as Chair of the Committee on Transportation, helped Black people, and minority firms to acquire jobs and gainful contracts with Metro Transit. Also, Moore co-founded the Conference of Minority Transportation Officials that provided a forum for senior-level minorities in the transportation field. Before retirement, Moore became the chaplain for D.C. Detention Facility, Executive Secretary for the Home Mission Board of the National Baptist Convention, and U.S. Ambassador to Lesotho, South Africa.

Transitioning into Postmodernity. In the next era, NSBC began equitable growth into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, and began facing the realities of postmodernity. Following Moore, in 1995 NSBC called Rev. Derrick Harkins, also a scholarly pastor with a B.S. in Broadcasting and Film from Boston University, a Master of Divinity in Church History from Union Theological Seminary in NY, and a Doctor of Ministry in Homiletics from United Seminary, Dayton, Ohio. Harkins led NSBC in offering health education, medical access initiatives, international development and relief, and he served as a faith advisor to Barak Obama, the first African American President of the U.S.<sup>51</sup> In 2016, Harkins resigned to become the Asst. Vice President of Union Theological Seminary, NY.

In spite of NSBC's successive notable pastors, and irrespective of its progressive status, the congregation could not avoid joining fellow Black churches in addressing the harmful effects of gentrification that became noticeable in the year 2000. Studying the

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<sup>51</sup> Sojourners. *Derrick Harkins*, (Sojourners, 2020), accessed on June 2, 2020, <https://sojo.net/biography/derrick-harkins>

relationship between NSBC and its surrounding communities in the years 2000 - 2016, the interim pastor of NSBC (2016-17), Rev. James A. Crosson, Jr. directly addressed the adaptive challenges in a rhetorical question: “How can we position ourselves to fill the gap of those who are out of college in the 22-to 35-year age range?”<sup>52</sup>

Seeking Renewal in Postmodernity. In the year 2017, it was clear that NSBC had prepared for regaining its progressive legacy. The church called Dr. Darryl Roberts, one who had earned a Ph.D. from Emory University; was mentored at one of the most radical churches in the nation, Brentwood Baptist Church, Houston, TX; had served as Executive Minister at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA, the church of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Sr. and Jr.; and had served as pastor of Mt. Welcome Baptist Church, Decatur, GA. In response to the call, the newly elected pastor precisely described UBHCs’ adaptive challenges shared his upcoming leadership agenda in response to them:

First, we will be a magnet for the “multitudes” as we carry out our mission to be a welcoming, and loving church... Second, we can fulfill our charge to be a magnet for the multitudes when we support, and sustain ministries that prepare God’s people for effective Christian discipleship... Third, and finally, we can fulfill our charge to be a magnet for the multitudes when we support, and sustain missionary outreach activities that advance Christ’s love, and grace through local, and global ministry.<sup>53</sup>

The Rev. Dr. Roberts led the church in responding to the adaptive challenges. In reaching out to young adults, NSBC provided interactive church activities and worship

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<sup>52</sup> Karen Williamson, “The Epistle”, vol. 37, no. 1 (January 2016), 7-8, accessed on May 30, 2020, <https://dg04wtk6p9fdf.cloudfront.net/sites/43/2015/12/09024605/The-Epistle-January-2016.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

services through popular social media links on its website,<sup>54</sup> Facebook,<sup>55</sup> and YouTube.<sup>56</sup> For Sunday school, this UBHC added Zoom links for children, K – 6 years of age, and teenagers,<sup>57</sup> all beginning in April of 2020. Likewise, NSBC’s women’s ministry began displaying an invitation to its Bible study to be held on Zoom.<sup>58</sup> These adjustments followed the mayors of D.C. and Maryland’s mandatory quarantines due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Despite these changes, Figure 5 in this project depicts NSBC’s traditional worship service format, customary ministries, and adherence to the ordinances, all online, yet in ways faithful to the Black Church tradition.

Also, in an attempt to renew the heritage of closeness between the church and the community, NSBC held a special Sunday worship service, called “Church Service, and Old-Fashioned Picnic in the Park,”<sup>59</sup> at Piney Branch Park, which is 5 minutes from the church. And, on August 19, 2019,<sup>60</sup> NSBC hosted a city-wide meeting and question &

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<sup>54</sup> *Nineteenth Street Baptist Church Online*, accessed on June 3, 2020, [www.everyblessing.org](http://www.everyblessing.org)

<sup>55</sup> Nineteenth Street, *Facebook*, accessed on June 3, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/nineteenth.street.399>

<sup>56</sup> Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, *YouTube*, accessed on June 3, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIL8xG5-YbTSRVVx1odHcZA>

<sup>57</sup> *PreK – 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Sunday school*, Zoom.com, accessed on June 3, 2020, <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81048834575?pwd=Z3QvMTFvREx0a1RsZUI4NUJ5K2o5dz09>; *Teen Sunday school*. Zoom, accessed on June 3, 2020, <https://zoom.us/j/692905919?pwd=K0paUUpZbUozVjdIZERBbjFpRFdpZz09>

<sup>58</sup> *Friday Night Selah: Women’s Bible Study*. Eventbrite, accessed on June 3, 2020, <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/friday-selah-womens-Bible-study-tickets-104474558216>

<sup>59</sup> Karen E. Williamson, “The Epistle,” vol. 40, no. 2 (February 2019), 11, accessed on May 30, 2020, <https://everyblessing.org/files/2015/12/Epistle-Feb19.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> Eleanor Holmes Norton, *Norton to Hold Affordable Housing Community Forum*, accessed on June 4, 2020 <https://norton.house.gov/media-center/press-releases/norton-to-hold-affordable-housing-community-forum-tuesday>

answer panel for the City Councilperson, Eleanor Holmes Norton, which addressed the D.C. government’s response to the reduction of affordable housing for senior citizens in the city. Along with other community gatherings, NSBC also planned a New Baptist Covenant forum, with a notable guest speaker, titled “An Exploration of Gentrification, and Racial Justice.”<sup>61</sup> Overall, NSBC’s new pastor began a renewal of this 300+ member congregation and its UBHC legacy via inspired worship services, broadened tasks in Christian Education, empowered work of associate clergy (online), and community care.<sup>62</sup>

*Wide-Angle Lens View on Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, and its Vicinity*

In addition to disclosing NSBC’s unseen attributes that undergird its practices, and renewal efforts, the shift of my lens to a wide-angle view of the surrounding neighborhoods and communities revealed an entirely different context than the church’s prior predominantly African American residential setting. Also, maps and empirical data revealed that changes in this community paralleled the trends in the broader District, during the years 2000-2018.

Explicitly, in Figure 2 of this project, a map view of NSBC’s neighborhood and adjoining communities identified the following communities that directly surround NSBC in Central Northwest D.C.: Adams Morgan, Columbia Heights, Crestwood, Le

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<sup>61</sup> New Baptist Covenant, “Home: An Exploration of Gentrification, and Racial Justice.” NBC Forum, accessed on January 20, 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/events/224377141941562/>

<sup>62</sup> Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIL8xG5-YbTSRVVx1odHcZA> (refers to “303 Subscriptions”)

Droit Park, Mt. Pleasant, Parkview, Petworth, and Sixteenth Street Heights. The District of Columbia Office of Planning “Population Trend” report,<sup>63</sup> which mapped the area changes, identified D.C.’s Central NW as one of the areas of the highest levels of growth in the city between the years 2000-2015. Interestingly, while this report indicates less poverty, and an increase in the income or wealth of the growing population,<sup>64</sup> the emerging group represent the largest youth population throughout D.C.<sup>65</sup> Also, the forecast in this report anticipates the following D.C. Central NW communities to experience significant growth between the years 2015 – 2022: Brightwood, Crestwood, Petworth, Columbia Heights, Mt. Pleasant, Pleasant Plains, and Park View, which all directly impact NSBC.

Regarding ethnicity changes in the D.C. Central NW communities, David Rusk, an urban policy professional, provided commentary to U.S. Census empirical data, which reported this vicinity as representing the 2nd greatest racial change in the District.<sup>66</sup> Figure 3 of this investigation illustrate the shift from 79.3% African Americans and 14.5% Caucasians in 1980, to 42.4% African Americans and 30.6% Caucasian by 2015, with over 40% of the rise in Caucasians in D.C.’s Central NW occurring in

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<sup>63</sup> The District of Columbia Office of Planning. *Population Trend* (D.C, 2016), 3, accessed on March 20, 2021, <https://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dme/publication/attachments/Office%20of%20Planning%20Presentation%20for%20CSCTF%204%2026%2016.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid, 17-19, 22.

<sup>66</sup> David Rusk, *Goodbye to Chocolate City: Articles, D.C. History, Demographics. D.C.* (D.C. Policy Center, 2017), accessed on June 1, 2020, <https://www.DCpolicycenter.org/publications/goodbye-to-chocolate-city/>

neighborhoods adjoining the old City of Washington, such as Adams Morgan, Columbia Heights, and Le Droit Park,<sup>67</sup> which represent geographical areas that were formerly home for many NSBC members (150). In reflection, the population changes that have included a noted rise of the number of Caucasian residents in NSBC's historic missional populace. This is further evidence of the gentrification above.<sup>68</sup>

Additionally, this transformative wide-angle lens view reveal immigrants, who speak very little English, numerically growing in parts of NSBC's historic missional communities.<sup>69</sup> Figure 4 reports significant increases in Hispanics, Africans, Asian American, and Pacific Islanders (AAPI), and Caribbean residents in D.C. throughout the years 2000-16.<sup>70</sup> The report discloses how, between 2000, and 2012-16, the Hispanic immigrant population grew from 31,400 to 37,100, an increase of 18 %, with the majority in the Columbia Heights and Mt. Pleasant neighborhoods in the District. D.C.'s Asian American and Pacific Islanders population has grown from 11,800 to 14,400 between year 2000, and 2012-16, an increase of 22 % of its local population. The greatest increased numbers of AAPI since 2000 were from China, India, and Korea. Similarly,

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<sup>67</sup> The District of Columbia Office of Planning. *Population Trend*, 7, <https://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dme/publication/attachments/Office%20of%20Planning%20Presentation%20for%20CSCTF%204%2026%2016.pdf>

<sup>68</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 184-185.

<sup>69</sup> *Population Trend*, 13, <https://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dme/publication/attachments/Office%20of%20Planning%20Presentation%20for%20CSCTF%204%2026%2016.pdf>

<sup>70</sup> Peter A. Tatian, Sara McTarnaghan, Olivia Arena, and Yipeng Su. *State of Immigrants in the District of Columbia*, "Data Profiles of Immigrants from Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean" (D.C.: Urban Institute, 2018), 3-4, accessed on July 2, 2020, [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99031/state\\_of\\_immigrants\\_in\\_dc\\_brief\\_2.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99031/state_of_immigrants_in_dc_brief_2.pdf)

between 2000, and 2012-16, the African population, chiefly from Ethiopia, grew from 9,500 to 14,800, an increase of 56 % for this culture. During the same period, the Caribbean populace has retained 6,000 residents from Haiti, Jamaica, Tobago, and Trinidad. Most importantly, D.C. saw growth trends in all immigrants in the Central NW, and Central areas,<sup>71</sup> illustrated on maps from the years 2000, 2012, and 2012 – 2016.<sup>72</sup> Thus, the largest share, 25%, of these naturalized U.S. citizens in D.C., was among 25 - 34-year agers during 2012-16. Due to their aging, and family growths, young Caribbean Americans have risen in number since 2000, from 20,800 to 23,400+ D.C. residents.<sup>73</sup> This report also indicates that the number of immigrant senior citizens 65 and older in D.C. has grown from 6,700 to 9,700 residents. In reflection, my wide-angle lens view of the broader District has reveals to NSBC's leadership that their UBHC's historic home surroundings have transitioned to a globalized populace.

Furthermore, the shift of my wide-angle lens views to the broader District reveals entirely different demographic trends, during the years 2000-18, than the previous predominant African American tendencies before the year 2000. Interestingly, shifts in age groups and ethnicities appear irrelevant until their presence is descriptively identified. Referencing the District's secondary schools and graduating seniors, who customarily

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<sup>71</sup> Tatian, et. al, 3-4,  
[https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99031/state\\_of\\_immigrants\\_in\\_dc\\_brief\\_2.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99031/state_of_immigrants_in_dc_brief_2.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> D. W. Rolands, *How the Regional's Racial, and Ethnic Demographics have Changed Since 1970*, (D.C. Policy Center, 2020), accessed March 3, 2021,  
<https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/regional-demographic-shifts/>

<sup>73</sup> Tatian, et. al, 3-4,  
[https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99031/state\\_of\\_immigrants\\_in\\_dc\\_brief\\_2.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99031/state_of_immigrants_in_dc_brief_2.pdf)

remain in the city, a noteworthy sociologist in the D.C. Policy Center, Chelsea Coffin, identified the student increases in local secondary and post-secondary schools, during the years 2000-17, the same time period of the other noticeable changes. Coffin posited that these students would be the children of the millennials.<sup>74</sup> The U.S. Department of Education reported that students who enrolled in DC colleges/universities during the year 2000 were 73,658,<sup>75</sup> and by the year 2017 the number had grown to 95,999,<sup>76</sup> which this postmodern cultural analysis attributed to 22,341 college students' increase in the District in seven years. The demographics of young people's presence was very important because it also contributed to a technological and high-density increase in the Central NW area, the home vicinity of NSBC.

This trend of increased young people continued in the form of grad students and young professionals with whom the church could foster connections/relations. During the years 2000-16, the D.C. increases of 20-24 year olds at 8.9%, and 24-34 year olds at 22.6% represent a lion-share of the D.C. population, which has also contributed to the increase in the Central NW area. The rationale that statisticians and sociologists gave for

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<sup>74</sup> Chelsea Coffin. *Will Children of Current Millennials Become Future Public-School Students? Education, Education Policy Initiative, Reports*. D.C, D.C. Policy Center, accessed on June 1, 2020, <https://www.DCpolicycenter.org/publications/future-public-school-students-report/#One-one>

<sup>75</sup> Laura G. Knapp et al, and Susan G. Broyles. *Enrollment in Postsecondary Institutions Fall 2000, and Financial Statistics, Fiscal Year 2000, NCES 2002– 212*, (D.C: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, [E.D. Tabs] 2002) 18, accessed on March 26, 2021, <https://nces.ed.gov/DataLab/TablesLibrary/TableDetails/1121?keyword=2002212&rst=true>

<sup>76</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), *Fall Enrollment in Colleges, and Universities, Surveys, 1970, and 1980; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall Enrollment Survey, (IPEDS-EF: 90);* and IPEDS Spring 2001 through Spring 2018, Fall Enrollment component, (D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2018), accessed on June 1, 2020, [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18\\_304.10.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_304.10.asp)

the whopping increase in 20-24 year olds is that they represent college graduates who seek access to the Capitol Hill internships, businesses, federal offices, organizations, and technology-related jobs. These increases resulted in a mobility cluster that spread from NW to Central NW and to North D.C.<sup>77</sup> Subsequently, the entire group of 17-34 year olds who arrived in the city for professional mobility represent nearly 30% of the D.C. populace. This is a complete generation who critically affect and speak to NSBC's future.

The third set of substantive changes affecting urban churches, such as NSBC, were mid-career relocations out of D.C., and retirees who moved back into the District. Specifically, people aged 45-49 and 55-59 whose tendencies have been relocations away from/out of the city either to counties or states external to the D.C. metropolitan area for lower cost residences, took with them their income and/or children. As well, relocators back to their hometowns further away took parts of the District's financial clusters/capital cashflow with them. Within this exchange, there was a rise in the 65 to 74 age group increasing the retiree cluster. Notably, those who lived in the broader D.C. Metro (MD/VA) and have moved back to the city for amenities created retiree clusters in healthcare, retirement/ adult-living, and transportation for their conveniences.

More specifically regarding senior citizens, Ellen Squires, a D.C. Policy Center researcher, used data from the 2016 American Community Survey and reported that 59%

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<sup>77</sup> The District of Columbia Office of Planning, *Population Trend*, (D.C, 2016), 3, <https://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dme/publication/attachments/Office%20of%20Planning%20Presentation%20for%20CSCTF%204%2026%2016.pdf>

of D.C. senior citizens were female.<sup>78</sup> This report indicated that while the proportion of senior citizens who are black decreased in recent years, from 63.8 % in 2009 to 58.4 % in 2016, black residents still make up a higher share of this age group than the overall D.C. population (47.1 %). Logistically, this report indicated that senior citizens normally do not have a college degree compared to the recent overall D.C. population (41.9 % versus 56.8 %). With regards to income, 13.4 % of senior citizens in D.C. ages 65, and older live below the Federal Poverty Line, compared to 9.2 % of the national average. Also, 75% of senior citizens in D.C. receive Social Security almost half receive retirement income, and 15 % receive food stamps (SNAP benefits), as well as 8 %, receive Supplemental Security Income. Within the same time frame, this report indicated the median annual income for tax filers ages 60, and older was from \$50,000 to \$75,000, with about 25% of the total senior citizen population reporting earnings of less than \$25,000, and 1/8th at least \$200,000 per year. While there are many multi-generational households in the District, as a group, senior citizens are more likely than the general population to reside in a non-family household living alone (58.1 %).<sup>79</sup> This was comparative to the majority (58.6 %) of senior citizens in D.C. who live in owner-occupied housing units. Among renters, about 53.5 % of senior citizens say their gross rent is at least 30 % of their annual household income (median monthly rent \$787), compared with 45.5 % of all adults in

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<sup>78</sup> Ellen Squires, *A Portrait of D.C.'s Older Adults*, (D.C.: D.C. Policy Center, 2018), accessed on July 1, 2020. <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/a-portrait-of-d-c-s-older-adults/>

<sup>79</sup> Michele Lerner, *Demand rises for properties that can house more than one generation*, [D.C.: Washington Post, September 30, 2015], accessed on July 1, 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/realestate/demand-rising-for-properties-that-can-house-more-than-one-generation/2015/09/29/9d6f7042-50bd-11e5-8c19-0b6825aa4a3a\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/realestate/demand-rising-for-properties-that-can-house-more-than-one-generation/2015/09/29/9d6f7042-50bd-11e5-8c19-0b6825aa4a3a_story.html)

D.C. (median monthly rent \$1,376). Other characteristics of senior citizens in D.C., were reported by Squires on D.C. Policy Center:

- 34.0 % ...are living with a disability.
- 24.4 % ...yet employed (up from 22.6 % in 2009), above the national average of 17.6 %.
- 14.8 % of ...senior citizens in D.C. are civilian veterans, compared to 4.7 % of D.C.

In summary, these intense changes in the people and places of mission for black historic churches in D.C., which led to their declines, raises questions on the churches' practices, visions, and their awareness of the "mission of God"<sup>80</sup> in the new era. College students including new or young upcoming professionals, as well as senior citizens, all entered D.C. for the urban conveniences. The increase in these groups has raised the number in city's rentals, cost-of-living and educational expenses, and also companies and restaurants that serve them. However, when viewed through the prism of low and middle-class income families, the entering populations, and the social structures underscore economic, educational, and housing disparities, which I assert as important to the Church. Most significantly, NSBC's surroundings are near parallel to that of the city, and the District has emerged into a postmodern capital, and globalized society. This is seen in the impact of stratification and the movement of diverse people throughout the broader region, which have altered the church's prior Black field-of-mission to multicultural, and pluralistic. Thus, the question becomes, "Can the socio-cultural changes speak to NSBC's view of self and God's mission? If so, how?"

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<sup>80</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 401.

Postmodern Cultural Analysis of an Urban Black Historic Church Surrounded by  
Emerging Dissimilar Neighborhoods

Considering the dominance of the emerging postmodern and globalized populace as the identity of the neighborhoods in NSBC's home-base, "... NSBC's home base, the issues of context become urgent for the church, which is why I have conducted a multilayered investigation. The study builds upon the emphasis of Theodore Maynard-Hickman, esteemed professor of Church Renewal, who posits the critical importance of a postmodern cultural analysis for assisting church leadership in decisions for renewing the faith identity of the body amidst 21<sup>st</sup> Century changes.<sup>81</sup> Fittingly, acclaimed sociologist, M. Cornis-Pope,<sup>82</sup> agreed with scholars in the field, Steven Best, and Douglas Kelner, in what postmodern cultural analysis entails:

...a multi-perspectival cultural analysis will attend to the dimensions of class, race, gender, and specific social groups in textual analysis, and critique. A multi-perspectival social theory will also conceptualize multiple axes of power, and domination, and multiple modes of struggle against them. [...] Becoming aware of the various discourses, and subject positions that constitute our subjectivity give us the power to see the multiple constraints that inhibit our thought, and action, and those oppressive discourses, and subject positions that we should fight to eradicate (sexism, racism, classism, chauvinism...)<sup>83</sup>

Respecting the social collaborative aim of this definition, Maynard-Hickman's wisdom, alongside the local growing urban multicultural society, I argue that UBHC's faithfulness

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<sup>81</sup> Theodore Maynard-Hickman, "Module 1: Context," Doctoral Lecture in Church Renewal from Boston University, Boston, MA, September 11, 2017.

<sup>82</sup> Cornis-Pope, M. *Narrative Innovation, and Cultural Rewriting in the Cold War Era, and After* (New York: Springer, 2001, 2016) 4.

<sup>83</sup> Steven Best, and Douglas Kelner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (NY: Guilford Press), 213.

to the *mission of God*, and African American Christian witness in a postmodern community, necessitate the Urban Black Historic Church to envision itself as a heterogeneous body, and as a part of the postmodern and globalized context. I base this thesis on 3 conversation threads. The first, and some would argue the most significant, is the cultural quality of the Black Church that enabled its ancestors to help themselves in its horrid Antebellum, and Postbellum transitions, that is their African heterogeneous quality. The second conversation thread will analyze this quality over and against traditional racial tensions between the U.S. dominant cultures and African Americans, which contribute to the UBHC decline and challenge it to respond in building the future. Then, based on these analyses, the last thread poses questions about UBHC core beliefs, seeking faith responses to the present-day polarized culture changes in the emerging communities surrounding the NSBC.

First, regarding one of the most significant qualities in U.S. African slave culture & religious folk history, the heterogeneous trait, Dale P. Andrews,<sup>84</sup> along with James H. Evans, Jr.,<sup>85</sup> scholars of Black Church Theology, talk about how this attribute in Nubian people enabled them to co-opt aspects in Christianity solely for nurturing their social relationships and worldview that undergirded their culture and religious traditions. Similarly, lecturing to WCC in Harare, Zimbabwe, in the year 1998, former professor at

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<sup>84</sup> Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology, and African American Folk Religion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 2002), 13-14.

<sup>85</sup> James H. Evans, Jr, *We Have Been Believers: An African American Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 3.

Union Theological Seminary, NY, Kosuke Koyama, talked about the quality of coexisting with people of contrasting views: “In a pluralistic world, those who embrace a particular position must be enlightened about positions other than their own. It takes critical intellectual effort to understand, and appreciate the plural reality of truths, and their meaningful coexistence.”<sup>86</sup> Affirming Koyama’s ideas resident in Africans, Molefi K. Asanti, a scholar of African American Studies, submitted that African religions also emphasize human relations, corporate, and individual relationships to the Supernatural, and a person’s understanding of one’s being in the effort to restore from human conflict and bring order.<sup>87</sup> This analysis affirms Andrews, Asanti, Evans, and Koyama’s contributions, and asserts these as inherited qualities of the enslaved Africans, and thus a trait continuing in urban Black historic churches. This analysis proposes that NSBC leadership recover heterogeneous traits for fostering collaborative relationships with the emerging postmodern and globalized communities.

Second, concerning traditional racial tensions between the U.S. dominant cultures and African Americans, I assert reasons for church responsibility in social collaboration. And rather than addressing the continuous and visible tension between the Black Church and White evangelical churches, such as the Southern Baptist Church, my attention was drawn to the Emergent Church because it poses hidden harms to African Americans and their UBHC. Formed in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Emergent Church was an opposing

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<sup>86</sup> Kosuke Koyama (1999), “A Theological Reflection of Religious Interculturalism”, last edited (March 2009), *The Ecumenical Review*, 51: 160-171, accessed on July 1, 2020, doi:10.1111/j.1758-6623.1999.tb00025.x

<sup>87</sup> Molefi K. Asanti, *The Afrocentric Idea* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 168-172.

reaction to the modern era's traditional churches' absolutism, which is a common foe of the UBHC. Also, due to the Emergent Church mostly discussing topics relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century society, maintaining a Bible centeredness, and offering an emotionally stimulating worship experience as a part of their meetings/Bible talks in spaces in common with cross-sectors of people (coffee shops and meeting rooms in colleges, libraries, restaurants, etc.), they attract people from the local globalized society, postmodern generation, as well as young African Americans/descendants of UBHC members. Keeping with its contemporary/non-traditional identity, rather than teaching a systematic theology, the churches in this contemporary organization presents Christian narratives of faith stemming from the Bible that can decenter cultural values. In short, the Emergent Church contributes to the attendance and membership decline of UBHCs in urban centers by attracting young people away from their families' churches. However, this is not the most harmful trait of the Emergent Church.

In addition, I consider this church as most harmful to African Americans and the urban Black historic Church due to how the contemporary group reads the Bible and the continued dominance of one culture group. The Emergent Church's reading of the Bible from a "Christian metanarrative" angle presents a biblical/faith identity problem. D.A. Carson, an author and evangelical theologian, described a lecture given by one of the Emergent movement's leaders, Brian McLaren, who discredited postcolonial or postmodern views of metanarrative:

It is no solution, McLaren asserts, to propose a 'metanarrative,' the Christian metanarrative, because even if there is a sense in which we want to invite people into the Bible's story line, in a postmodern world the word 'metanarrative' has all

the associations of a ‘propaganda.’ For postmoderns, it smacks of absolutism.<sup>88</sup> Further, in describing how to move forward with metanarratives would be to adopt pluralism, however, McLaren described world is “fragmented.”<sup>89</sup> With McLaren synonymizing all tradition as absolutism, and his grouping the pluralistic movement of considering diverse accounts of God as fragmentation, this Emergent Church leader’s vision of timeless and proven traditional values as a return to barbarities and future of pluralism as “leaving us open to marketers.” Alongside McLaren’s inconsideration of the lessons and values that one can learn crossculturally and multireligiously, Carson’s version of the emerging movement leader’s scarce descriptions of denominational perspectives depicts the Emergent Church’s limited awareness of African Americans’ religious values of peaceful coexistence in dignity. In some cases, the writer claimed that only a few African preachers have a limited understanding of the Bible book called Romans.<sup>90</sup> Similarly, Black pastors often use metanarratives in describing cultural, social, economic, and religious patterns in the Bible that crosses cultural and time boundaries; however, McLaren directly denounces such use of the Bible.<sup>91</sup> Most interesting, with this church’s Bible talks/services being led by young Caucasian men, and due to Carson’s version of McLaren’s excessive usage of absolutism vs. relevance argument, which

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<sup>88</sup> D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emergent Church: Understanding a Movement and its Implications* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervon, 2005), 32.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 67.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 32 and 165.

exudes intolerance vs. tolerance,<sup>92</sup> I interpret McLaren's avoidance of directly critiquing postmodern and globalized churches as this rising being a contemporary rendition of the dominant White culture's Modern Evangelical Church. However, with town centers filling with diverse cultures and lifestyles, I retort that the UBHC's urban locations amidst growing diverse societies conveniently positions the Church's leadership for educating the Emergent Church and its White culture, and fostering closer relations between these dissimilar communities.

Pertinent to relations, Soong Chan-Rah, a Korean American pastor, agrees that a multicultural community opens churches to the post-religious/secular. Rah and Evans contend that it is among the Church's responsibility to make relevant distinctions (e.g. between good or bad, and primary or secondary culture, etc.).<sup>93</sup> While not focused on the church per se, a noted theologian and ethicist, Katie G. Cannon offers a narrative about Zora Neal Hurston, a famous African American poet in Harlem, contributes to the idea of Black Church's renewal of topics pertaining to the family as a biblical location for crossing many cultural chasms.<sup>94</sup> This analysis affirmed the responsibility, reason, and role of the NSBC leadership in increasing dissimilar cultures in secular training practices (e.g., performing arts conservatory, career skills training, etc.), as well as to begin annual observances of additional civil religious days, such as Juneteenth, and Native American

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 31-33, and 35.

<sup>93</sup> Soong Chan-Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for Changing Church* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 71, 103, 162, and 166. James H. Evans, Jr, *We Have Been Believers*, 9.

<sup>94</sup> Katie G. Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 99-125.

days, all for learning about each other.

Third, I argue from a theological perspective that as a heterogeneous body, the Urban Black Historic Church is part of the present emerging postmodern and globalized context. Andrews elaborated on how the Bible accounts of King David's reception and application of Mosaic Covenant serve as a metanarrative for inspiring Black Church leadership in its religio-social reform in a multicultural setting. David moved the liberation aspect in the Covenant to the back, and shifted the reform part to the front, for fostering a peaceful coexistence with others.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, in James H. Evans, Jr.'s book, titled *We Have Been Believers: An African American Systematic Theology*,<sup>96</sup> and in an article, titled "David: King of Israel", by J. C. Rylaardam, a University of Chicago Emeritus Professor of Old Testament,<sup>97</sup> both discussed the geographic overlap and socially diverse context in which the Davidic covenant was given and lived into by the Israelites. This assessment maintains that the biblical focus shift from liberation to reform serves as a metanarrative for encouraging NSBC leadership to become a model of leading Church and social reform in D.C., as a part of this UBHC fostering relations.

Moreover, in reflecting on Cannon's review of Hurston's focus on family as a way for breaking barriers, and theological perspectives revealing David's cross-cultural

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<sup>95</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 116 (Refers to . I Chron. 17:11-15; 2 Sam. 7:12-16).

<sup>96</sup> Evans, Jr, *We Have Been Believers*, 11, and 69 (refers to Abraham), 40, and 79 (refers to Moses, and Israelites suffering context); 85, and 131 (refers to pre-exilic prophets' inspiration of reconciliation). Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 121.

<sup>97</sup> J. Coert Rylaardam, *David: King of Israel*, " accessed on July 1, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/David>

relationships in sharing God's Covenant, I assert that relations responsibility requires self-evaluation or self-critique. Freire and Rah posited the importance of dialogue for collaborative coexistence in diverse contexts, Carson was unable to critique the Emergent Church nor White Evangelicalism, in which the former's local meetings are led by White males, and the latter has led to racism and deaths of myriads of Black people. Although Evans and Rah did not use the exact word *dialogue* per se in topics regarding the church, scripture, or social justice, however, each's position on the Church's reason and role in overseeing responsible relations among cross-cultures offer promise as helpful sources of knowledge. Thus, theologically I agree with Andrews's selective use of moving liberation to the back and Covenant reform to the front, rather than eliminate or remove, as the liberation aspect from the Mosaic covenant was an existential part of the Israelite's faith identity.<sup>98</sup> Andrews's proposal of David's shift to a renewed heterogeneous character, where repentance and reform became the center of the Israelites' customs, indicates his ideology of identity as congruent with practice.<sup>99</sup> For NSBC leadership, I recommend taking serious a similar shifting or moving of the previous Liberation Theology backward, but not removal because the quest for liberation stands as a part of the Black Church religious history and identity. This type of move would be a reform of the UBHC's priorities/agenda, placing its heterogenous traits to the front. I elaborate later in greater detail suggesting ways for the UBHC to renew its heterogeneity in authentic ways that are faithful to Scripture.

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<sup>98</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 116 (Refers to . I Chron. 17:11-15; 2 Sam. 7:12-16).

<sup>99</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 1, and 96 (refers to dialogue); 93, and 124 (refers to move).

In summary, due to urban Black historic churches' inheritance of a heterogeneous worldview, and to the emergence of postmodern and globalized neighborhoods and communities, the UBHC leadership has an opportunity now to foster the growth of authentic and mutually beneficial relationships. In addition, considering Scripture and the relations responsibility of the church, this analysis suggests that historic Black churches in urban centers are the best agents for leading reform that best serves the emerging communities. As seen in this postmodern cultural analysis, there is more at stake for UBHC than multicultural Sunday services or unified episodic protests. Nonetheless, due to this postmodern cultural analysis, I emphasize importance of renewing the UBHC's heterogeneous quality. Due to the necessity of identity renewal, the question became, how would this recovery shape the social structure or ecclesial image of the church?

Social Structural Analysis Tools for an Urban Black Historic Church Surrounded by an Emerging Dissimilar Community

Without reservation, the postmodern cultural analysis support for recovering urban Black historic churches' heterogeneous ideology creates a framework for envisioning it as a common faith identity. Recognizing the potential and tension that this renewal would require underscores the need for intentional remodeling of the church's social structure and ecclesial image for modifying ministries that direct the congregation's internal, and external interactions. My own upbringing in a Black church gives me the foresight to expect that, in historic African American churches, changes to the church in providing for intercultural ministries and worship experiences would be most touchy and feared among senior members. Andrews named the four tensions that would understandably rise

regarding the topic: expected resistance from the patriarchs and matriarchs due to their view of the church as a place of refuge and liberation; questions about which is the most influential ministry in the church to begin such revitalization; questions about how the NSBC ministry can overcome inevitable vision limitations; and concerns about the structural barriers that may prevent the focal ministry from closing generation gaps.<sup>100</sup>

This analysis aimed to provide urban Black historic church leadership with an intellectual tool that will enable ministry leaders to begin prophetically viewing the emerging context for establishing additional connections in the future.

Nonetheless, this analysis concurred with Andrews's categorization of the problem, and the core question that this analysis followed: "The struggle facing black churches is no less a question of ecclesiology than it is a question of liberation. The question becomes, how does the church shape itself...?"<sup>101</sup> In reflection, while my analysis's contributors propose a heterogeneous ideology, and identify how cultural and demographic influences can inform Black Church leadership in areas necessitating the congregation's social structure changes, they offer very little as a tool for doing so. Therefore, this assessment has used a contemporary approach called the networking analysis technique.<sup>102</sup> This would allow the NSBC leadership to identify contemporary needs and envision new interactions between the church and its new neighbors.

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<sup>100</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 85 (resistance); 89-91, and 106 (influential ministry - covenant model of Black ecclesiology); 86 (vision limitations); 91-92, and 102 (social structure barriers/one-world).

<sup>101</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 65.

<sup>102</sup> Barry Wellman, S.D. Berkowitz, and Mark Granovetter, *Social Structures: A Network Approach* (UK: Cambridge University, 1988), 6, 22-33, and 517-518 (back cover).

Sociologists, Barry Wellman, S.D. Berkowitz, and Mark Granovetter, who study organizational behavior, and response amidst societal changes, described a recent tactic:

By using the powerful techniques of network analysis, they directly study the concrete relations that exist among persons, organizations, interest groups, and nation-states. Their work forms part of a worldwide scientific shift away from the tradition of analyzing things in terms of their intrinsic characteristics towards a structural analytic interpretation of phenomena in the light of their linkages with other members of systems.<sup>103</sup>

With an understanding that this networking technique is not a method or approach, but a fundamental intellectual tool for studying, it does not use stereotypical nor ethnic intrinsic identifications or procedures. Thus, it allowed me to examine the ways that people distinctly operate in organizations and in relation with other structures, all of which these connections and linkages are called nodes and people as network members. The network analysis technique was useful for the social structure analysis in providing the NSBC leadership a view of the many opportunities for connections and linkages between the church, as a network member, with the emerging globalized and postmodern populace and with new places in the NSBC home area and the District as a whole.

Using this tool enabled the study to identify the noticeable increases within the private sector industries and the construction of high-density homes in the District. The recent “Washington D.C. Development Report, 2019/2020 Edition” reported that there has been an increase in Education & Health services by 28.8K jobs, a rise in the Leisure & Hospitality industry by 21.9K jobs, and increases in Professional & Business services

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<sup>103</sup> Wellman et. al, *Social Structures*, 4.

by 15.3K jobs, all during the years of 2000 – 2018.<sup>104</sup> The analysis also reveals the major decreases in governmental public sector jobs that had employed many African Americans. Viewed through the prism of these jobs as connections and people as new networks, they are responsive to building the bridge for the prophetic offices. Yet, because these new nodes had formerly caused gentrification that led to UBHC declines, without a prophetic vision beyond liberation, they represent barriers.

In addition to recent new nodes in D.C., this analysis revealed that D.C. had made long-term commitments to its emerging postmodern and globalized populaces, and their institutions:

Mayor Muriel Bowser’s Economic Strategy calls for growing private sector GDP to \$100 billion by the end of 2021. With annualized private-sector GDP totaling \$99.0 billion as of the first quarter of 2019, the District is well on its way to achieving this goal. The tech industry has proven to be a strong growth center, and the nearby Amazon HQ2 will further enhance the District’s appeal to tech firms.<sup>105</sup>

Thus, using the networking analysis technique, this analysis identified corresponding trillions of square feet of land in constructions for accommodating high-density residential housing with upper floors, alongside the private sector businesses within the District over the most recent twenty years.<sup>106</sup> Wellman et. al., and Charles Crothers, a noted network analyst, classify clusters, and destinations for sagely, and new generational

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<sup>104</sup> Washington D.C, *Development Report*, 2019/2020 edition (D.C.: Washington, D.C. Economic Partnership, 2020), 6-7, accessed on July 1, 2020, [https://14x1z243z9883151c25fjqzl-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/dcdr\\_2019.pdf](https://14x1z243z9883151c25fjqzl-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/dcdr_2019.pdf)

<sup>105</sup> Washington D.C, *Development Report*, 2019/2020 edition, 4.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 12-14.

network members as long-term commitments: investments, entrepreneurial sectors, and construction.<sup>107</sup> Again, informed by the analysis, I assert that, because these new nodes have formerly caused gentrification that have led to UBHC decline, a prophetic vision is needed beyond liberation if the church is to address the barriers.

In summary, the emerging private sector of D.C., and NSBC's use of the networking analysis technique summons opportunities for the renewal of the urban Black historic churches, as network members, with emphasis on the focal church's history, heterogeneous trait, and God-given intercultural quality of fostering professional advancement and upward mobility. With a prophetic vision beyond liberation, the NSBC leadership could begin faithfully remodeling its social structure and ecclesial image by seeking ways that former sources of decline can be explored to uncover opportunities for envisioning the heterogeneous, intercultural Kingdom of God. Such a view on the Education & Health Services, the Leisure & Hospitality industry, and the Professional & Business clusters, and destinations viewed through the lens of a new social structure, presents future sites for education, professional development, and training. Similarly, with resolved solidarity, NSBC leadership can view the spiritual, and communal needs for connecting to incoming college students,<sup>108</sup> graduates, interns, and young

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<sup>107</sup> Barry Wellman et. al, *Social Structures*, 6, 22-33, and 517-518. Charles Crothers. *Recent Works on Social Structure: A Literature Review Essay*. (Refers to *Humbolt Journal of Social Relations*, vol. 22, no. 2, "Recent Advances in Theory, and Research in Social Structure" (1996), pp. 97-107), accessed on July 1, 2020, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/23263034>

<sup>108</sup> Chelsea Coffin. *Will Children*, accessed on June 1, 2020, <https://www.DCpolicycenter.org/publications/future-public-school-students-report/#One-one>

professionals,<sup>109</sup> as well as senior citizens, which all make up a significant part of the emerging neighborhoods in D.C.<sup>110</sup> While emotional affirmation and spiritual fulfillment can help remodel urban Black historic churches' ecclesial image, there yet exists a need for responding to cultural transitions for mutual benefit to the church and community in a postmodern society. A look at the African American experience for the purpose of remodeling the ecclesial image and fostering an intercultural ministry calls for a theme-based view or an analysis of the experience. Thus, this study redresses the core question: How can the UBHC shape its narrative for becoming a common heterogeneous identity?

#### Thematic Investigation of an Urban Black Historic Church Surrounded by an Emerging Dissimilar Social Context

Unlike the two prior studies that somewhat looked through UBHC's lens as a third party, a researcher and the subjects/oppressed people view their problem through an theme-based lens, which is formally called a "thematic investigation."<sup>111</sup> It enables them to become critically aware of their reality and beliefs, and become agents of change for themselves. Paulo Freire, a famed Brazilian educator, presented this methodology in a book titled, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed," which advocated for an education in which oppressed people critically engage the problems that they face. Such critical analysis

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<sup>109</sup> Laura G. Knapp et al, and Susan G. Broyles. *Enrollment in Postsecondary*, accessed on May 26, 2020, <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2002212>

<sup>110</sup> Ellen Squires, *Older Adults*, accessed on July 1, 2020, <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/a-portrait-of-d-c-s-older-adults/>

<sup>111</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 96, 104, 109, 110, 114, 118-119, 181.

takes place with the context of a larger world where the issues exist in larger patterns and themes that Freire calls a “thematic universe”:

The concrete representation of many of these ideas, values, concepts, and hopes, as well as the obstacles which impede the people’s full humanization, constitute the themes of [an] epoch. These themes imply others that are opposing or even antithetical; they also indicate tasks to be carried out and fulfilled. Thus, historical themes are never isolated, independent, disconnected, or static; they are always interacting dialectically with their opposites. Nor can these themes be found anywhere except in the human-world relationship. The complex of interacting themes of an epoch constitutes its thematic universe.<sup>112</sup>

For moving forward the present thematic universe to one that consist of themes and epochs more relevant to the present-day, Friere proposes that the oppressed interact with the oppressor for identifying generative themes and engaging in dialogue, which are defined as this section describes thematic investigation.

In this study, Freire posited the idea of framing oppressed peoples’ lived experiences into themes based on their opposing relationships and situations with their oppressors. For using Friere’s approach in developing the BETH approach’s framework, Smith described how oppressed and oppressors’ lived experiences were labeled as their human world or universe of themes, called thematic universe, and the relationship between these two peoples were depicted as continual conflict vs. opportunity.<sup>113</sup>

Pertinent to NSBC, the analysis aims to look at this congregation’s lived experience through a theme-based lens, for noticing indicators that are counted as counterproductive vs. those of fulfillment, all from the congregation’s perspective for later naming new

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid, 96-97, 101.

<sup>113</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 68-69, 97, 95, 96-97, 101, 104, and 108-109.

practices that could inform the development of an appropriate vision for focal ministry, which is church's Christian Education Department. Fascinatingly, the outcomes for my analysis for NSBC led this study to notice the congregations' discussions, lessons, and sermons, all included local adaptive challenges that were publicly documented as experienced by this church, not only intimately intertwined with the struggles of other UBHCs and African Americans, but also akin to thematic universes of other cultural, national, local-global people, and those abroad. Freire calls these shared experiences "generative themes."<sup>114</sup> However, before revealing the themes addressing the church, it was important to examine the components of its methodology, the thematic investigation.

The first factor in this investigation's methodology is called limit-situations, which either can function as barriers to progress or serve as opportunities for bettering one's condition.<sup>115</sup> Thus, encouraged teachers to engage students in critical reflection on their problems, discerning the limit-situations that they and their people have experienced. In essence, limit-situations take seriously the dialogical agency of humanity, in that people possess an enhanced ability for critically reflecting on their pasts (history) as well as self, and make transformative choices that will impact their present, and future situation. Freire's elaboration on limit-situations led to a logical conclusion that humanity can dialectically interact with their setting, objects, and other people, and thus distinguish freedom vs. limitations, as well as critically think while separating their activities, and the

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<sup>114</sup> Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 96-97.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

world from themselves “...as they locate the seat of decisions in themselves, and their relations with the world, and others, people overcome the situations which limit them...”<sup>116</sup> In practice, the critical investigation includes analysis of the particular situation of NSBC and the limit-situations in the larger culture, which serve some and oppress others. Thus, the first movement of the church’s critical reflection is to identify limit-situations and the opportunities and barriers that they introduce.

In addition, Freire’s usage of limit-situations in light of generative themes related to the continual struggles in others’ distinct cultural, economic, and geographical contexts, in the present, and across different times. Relatively, theologian, Robert L. Smith referenced Freire as a proactive subject, who responded to the limit-situations in his context by establishing a parallel in African American’s plight, and called them generative themes:

His work, undertaken in the context of Brazil in the 1950s, and 1960s, concerns the struggle to liberate men, and women from conditions of ignorance, poverty, and political domination [...] A parallel exists between the context of hunger, and class struggle in Brazil from which Freire wrote, and the context of the struggle of enslaved, and marginalized black people in America...<sup>117</sup>

Furthermore, because limit-situations have continually existed throughout U.S. History, whereas competing opposite themes persisted between ethnicities of Euro Americans and African Americans, I utilized this method for assessing the historical, cultural, and practice influences in the latter’s use of their slave masters’ Bible for

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid, 97-99.

<sup>117</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 67.

navigating their freedom. Also, this leadership project identified contemporary entities, and people who are being served in the present gentrification/ renovation processes which have impeded on UHBCs' normality in the District of Columbia today; namely, D.C.'s government agencies, real estate developers, college students, and incumbent professionals, as well as some senior citizens, are all benefitting from the renovations of the District. Thus, I encouraged NSBC to identify their human limit-situations in Central NW D.C., to reflect dialectically on the tensions, and to envision possible actions for mutual benefit with the emerging new community."

Freire posited that people have the innate gift of executing, what notable professor Alvaro Pinto coined, limit-acts,<sup>118</sup> in transforming their limit-situations and consequently changing their reality. Often, while dominant cultures may possess good intentions, and concur with improving oppressed peoples' condition, it is fear of the unknown or anxiety in experiencing an unproven reality that instigates suppression of people, in which undue dominance are also limit-acts.

In keeping with the proactive aim of this transformative leadership project, relevant to the topic of leadership praxis, Henri Nouwen, one of the leading voices regarding compassion, throughout his book, "Compassion: A Reflection on Christian Life," talked about love and dialogue as vital factors. His ideas about dialogue are different but compatible with Freire's, seeing dialogue as the prism through which radical

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<sup>118</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 97, 99-100; Alvaro Viera Pinto, *Consciencia e Realidade Nacional*, vol. 2, Rio de Janeiro, Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros, (1960), 284.

love, praxis, faith, and critical thinking can be understood. Nouwen's import about dialogue was helpful for this thematic analysis:

As soon as we start taking ourselves, and God seriously, and allow him to enter into a dialogue with us, we will discover that we also are asked to leave fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters, and follow Jesus in obedience. Quite often we will discover that we are asked to follow to places we would rather not go. But when we have learned to respond to the small displacements of our daily lives, the greater call will not seem so great after all. [...] Finally, voluntary displacements lead to compassion; by bringing us closer to our own brokenness it opens our eyes to our fellow human beings, who seek our consolation, and comfort.<sup>119</sup>

Herein, Nouwen presented the idea that the God-human dialogue can face people with challenging decisions and can result in the discovery of fellow neighbor in the common identity of humanity. With a noble goal of creating ways that oppressed, and dominant cultures can live together equitably, Freire largely talked about the need for continual dialogue between these two societies. This analysis viewed the limit-act of dialogue as a visional praxis.

In summary, thematic investigation points to the importance of critically analyzing the tensional relations between minorities and their dominant cultures for the benefit of those who suffer in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. In particular, I recommend NSBC Christian Education Ministry leadership succinctly carryout this investigation by identifying the ministry's overarching problem, locating the sub-problems as specific limit-situations, exploring limit-act of dialogue, and recognizing generative themes, all to respond to the problems. Later in the Assessment section, I pinpoint three specific areas of contemporary generative themes among most recent U.S. protests that are shared with

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<sup>119</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Compassion: A Reflection of the Christian Life*, (New York: Doubleday Publishing, 1989), 72 – 73.

NSBC. The implications for NSBC will be shared in the development of an appropriate vision in the conclusion of the Assessment.

### *Chapter Summary*

Thus far, using the first stage of the BETH approach, Analyze, for investigating the harmful effects of gentrification in D.C. throughout the years 2000 – 2020, focusing on the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church’s perspective. In so doing, I have offered a framework that would assist other urban Black historic church leadership in Thus far, using the first stage of the BETH approach, Analyze, for investigating the harmful effects of gentrification in D.C. throughout the years 2000 – 2020, focusing on the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church’s perspective. In so doing, I have offered a framework that would assist other urban Black historic church leadership in envisioning informed, and relevant practices, and then guiding their congregations in living into that vision in authentic ways, all led to several discoveries. The first discovery was that the emerging postmodern, and globalized populace presents challenges that the Black Church can accept in relation to the heterogeneous biblical and Black Church traditions. This discovery can reveal a fuller view of God’s purposes carried out through the church’s heterogeneous faith identity as it relates with the emerging surroundings. A second discovery is that the new neighbors, businesses, and organizations in the community might offer opportunities to create new partnerships, a more public theology, and a futuristic intercultural ministry. Of course, prevailing contentious themes instigated by those with hegemonic purposes place limitations on the entire African American culture’s full participation in growing networks with increased private sector employment and high

density homes. Yet, moving forward with postmodern and globalized neighbors, and an idea about the renewal of a God-given heterogeneous worldview offers many possibilities for building intercultural connections, enacting new ministry possibilities, and forming a new church narrative. The core question raised by the analysis of this chapter is what will the urban Black historic church's message, mission, and narrative become?

### **Chapter Three: Assess**

#### **Assessing the Black Church Message, Normative Faith Texts, and God's Mission of God for Renewed Leadership and Life in the Current Era**

Given this doctoral project's posit of renewing urban Black historic churches' inherited African heterogeneous faith identity as a common religious folk experience, and based on my proposal for remodeling the UBHC's ecclesial image for partaking in ministry interculturally, the question became, What will urban Black historic churches' message, mission, and theme become? In response, this transformational leadership project moved to the second stage of the BETH approach, Assess, that called for the assessment of the Black Church normative faith texts. My assessment will offer Nineteenth Street Baptist Church leadership a transformative way for re-grounding their message and reframing their view of God's mission relevant to today's urban society in the U.S. For "church leaders"<sup>120</sup> in the remnant UBHCs, such as NSBC. This assessment uses an emerging approach, postcolonial biblical criticism, for renewing its normative faith texts, and Bible stories in ways consistent with the church's authentic customs in advancing its awareness of the *missio Dei* in the prophetic tradition of the Gospels and Black Church witness. As I applied postcolonial biblical criticism in assessing the conditions, and ways that the Black Church normative faith texts were learned, over, and against the UBHC present situation, more relevant texts were located that transformed the previous message and mission of freedom | liberation to equity | covenant reform. And when looking at the grounding texts of Missiology's holistic mission theology, in dialogue with Black

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<sup>120</sup> Church leaders refers to Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, Associate Minister, and Director of Ministry

Practical Theology, the nuances pose an opportunity in proposing an appropriate visional framework of its mission for the Christian Education Ministry, in the year 2021.

Resurveying Biblical Assessment Methods for Transforming the Message, and Mission of the Urban Black Historic Church

Stage two of the BETH approach, *Assess*, focused on evaluating the normative faith texts of the Black Church. Robert L. Smith, the author of the BETH approach, posited that the Black Church normative faith texts convey the Bible's message to the ecclesial body's mission:

When considering the values, and meanings that inform the praxes of various church leaders, and workers who may be involved in creating particular ministries or other forms of praxis, certain doctrinal, and black religious understandings concerning the church, and its role, and its purpose will be drawn in. [...] Those beliefs are located within the normative texts of the faith where understandings of what the church is believed to be and to do are then brought forward.<sup>121</sup>

I learned in the assessment that many urban Black historic churches and their Christian Education Ministries have retained the same normative faith texts for decades. Thus, rather than using the current normative faith texts, this study assessed the UBHC focal church's message | mission framework. In doing so, this assessment looked to an African American Religion scholar, and theologian, Frederick K. Ware, who posited that the aim is locating the Scripture location (loci) that speak to the contemporary issue(s), and its guiding or underlying texts that provide direction and meaning, called locus or topics. All are used for forming creeds, principles, socio-theological positions in churches,<sup>122</sup> and

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<sup>121</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 195-196.

<sup>122</sup> Frederik L. Ware, *An African American Theology: An Introduction* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 5-6.

locating normative faith texts.

Loci are regarded as the main branches or subject areas of theology or, at minimum, basic topics for discussions in theology. With each locus, there are smaller component doctrines. For example, under the locus of soteriology (salvation), there are the doctrines of justification, and election.<sup>123</sup>

After locating relevant and specific loci in Scripture, if needed, locus supporting prior practices (topics) are decentered, and the newfound passages (topics) are brought forward, thus creating a pool for selecting the most significant as normative faith texts.

This assessment found that although both methods look to the Black Church's "praxiological"<sup>124</sup> quality, their distinctions provided a clear tool for assessing the focal church's normative faith texts, and message. For Ware, the loci method observes the Black Church's cultural, religious, and worldview situation, and looks to the Church's ideologies and values (whether Christianity or not) for finding the location of the ministry in the Bible. For Ware, the church's situation is the loci's informer, and the locus provides subject to the scripture location. Rather, for Smith, the normative faith texts account for churches' assumptions, meanings, and values that inform the congregation's practices, and observes the Bible as a resource for conveying the message, and mission. For both theologians, the Bible is the communicator to the Church. Therefore, the transformative aim of this assessment was to recognize NSBC's Christian Education Ministry's current location or loci and direction in the Bible, and "[bringing] forward"<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Ware, *An African American Theology*, 11 (importance of loci).

<sup>124</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 5 17, 28, and 217. (praxiological - actions which respond to situations with a display of sound theological judgment; praxeological)

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 195-196.

the Black Church's authentic ways of selecting relevant normative faith texts in conveying the message and mission of what the Urban Black Historic Church is to be or to do in postmodernity. With this aim, I identified three conversation threads: postcolonial biblical criticism, holistic mission theology, and Black Practical Theology.

The first conversation thread is postmodern biblical criticism. In a lecture, titled "Decolonizing the Homiletical Mind: Religious Hypocrisy, and Cultural Invasion," Kenyatta Gilbert, Jr., a scholar of Homiletics, offered a clear definition of this approach:

Postcolonial biblical criticism derives from a growing number of theologians, and practitioners, arising primarily out of the contexts of Africans/Pan Africans, Black Liberation/ Feminist-Theologians, Latin, as well as sympathizers, who aim at the decolonization of the Bible, for empowering the practice of the Christian faith while answering questions about freedom, religion, dignity, community, restoration, justice, hope, and spiritual transformation.<sup>126</sup>

My acceptance of this approach was for moving NSBC away from denominational agendas, and Modern/20<sup>th</sup> Century understandings of the Holy Bible (Bible), to ways that listened to and responded to refuge-immigrants, the marginalized, and the silenced voices in Scripture, and life. In agreement with Gilbert, African Bible scholars, Lazare S. Rukundwa, and Andries G. van Aarde posited that postcolonial biblical critique derived from the field of Postcolonialism, which is grounded in postcolonial theory. The Postcolonial Theory uses an optimistic/constructivist point of view as a means of defiance by which any exploitative, and discriminatory practices, regardless of time, and space, can be challenged.<sup>127</sup> Similar to Gilbert in discussing the critique of Word,

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<sup>126</sup> Kenyatta Gilbert, *HUSD Gilbert Lecture 2019: Decolonizing the Homiletical Mind: Religious Hypocrisy, and Cultural Invasion*, accessed on March 18, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vNjTm0qSMHE&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>127</sup> Lazare S. Rukundwa, and Andries G. van Aarde, "The Formation of Postcolonial Theory,"

Rukundwa, and van Aarde included the triangular nations of Africa, and Latin America, and Asian:

These triangular hermeneutics (the Bible provides the text - the Western theologian produces the hermeneutics - the rest of the world reads) - need to be reviewed in the postcolonial process. The idea is not to destroy the hermeneutical tools produced by Western theologians but to recognize the hermeneutical principles that respond to the needs of the tricontinental context. [...] if exegesis is to be truly contextual, and African, an ideological break with the western centrist ideology is necessary. African perspectives, and contexts must stimulate exegesis to formulate questions that are relevant to their situations.<sup>128</sup>

In addition, I add retort to this issue whose full body of treatment is beyond the scope of this transformative assessment. An article in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* reports modernists' arguments against postmodernists' appending confirmed biblical information.<sup>129</sup> The modernists argue that, despite sharing the same era with postmodernists, they critique and rewrite the former's hard work that produced history, reality, and meaning. The article went on to report modernists' allegations that, although coexisting with postmodernists in the same metanarrative, they do not produce the type of work that the former produced, but rather they continue changing pre-existing texts and creating a diverse bricolage. In response, my assessment is, in essence and intent, transformational. Thus, I affirm postmodern critiquing that appends modernists' accounts of biblical history, reality, and meaning due to contributing bodies' different spaces, and

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*African Journals Online: HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies.* (Congo, Africa: University of Pretoria, 2007), 1171, accessed on December 3, 2019, <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/hts/article/view/148581/138081>

<sup>128</sup> Rukundwa, and Aarde, "Postcolonial Theory," <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/hts/article/view/148581/138081>

<sup>129</sup> George Aichele, Peter Miscall, and Richard Walsh, "An Elephant in the Room: Historical-Critical, and Postmodern Interpretations of the Bible," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 128, no. 2 (2009): 383-404 (385), accessed on September 19, 2020, doi:10.2307/25610189.

social situations during each receipt, organization, and translation of the proposed sacred religious texts. In addition, my transformative assessment differs from modernists' evaluations of postmodern biblical criticism, due to the body of foundational work that has been offered in African American Christian religious folklife, and history, bible reading, theology, and ecclesiology. Brian K. Blount, Katie G. Cannon, Mary B. Hinton, Jr., Gayraud S. Wilmore, Cain H. Felder, and Thomas L. Hoyt, as well as contemporary contributors to the practice of postmodern biblical criticism, such as Mitzi J. Smith, Felicia H. LaBoy, and other Womanist researchers, all well represent African American assessment in lifting biblical scriptures that underscore God's interactions for the good of the oppressed and oppressors simultaneously.

*Unearthing the Antebellum Black Church Message and Mission, through Postmodern Biblical Criticism*

Relevantly, postcolonial biblical criticism from African American Religion discourse, which identifies economic, educational, and social issues in the bible, posit that enslaved African church gatherings, tenets, worship, songs, and instructions (preaching/ teaching) were worded by Scripture based on their prior awareness of God versus their rigid sufferings as U.S. slaves.<sup>130</sup> On personal levels, enslaved Africans embraced certain Scriptures as resources for self-affirmation, coping, and inspiration amidst their harsh experiences by listening to the Scripture readings of their slave masters and translating it according to its socio-historical suffering.

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<sup>130</sup> Rukundwa, and Aarde, "Postcolonial Theory," <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/hts/article/view/148581/138081>

Brian K. Blount, author of “Cultural Interpretation: Reorienting New Testament Criticism,” explained how the Bible-to-contextual translation occurred:

The 'texts' the slaves drew upon were orally transmitted Bible stories. The fact that the spiritual is an oral phenomenon opens it all the more to context influence; the literary controls that exist in written works are absent. Contextual influence on the spiritual interpretative process begins at the moment of creative conception. The music, and its accompanying words, to effectively interpret the historical moment, adapt themselves to that moment.[...] Because of the spiritual responsive nature individual singers had no qualms about changing the music so that it would more appropriately fit a new socio-historical circumstance.<sup>131</sup>

Africans used the Bible in affirming Christian piety. Theologian, Katie G. Cannon noted:

The biblical interpretation of the antebellum Black Church served as a double-edged sword. Confidence in the Sovereignty of God, in an omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient God, helped slaves accommodate the system of chattel slavery. [...] The biblical interpretation of the Black church also made the slaves discontent with the service condition. [...] The Black religious experience equipped slaves with a biblical understanding that called them to engage in acts of rebellion for freedom. The faith assertions of the Black church encouraged slaves to reject any teachings that attempted to reconcile slavery with the gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>132</sup>

In reflection, Cannon added to a growing body of works that described how the UBHC ancestors affirmed the Bible’s piety, God’s justice, and their prior awareness of the mission of God. This assessment asserts that holding Cannon’s work as valid affirmed the plight of UBHCs, the voices of feminists and womanists, and current worldwide protests as an embodiment of a metanarrative of Jesus’ ministry, because their exegesis ascribe the Suffering Servant narrative for women and slaves, whereas God inspired both.

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<sup>131</sup> Brian K. Blount, *Cultural Interpretation: Reorienting New Testament Criticism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf, and Stock, 2004), 57.

<sup>132</sup> Katie G. Cannon, “The Emergence of Black Feminist Consciousness,” in *Feminist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty M. Russell (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1985), 31.

Affirming Africans' awareness of the mission of God before arriving in America, Gayraud S. Wilmore, a scholar of African American church history, offered three responses by UBHC ancestors to the popular preaching of apocalyptic Scripture from the Book of Revelation, mostly by their White slave masters. First, due to disbelief after nothing heavenly occurred after a while, there was a turning away from Christianity, millions never joined the church, and others backslid from the faith, of their so-called conversions, into apostasy.<sup>133</sup> The second response was people joining the church due to the anticipation of the return of Christ, who would take sufferers to "another world" (Heaven), also due to the intensification of charismatic phenomena, and "spirit possession,"<sup>134</sup> all expressed by either speaking in tongues, shouting, and/or dancing. The third response to apocalyptic preaching from the Book of Revelation was akin to the second respondent's belief in the "next world." In this next world understanding, although it too is beyond death, and distant future, the distant future of the new heaven, and new earth exude a notion that the existing heaven and earth perfected, and the future is brought back to the present, with ancestors. Wilmore expressed the third:

...it is the present world turned upside down – a world in which 'the evil cease oppressing', and the 'last shall be first.' But it is also a world not far from the physical world in the sense that it is where the natural gestures, affections, and relationships of this present world are validated and fulfilled.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Gayraud S. Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality: The Christian Faith Through an Africentric Lens* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 87-90, 173-174 (slaves' response to apocalyptic preaching).

<sup>134</sup> Wilmore, *Pragmatic Spirituality*, 174-175 (slaves' second response to apocalyptic preaching).

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*, 176 -177 (slaves third response).

Further implications of otherworldliness, according to Wilmore, referred to the “Kingdom of God,” but according to African, and African American religion, was not some distant detached place, rather it is this world in a perfect condition. Most significantly, it is the third response to an apocalyptic destination that echoed in slaves’ songs, such as “Steal away to Jesus” “Crossing the Jordan,” “Wade in the Water,” or “Goin’ to the Promised Land.”<sup>136</sup> These Scripture-based songs referenced the Underground Railroad for traveling to territories of freedom beyond the Ohio River. According to a theologian, Dwight D. Hopkins, they yearned for returning to Africa.<sup>137</sup> Regardless, Scripture-based biblical hero songs talked about slaves’ anticipation, desires, and earthly hopes.

Interestingly, Mary B. Hinton, a foremost theologian and Christian Education scholar, drew correlations between Israelites’ deliverance and African’s escape from slavery, and observed social differences, due to their sense of covenantal kinship with God, and each other, in the following passage.

Given that the key tenet of biblical religion is kinship, it is important to articulate that the concept of brotherhood/sisterhood was alive in very early black churches. Though Christian fellowship limited the amount of brotherly/sisterly love between the races during slavery, the biblical teaching of kinship, especially fictive kinship, thrived in the black community. As was the case with the people of Moses who escape the city-states of Canaan, blacks were keenly aware of the social separation between them, and the whites. Likewise, as the Israelites created an alternative, and a rich sense of community so, too, did the enslaved.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Dwight D. Hopkins, *Black Faith, and Public Talk: Critical Essays on James H. Cone's Black Theology, and Black Power* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007), 97-101, and 98 (refers to slaves' Scripture-based songs).

<sup>138</sup> Mary Hinton, *The Commercial Church: Black Churches, and the New Religious Marketplace*

Similar to kinship, professor of African American Religion and profound Unitarian, Anthony B. Pinn, identified Genesis 1 as a popular sacred text in Black Church preaching tradition, and he elaborated on human care and a Godly sense of earth care.

The Negro sermon in verse is an interpretation of the creation story found in the Hebrew Bible, in Genesis chapter 1. However, just as black religious biblical scholars Cain Hope Felder and Renita Weems have proclaimed, African American interpretations of biblical Scripture (or biblical hermeneutics) added more than just a fresh and theological empowering interpretation of the text.[...] From a black theological ecological liberation perspective, these sacred texts can also be seen as important instructions on how both understand human relationship to the divine and to facilitate and nurture a human relationship with the earth.<sup>139</sup>

Overall, this transformative assessment of postcolonial biblical discourse unearthed UBHC ancestors' translations of Scripture, and co-opting of the oppressors' churches, as a refuge for coping, fellowship, and worship that nurtured their inner African culture, and religious convictions. Consequently, the new context allows urban Black historic churches to be used in mutually beneficial ways for its members, and the growing postmodern and globalized neighbors, through relationship and obedience to Scripture.

*Excavating the Postbellum Black Church Message and Mission through Postmodern Biblical Criticism*

In moving from viewing the Church from being understood solely as a place of refuge/care and protection, to a center for increased freedom and liberation, Black Church leadership shifted their congregations' biblical attention in message and mission to

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*in America* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), 28.

<sup>139</sup> Anthony B. Pinn, *African American Religious Cultures* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 497.

Scripture locations that pointed to normative faith texts that conveyed a word of autonomy and mission of liberty. My reference to postmodern biblical criticism discourse reveals that the postbellum Black Church used scripture topics (locus) for conveying the creation of African American progressive communal works (schools and universities) and the 20<sup>th</sup> Century church's Civil Rights movements. Helpfully, these findings aided the study's aim in bringing forward the Black Church's authentic ways for learning and communicating its emerging message and mission framework (freedom | liberation).

Relevantly, Cain H. Felder, a scholar in Biblical Studies, in his book titled *Stony Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation*, offered a postmodern biblical critique that brought forward the African loci of Creation, God, and Revelation for the Black Church.<sup>140</sup> Within this book, C.M.E. Bishop, Thomas L. Hoyt, Jr., posited that African Americans read the Bible much differently than White Americans, in that the stories about Creation, Exodus, and Eschatology (Revelation) were central themes to the U.S. enslaved African's faith identity, understanding of God, and the future or end time participations. Regarding Creation (Gen. 1), Hoyt opined, "The Sovereign parenthood of God implied a Sovereign kinship within humankind. Some scholars would consider the Creation story as the one undergirding the hermeneutic of blacks, and their interpretation of Scripture."<sup>141</sup>

Drawing from the Bible's book of Deuteronomy, Hoyt explained how the Black

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<sup>140</sup> Cain H. Felder, *Stony Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991).

<sup>141</sup> Thomas L. Hoyt, Jr, "Interpreting Biblical Scholarship for the Black Church Tradition," *Stony Road We Trod*, ed. Cain H. Felder (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 32.

Church grasped the work of God, and the Israelites through the narrative of their plight from Egypt to freedom:

My father was a homeless Aramaean who went down to Egypt with a small company and lived there until they became a great, powerful, and numerous nation. But the Egyptians ill-treated us, humiliated us, and imposed cruel slavery upon us. Then we cried to the Lord the God of our fathers for help, and he listened to us and saw our humiliation, our hardship, and distress; and so, the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand, an outstretched arm, with terrifying deeds, and with signs, and portents. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk, and honey. (Deuteronomy 26:5-10)

Then providing a hermeneutical privilege, which compared the plights of the U.S. African slaves to the Israelites, Hoyt asserts...

Our ancestors were great and powerful people on the continent of Africa. Africa once ruled the world. There, great and mighty empires existed like Egypt, Ethiopia, and Mali. Our fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers were kidnapped, stolen like cattle from their home in Africa and brought to America as slaves. They were beaten, molested, and killed. Yet, all the while they were building America.<sup>142</sup>

Pertinent to the Black Church locus that was transferred from the Antebellum to Postbellum Black Church, Hoyt bridged Creation to Eschatology and end times. In critiquing the widely accepted view of an eschatology that the new heaven and new earth are entirely separate from the present creation, Hoyt highlighted the consequences of such a view: "This politically reactionary view has been detrimental to blacks, and the poor because the concern has been for the 'souls' of human beings to the exclusion of oppressive, and dehumanizing socio-economic, environmental, and political

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<sup>142</sup> Hoyt, "Interpreting Biblical Scholarship," 31, (Hermeneutical privilege similar to mutual critical correlation)

structures.”<sup>143</sup> In reflection, Hoyt had offered the inherent possibility of a creation motif with humanity as co-creators with God in making and inhabiting the new earth and new heaven.

Similarly, Felder elaborated on biblical sacralization and secularization’s use by some for cultivating advantageous patterns of ethnocentrism/racism.<sup>144</sup> In a popular Bible story about Noah and the flood, particularly the post-flood experience in Genesis 9:18-27, Felder offered a critique that in antiquity there was not a notion of race nor skin color, particularly in verses 20-27 where Canaan (son of Ham) was cursed. Cain posited that a conjecture had been formed that has led to the construal of culture, and history and sacralized some, and subjugated others to slavery:

Thus, in Westermann’s view, Ham, in effect, was cursed, and presumably with him not just Canaan but all of the other descendants of Ham, that is, Cush, Egypt, and Put (Phut), as cited in Genesis 10:6. Although I disagree with Westermann’s contention that Ham was, in effect, cursed in Genesis 9:18-27, Westermann does help us to see that the ambiguity of the text can lead Bible interpreters to justify their particular history, culture, and race by developing self-serving theological constructs.<sup>145</sup>

Unlike Westermann, Felder identified many places in the Old Testament where Africans or figures from darker regions were a part of God’s prophetic work: an Ethiopian (Tirhakah) was a pharaoh of an Egyptian kingdom that the Israelites sought for help; Africans as wealthy (Job 28:19; Isa. 45:14); a black African author, Zephaniah, son of Cush (Zephaniah 1);, and part contributor to the prophetic works of God, such as

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 33.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, 132.

<sup>145</sup> Felder, *Stony Road We Trod*, 132 (refers to Westermann, 484).

Ebedmelek an African of status who saved Jeremiah's life from extensive imprisonment (Jeremiah 38:7-13; 39:15-18), to name a few.<sup>146</sup>

Similarly, in the New Testament, Felder offered substantive rebuts to denigrations that were motive-based sacrilege or secular, and that unfoundedly identified Africans as Gentiles rather than Jews, such as the rich Ethiopian (Acts 8:26-40). Pertinently, Felder highlighted that Africans' persistence and resolve to freedom in the U.S. led to adopting select stories, and verses in Christianity's Bible. It had to do with their African birth-right as a part of God's original works in the earth, and who led in commissioning, and sending the first Apostles. Felder highlighted people such as Simeon, who was called Niger (Latin: the black man), and Lucius, who were African leaders in the Antioch Church that ordained/sent new Apostles Barnabas, and Paul (Acts 13:1-2).<sup>147</sup> Moreover, through critique, Felder emphasized how Bible verses identified Jesus as the Son of God made flesh (St. John 1), Son of Man (Matt. 8:20), and other Scriptures that identified Jesus suffering, crucifixion, death, and humanly glorified resurrection (Matt. 28), all dispelled the idea that God was impersonal, and that gave prophetic hope of freedom in the lives of enslaved Africans.

Even more convincing to my aim, C. E. Lincoln & Lawrence Mamiya, noted Black Church historians, conveyed that during early Black Church history, the verses regarding freedom were central to gospel preaching and teaching because the enslaved Africans' understanding was that, when salvation came so did freedom. Their awareness

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid, 137.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 144.

was that freedom was both spiritual and natural: “*If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed*” (St. John 8:36).<sup>148</sup> I assert that the preponderance of Scriptures gave reason for Lincoln and Mamiya to include the formation of churches solely under the leadership of Black pastors: First African Church in Augusta Georgia; Bethel A.M.E. Churches that became the mother church of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Church of God in Christ. Along with developing churches, some interpretations of Scriptures and Bible stories that were applied by black slave preachers preached about vision of freedom in terms of revolt:

...the three largest slave revolts in American history were led by slave preachers. The Old Testament narratives of Exodus and the prophets, and the New Testament apocalypse were for them compelling signals of God’s concern for their freedom. The sense that slavery was inconsistent with the will, and character of God was subliminal to slave religion, thus the three largest slave revolts in American history were planned and led by slave preachers: Gabriel Prosser in 1800 near Richmond; Denmark Vesey in 1822 in Charleston South Carolina, and Nat Turner in 1831 in Southampton County, Virginia.<sup>149</sup>

My assessment summarizes that their unsuccessfulness had more to do with God’s desire for the freedom of Black people to occur naturally and peacefully. Nonetheless, the bible was not solely read as a word and mission of piety and religious membership, but also read as freedom and liberation.

Carter G. Woodson, a celebrated educator, author, and Black Church historian, noted that the Bible as a whole and the Black Church were considered important in the development of the Negro, such that in every Negro school there was instruction in the

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<sup>148</sup> Lincoln, and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 4, 177, 117-118, 251-252, 110, 189, and 196-197. (refers to God, Son of God, and freedom)

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, *The Black Church in the U.S.*, 203 (refers to Exodus).

English Bible, and to the extent that missionaries and colleges were built:

They [the missionary teachers] came to change the character of the freedmen through an intelligent religion based upon actual knowledge of God as revealed in the Bible. Among these workers one should mention Rev. D. L. Johnson, a teacher of refugees in Washington; Solomon Peck, a volunteer teacher of the contrabands at Beaufort, South Carolina, in 1862; Horace Burnstead, afterward President of Atlanta University; and Gen. O. O. Howard, President of Howard University.<sup>150</sup>

As an educator who provided books to NSBC's church school and the National Training School for Women and Girls (founded by Nannie Helen Burroughs), Woodson recalled how Sunday school and Bible Study provided more than food for the minds of a kindred nature, but it broadened the appetites of the next generations for learning other subjects, such as medieval history, and theology. The practice of reading the bible also assisted in Black church members' socialization such that adult and senior members could discuss parliamentary issues, and many spoke eloquently, and intelligibly in debates or discourses about issues.<sup>151</sup> Woodson's critique of the students' usage of the bible, and by providing Negro History books in Black Schools helped understand why the Antebellum, and Postbellum Black Churches lifted the Bible, and the Bible lifted the Church,<sup>152</sup> due to the Bible serving three vital aspects of students' lives: literacy, spirituality, and socialization.

In addition, postmodern Bible criticism, which takes seriously the cultural and contextual implications of people's awareness in reading the Bible, provided an

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<sup>150</sup> Carter G. Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church* (DC: Associated Publishers, 1921), 143.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, 23-24, 26, 37, 40, 62, 150-153, and 199.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, 167-171.

opportunity for exploring how the Black Church used the Bible as a resource that supported their lived mission and informed the development of contextually relevant and theologically informed practices in the Civil Rights of blacks, immigrants, refugees, and others. Anthony Pinn, author of *“The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era,”* identified the social gospel as the praxiological thrust of the Black Church during the transition from the dust of the twentieth century to the dawn of the twenty-first century. This transformative assessment ascribed the wording of contemporary Black Church covenants, creeds to what the Church identifies as the social gospel’s grounding text:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
Because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor,  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the  
blind,  
To set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.* (Luke 4:18-19, NRSV)

Regarding this text, Pinn posited that ministers Reverdy C. Ransom (AME), Walter Hood (AMEZ), and L.K. Williams (Baptist), placed their ministries in the framework this scripture as the social gospel for community development, and argued that as Christians there was a social binder for ending poverty and discrimination.<sup>153</sup> Also, Pinn ascribed the truth force philosophy of Indian leader Gandhi, and the social gospel for Martin Luther King’s Civil Rights Movement, which I add was return an inherent praxiological quality:

...to move away from the Church’s complacency of the early twentieth century, and to reconnect with the social agenda that framed the work of the first generation of independent black churches. [...] But [an activist’s] comment suggests that the mission established by King, and other prominent figures in the

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<sup>153</sup> Anthony B. Pinn, *The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 11.

civil rights movement required the active participation of congregations. Members of churches created, and distributed information, raised money, spread word of meetings, boycotted businesses, and marched under the vision of freedom presented by the movement's leadership.<sup>154</sup>

Consequently, these practices that extended from 1957 throughout the 1960s became a national movement, which resulted in reforms of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment for outlawing slavery in all states, the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment for protecting the Civil Rights of past slaves, and the Voting Rights Act that supported the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment for protecting all men and women citizens' votes. This evaluation assessed that this freedom message and liberation mission had been fought for by women in Black Churches, and had been voted into law ever since the 1880s,<sup>155</sup> but not enforced in all states before the Black Church's overt, and peaceful practice of their inherent worldview, which scholars called the social gospel.

Alongside the aforementioned benefits, this biblical critique shifted the Black Church and the nation's attentions to human rights in the 1970s, which benefitted citizens with physical disabilities, immigrants, and others. Regarding collateral effects of the Civil Rights Movement on immigration, Todd Schribner, the Education Outreach Coordinator in the Department of Migration, and Refugee Services in the U.S. Council of Catholic Bishops reported, "...Asians, and Eastern, and Southern Europeans who were effectively forbidden entrance into the United States for decades, the spirit of the Civil Rights Movement provided an important turning point in the formation of migration policy, and

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 13-14.

<sup>155</sup> Martha S. Jones, *How Black Suffragists Fought for the Right to Vote, and a Modicum of Respect*, "Humanities: The Magazine of the National Endowment for the Humanities," (Summer 2019), vol.40, no.3., D.C., accessed on March 18, 2021, <https://www.neh.gov/article/how-Black-suffragists-fought-right-vote-and-modicum-respect>

its relationship to race.”<sup>156</sup> And, reflecting on the needs/rights of African Americans as common to all humans, African American national networks, such as its historic denominations’ (AMEC, AMEZ, Baptists, COGIC) foci or creeds alongside people such as Rev. Jesse Jackson’s, and Rev. Al Sharpton’s Rainbow PUSH Action Network, also addressed human rights in economic and social progress for all oppressed.<sup>157</sup>, and despite African American’s mass migrations back to the U.S. South, and suburbs, during the 1980s –1990s,<sup>158</sup> Pinn posited that African American churches who directed their values to human rights, such as Allen Cathedral A.M.E. Church, in Queens, New York, Mount Olivet Baptist Church in St. Paul, Minnesota, and others, thrived due to their investments in economic development, education, employment, and housing in their city.<sup>159</sup> The transformative assessment of this value shift, from solely African American to humanity, was that the Black Church message of freedom, the mission of liberation, as civil rights practices were eclipsed by Sovereign calls for human rights in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The implications for NSBC leadership were the following. While there were renewals of some black historic churches in the District, due to their responses to social issues about human rights, and the corresponding preaching of a social gospel,

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<sup>156</sup> Todd Schribner, *How the Civil Rights Movement Influenced U.S. Immigration Policy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Bishops, 2019), accessed on October 7, 2020, <https://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/african-american/civil-rights-and-immigration.cfm>

<sup>157</sup> Lincoln, and Mamiya, *The Black Church in U.S.*, 85; Anthony B. Pinn, *The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 77.

<sup>158</sup> Anthony B. Pinn, *African American Religious Cultures* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2009), 468 (mass migration of Black people to suburbs, and U.S. South, 1965 – 2000).

<sup>159</sup> Pinn, *The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era*, 77; Lincoln, and Mamiya, *Black Church in U.S. History*, 110, 189, and 196-197.

throughout the years 2000 – 2019 there yet were noticeable declines in church numbers, caused by cultural, social structural, and narrative concerns, discussed in the analysis of this project. This study call these three concerns a trifold situation. And this assessment’s comparisons between the Antebellum-, Postbellum-, and the Modern Black churches’ contexts highlighted three significant aspects that were helpful to the aim of bringing forward praxiological traits, and usage of the Bible as a resource for re-grounding the UBHC’s message of freedom, and re-framing its mission of liberty in postmodernity. First, the use of the Bible, and church fellowship served as refuge/resource for renewing African inherent values of assemblage, collaboration, and family. Second, the practice of applying Scripture to the sufferers’ experiences functioned as a resource that appealed to the conscience of the U.S. White society for the social liberation of Black people and immigrants. Third, a review of Black Church History, amidst 21st Century challenges, served as a self-evaluation that distilled a clear method of how this body functioned as a decolonizing agent of God. Thus, I redressed my core question: What will the UBHC’s re-grounded message and reframed vision of God’s mission become in the 21st Century?

#### Re-grounding the Urban Black Historic Church’s Message for Increasing its Relevance in 21st Century Society

The initial task in Assess, re-grounding the UBHC’s message with faithfulness to the mission of God and relevance in the U.S. 21<sup>st</sup> Century society, requires what Smith refers to as “mutual critical conversation.”<sup>160</sup> Relevant to NSBC, critical conversation

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<sup>160</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 185-187.

calls for an explicit and deliberate assessment of the church's present situation through comparing it with the context of the social gospel in Luke 4:18-19, which is defined in the following subsection. UBHC's ancestors progressed by such assessment informally:

Historically, the [enslaved African] men and women who developed the unique black faith in response to the injustices of life in the New World were able to create new perspectives and ways of being only after the careful and deliberate assessment of their situations. This is how they understood that the form of white Christianity that they were taught was not right.<sup>161</sup>

A critical conversation for carefully assessing African American church folks' current situation means comparing the Black Church's traditional belief of the social gospel with the 21<sup>st</sup> Century society's understanding it, all for revealing the juxtaposition between the two. Likewise, evaluating UHBC declines means critically comparing its Black Church message with the present lived experiences of its church members, with their postmodern descendents, and the surrounding globalized neighborhoods, for disclosing the internal and external contrasts. I assert that using postmodern biblical critique for studying what is learned in assessing the text and message, over and against the emerging local and social contexts, offer UBHC leaders a regrounded view of the social gospel in fresh soil with a prophetic promise. This assessment would allow NSBC leadership to respond the question, What will the urban Black historic church message become in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?

As stated, regrounding the social gospel begins by carefully assessing the Black Church folks' present situations through critical comparison internally and externally, which are conveyed through the leaders' message and the church's actions. While this

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 187.

assessment was staged by the analyses, which report UBHC declines, harmful effects from gentrification, and a list of continued problems that instigated BLM protests, interestingly, these issues are included in Black Church leaders' unrelenting message calling for and prophesying about freedom. Arguably, although this study's Introduction reviews African American ancestors' freedom from slavery gained by the Emancipation Proclamation, and their free-will expressed through economic, social, and religious progresses, I assert that this assessment's discourses from postmodern biblical criticism, questions the very relevance of Black Church's message of freedom in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Given that the Black Church message is informed by its culture's meaning, assumptions, and values,<sup>162</sup> this study's discourses from postmodern biblical criticism, particularly in the subsection, "Discovering a Re-centered View of the Social Gospel Audience," theologians view the Bible's Nubian people's self-meaning or worldview as a God-given heterogeneous identity, whereas they interculturally married, coexisted, and partook in God's blessings with other nations. Metanarratively from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, this view means that U.S. enslaved African's praxeological creation of invisible churches allowing distinct ethnic Africans worship of God together, and later, their near effortless adaptation of worship in their slave-masters church services, all confirmed their inherent heterogeneity. Similarly, Black Postbellum Church leaders' sermons and teachings, alongside members' singing, all including topics of freedom reveal ways that their faith and worship were naturally unrestricted. However, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century's

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 184-185.

African Americans' increasing participation in economic, political, and social progresses all indicate that the message of freedom became lesser important, due to the lack of full participation by freed Nubian people. For postmodern generation and globalized residents relocating around declining UBHCs, their lack of attending these churches can be partly attributed to their continued pontification of a traditional understanding of the social gospel that is irrelevant to an emerging intercultural people who are already free. Thus, keeping with the dual aim of critical conversation being correlation and dialogue between the church and the dissimilar community, I suggest that NSBC leaders assess how to renew their inherent heterogeneous qualities for engaging the 21st Century society by diagnostically evaluating their context with that of the Bible's social gospel.<sup>163</sup>

When this study diagnostically evaluates the social gospel's Scripture through comparing the traditional biblical interpretation of Luke 4:18-19 and the discourses of postmodern biblical criticism in this chapter, over and against its social context, a relevant and prophetic meaning of the text is revealed. In light of the need of such a Divine Word, the evaluation deliberately move to more congruent locus topics, which addresses UBHCs' and its members' present-day cultural and social situations, and that also communicate God's message from the church to members and society. Then the Black Church message of freedom becomes a relevant word of equity. As a result, the

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<sup>163</sup> Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, & Public Witness* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 91, (references James H. Cone, "Christianity, and Black Power," in *Risks of faith : The emergence of a Black theology of liberation, 1968-1998* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1999), 3-11; first published in *Is Anybody Listening to Black America?*, ed. C. Eric Lincoln (New York: Seabury, 1968), 8).

assessment task shifts to the need for UBHC leadership to form new sermons, develop lessons, and sing songs, all containing a fresh message of equity. The implication of regrounding the social gospel from the fields of freedom into the soil of equity is that it provides stability for existing members, promise for emerging postmodern and globalized neighbors, and present all populaces with opportunities for crossing cultural boundaries.

*Crossing Cultural Boundaries by Recentering the Black Church View of its Social Gospel*

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
Because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor,  
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the  
blind,  
To set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19, NRSV)*

Acclaimed theologian, James H. Cone<sup>164</sup> and his contemporary Raphael G. Warnock,<sup>165</sup> identified this message from Jesus about his earthly mission, as the grounding text of the Black Church's understanding of the social gospel, which in their view exudes a message of freedom and a mission of liberation for African Americans. However, the preservation of the freedom | liberation dialect for African Americans, and contrastingly, advancing the UBHC's inherent heterogeneous worldview, both assessed via Black Practical Theology's interdisciplinary dialogue, has become problematic for their churches due to the shifting cultural situations in the transitions of the 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Centuries.

Cornell R. West, an activist and philosopher, alleged that the Black Church's self-

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<sup>164</sup> James H. Cone, "Christianity, and Black Power," in *Risks of faith : The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation, 1968-1998* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1999), 8, refers to Cone's use of Luke 4:18-19 linking the social gospel and liberation.

<sup>165</sup> Warnock, *The Divided Mind*, 91.

view, which is exclusive to the African American culture and history, alongside conflicts, from, and with the nation's broader society, led to inadvertent nihilism in poor African American urban communities.<sup>166</sup> Ecclesiologist Dale P. Andrews claimed that the Black Theology dialect of freedom | liberation lacked protections for existing church members and neighborhoods from influences of U.S. individualism, neo-hegemony, and the status quo of the black religious folk culture.<sup>167</sup> The Black Church's shortage of self-awareness beyond their slave history, challenges UBHC in extending God's graces in intercultural ways for seekers and sufferers in the broader society, consistent with their African traits and biblical history.<sup>168</sup> Thus, the dialect of freedom | liberation is not a viable option.

In contrast, assessing how to renew urban Black historic churches' inherent worldview appears to be an alternative route. However, this option, likewise, assessed through the lens of Black Practical Theology, unfortunately means the Black Church joins a corporate Christian perspective, which is problematic:

The displacement of black churches within the larger fragmentation of the black community makes a straightforward application of this method rather difficult. The narrative structures of American individualism not only fragment the black community at large but also disrupt the historical communal narrative of shared suffering and religious folk life. Consequently, a reflexive examination between individual and corporate narratives of modern black life is necessary. The task here is to reformulate horizons of meaning between individual and corporate

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<sup>166</sup> West, *Race Matters*, 108.

<sup>167</sup> Dale P. Andrews, *The African American Lectionary: How to Reassess the Prophetic Voice of Black Theology*, accessed on December 15, 2020, [http://www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/pdf/preaching/ReassessingthePropheticVoiceofBlackTheology\\_DaleAndrews.pdf](http://www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/pdf/preaching/ReassessingthePropheticVoiceofBlackTheology_DaleAndrews.pdf), 3, and 4.

<sup>168</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 13-14; James H. Evans, *We Were Believers*, 3; in "Analyze" section (heterogeneity); Kosuke Koyama, *A Theological Reflection*, (pluralism)

identity within a Christian narrative of African American folk religion.<sup>169</sup>

Despite these seemingly problematic views, I propose that both offer further reasons for assessing the social gospel text through the lens of postmodern biblical criticism, which informs urban Black historic churches about their culture and history beyond their ancestors' U.S. enslavement.<sup>170</sup> Also, based on the cultural arguments, the assessment task becomes shifting the Black Church's message of freedom to the back and moving socio-cultural equity to the front. This assessment reveals that a shift in the Black Church's view of its social gospel would restore its prophetic vision, and assist Urban Black Historic Church leadership in re-grounding its message in authentic and relevant ways including and beyond the African American cultural boundaries.

#### *Assessing the Traditional Biblical Interpretation of the Social Gospel Audience*

In determining whether UBHC leadership's view of the social gospel's grounding text, Luke 4:18-19,<sup>171</sup> could be shifted in ways faithful to Jesus's prophetic vision in the bible while increasing the relevance of the church's message in society, this study asked: What audience was Jesus addressing in the social gospel text? In response, this study assesses the existing social gospel grounding text's view by reading it and its Old Testament (OT) parallel, Isaiah 61:1-2a, through the lens of what Gale A. Yee, a scholar

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<sup>169</sup> Dale P. Andrews and Robert L. Smith, *Black Practical Theology*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015.

<sup>170</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 13-14; James H. Evans, *We Were Believers*, 3; in "Analyze" section (heterogeneity); Kosuke Koyama, *A Theological Reflection*, (pluralism)

<sup>171</sup> Ware, *An African American Theology*, 11 (importance of loci).

of the Hebrew Bible, refers to as the Historical Context, which is commonly referred to by Protestants as the traditional biblical interpretation.<sup>172</sup> This assessment sheds light on the limitations in continuing the Black Church leadership's traditional understanding of themselves as Jesus' focal audience. Then the study assesses the same scripture through the prism of this chapter's discourses from postmodern biblical criticism,<sup>173</sup> and it identifies different subjects of Jesus' intention. The assessment's aim is twofold: it highlights the relevance of Luke 4:18-19 message to issues beyond the scope of freedom, and this text underscores Jesus' concern, and thus the Black Church's subjects outside of its traditional cultural boundaries.

In assessing the traditions behind the social gospel's grounding text (Luke 4:18), one important note is that Jesus read from a 538 BCE scroll:

*The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
because the LORD has anointed me;  
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the brokenhearted  
to proclaim liberty to the captives,  
, and release to the prisoners;  
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor (Isaiah 61:1-2a, NRSV)*

A traditional biblical interpretation by Chris Franke, a foremost OT scholar, describes this Scripture as Yahweh's restoration of the Israelites from God's punishment that was exacted through exile by the Babylonians, who had apprehended the rich, educated,

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<sup>172</sup> Gale A. Yee, Hugh R. Page Jr, Matthew J.M. Coomber, *The Old Testament, and Apocrypha: Fortress Commentary on the Bible*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 22-23.

<sup>173</sup> Leo G. Perdue, *Reconstructing Old Testament Theology: After the Collapse of History* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, Press), 80-81, 87-88, refers to Fernando Segovia's *Decolonizing Biblical Studies*, 96-97, and Cain H. Felder's *Stony Road We Trod*, regarding the "Table of Nations," that discusses the many nations in the Bible as a part of God's works, 133-135, 140, 147, 150, 151-153, 171, 188, 204.

skilled, and army, as well as the valuables in the Temple, and deported all from Jerusalem to Babylonia (II Kings 24).<sup>174</sup> Structurally, traditional exegesis places Isaiah 61:1-2a in the third book of Isaiah, called Trito-Isaiah, between chapters 56-66,<sup>175</sup> which discusses the post-exile situation or limited freedom of Israelites. Particularly outlined in chapters 60-62, Franke interprets that Isaiah prophesied about Yahweh having raised the Persian king, Cyrus, solely for defeating the Babylonian oppressors of the Israelites, returning the people of God to their home, helping rebuild their cities, some kings bowing down, and carrying wealth to Zion (60:1-2).<sup>176</sup> Also, this traditional interpretation posits that Yahweh was solely looking at the Israelites for resettling their returners, securing their drifters, and comforting the oppressed who were left-back, and gentrified, all in rightly affirming them as God's chosen people.<sup>177</sup> Therefore, from Franke's exegesis, arguably, this study assesses Isaiah 61:1-2a as a Hebrew messianic location that would describe Jesus's worldview, in St. Luke 4:18-19, as a prophetic message/vision of restoring equity solely for the Jews. In light of this assessment's OT claim that, arguably if viewed from a monolithic perspective, support a freedom | liberation message from Yahweh, which this study might allege, caused a cultural situation that led to Jesus' death, and debatably as a metanarrative, led to UBHC decline.

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<sup>174</sup> Gale A. Yee, Hugh R. Page Jr, Matthew J.M. Coomber, *The Old Testament, and Apocrypha: Fortress Commentary on the Bible*, "Isaiah 60:1-62:12: Restoration of Jerusalem, and its Inhabitants," ed. Christ A. Franke (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), 718.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, ed. Chris A. Franke, 718-719.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 719

<sup>177</sup> Ibid, ed. Corrine L. Carvalho, "Ezekiel," 787.

For clarity, this assessment focus on Isaiah 61:1-2a. Bruce Birch, an OT Bible scholar, in his book, *Let Justice Roll Down: The Old Testament, Ethics, and Christian Life*, provides a very inclusive but historical exegesis of God’s relationship with the Israelites. In Birch’s view, the Israelites understands Yahweh as of their God, which reveals that they observed Yahweh as Creator (Psalm 33:6-9),<sup>178</sup> salvation is from the coming Messiah (Isaiah 11:1-2, 4-9),<sup>179</sup> and the Divine Election of them (Exodus 19:4-6).<sup>180</sup> This point, which Birch called forensic contexts, were shaped in Yahweh’s initiated covenants with the Israelites’ by way of their most revered ancestors: Abraham, and then Moses (at Mt. Sinai).<sup>181</sup> Thus, when the Israelites were exiled away from their God-given land, Birch posits that their ingrained hope led their faith to believe in their ultimate vindication by Yahweh, who would act solely on their behalf, due to the character of God (righteousness, and justice) that had been expressed to them in covenants:

Yahweh’s righteousness was not an abstract norm but was seen in God’s concrete acts to establish, and preserve relationships [...] For Israel, this divine righteousness is known in God’s actions to establish Israel in deliverance, and preserve community in covenant. One of the oldest of Israel’s poems, the Song of Deborah, speaks of “Yahweh’s righteous acts” (sadaqat, pl.; Judg. 5:11, NRSV “triumphs”) meaning the acts of salvation by which God called Israel into being.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Bruce Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down: The Old Testament, Ethics, and Christian Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Knox Press, 1991), 72-73 (Sovereign creation Genesis 1-2; Psalm 33:6-9, John 1:1, 14), 77-78 (creation revealed in Israelite history Exodus 3:14-15; 15:3-15; Deuteronomy 32; Hosea 8:14; Psalm 100:3; Isa. 43).

<sup>179</sup> Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 205-206, and 228 – 229 (Israelite’s Messiah – Psalm 72: 1-2,4; Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-2, 4-5; Jeremiah 23:5; Ezekiel 34:23-24).

<sup>180</sup> Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 104, 253-254, refers to election - Genesis 12; Exodus 14-15; Psalm 89:14.

<sup>181</sup> Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 146-147 refers to covenants with Noah, Abraham, and Mt. Sinai

<sup>182</sup> Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 154.

Most notably, when referring to God's actions in upholding, and redeeming the Hebrew community, Birch refers to Isaiah 61:10, whereas righteousness is a gift that was always coupled with salvation. From this view, the covenant/law was an act/gift of righteousness/salvation rather than a set of rules. Similarly, Birch asserts that justice, in the Israelite's view, described the terms of their relations with Yahweh, themselves, and Gentiles. Birch's exegesis proposes Psalm 82, whereas a Temple priest's song characterizes righteousness, salvation, and justice of Yahweh, and they trust that God will favor them when judging over all other nations.

*I say, "You are god  
children of the Most High, all of you;  
nevertheless, you shall die like mortals,  
, and fall like any prince."<sup>[a]</sup>  
Rise up, O God, judge the earth;  
for all the nations belong to you! (Psalm 82:6-8)*

In reflection, all Scriptures, and texts in this points to the Israelites' God as the Creator, a coming Messiah for the Israelites, and the Divine Election of the Hebrew descendants, whereas the Israelites understood themselves as having a special relationship with Yahweh. Thus, viewed through in its historical context, Isaiah 61:1-2a supports the claim that Jesus's message in Luke 4:18-19 was an inaugural renewal of what the Jews considered as fulfillment of God's existential covenant with them. From this view, the saying in verse 20, "*Then he [Jesus] began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing',*" suggests that Jesus recognized his messianic role was to carry out salvation/reform that the Hebrew Scripture refers to. Despite the parallel supporting the claim, the historical outcome of the Israelites' view of Yahweh being solely their God for their benefit, arguably became/has been problematic

for the Jews, and the world.<sup>183</sup> Thus, this study reviewed the parallel Scriptures looking at different people in the audience, and evaluates who else was affected by God's agenda.

*Discovering a Re-centered View of the Social Gospel Audience*

Pertinently, for evaluating the 1st Century cultural situation that affects the message of urban Black historic churches in the 21st Century, this study assessed Luke 4:18-19 using postmodern biblical criticism for re-centering the view of the audience, with emphasis on an ideological understanding of the text, that gives precedence to the voices that were silenced in historical accounts/texts.<sup>184</sup> Seeking a re-centered view, the study re-asked the same question: What was the view of Jesus in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century? (Who was Jesus looking at?) After diagnostically studying the text, and its parallel, Isaiah 61:1-2a, using discourses of postmodern biblical criticism from the first section of this chapter, I conclude that Yahweh's attention was not solely on the Jews. Even though Yahweh had made covenants with the Hebrews and their descendants, and regardless of the prophets. and Jesus being an Israelite, his attention was not solely on the Jews. This claim was based on biblical accounts of what Yahweh spoke concertedly to people who were not connected, and in different locales, and is especially supported by the fact that there were Gentile witnesses (cultures, females, males, and kings) who benefited in the Babylonian

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<sup>183</sup> Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down*, A-28, (The Intertestamental Period - From the end of the OT to the beginning of the NT there was a period of about 400 years.)

<sup>184</sup> Perdue, *Reconstructing Old Testament Theology*, 96-97.

post-exile era. Thus, my claim is that the recognition of an expansive meaning of the Lukan text is important for the UBHC.

Katie G. Cannon, “The Emergence of Black Feminist Consciousness,” conducted an inquiry about those on the margins of Jesus/Yahweh’s audiences, offered an improved awareness about who should be in the focus, and periphery of urban Black historic churches. Cannon reported how amid severe subjugation, the Black woman possesses a *religious consciousness* that equips her with a gift in humanizing the environment.<sup>185</sup> The parallelism that Cannon drew between the Black woman, and the Church gifted this evaluation with a path for reading the parallel, and the social gospel’s grounding text, but radically shifted their situations.

During the Reconstruction Era, the Black church continued to assume its responsibility for shaping the expository, and critical biblical reflections that would help the adherents of the faith understand the interplay of historical events, and societal structures.[...] The Scripture lessons that were most important after emancipation were those texts which focused on Christians working to help the social order come into harmony with the divine plan.<sup>186</sup>

Cannon shed light on the same *divine plan* used by countless African Americans: the Creation story, therein this assessment applied Genesis 1:1-31 as a locus, and thus, Isaiah 61:1-2a and Luke 4:18-19 as, what theologian Eugene C. Bianchi called, a “new theologic loci”<sup>187</sup>.

Significant to the substance of the claim of Genesis 1:-31 as locus that gives

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<sup>185</sup> Russell, *Feminist Interpretation*, 31-32

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>187</sup> Eugene C. Bianchi, "The Signs of the Times," in *CrossCurrents*, vol. 20, no. 4 (1970): 382-98, accessed on February 3, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24457808> (refers to global theologic loci).

direction to Isaiah 61:1-2a and Luke 4:18-19, Cain H. Felder, an AMEC elder, and Bible scholar, in his book, “Stony Road We Trod,” argued against the monoculturalism of the *Hebrew*, saying “[Hebrew] is not one that may be limited altogether to the descendants of Jacob. It is indicative of *social class* inclusive of others.”<sup>188</sup> And, intending to note the inclusion of People of Color as Hebrews, Felder listed Egyptian names in Moses’s family: Moses, Aaron, Hophni, Merari, Miriam, Phinehas, and Putiel. Also, Felder offered the Bible where Yahweh defended Moses in light of his wedding to an Ethiopian:

*And Miriam, and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman, and they said, Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?, and the LORD heard it.[...], and he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches, and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? (Numbers 12:1-8 NRSV)*

Similarly, Black Church scholar, and CME Bishop, Thomas L. Hoyt, Jr., offered his view on the Creation story from a perspective of the Hebrew tradition: “God the creator, and parent, and human beings as brothers, and sisters are motifs that were derived from the biblical creation stories. This presupposition helped blacks extricate the gospel from its racist entanglements.”<sup>189</sup>

Given these prior significant/trusted elders and theologians of the Black Church tradition who collectively suggest a radical theological direction, this assessment readily includes the recent Bible scholarship by an African American Baptist pastor, Theron D.

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<sup>188</sup> Felder, *Stony Road We Trod*, 155.

<sup>189</sup> Hoyt, “Interpreting Biblical Scholarship,” 31, 33, 132, 137, and 144.

Williams, in his book titled “The Bible is Black History” that critiqued the historical context of the traditional Creation story in Genesis 1:1-31, as a response to racism.

Williams’s research of Adam and Eve’s descendants concluded that anthropological data indicate Nubian people dating back 60,000 years ago but those of the Caucasian race extending only 8,000 years ago.<sup>190</sup> Also, Williams offered a report about the Nubian people in Noah’s line of descendants:

Noah has three sons, all of whom like him are African. His sons are Ham, Shem, and Japheth. Ham is the father of Cush (Ethiopian), Mizraim (Egypt), Phut (Libya), and Canaan (The Canaanites). Shem is the ancestor of Abraham, who is the father of the Hebrew lineage, the bloodline of Jesus. Japheth’s most notable son descendant is Ashkenaz, who is the grandson of Gomer. His offspring migrated north to Europe, and parts of Northern Asia (Eurasia). The biblical narrative tracks the histories of Shem and Ham, but almost wholly ignores Japheth.<sup>191</sup>

Most interestingly, Williams’s critiqued Eurocentric posits that God cursed Ham:

For the White Supremacy System, The Curse justifies the suppression of all Black people; although Noah’s curse was not pronounced upon Ham nor any of his descendants except Canaan, his youngest son. Also, Ham and Canaan were Black before the curse; as were the rest of their family members.<sup>192</sup>

Thus, this evaluation of Williams’s data-driven offerings did not yield a particular culture/ethnic focus of God in Creation, but rather a human race or inclusive agenda.

Based on these four researchers’ offerings, this evaluation applied what Hoyt called a “hermeneutical privilege”,<sup>193</sup> to Genesis 1:1-31, and Isaiah 61:1-2a, and proposed

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<sup>190</sup> Theron D. Williams, *The Bible is Black History* (Indiana: WritersTablet.org, 2018), 28, 46-47.

<sup>191</sup> Williams, *The Bible is Black*, 36.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, 36-38.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, 31.

these texts as a universal theological location,<sup>194</sup> and the first description of God as Creator of all. This shift would have significant implications to the social gospel grounding scripture, as well as the UBHC message.

For clarifying whether Isaiah 61:1-2a was a universal theological location, and Creator description, the task evaluates Scriptures that describe the intentionality of Yahweh's cultural boundary-crossing gospel and generation gap closing in the Israelites' exile and return from exile. This assessment emphasizes that Isaiah's prophecy was not monolithic, in that Yahweh's focus was on gathering all nations for learning God's principles.<sup>195</sup>

*In days to come  
the mountain of the Lord's house  
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,  
and shall be raised above the hills;  
all the nations shall stream to it.  
Many peoples shall come, and say,  
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
to the house of the God of Jacob;  
that he may teach us his ways  
and that we may walk in his paths." (Isaiah 2:1-3)*

Similarly, following the parallel text, towards the end of the book of Isaiah, the prophet continued sharing the Sovereignty of Yahweh for closing generational gaps:

*For as the new heavens, and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed, and your name remain, and it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD, and they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they*

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<sup>194</sup> Bianchi, "The Signs," <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24457808> (refers to global theologic loci).

<sup>195</sup> Isaiah 42:1-4, 10-12; 44:23; 45:8; 49:6, and 52:10

*shall be an abhorring unto all flesh. (Isaiah 66:22-24)*

Also, Birch presents God as a universal God, “For the prophets God is not simply the God of Israel, while other peoples have their gods. The broad scope of events involving the Israelite kingdoms force the prophets to a radicalized understanding of the universal sovereignty of God – God’s reign over all of human history.”<sup>196</sup> Interestingly, Birch lists contemporary/minor prophets as supportive scripture whereas nations (Gentiles) who are approved by God will be fellow partakers of Yahweh’s benefits alongside the Israelites:

*In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the hills. Peoples shall stream to it,*

*And many nations shall come and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

*He shall judge between many peoples, and shall arbitrate between strong nations far away; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more;*

*But they shall all sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees, and no one shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.*

(Micah 4:1-4, NRSV)

Christopher J. H. Wright, a Missiologist and Anglican clergyman discussed the contemporary prophets of Isaiah, such as Zephaniah, understood to be an African/Cush descendent (1:1-7). Wright highlights how Zephaniah’s prophecy is similar to Zechariah stressing Yahweh’s broad focus on those not of Hebrew descent, in that the nations

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<sup>196</sup> Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 251, and 294-295, (Isaiah 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-4; Isaiah 45: 22-23).

participate in cultural boundary-crossing works in the mission of God:<sup>197</sup>

*Thus, says the Lord of hosts: "Peoples shall yet come, the inhabitants of many cities; the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, 'Come, let us go to entreat the favor of the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I myself am going.'" Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord. Thus, says the Lord of hosts: In those days ten men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garment, and saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you." (Zechariah 8:20-23)*

This assessment presents major and minor prophets' texts that prophecy Yahweh's invitations to foreigners and all nations (Jeremiah 12:14-17, 33:6-9, and Amos 9:11-12). Interestingly, the Torah and Judges narratives present God's inclusion of Gentiles in the blessings/salvation of the Israelites (Genesis 12:1-3, Exodus 12:38-39, and Jonah 3).

Weightier to this claim was, this assessment identified prophetic narratives and accounts of people in the Bible, who were neither a part of the dominant culture nor of Hebrew descent but having received Yahweh's salvation and blessings alongside the Israelites. In an essay by Yolanda Norton, a Womanist OT Theologian, titled "Silenced Struggles for Survival: Finding Life, and Death in the Book of Ruth," talks about Ruth, a Moabitist whose Israelite husband died, and is observed nearly invisible to the Jews:

*"Blessed be the Lord, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin... your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him" (Ruth 4:14-15). The child belongs to Naomi, not to Ruth. Ruth is merely a surrogate, she is a valuable surrogate, given more distinction, and worth than her counterpart, Hagar, but she is a surrogate nonetheless.<sup>198</sup>*

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<sup>197</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 189-190, 240-241, and 348.

<sup>198</sup> Yolanda Norton, "Silenced Struggles for Survival: Finding Life, and Death in the Book of Ruth," in *I Found God in Me*, ed. Mitzi J. Smith, (Eugene, OR: Wipf, and Stock Publishers, 2015), 277.

After elaborating on Ruth's seemingly dependent but yet empowering cross-cultural experience, Norton offered, "However, we fail to acknowledge ways that God empowers, informs, and emboldens Ruth in ways that allow her to be her change agent, even when the author fails to acknowledge such characteristics."<sup>199</sup> Significant to an understanding of Ruth is the superior character exuded that was either gleaned from Yahweh's gift of heterogeneity or derived from her God-given culture. Ruth could feel, and respond to her personal womanly needs, as well as be touched by navigating cross-cultural deeds required in facilitating Naomi's survival. Norton compared Ruth's challenges and giftedness with enslaved antebellum African women: "It is so ingrained in the black [consciousness] that it appears palpably in black popular culture in the cultivation of the 'mammie'."<sup>200</sup> Nonetheless, this study surmises that Ruth accepting Yahweh as her God, marrying Boaz, and they birthing Obed into the lineage would be both, king David, and Jesus our Savior (Ruth 4:13-17), sets precedence the locus of God's Divine Election, including people not of Hebrew descent.

Also, this study evaluates Yahweh's Divine Election of Gentile kings through the experiences of a young group of Israelite prophets (Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego). They were protected by Yahweh after being thrown into a fiery furnace for not bowing down to Gentile king Nebuchadnezzar (3:19-25), and later Daniel was thrown into a den of lions for praying to his God instead of king Darius (6:18-23). After each case, the kings ascribed the Divine interventions to Yahweh and promoted these young

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid, 279.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid, 277.

men (3:25-30; 6:25-28). This evaluation asserts that due to Yahweh's salvific revelation to these kings, and each accepting, and responding with justice to the young men (3:30; 6:28), God gave peace to these Gentile rulers throughout their leadership (4:1-33). I assert this narrative as a locus of global/universal Divine Election.

Last, and most substantial to this evaluation's claim of Yahweh's global attention was Yahweh's call, and appointment of Gentile kings for leading all nations (Ezra 1:1-4, Nehemiah 2:1-9).<sup>201</sup> This evaluation noted that Yahweh unmistakably identifies the Divine Election of Cyrus the same as for Jacob, and the Israelites, and reveals Godself as Creator:

*For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me. I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the Lord, and there is no one else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things. (Isaiah 45:1-7)*

This study compared Yahweh's call of Cyrus to the summons of Moses (Exodus 3), and Abram (Genesis 12:1-3). Relevant to the exile situation, this evaluation ascribed the Sovereignty of Yahweh to the charges of, first, Cyrus for returning the exiled, and rebuilding the Temple, and second, to the recruit of Artaxerxes-1 for assisting Nehemiah in reconstructing walls for securing the Israelites' city (Ezra 2:1-9). Critically important, Wright, a missiologist substantiated this Sovereignty locus by reviewing that Yahweh had led the Israelites out of Egypt, just as God led the Philistines from Crete and the

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<sup>201</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God*, 85, and 88-89.

Arameans from Kir.<sup>202</sup> This study reveals that the socio-cultural boundary-crossing prophetic words of justice were not only for the Israelites. Rather, God's messages of justice served as three purposes: Divine interculturalism (radical reconciliation/reunion), a way of bringing about salvation for the Israelites and Gentiles, and as a way of causing Spiritual renewal for all humanity to recognize themselves as people of God.

*Assessing the Radical Impacts of a Shifted Social Gospel for Re-grounding the Message*

Considering Isaiah 61:1-2a and Luke 4:18-19 as texts of universal meaning, and considering the meaning of Genesis 1:31, the Black Church social gospel has developed an increased awareness of what Hoyt referred to as the "Sovereign parenthood of God"<sup>203</sup> or the universal nature of God. These points have radical socio-cultural meaning to the UBHC. Grounded by the view of Yahweh as Creator, the Sovereignty of God, and the Divine Election of humanity, my assessment points to Urban Black Historic Church leadership creating, what this study called, a message of socio-cultural equity. Similar to the Israelites' and Persians' post-exile situation, this deliberate cultural boundary-crossing message through Urban Black Historic Church leadership should not indicate Divine favoritism of African Americans. Rather, it should be a message, mission, and narrative from the covenant that serves three purposes: Divine interculturalism (radical conciliation/union) as an equitable message for bringing about the second, restoration/salvation (covenantal reform) for People of Color (POC) and the dominant culture, all

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<sup>202</sup> Wright, *The Mission of God*, 97-98, (refers to Amos 9:7, Jeremiah 27:4-6).

<sup>203</sup> Hoyt, "Interpreting Biblical Scholarship," 32.

alongside the third, a narrative of Spiritual renewal for all humanity as the people of God.

Due to People of Color's longer, if not equal, time of existence on the earth, the study assessed the possible radical implications to be expected in urban Black Historic Church leadership disseminating a message of equity, especially with cultures not of African descent. Pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C alongside the controversial pastor of Anacostia River Church in Washington, D.C., Thabiti M. Anyabwile, offers an insightful article with 5 notable aspects regarding the Black Church defining itself and its theology cross-culturally, titled "*The Orientation Problem of the Black Church*."<sup>204</sup> In this article they offer four considerations in orienting:

First, the Black church must recover a radical God centeredness in its theology and practice. [...] Second, the Black church must see the wider Christian heritage as legitimately its own and not exclusively or even mainly the inheritance of 'white Christianity.' [...] Third, the Black church must continue to develop, articulate and share theological work focused on its own historical, social, cultural, economic and even political vantage point. [...] Fourth, the Black church must make a cautious but joyful embrace of multi-ethnic churches.<sup>205</sup>

Robert L. Smith offers, what this assessment identifies as more contentious impact would be, the implication of intentionally reorienting people from oppressing cultures alongside residents of postmodern and globalized neighborhoods, which would present the need for groundbreaking research in the church's new vision of context practices (informed praxis).<sup>206</sup> I add that helpfully, remodeling the ecclesial image along these lines would

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<sup>204</sup> Isaac Adams and Thabiti M. Anyabwile, "The Orientation Problem of the Black Church," *The Front Porch*, (December 2013), accessed on February 13, 2021, <https://thefrontporch.org/2013/12/the-orientation-problem-of-the-black-church/>

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 16-17, 25, 183-184.

contribute to countering negative U.S. hegemonic forces, nullifying the status quo, and individualism. Arguably, this study offers locating normative faith texts for biblically addressing the social structure challenges mentioned, for functioning as a resource in bidirectional conversation about and with society, and for conveying Christian mission in ways authentic to the Black Church, and relevant to society. With UBHC having a mantra of equity, the question becomes, What would become urban Black historic churches' vision of Christian mission? This question is addressed by assessing the normative faith texts of the UBHC.

Reframing the Urban Black Historic Church Leadership's View of Christian Mission for Being a Light in a Dissimilar Generation

The next task in Assess is to assess the sources on which the UBHCs can draw in closing generation gaps in their modern to postmodern congregations and in the larger society. This work is informed by what Smith called, "mutual critical correlation."<sup>207</sup>

The mutual critical correlation method aims to correlate the issues, and concerns of contemporary experience with the *normative* positions of the Christian story in a way that is dialectic, and mutually critical. By drawing together the issues, and concerns that are of importance in the contemporary social context with the 'Christian fact', a degree of relevance may be realized that traditional theological methods have not enjoyed.

Helpfully, the earlier analyses reveals some of the challenges that NSBC is experiencing cross-culturally, social structurally, and in their narrative. In this section, there is an importance in emphasizing globalized, which denotes the presence of folks from world cultures, religions and distinct Christian denominations, not included in the postmodern cultural

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<sup>207</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 53, 185-186.

analysis. Equally, there is an importance in stressing the postliberal character of postmodern populace, whose secular, humanitarian, and counseling services increasingly compete with UBHCs for funding, parking spaces, visitations of needy, days/times, and volunteers, all which the Black legacy churches have long enjoyed since their inceptions. Seeking recourse, the study consult with African and African American apologists, and missiologists in informing the UBHC leadership's vision of contemporary Christian mission, and inherent praxeological ways for moving it forward. Mutual critical correlation created space for the church leadership to engage in practical and theological reflection in a dialogue between social structural changes and the normative Black Church story in U.S. History. This task began by identifying and interpreting the normative faith texts of NSBC's Christian Education Ministry (focal ministry) to create a dialogue about reframing the ministry's vision of Christian mission in ways that include existing members and the new postmodern and globalized generations in the community.

In evaluating the existing chief normative faith texts of NSBC's Christian Education Ministry, Matthew 28:19-20, which this study learned had been the same for many years, this study reveals four parallel Bible passages: Acts 1:8, John 20:21-23, Luke 24:45-49, and Mark 16:15-18. Based on the social gospel's grounding text, Luke 4:18-19, which this study renews as a universal theological location, recommendations from African and African American apologists, and missiologists, along with the "mutual critical correlation"<sup>208</sup> process, described by John Swinton, and Harriet Mowatt, in

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<sup>208</sup> J. Swinton and Harriet Mowatt, *Practical Theology, and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2016), 77 -79.

*Practical Theology, and Qualitative Research*, this assessment proposes Acts 1:8 as the new normative faith text for the Christian Education Ministry. In addition, not to undercut the importance of Matthew 28:19-20 or Acts 1:8, but the I question whether a single text is the best approach. I argue that the Black social gospel movement drew upon multiple texts and not just Luke 4:18-19. Also, I would question whether the choice of just one text for the future be limiting to the heterogeneous vision that this project proposes amidst an emerging culturally and socially diverse community? Perhaps many other texts would also be important, including those that support Acts 1:8, the whole of the Pentecost story and Paul's vision of the clean and unclean food and his emergent understanding of the importance of including gentiles in the Gospel vision. However, leadership's reservations due to the historic harmful hegemonic works of other churches, and groups, whose faith identity is supposedly Christian, this work uses the implications of Acts 1:8 for evaluating the grounding Scriptures in one of the most progressive Protestant Mainline Church approach to global evangelism, and mission called holistic mission theology. As a result, the Black Church dialect's message | mission of freedom | liberation will become an appropriate framework of equity | reform, whereas the type of reform identified will be proposed as the UBHC's reframed vision of Christian mission in the 21st Century. This study asserts that reform in Christian mission will increase urban Black historic churches' leadership and membership by presenting an opportunity for closing generation gaps between modern congregations, and postmodern residents.

*Closing Generation Gaps by Locating Normative Faith Texts for Increased Relevance to the 21st Century Society*

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)*

In a collection of Apologetics discourses assembled by Alton B. Pollard, and Carol B. Duncan,<sup>209</sup> and in an anthology of African missionary/missiologist writings edited by Vaughn J. Walston, and Robert J. Stevens,<sup>210</sup> Acts 1:8, which was given by post-resurrection Jesus (Jesus) to the Apostles in the 1st Century, is affirmed as the freedom and empowerment of Black Church's leadership in universal Christian mission in the 21st Century. However, in the myself – the Resident Theologian – proposing whether Matthew 28:19-20, the existing chief normative faith text of the ministry,<sup>211</sup> should be shifted to Acts 1:8, this assessment reflects on two concerns. The initial concern is probable resistance from matriarchs/patriarchs NSBC, who value the existing normative faith texts. Next, there is a concern regarding NSBC's resistance to orienting people from the culture that is/was historically oppressive to Black people. Thus, this study poses a sub-question, What was the mission of the incumbent Apostles? (What did Jesus ask of the Apostles?) In response, this study briefly evaluates Matthew 28:19-20 through the lens of Historical/Ancient Context interpretation and summarizes the implications. As a

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<sup>209</sup> Dennis W. Wiley, "Black Church Studies as Practical Theology," in *The Black Church Studies Reader*, ed. Alton B. Pollard, and Carol B. Duncan, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 168-169.

<sup>210</sup> Vaughn J. Walston, and Robert J. Stevens, *African-American Experience in World Mission: A Call beyond Community, Volume 1*, (Chesapeake, VA: Cooperative Mission Network of the African Dispersion, 2002), 1-3, 143-149, and 172-179.

<sup>211</sup> Christian Education Department in the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, Washington, D.C.

result, I assess this interpretation's view of the teaching function in Jesus' directive, which has been historically understood by Black Church leadership as authoritative order, and I discuss the potentially harmful implications to urban Black historic churches' interactions with their new dissimilar communities.

*Evaluating the Great Commission through the lens of Historical/Ancient Context*

*Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you, and remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28: 19-20, NRSV)*

Since the Antebellum generation of the Black churches, the U.S. African enslaved co-opted this scripture from Caucasian congregations as their view of Christian mission, and it has been faulty in enabling urban Black historic congregations for thriving in the 21st Century. This concern led to assessing this popular scripture for measuring its relevance to the UBHC in postmodernity.

Michael J. Wilkins analyzed this Scripture linguistically and posited that it contains "...one imperative command, 'make disciples', and three subordinate participles, 'go,' 'baptizing,' and 'teaching'." <sup>212</sup> Wilkins elaborated that the imperative command centers on the commission while the participles describe the way that command is to be carried out. In agreement, Edgar M. Krentz, a noted Bible professor who focused on historical-critical methods, asserts that at the center of Jesus' commission is a command: "Therefore, as you go your way, disciple." <sup>213</sup> Here, Krentz stressed, "The imperative is

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<sup>212</sup> Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew: The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 951.

<sup>213</sup> Edgar M. Krentz, "Make Disciples: Matthew on Evangelism," *Currents in Theology, and*

significant, as it makes discipleship an urgent matter, a matter of fact in the disciple's everyday life."<sup>214</sup> Using critical correlation, I could not assess/locate places for critical conversation with this traditional biblical interpretation outcome in several facets.

From a biblical perspective, while this evaluation fully respects the importance of discipling, the present evaluation focuses on the fact that the preceding commentaries on the Great Commission center solely on Jesus' final words as a command and very little about the economic, educational, or socio-political condition of the people for whom the disciples would engage. While salvation from sin and the regeneration of the souls of people to escape hell and acquire a heavenly destination in the afterlife, were significant factors in the urgency of discipling, Evangelical authors' are known for publishing writings that present very little space for locating sin relevant to causations of poverty, racism, or crime, which were all rampant in first-century Jerusalem, regions, and countries adjacent to the city. Also, I assess the way that the slave masters and then Evangelicals used the normative faith texts had supported a historical social structure that was problematic to African Americans and immigrants throughout U.S. history by making them the objects of conversion, which has partly led to the decline in urban Black historic churches. The implications of this assessment lead to a situation of offering an interaction that presents further colonization of postmodern and globalized neighborhoods. This study surmises that implications from traditional biblical interpretations of Matthew 28:19-20, which was originally solely a Jewish writing, that

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*Mission* 33, no. 1 (2006): 29.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

has been historically co-opted by the Black Church from its days of enslavement, will foster an urban Black historic church version of Euro forms of colonizing Christianity in emerging communities. Thus, the assessment study's new normative faith texts for the 21st Century generation of the UBHC.

*Discovering New Normative Faith Texts by Exploring the Universal Social Gospel*

Exploring the Gospels through a prism of the Universal Social Gospel, for locating normative faith texts for the Christian Education Ministry, leads this assessment to seriously acting on African American apologists', and missiologists' recommendations of Acts 1:8. Due to this passage's link to the social gospel grounding scripture, Luke 4:18-19, a famed text in the Black Church, Acts 1:8 is favored by the Christian Education Ministry leaders, the matriarchs, and patriarchs. Theologically, due to *The Acts of the Apostles* as a continuum of *The Gospel According to Luke*, along with Luke 4:18-19 as parallel to Isaiah 61:1-2a, and all had been located by the assessment as a universal theological location, Acts 1:8 was proposed by this study as a normative faith text. As a result of my assessment of Acts 1:8, transitively, as a universal theological location, the study critically compares the Apostles' context with the ecclesial image situation of the urban Black historic church, and will immediately locate mutual correlations. Thus, this assessment will evaluate Acts 1:8 for informing the UBHC leadership's vision of the Christian mission. The underlying sub-question of this evaluation is, What was the universal mission of the incumbent Apostles? (What did Jesus want the Apostles to universally affirm or attest?), and consistent with the outcomes of Isaiah 61:1-2 and Luke

4:18-19, Acts 1:8 placed serious expectations on the mission of the Apostles, which means radical implications to UBHC leaderships' vision of Christian mission.

*Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance and forgiveness of sins are to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things, and see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so, stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.'* (Luke 24:48-49, NRSV)

Theologically reflecting on this scripture (above) as part of Jesus' mission that included and/or overlapped the Apostles' commissioning, Acts 1:8, this study reckoned the new leaders had followed their Messiah's teachings, and acquired an understanding of God as the Creator of all (Father), the Lord's Sovereignty, and the Divine Election of all humanity. This critical reflection discussed theological, geographical, and Scriptural perspectives that transformed the Apostles' ecclesial image from solely Jewish, to a universal mission.

Theologically, Demetrius K. Williams, NT scholar overviewed *The Acts of the Apostles*, and *The Gospel According to Luke*, and described Luke's presentation of Jesus via the Roman kings. Williams mentioned that Jesus was born during the Roman Empire under the reign of Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1), amidst the governorship of Quirinius in Syria (Luke 2:2), and outlined Christ's ministry as starting during the reign of Tiberius Caesar (3:1), as well as reported a fact that the Messiah was crucified under the state leadership of Pontius Pilate (23:24-25).<sup>215</sup> In keeping with postmodern biblical criticism,

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<sup>215</sup> Demetrius K. Williams, "The ACTS of the APOSTLES," in *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*, ed. Brian K. Blount, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 214.

which lifts the Ideological benefits of the oppressed, and the oppressor, Williams offers Luke's favorable account of the Roman leaders throughout Acts, by mentioning their advancement of the Pax Romana ("peace of Rome") policy, and adulation of their Caesar, while oxymoronicly expounding on how the quest of civilizing, and dominating others was a catalyst to the widening of the Apostles' universal mission:

...in Luke-Acts, it is clear that although insignificant in the eyes of Rome, providence is being mediated through the traditions of Israel, not that of Rome, and it is by means of the gospel of Christ that God is bringing about new world order. [...] Acts recounts the evangelistic efforts of several others, who also proclaimed the gospel to the marginalized, and despised Gentiles, offering to them the new dispensation of God's love, mercy, and grace. Therefore, Luke's focus on both the unity and the inclusiveness of humanity under the sovereignty of God found welcome resonance with enslaved African Americans and their progeny.<sup>216</sup>

Another significance in identifying the Roman kings is the critical correlation of the context in which Jesus ministered and commissioned the Apostles to serve, the context of African enslaved experience, and the UBHC's present context of serving new bodies of diasporic and indigenous people in need. Recognizing the overlapping contexts, as in the Greco-Roman political expansion that engulfed many North African countries, Williams asserts a correlation between praxiological contexts and texts: "In Acts, as in Luke 4, the good news comes to the poor, the oppressed, and the imprisoned. Indeed, Luke's message is for the oppressed, and the oppressor, the high, and the low, the Jew, and the Gentile. His message embraces all ethnic diversity within the Roman Empire."<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Blount, *True to Our Native Land*, 214, and 217 (new world order).

<sup>217</sup> Ibid, 214 (diversity).

Equally important, this evaluation finds that Ann E. Hanson's study of how the Roman Empire spread into Africa, is vital to the awareness of critical correlation:

The site of Philadelphia was previously unoccupied, and the village was laid out in accordance with Hellenistic grid patterns for city planning [...]. Its position at the northeast corner of the Faiyum made it an important point of entry into this rich agricultural district; in the Roman period, there was a customhouse in the village for collecting internal customs duties. Philadelphia's proximity to the Nile nurtured its connection with localities to the north, and with Alexandria, as well as diversified the village's economic prospects. The Zenon archive gives us a vivid picture of the village soon after its foundation, and the population of Philadelphia, as it appeared in the letters, consisted largely of immigrant Greeks, marked by their Hellenic names, and their ethnic designations, and native Egyptians, whose names, even if transliterated into Greek characters, reflected their Egyptian language, and their Egyptian origins. Zenon and his correspondents mention a large number of geographical places, and the ethnic designations they employ span the Mediterranean from 'Tarantine', and 'Sicelot' in the west to 'Arabic' or 'Arabian', and 'Indian' in the east. The geographical distribution of the ethnics also reflects Zenon's personal ties to the area around his hometown of Kauno in southwestern Asia Minor, and his business activities in Syria, and Palestine on behalf of his employer Appollonios [...]. The wide variety of geographical names employed in the Zenon letters also testifies to a lively interest in the origins of peoples, and commodities.<sup>218</sup>

In this description of Philadelphia, the diversity of people under Roman rule that were heavily taxed included In this Egyptians Arabs, and Ioudaioi (Judean Jews), but not the Greeks, and Romans. This meant that the Roman Empire profited from the Palestinian and North African regions. Also, it depicts that the Roman rule was not so much military warfare, but by occupying riverfronts, and taxing passages, and building Greek occupied cities for receiving customs on agriculture from the poor. This study noted that the monetary, and political interests of the Greeks allowed the Apostles wide acceptance in

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<sup>218</sup> Ann E. Hanson, "Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Arabes, and Ioudaioi in the First Century A.D. Tax Archive from Philadelphia," *In Life in a Multicultural Society: Egypt from Cambyses to Constantine, and Beyond*, ed. J.H. Johnson, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization, no. 51 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1992), 136-137, accessed on February 19, 2021, <https://oi.uchicago.edu/sites/oi.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/shared/docs/saoc51.pdf>

spreading the gospel throughout Arabia, Asia Minor, and Africa. It correlated with Artaxerxes-1.

Relevant to Scripture, this assessment noted the texts that affirmed when Apostles began ministry abroad, outside of Jerusalem, indiscriminately welcoming and teaching diverse cultures, these leaders were likened to Jesus. In Antioch, they were called Christians (Acts 11:26). A Christian persecutor who became Apostle Paul, sought the conversion of the Judeo-Roman King Agrippa, who associated the missionary with Jesus, said, “*Are you so quickly persuading me to become a Christian?*” Paul replied, “*Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that not only you but also all who are listening to me today might become such as I am...*” (Acts 26:28-29). And to the present-day, there exists a theological debate regarding whether a letter of Peter, one of the first Apostles, was addressed to diasporic Jews or Gentiles when referencing *Christian*: “*Yet if any of you suffers as a Christian, do not consider it a disgrace, but glorify God because you bear this name*” (I Peter 4:16). The significance of this fact was whether the conversion of Gentiles entitled them to the Christian faith identity. Therefore, rather than exhaustively identify conversions, and miracles for Gentiles, this study identified whether Gentiles were added to the Apostolic ministry, just as in OT prophetic texts, and Jesus’ ministry, which substantiates a new world order claim as both a reframing of UBHC view of the *Missio Dei* and ecclesial reform.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Blount, *True to Our Native Land*, 217.

Postmodern biblical critiques of Acts reveal parallels between the OT prophetic texts, the ministry of Jesus, and the Apostles that reframed their ecclesial image. We have already noted the narrative of Ruth in which Ruth was welcomed into the Hebrew people, which resulted in great-grandson (Ruth 4:7-12), King David, who established the Israelites and ruled it as an intercultural kingdom (4:13-17). Norton critiqued the often and unmentioned revelation from God to Ruth, a Moabitist:

...we fail to acknowledge the ways that God empowers, informs, and emboldens Ruth in ways that allow her to be her own change agent, even when the author fails to acknowledge such characteristics.<sup>220</sup>

Norton's critique point to Yahweh's redistribution of power to include Gentiles, who carry out God's desires. Daniel, and the Israelite colleagues' prophetic ministries to the oppressors, Nebuchadnezzar, and Darius, resulted in God's revelation to these Gentile leaders, and their praise, and protection to "the God of the Israelites" before their nations (Daniel 3:25-30; 6:25-28). Then God's redistribution of power to include Gentile kings was most transforming. Cyrus and Artaxerxes-1 were empowered by God for restoring both, the Israelites and neighboring sufferers' lifestyles, as well as rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-2; 7: 7-28). In reflection, this pattern was established in the OT and perpetuated in the NT: exile, redistribution of power, interculturalism.

John the Baptist prophesied Jesus' baptism of people with the Holy Spirit (Luke 21-22, Mark 1:7-11), which was followed by Christ's missional sermon, and then ministry to diverse people (Luke 4:18-19, 20-30). In these texts, though the Israelites were the primary audience, and the passage's implied subject, the scripture extended the

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<sup>220</sup> Smith, *I Found God in Me*, 279.

influence of God's blessings to those who were generally poor, brokenhearted, captive, blind, and oppressed, as in Isaiah 61:1-2a. New Testament scholar Brian K. Blount, elaborated on the transformative works of Jesus among people not of Hebrew descent as a precursor of Acts 1:8, by calling Christ's works among the Gerasenes, and with the Syrophenician woman a "...virtual Jesus Gentile mission" (Mark 7:24-8:10).<sup>221</sup> Then Blount summarized Jesus' feeding of 4000 Gentiles, saying, "Jesus has offered the bread on God's table to all nations."<sup>222</sup> Further, reflective of the pattern, in the first two encounters of Jesus, according to Luke, an unclean demon in man recognized Jesus as "...*the Holy One of God!*" (Luke 4:34), and shortly afterward in a different occasion, the Bible says, "*And demons also came out of many, crying out, and saying, 'You are the Christ, the Son of God!'*". In addition to the multitudes who either publicly followed or gathered for listening to Jesus' sermons, and received healing opportunities, the Bible recorded accounts of nature's responses to Jesus, which this study ascribed as a reaction to their universal Creator:

*When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water, and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So, they signaled their partners in the other boat to come, and help them, and they came and filled both boats so that they began to sink. (5:4-7)*

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<sup>221</sup> Brian K. Blount, and Leonora T. Tisdale, *Making Room at the Table: An Invitation to Multicultural Worship* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 20-21.

<sup>222</sup> Blount, and Tisdale, *Making Room*, 20-21.

In this eventful journey to Jerusalem that included nature's response to Jesus,<sup>223</sup> people left their families for following the Messiah,<sup>224</sup> marginalized folks recognized the Lord,<sup>225</sup> foreigners located Christ, and all revealed the Son of God's identity through unwarranted verbal recognition, which this evaluation assessed as the distinct names of their Creator.<sup>226</sup> In reflection, the universal mission of Christ lends itself to the redistribution of the individual power of diverse people. This was significant to urban Black historic church leadership, whereas the surrounding emerging globalized neighborhoods might mean the different world religions' names of God than the Christian titles. This study posited the need for increased awareness of the universality of God in Christ. More importantly, in many instances, Jesus ascribed healings indiscriminately to the faith of people who were rejected by Jewish religious sects: the Roman officer requested Jesus to simply "send your word, and my son will be healed" (Matthew 8:5-13); an African woman displayed Spiritual discernment, and her daughter was restored to good health (15:21-28); and a Jewish woman with an issue of blood faithfully touched the hem of the Lord's garment and was healed (Mark 5:25-34). In each of these cases, this evaluation identified Jesus' responses to individuals' faith as the source for their

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<sup>223</sup> Refers to Jesus walking on water: Matthew 14:22-36; Mark 6:45-56; John 6:16-24; Refers to winds, and waves recognized Jesus publicly Luke 8:22-25; Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:36-41;, and John 6:16-21.

<sup>224</sup> Refers to the followers/disciples leaving all to follow Jesus: Matthew 4:18-22, Mark 3:16-20; Luke 5:1-11;, and John 1:35-51.

<sup>225</sup> Refers to marginalized people identifying Jesus: Simon the Phariand unwelcomed woman - Luke 7:36-50; Samaritan woman - John 4:4-42; Zacchaeus - Luke 19:1-10; Jesus at Simon the Leper, and woman with alabaster box's visitation: Matthew 26:7, Mark 14:3, and Luke 7:37;, and criminal on the cross, Luke 23:40-43.

<sup>226</sup> Refers to the Canaanite/Syrophoenician woman Matthew, 15:21-28, and Mark 7:24-29.

miracles, as redistributions of power. This evaluation proposed UBHC leadership's, likewise, reframing of their view of Christian mission, observing that the universality of Christ would mean a radical remodeling of their ecclesial image. Also, the review of texts that describe Jesus' collaborative relationships with figures from the oppressing culture, immigrants, and women are all previews of Acts 1:8.

In the Divine motif in Luke-Acts, post-resurrection Jesus provided a prophetic promise to the Apostles (Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:8), as John the Baptist did for him (Luke 3:21-22; Mark 1:7-11). Following the promise they received the empowerment of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-3). Likewise, in a parallel fashion, Peter preached an announcing sermon, as Christ had (Luke 4:18-19), by quoting a prophetic message of Joel (2:14-41, 17-21), which all, likewise, resulted in a cross-cultural reception of their faith, and intercultural ministry abroad. Consistent with closing the generation gaps, Felicia H. LaBoy, an African American Womanist scholar, underscored how a well-educated, and wealthy Ethiopian eunuch and an Alexandrian Jew, Apollos, were among the first to begin fulfilling the Apostles' universal mission (Acts 8:26-40; 18:24-28).<sup>227</sup> LaBoy underscored how these African men were enabled to further empower the populous, and military-strong nations of Africa in *The Way*.<sup>228</sup> Based on this Divine motif (exile, redistribution of power, decolonization), we can see a metanarrative with radical implications for urban Black historic churches' leadership to view God as universal.

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<sup>227</sup> Felicia H. LaBoy, *You Want Me to Talk to Whom? Explorations in Fear, and Faith from the Underside of the Bible*, Review & Expositor 115, no. 1 (February 2018): 26–39.

<sup>228</sup> LaBoy, *You Want Me*, 26.

In further evaluating a universal mission of God that was received and was exuded by the Apostles, this study briefly identifies radical implications proposed through Africans, African American apologists, and Black missiologists, all in light of their recommendations of Acts 1:8 as the affirmation for Black Church leadership in globalized Christian mission, in the 21st Century. In Pollard and Duncan's Apologetics discourses, Dennis W. Wiley, retired pastor of Covenant Baptist Church of Christ, discussed how redistributing power looks on a local church level.

...I am talking about the Holy Spirit power that Jesus promised his disciples in Acts 1:8 that enabled them to become effective, liberating witnesses at home, and abroad. I am talking about power, not as a possession, but as a life-building force that, when shared, allows the church to be all it can be through allowing the people of God to be all they can be. This radical redistribution of power requires the church to break away from tradition, and be bold, and creative enough to do new things in new ways [...] It seems to me that a *redistribution of power* is essential for the Black church of the twenty-first century to do the 'new thing' God is calling it to do as it endeavors to realize its full God-given potential.<sup>229</sup>

In light of these words, Wiley had shared his pastoral role with his wife, as co-pastor, as well as redistributed, and created new leadership among members, enabling their invested contributions to benefit their church and the outer community. From a broader outlook, Mark Shaw, scholar in African Church History, posited, "In the 1970s Kenyan, and Presbyterian leader John Gatu called for a moratorium on Western missionaries to foster self-hood within the Church."<sup>230</sup> This was a call for the decolonization of Christianity, for empowering African leadership to do discipleship throughout their continent via their

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<sup>229</sup> Wiley, "Black Church Studies as Practical Theology," 168-169.

<sup>230</sup> Mark Shaw, "A History of Christianity in Africa," ed. Vaughn J. Walston, and Robert J. Stevens, *African-American Experience in World Mission: A Call beyond Community, Volume 1* (Chesapeake, VA: Cooperative Mission Network of the African Dispersion, 2002), 149.

ancestral/cultural ways. Even further, missionary, Kwame Bediako, elaborated on how the biblical universality of Jesus Christ enabled diverse African cultures, not of Jewish descent, to witness the Incarnation of Christ, and translate it in ways that associated with the customs, naming, traditions, and ways of experiencing God (Acts 2:15).<sup>231</sup> Moreover, reflecting on a missionary conference where attendees were admonished to take Acts 1:8 seriously,<sup>232</sup> Leslie Pelt, an African American missionary, mentioned the advantages in having undergone the Black experience in the U.S. when ministering cross-culturally in Africa:

The black experience in America has made our race sensitive to issues, attitudes, and practices that offend nonwestern people. While missionaries often must be told that something is offensive, the black missionary may already have an innate awareness of this. Because of this, an integrated missions force can help mission organizations better perceive subtle acts of discrimination that can hinder the Gospel.<sup>233</sup>

In reflection, the ecclesial shifts by apologists and missiologists in their applications of Acts 1:8 examples decolonization, redistribution of power, and cross-cultural/intercultural ministry. More importantly, this assessment's claim of the ecclesial shifts, as grounded by Isaiah 61:1-2a, Luke 4:18-19, and Acts 1:8, as universal theological loci, not only posited the applications as examples of closing of generation gaps, whereas Gentile sufferers received direct blessings from the Lord, the transition

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<sup>231</sup> Kwambe Bediako, "Jesus in Africa: A Ghanian Perspective," ed. Vaughn J. Walston, and Robert J. Stevens, *African-American Experience in World Mission: A Call beyond Community, Volume 1* (Chesapeake, VA: Cooperative Mission Network of the African Dispersion, 2002), 172-173.

<sup>232</sup> Leslie Pelt, "Wanted: Black Missionaries." ed. Vaughn J. Walston, and Robert J. Stevens, *African-American Experience in World Mission: A Call beyond Community, Volume 1* (Chesapeake, VA: Cooperative Mission Network of the African Dispersion, 2002), 79.

<sup>233</sup> Pelt, "Wanted: Black Missionaries," 82.

brought to light the Divine Election of humanity, such that the oppressed no longer view the Christian faith through the lens of the oppressor. Explicitly, the Lord's Sovereign Election of all humanity is sensed universally, even cross-culturally, such that oppressed ecclesial institutions, religions, and people, become universal participants! These were radical implications for the UBHC! This means that upon receiving the gospel of God in Christ, all peoples are made free (John 8:36), become justified (Romans 5:1), and empowered for participating in the universal mission of God (Romans 8:29). Considering this study's proposed chief normative faith texts, Acts 1:8, the ecclesial shifts, and leadership roles as examples of, what Robert L. Smith referred to as, contemporary "informed praxis,"<sup>234</sup> alongside NSBC's legacy of visional congregations, and their pastors, the impending question became, How can the Urban Black Historic Church reframe its view of the mission of God, reflective of universality, and the church's legacy? (What is the UBHC's vision of what God is doing in the 21st Century?)

*Assessing the Grounding Scriptures of Holistic Mission Theology for Critical Conversation with the UBHC Informed Practices*

When viewing Acts 1:8 as a normative faith text through the prism of this assessment's informed praxis from Africans, African American apologists, and missiologists, all in dialogue with Jesus' universal mission declaration and Isaiah's prophetic message, one can see a Divine universal purpose and the Urban Black Historic Church leadership's need for a reframed view of mission. Despite the bible's clear Divine

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<sup>234</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 183-184, and 188.

universal agenda, the UBHC has often refused to recognize its historical heterogeneous worldview, which I propose as inherent, and thus faced decline. This brief study of the causes for UBHCs' inner focus reported, for example, a continuum of racism motivating forces in four periods of burning down Black churches, aimed to induce fear and obstruct African American progress: 1865-1877 amidst blacks' Post Civil War Era's freedom, the 1920s amidst voting rights of the Reconstruction Era, 1960s amidst the Post WW2 Civil Rights Era, 1980s-present amidst citizens living into lawful liberties.<sup>235</sup> Moreover, this study reported the existence of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century version of hegemonic forces that continue colonized interpretations of the bible that repress African Americans thriving, and thus nullify the effectiveness of the Black Church. In response, this evaluation of the informed praxis from Nubian people led this assessment to evaluate one of the most progressive mainline Protestant Church missional approaches, seeking whether it empowers cross-cultural recipients in becoming participants in advancing Christian mission. Mission scholar, Dana L. Robert, referred to the approach as "holistic mission theology."<sup>236</sup>

Holistic mission theology is a discipline that derives from the field of Missiology, which is a branch of Practical Theology. While there exist many scholarly definitions for this field, for the practice nature of my transformational leadership project, the assessment recognized the blog of a noted mission scholar, Robert J. Priest, who posited,

Missiology is an interdisciplinary discipline which, through research, writing, and teaching, furthers the acquisition, development, and transmission of theologically-

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<sup>235</sup> Barbara Perry, *Hate Crime: A Reader*, (New York: Routledge 2003), 177-180.

<sup>236</sup> Dana L. Robert, "Lecture 2B: Holistic Mission," Doctoral Lecture, Mission, and Outreach: Foundations for Transformation from Boston University, Boston, MA, February 4, 2015.

informed, contextually-grounded, and ministry-oriented knowledge, and understanding, to help, and correct Christians, and Christian institutions, involved in the doing of Christian mission.<sup>237</sup>

Appending the study of mission with the theology of mission, mission scholar, J. Andrew Kirk offered,

The theology of mission is a disciplined study that deals with questions that arise when people of faith seek to understand and fulfill God's purposes in the world, as these are demonstrated in the ministry of Jesus Christ. It is a critical reflection on attitudes, and actions adopted by Christians in pursuit of the missionary mandate. Its task is to validate, correct, and establish on better foundations the entire practice of mission.<sup>238</sup>

Collectively, Priest and Kirk shifted the practices, questions, and studies of Christian/Church missions away from themselves to an increased awareness of God's purpose or the ministry of Christ to the world. Relevant to aiding UBHC leadership in reframing its view of mission, missiologist, David Bosch, link Christian/Church mission to the mission of God (Latin - *Missio Dei*) as "... God's activity, which embraces both the church, and the world, and in which the church may be privileged to participate".<sup>239</sup> Further, missiologists, Robert Gallagher, and Paul Hertig enmesh the missions of Jesus, and the Church, saying, "The mission of the church, as the mission of Jesus, involves being sent into the world – to love, to serve, to preach, to teach, to heal, to save, and to free".<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Robert Priest, *Missiology Matters: What in the Word is Missiology?*, accessed March 11, 2021, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56dee43ee321400514f98522/t/575c3b17e707eb73521a574c/146566232210/4+MISS+401+Mag+4.pdf>

<sup>238</sup> J. Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission?* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 21.

<sup>239</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 401.

<sup>240</sup> Robert Gallagher, and Paul Hertig, *Landmark essays, and world Christianity* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2009), 14.

Based on these renowned missiologists' contributions, this evaluation gathered the defining, and thematic scriptures in holistic mission theology, seeking whether they foster critical conversation with the informed practices for assisting Urban Black Historic Church leadership in reframing its view of mission from itself (Christian or Church mission), to the mission of God.

Bridging the concepts that constitute a holistic mission, Dana Robert offered:

The fullness of God's love suggests that missional thinking be holistic. From a Wesleyan theological perspective, the holistic mission takes its cue from the Book of John, when Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Abundant life is a generous concept that extends to all realms of created existence. It can include physical healing, psychological well-being, peace, and justice, and eternal salvation. It assumes that mind, body, and spirit are interconnected. The crossing of boundaries, the "sentness" of mission, and outreach bring people into a relationship with God, the author of abundant life. If a mission is to be transformative for persons, communities, and the world, then it will not limit the gospel message to one narrow aspect of human existence. [...] To produce a holistic mission theology requires examining the relationship among evangelism, the church as a gathered community, and the kingdom or reign of God.<sup>241</sup>

In agreement, mission anthropologist, Paul G. Hiebert, presented evangelism, Church-centered mission, and kingdom as the three major themes in mission.<sup>242</sup> Hiebert described the flaws when churches or missiologists place either of the three themes to the center of the mission, as "reductionism."<sup>243</sup> Overall, in arguing the importance of the Kingdom of God where Christ as King is the center, Hiebert emphasized Jesus' Kingdom of God

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<sup>241</sup> Robert, "Holistic Mission," 1.

<sup>242</sup> Paul G. Hiebert. *Evangelism, Church, and Kingdom* (1993). Last accessed on March 11, 2021, <http://hiebertglobalcenter.org/blog/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/67.-1993.-Evangelism-Church-and-Kingdom.pdf>.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid*, 153.

message (Matthew 4:17) as the Gospel/good news (4:23, Luke 4:43), and the initial *asking* in the Lord's prayer (6:10), and the kingship of the Lord (Matthew 2:2, Philippians 2:9-11).<sup>244</sup> Interestingly, despite Kirk sharing the same hierarchical sentiments (evangelism, church, and kingdom), using Romans 15:19, whereas the gospel/good news is preached without respect of location or context, and regardless of the many book titles about context, as well as emphatic words about the significance of the Kingdom, when considering the Church's self-consciousness, this missiologist resolves, "...in one way or another, the Church is at the heart of God's mission."<sup>245</sup> Then seemingly oppositely, in the chapter titled, "Mission in the way of Jesus Christ," Kirk posits, "They had no opportunity to become a full part of civil society, because of discrimination, prejudice, and the defense of privilege. The preaching of the kingdom came to them as good news because it spoke of another kind of system," and cosigned this description with Luke 6:20, where Jesus said, "*Then he looked up at his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God"*"<sup>246</sup> (Sermon on the Mount). Herein, this study evaluates the Kingdom of God passion of mainline missiologists, regarding Christ's position as King, his sermon messages, and the Church. However, unlike the mainline missiologists' noble positions, the African, and African American apologists, and missiologists were praxeological (informed praxis), and viewed the Kingdom of God as being visible in the actions, attitudes, and conditions of people.

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<sup>244</sup> Hiebert, *Evangelism, Church, and Kingdom*, 159-160.

<sup>245</sup> Kirk, *What is Mission*, 205.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

These distinctions are helpful nuances to my evaluation.

Beneficially, the nuances, between the mainline missiologists' Kingdom of God positions, and the African borne informed praxis offering, is helpful to the assessment, in that this critical conversation notes agreeance regarding the Kingdom of God, however, ascribing it to the deeds of Christ, and thus the Apostles. African missiologist, Kwame Bediako, argued from the premise of Acts 17:26, "*From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth, and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands.*" Bediako argued that Christ can be accepted personally, as Sovereign, so that Africans can discover themselves in Adam, Eve, and Creation, and pose a question, "But if Christ were to appear as the answer to the questions that Africans are asking, what would he look like?"<sup>247</sup> From a Ghanaian/Akan perspective, Bediako's position was that Western missionaries' teachings that Africans have received were inadequate, but Africans offered mercy due to human shortcomings. Bediako felt that Africans had shed the regulations of Jewish Law that Jewish Christians tried to impose on them, and rather accepted the Sovereignty of the Gospel of Jesus the Messiah, and are assured that Jesus, in resistance to the Western missionaries' negative view of African religion, is Christ of God from their pre-Christian African past into the Christian present, and not a new God unrelated to their traditions. Last, Bediako asserts that the most primal of African religion that appears furthest removed from the Christian faith was, and has been vital for the furtherance of the Gospel because they provide a fresh approach of how Africans relate to Jesus in their context. Thus, from Bediako's

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<sup>247</sup> Walston, and Stevens, *World Mission*, 178. (God, and Christ to Africa).

Akan cultural view, Christ, God, and Holy Spirit are used interchangeably, whereas the Kingship of God was revealed to their ancestors in the Beginning, as the original revelation, and covenant (Genesis 1:1-31). In Bediako's view, God had met them again in history through Jesus, as God in humanity, and history. Using this translation of thought, this study assessed that the Africans view the Euro posit of Acts 1:8 as a mission of speech, but the Akans' observes the text as the Sovereign Creator's plan or action.

The relationship of holistic mission theology with the church's informed practices is best advanced through Renee Padilla, an evangelical biblical theologian. an evangelical biblical theologian. For Padilla, holistic mission theology is viewed in terms of kingdom mission in an actionable way, rather than hierarchy, whereas the theologian said, "The central thrust of the New Testament is that Jesus has come to fulfill Old Testament prophecy and that in his person, and work the kingdom of God has become a present-day reality."<sup>248</sup> Based on Luke 4:18-19, Padilla talked about how Jesus' historical mission, his life, and work, were the manifestation of the kingdom of God, or Yahweh's dynamic power made visible. As Bediako, Padilla pointed to the active works of people discerned through faith (Luke 17:20-21). The central contribution to the informed practices was Padilla's definition of kingdom mission, and/or holistic mission as integral, such that evangelism is not solely in terms of words, but rather through words accompanied with deeds:

We must, therefore, posit no interpretation of the Christian mission that leaves the impression that the verbal proclamation is 'in itself persuasive to the unbelievers' while visible signs - good works - are not. Neither seeing nor hearing will always

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<sup>248</sup> C. Renee Padilla, *Mission Between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom* (Carlisle Cumbria: Langham Monographs, 2010), 200.

result in faith. Both word, and deed point to the kingdom of God, but ‘no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:3).<sup>249</sup>

In Padilla’s view, the church, and its ministries must be seen in the context of God’s universal purpose, such that “...Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father” (Philippians 2:10-11). The integral mission concept can find fertile grounds with Walter Rauschenbusch, a theologian who identified the growth of the human race upward, and the unsettled ecclesiastical system of thought, all whereas “...the Reign of God toward which all creation is moving. Translate the evolutionary theories into religious faith, and you have the doctrine of the Kingdom of God.”<sup>250</sup> In other words, all science falls within the realm of God’s mission. As well, Brian K. Blount, a scholar in African American Religion, offered aforesight to the Negro Spiritual “Wade in the Water,” in describing how the songs were far more than music, and melody:

God in the spirituals is a God-of-Encounter revealed both through natural events and directly into the consciousness of human beings. This God was no passive observer of human history, but directly, and emphatically intervened into the secular, religious, and political affairs of humankind. Nathan Wright notes that this image of God “parallels or is identical with the Jehovah God of the Old Testament, and with the Messiah manifestation of the New Testament.”<sup>251</sup>

Significant to the critical conversation regarding the intersects or congruence of holistic mission, integral mission, and kingdom, Blount asserts, despite the illiteracy of enslaved Africans, they “...reoriented the biblical mythology by aligning it with a consciousness response to the nineteenth-century slave reality.” Therefore, the miracles of God, even in

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<sup>249</sup> Padilla, *Mission Between the Times*, 206.

<sup>250</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York: The MacMillan Co, 1926), 90.

<sup>251</sup> Blount, *Cultural Interpretation*, 57.

Jesus' championing death, and empowering the disciples to do greater works in their contexts, this study assessed, were present, and real to the enslaved in their setting!

When reflecting on holistic mission theology's mission of God focus through the lens of Padilla's integral mission, it concurs with several praised scholars of Black religious tradition. Cain H. Felder asserted blacks' prior learning of God in Africa in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. C. E. Lincoln & Lawrence Mamiya elaborated on how urban Black churches established control and assimilations of strangers during mass migrations to the U.S. North after the Civil War.<sup>252</sup> Anthony Pinn talked about African Americans prophetic understanding in asserting Civil Rights in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. These Nubian scholars and others proposed a praxis-led awareness for leading social reform in postmodernity, that was similar to Padilla's integral mission. Remembrance of Black churches in past, through the view of integral mission, reveal that they also benefited others, not of African descent: as change agents for women's voting rights, whereas African American women received a platform for speaking,<sup>253</sup> as cultural, and location boundary crossers for refugees in the U.S.,<sup>254</sup> and as generation gap closers for children's Civil Rights in education, and all women.<sup>255</sup> Hence, in postmodernity, the lens of history depicts a

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<sup>252</sup> Lincoln, and Mamiya, *The Black Church in U.S.*, 117-118, 251-252, 110, 189, 196-197.

<sup>253</sup> Todd Schribner, *How the Civil Rights Movement Influenced U.S. Immigration Policy* (D.C.: United States Conference of Bishops, 2019) accessed on March 21, 2021, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/cultural-diversity/african-american/civil-rights-and-immigration.cfm>

<sup>254</sup> Lincoln, and Mamiya, *The Black Church in U.S.*, 313, 339-341.

<sup>255</sup> Martha S. Jones, *How Black Suffragists Fought for the Right to Vote, and a Modicum of Respect*. Humanities: The Magazine of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Humanities (Summer 2019) vol. 40, no. 3. Washington, D.C, accessed on March 16, 2021, <https://www.neh.gov/article/how-black-suffragists-fought-right-vote-and-modicum-respect>

necessity for urban Black historic church leadership's recovery of a mission of God focuses so that their reframed view shifts to the Missio Dei for the UBHC in the 21st Century, reflecting the Kingdom of God as an integral or praxiological mission, that will convert sufferers to agents of God. The overall significance of this critical conversation process to urban Black history churches was that it confirmed the necessity of their leadership in recovering/reframing a mission of God focus for them, which meant rediscovering a self-understanding of the Black Church as a decolonizing agent of God, and thus, seek ways in utilizing inherent modes of informed praxis integrally for increasing relevance in advancing the Missio Dei in postmodernity.

When considering this transformative assessment proposal for the Black Church's renewed faith-identity, its recentered social gospel scripture, its re-grounded message, the prophetic normative faith texts, each's reframed view of the mission of God in integral or praxeological ways, and most importantly, all of the radical implications for the UBHC in its dissimilar communities, the impending question became, Why should UBHCs take risks in renewing its African heritage, remodeling its ecclesial image fittingly, shifting its message to a covenant observance, and advancing a reform mission? In other words, Why should urban Black historic churches take such risks for observing God in universal ways? In response, due to the present UBHC declines, this project will assess its proposals' relevance to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century society by conducting a thematic investigation.

Rethinking the Theme for Urban Black Historic Church Leadership in Sharing God's  
Love with All People

The final task in Assess was rethinking the existing UBHC theme by evaluating it over, and against the proposed normative faith texts' implications, and the 21<sup>st</sup> Century society's new context. Beyond the Caucasian-led, heterosexual, and male-dominated U.S. society, exists cultural biases, gender discriminations, and sexual apprehensions. Arguably, the most damage done has been the voidness in urban Black historic churches talking about these areas, which has hindered their leadership an opportunity for shifting the congregations' focus from the Church mission to a reframed view of the *Missio Dei*. By doing so, UBHC will exude God's universal care/love. Robert L. Smith talked about the faux pas brought to light:

What this will result in are the instances where the acts of the church are brought into critical tension with the reality of these biases, and its theological beliefs. This is not novel. What is different here is that the BETH approach, in a consistent, critical, and deliberate way, makes these tensions explicit.<sup>256</sup>

In instances where urban Black historic churches are surrounded by growing populations that are ethnically, and ideologically dissimilar to the existing congregants, the researcher assessed, the tension of leaders, and members derive from fear of their plight, story, and/or strength becoming, respectively, irrelevant, replaced, and ineffective in the city. In response, this final task will involve assisting UBHC leadership in rethinking narrative by creating a theme that is more reflective of the church's new experience in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Smith's BETH approach incorporated the use of the thematic investigation in

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<sup>256</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 201.

this Black Practical Theological response because it focuses on Black Church practices for bettering all peoples' quality of life authentically and relevant to God's mission:

...an ongoing process of critical, and reflective inquiry into the praxis of the black church in the world, and God's purposes for all humanity. Its inquiry is carried out in light of Christian Scripture, black faith texts, and black religious tradition. It is informed by black history, culture, and experiences, and seeks the critical awareness of contemporary, and social issues, and events that shape human experience.<sup>257</sup>

Based on Smith's definition, envisioning informed practices seeking to counter the aforementioned issues, which have existed since the Black Church's inception in the U.S., this study turned to Black Practical Theology's BETH approach, for assessing the participants in UBHC leadership's vision of the mission of God, in the new era. Also, this part of the stage assessed, and completed the thematic investigation's aim that began in the analysis, which was to look at NSBC's lived experience through a theme-based lens, and noticing indicators that are counted as counterproductive vs. those of fulfillment, all from the congregation's perspective for creating an appropriate vision, and new practices for the Christian Education Ministry. This portion of the thematic investigation informed the Christian Education Ministry's missional considerations when preparing for its annual symposium.

*Exploring Proposed Normative Faith Texts and their Potential for Urban Black Historic Churches' Ministries*

Now in the church at Antioch, there were prophets, and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Nīger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the ruler, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "*Set apart for me Barnabas, and Saul for the work to which I*

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<sup>257</sup> Ibid, 48.

*have called them.*” Then after fasting, and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off. (Acts 13:1-3)

In this scripture, two new Jewish Apostles were commissioned or consecrated by gentile clerics rather than Hebrew Israelite priests, which was a cultural, and religious transformation that was previously not possible. Demetrius K. Williams claims that this occurred due to the changing contexts of the Roman Empire in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, which had expanded to northern Africa. Also, a city in Syria of northern Africa, Antioch, became the first Jewish-Christian church/mission center where followers of Jesus’ way were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). Further, additional firsts included people, not of Jewish descent prophesying, and teaching, namely Africans, such as Cyrus from Cyrene, and Simeon from Cyprus, also called Nīger (Black), who rose to church leadership (Acts 11:20-21). This evaluation asserts that Israelite ministers observing the faith’s extension via the Roman Empire’s expansion, and their affirming Gentile Christian leadership were implications of Jesus’s order to the disciples, *“you will be witnesses of me... in the uttermost ends of the earth”* (Acts 1:8c).

The sweeping implications from the Jewish, and Gentiles’ changed contexts provided critical conversation to urban Black historic churches in their prior African American community now inhabited by emerging dominant cultures, about how customary excluded, immigrants or marginalized people can emerge to leadership, and former leaders transition to, what Birch called, “suffering servants.”<sup>258</sup> Reflecting on Hoyt’s emphasis on Creation, concerning the Fatherhood of God and the kinship of

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<sup>258</sup> Birch, *Let Justice Roll Down*, 299, and 301.

humanity,<sup>259</sup> and the suffering servant motif, all identified post-exile prophets in a position of apathetically but radically welcoming adversaries who were not of the Israelite tradition into the family that God created (Isaiah 42:1-2, 49:1-6, 50: 4-11, 52:13 – 53:12; Jeremiah 33: 1-13; Ezekiel 40-48). Continuing the suffering servant motif, Jesus consistently healed and atoned for those who were not of the Jewish tradition as if they were already part of the family of God, such as the Syrophenician woman (Mark 7: 24-29) and a Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-28). Similarly, this assessment proposes that urban Black historic church leadership view their changing social structural contexts of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as opportunities for making radical decisions about the ecclesial image of their ministries and for viewing their churches as suffering servants. As well there could exist suffering servants among the membership and leadership, which could potentially include new participants whom God has radically called from the dominant cultures in postmodern and globalized neighborhoods in the urban Black historic church.

*Evaluating the Changing Contexts through the Lens of Shared Experiences*

Robert L. Smith critically correlated the ancient shifts with the changing contexts in the U.S. 21<sup>st</sup> Century, describing this as a time of instability in the country's philosophy and culture, as well as in education, jobs, healthcare, and housing inequalities:

It should be noted that increasing numbers of the majority white culture in America are being faced with some of those same realities. The current economic environment is becoming increasingly hostile to the working class, and working poor people. [...] For that reason, particular attention will be paid to the historical, and social circumstances which have given birth to the contemporary black thematic universe. It will be shown that these reflect the lived realities of the

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<sup>259</sup> Hoyt, "Interpreting Biblical Scholarship," 32.

common person.<sup>260</sup>

In accordance, this study emphasized the historical, and social circumstances of capitalism, consumerism, contemporary generative themes, globalization over the most recent 50 years, new forms of racism, and the interpretation of it all by the Black popular culture. The zoom lens view in the analysis of this project highlighted specific generative themes, which describe the plight of U.S. Blacks as shared by other races. For the most recent three years, 2017-2020, newspapers have reported how African Americans, Caucasians, and their local-global neighbors had weekly protested together in tensional areas: Black Lives Matter, Climate Change, Women's Rights, Livable Wages, and others. I make the case that the changing contexts revealed that urban Black historic churches have much in common with new external communities.

Alongside shared experiences, the analysis of this project revealed emerging global populaces who have experienced related past situations similar to the Black Church plight. The zoom lens view of the analysis in this project reported that there have been noticeable increases in Africans, Asian Americans, Hispanics, Pacific Islanders (AAPI), as well as Caribbean residents in the District, throughout the years 2000-2016, particularly in the Central NW, and Central D.C., where NSBC resides.<sup>261</sup> Along with these increases, the report details a rise in children, senior citizen women, college students, and young professionals. Buttressing the population changes, the social structural analysis in this project reflects investments in housing along with funding in

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<sup>260</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 111-112.

<sup>261</sup> Tatian, et. al, *State of Immigrants in the District of Columbia*, 3-4,  
[https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99031/state\\_of\\_immigrants\\_in\\_dc\\_brief\\_2.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99031/state_of_immigrants_in_dc_brief_2.pdf)

businesses, careers, and entrepreneurship, all that reduced government employment, and family dwelling in the District. In reflection, although elaborating on each populace's experience is beyond the scope of this study, significant to the urban Black historic churches in emerging postmodern and globalized residents, families, and college students all share recent past, and commonly lived experiences. As generative themes with the UBHC, they share common sufferings due to healthcare and medical price increases, college and housing cost increases, the peril of immigration dreamers and refugees, as well as internet predatory crimes and successive pandemics that have threatened the lives and well-being of the middle class, poor, and transitional classes of people regardless of ethnicity. Therefore, historic Black churches in urban centers, this study evaluates, have been brought to view the changing contexts as an opportunity for radically identifying postmodern, and global neighbors as partakers in sharing common struggles, and potential fellow participants/suffering servants in UBHCs.

*Discovering a New Era's Opportunities by Exploring the Thematic Universe*

In light of the generative themes shared by potential participants and the UBHC, this study incorporated Paulo Freire's thematic universe, a complex of interacting themes within an epoch (era). Using Friere's idea, Smith presents the thematic universe approach for reframing human experiences of Black people in the U.S. as an era. Reflecting on the country's history during the antebellum, postbellum, and Modern era, African Americans and their ancestors have experienced enslavement, Jim Crow Laws, and racism vs.

freedom, liberty, and Civil Rights.<sup>262</sup> Smith grouped the themes of the prior eras and called the epoch Modern Black Thematic Universe. Then Smith proposed that the Postmodern Era shift has relocated the Black Church in a Contemporary Black Thematic Universe with new postmodern themes (capitalism, consumerism, and racism), which require new opposing practices.

Using Smith's application of Freire's thematic universe, this study evaluates the potential new participants with the UBHC and proposes a new epoch characterized by a *People of Color Thematic Universe*. Also, concurring with Freire's competing themes concept within the thematic universe, I have offered additional new narratives within the proposed POC Thematic Universe that are more relevant to the postmodern experience of bigotry, classism, and homophobia. This study assessed that adding the new people according to the new challenges, create fresh opportunities for witnessing the miracles of God in new ways (Acts 1:8).

Given the proposed POC Thematic Universe and the new era presents new groupings of new challenges and fresh opportunity for prophetically reframing the UBHC leadership's vision of the mission of God were created. Freire would identify the new *limit-situations* because they are harmful practically, religiously, and systemically. The potential of these limit-situations is to bring the UBHC and the new neighbors together in continual dialogue for discovering limit-acts and, over time, to resolve problems via

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<sup>262</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 68-69, and 70-71.

governmental reforms.<sup>263</sup> Due to Black Church leadership bringing about freedom, liberation, and Civil Rights throughout the Black Thematic Universe, this study assessed that a POC Thematic Universe calls for UBHC leadership in guiding existing, and potential participants in dialogue for discovering limit-acts for countering their common limit-situations together.

Admittedly, this assessment recognized the radicality in proposing numbers of people from the dominant and globalized cultures as fellow participants under urban Black historic church leadership. However, based on the assessment of this chapter, I have proposed a mission shift from liberation to reform by considering the impending uncertainties that this era has brought in joyful anticipation of miracles similar to those previously witnessed under God's universal care. This study highlighted the narratives of unlikely participants, such as Ruth Cyrus and Artaxerxes, as well as Saul and Barnabas alongside Simeon and Cyrus. These narratives offer the same radical implications of the urban Black historic church in leading existing membership and potentially new participants in the POC Thematic Universe. Overall, I learned that the contextual changes, which caused integral theological practices, call for UBHC leadership to reframe their vision of the mission of God to include radical covenantal reform that will include existing African American members, and potentially new participants from different cultures.

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<sup>263</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 97, 99-100, refers to Alvaro Viera Pinto, *Consciencia e Realidade Nacional*, vol. 2, Rio de Janeiro, Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros (1960), 284.

*Assessing God's Universal Covenant: Transforming the Black Plight to People of Color*

Ever since the Black Church's official inception in the U.S. and enslaved Africans' awareness of Scripture, their normative faith texts of choice have pertained to Moses vs. Pharaoh, or slavery vs. freedom. Black Theologians Dale P. Andrews,<sup>264</sup> James H. Evans,<sup>265</sup> and Robert L. Smith,<sup>266</sup> alongside mission theologians - Walther Eichrodt,<sup>267</sup> and Walter Brueggemann,<sup>268</sup> all describe how the ancient Israelites' Mosaic and pre-exilic prophets' and Zionists' understandings of the mission of God consistently included three movements that became traditions: refuge | protection, exodus | liberation, and a equity | covenant reform.<sup>269</sup> However, because African Americans no longer exist in slavery, nor Jim Crow Laws, and have increasingly existed as citizens in these United States, as an intricate part of the American experience (hybrid), this project emphasizes Andrews posit of moving on to "covenant models," which would help African Americans socio-psychologically.<sup>270</sup> This means the creation of new traditions (re-orientation)

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<sup>264</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 103, 106, and 108.

<sup>265</sup> Evans, *We Have Been Believers*, 16-17, and 31, (liberation); 37 (covenant).

<sup>266</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 95-97, 172 (deliverance from Pharaoh), 201-202 (David)

<sup>267</sup> Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, vol 2, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1961), 476, 493.

<sup>268</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 28-31, (talked about the limitations of Eichrodt's positions on covenant. Called his theory reductionist, or one-sided, because it denied the free-agency/autonomy of humanity, and creation in mitigating its own life, and functions in the covenant. Nonetheless Brueggemann agreed with Eichrodt on the significance of covenant as "one idea" that centered within the mindsets of the Israelites, giving them confidence, shaped their faith-identity, and superiority.)

<sup>269</sup> Isaiah 49:6.

<sup>270</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 79, 95, and 102.

relevant to the covenant. Interestingly, while Andrews's offering of the covenant model appears as an opportunity for confidently living into the change I am proposing, there appears to exist a Black Church endearment for freedom | liberation praxis and theology, to extents that any dialogue exploring equity | reform opportunities beyond liberation are considered defensive or contentious. Yet, I have assessed the contention/fear in the face of opportunity as an existential juxtaposition that has been historically followed by radical vision or praxis.

Andrews identified this juxtaposition as a chasm or four tensions that coalesce with four tasks that can close "...the chasm between the refuge | pastoral, and the liberation | prophetic dialect."<sup>271</sup> Herein, Andrews categorized the problems as tensions that all point to and give response to a core principle, which this assessment asserts and maintains throughout the project: "The struggle facing black churches is no less a question of ecclesiology than it is a question of liberation."<sup>272</sup>

The first tension or task of bridging the chasm between African American folk religion, and reform is to evaluate Black Theology's classical use of alternate/prophetic consciousness.<sup>273</sup> Andrews alleged that traditional Black Theology lacked a vision of a lived freedom for African Americans:

*The prophetic office of black theology requires a methodology grounded in practical theology, which seeks an internal transformation of black religious life – that is, internal to the religious folk tradition. Instead, the dialectic method in black theology has produced an unsuccessful attempt to create resocialization of*

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<sup>271</sup> Ibid, 30, 89, and 65.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid, 89.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid, 96 11, 107, 106, 109, and 121 (prophetic consciousness)

*black churches. This method struggles to redefine for black churches newly plausible, religious, sociopolitical structures for re-socializing black life.*<sup>274</sup>

For Andrews, Black Theology, and the Black Church solely focused on God's acts of refuge, and liberation (salvation) in the lives of the Israelites, and lacked shared visions of wholeness, and freedom. Concurring with prophetic consciousness, theologian, Walter Brueggemann, stressed the need for an "alternate consciousness"<sup>275</sup> or a newness that was/ is counteractive to the dominant cultures' ideologies of others as slaves/socially dependent. And this consciousness should also correct the wrongs in the Israelites' religious subculture, which made their liberation history, and message all story-told traditions, and reflective practices/customs, rather than living into them.

Relevant to the urban Black historic churches, an alternate/prophetic consciousness, and correlative corrective agenda would aid NSBC in remodeling its ecclesial image, and addressing the same in its message, as well as responding to expected resistance from NSBC's matriarchs, and patriarchs, who see the Black Church solely as a place of refuge, and liberation. Thus, open dialogue with UBHC leadership provided opportunities for beginning to explore ways in shifting the faith identity from refuge ministries, and liberation practices, all birthed amidst slavery, and the Postbellum Reconstruction, and Civil Rights periods, to present prophetic consciousness. This meant seeking corrective moves from the Black Church's historic Men's & Women's Day, which personify U.S. African slaves' methods of fellowshiping with their estranged

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid, 85; (Google Play, 2002), 75.

<sup>275</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 13-14.

family, to creating types of globalized gatherings celebrating social reforms. Likewise, exploring structural shifts from the Black Church Sunday school and/ or midweek Bible Study customs, which pre-, and post- enslaved Black people disguised reading, writing, and socialization in the auspices of religious training, searching for postmodern ways of disseminating these, and other disciplines. Also, studying transitions from the Black Church's pastoral/ ecclesial image of one leader, i.e. Harriet Tubman leading slaves to refuge/freedom, which was embodied by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in leading the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and African Americans over the Edmond Bridge in Alabama, followed by this Black male pastor's liberation speech calling for Civil Rights, to ways for a multi-person leadership team's guidance of the congregation, and attendees for living into contemporary freedom. In reflection, this first task led to the second tension: Which is the most influential ministry in NSBC to begin analyzing such renewal/transformation in the church?

This analysis's second tension was addressed in Andrew's second task, which was to review the Black Church's appeals to a covenantal theology of prophetic inspiration, in which the noted theologian asserts "...a covenant model of black ecclesiology can work within a faith identity paradigm to bridge the chasm between [Black] religious folklife, and social justice."<sup>276</sup> Herein, the question was posed, "Just which biblical covenant should serve as the referential authority for black ecclesiology?" Responsively, Andrews talked about how the outcome of the Israelite's Red Sea experiences led to a Zionist

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<sup>276</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 89-91, 96, and 106 (Google Play 100 – 101).

covenantal relationship with God. At first, this relationship was expressed in the Mosaic Covenant.<sup>277</sup> Although the breadth of the Decalogue/Ten Commandments focused on reforming their religious responsibilities, civic character, and the consequences of violation,<sup>278</sup> rather the Israelites' centered their attention on worship due to Yahweh's miraculous liberation/ salvation of them from Egyptian slavery. Hence, identifying with the Israelites' slave experience, the Black Church became inheritors of a Zionist faith identity, whereas protest and worship focused solely on liberation became the center of their lives.<sup>279</sup> However, the next of the Zion covenants for consideration in remodeling black ecclesiology was the Davidic Covenant. Despite its exactness to the Mosaic Covenant,<sup>280</sup> Andrews posited that its scope focused on social ethics/ morality as the precursor, and maintenance of a Godly, and thus regional, triumphant kingdom amidst culturally diverse surroundings. Notably, while liberation and worship were yet important, this covenant model would place social reform and repentance as the ecclesial image. Hence, the second tension inquiry asked: Which church ministry would be most influential in exploring the Bible and reframing to a reformed covenantal model?

Relevantly, this inquiry drew from the historic social structure of the Black Church. Historians, James T. Campbell, in his book, "Songs of Zion,"<sup>281</sup> alongside C.

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<sup>277</sup> Exodus 19:3-8 (Mosaic Covenant).

<sup>278</sup> Exodus 20: 2-17, and Exodus 20:22-23:33 (Ten Commandments, and Book of the Covenant).

<sup>279</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 116.

<sup>280</sup> I Chron. 17:11-15; 2 Sam. 7:12-16 (Davidic Covenant).

<sup>281</sup> James T. Campbell. *Songs of Zion, The African Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, and South Africa*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 24-25.

Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya's book, "The Black Church in the African American Experience,"<sup>282</sup> both exhaustively described the importance, and investment of Christian Education leading in offering education to the socialization, and upward mobility of African Americans in the Black Church. More specifically, the Baptist Training Union, "Sunday School", and the Congress of Christian Education were staples in churches that comprised the National Baptist Convention and Progressive Baptist Convention.

Based on these accounts, Nineteenth Street Baptist Church's Christian Education Department was selected for this project's focal ministry. This focal ministry has a heritage of offering practices that inform all other ministries in the focal church and thus would benefit this historic church in future renewals. More significantly, this assessment discussed ways of authentically restructuring the Christian Education Ministry in ways that could be anticipated and repeated throughout NSBC's other ministries, and in other UBHCs. Most decisively, throughout NSBC's history, the Christian Education Department has represented the church's progressive ethos and possessed linkages in the broader District. Consequently, this ministry's historic features created this assessment's third tension, How can the NSBC leadership overcome inevitable vision limitations in their ministry for crossing internal and external generational boundaries? More explicitly, Andrews alleges that Black Theology's historic prophetic inspiration had failed in presenting vision to contemporary African Americans' daily needs.

Addressing this social structure analysis's third tension, was Andrew's third task:

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<sup>282</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church*, 35-36, 36-40.

“...to build a bridge for developing a common prophetic office [between liberation, and reform].”<sup>283</sup> In James H. Evans’s book “We Have Been Believers: An African American Systematic Theology”, he stressed how context can affect African Americans’ Christian witness of their faith and freedom:

The contexts show how the external, and internal forces that shaped, and continue to influence black religious expression have brought faith and freedom into sharp relief. The doctrinal affirmations must form the story, or gestalt, of black Christianity around the twin elliptical centers of faith, and freedom, the dialectic of which recasts and reinterprets the major sources of Christian revelation. The moral implications of this faith must direct African-American Christian witness in the world in a way that manifests the twin commitments of faithfulness to God, and the struggle for freedom. [...] Of course, the contexts of African-American Christian faith are always in the background, and the moral implications of that faith must always be acknowledged to be in the foreground...<sup>284</sup>

Although Evans conceded that secular changes must be responded to, he leaned on the side of caution in his statement twice emphasizing that African Americans must interpret, and respond to the context through filters of faith, and freedom. From a transformative leadership perspective, Black Theology’s position is that African Americans are yet striving for lawful freedom that has already been granted. In response, Cornel West, a scholarly activist of the U.S. Black culture, argued that Black Theology places African Americans in negation, and opposition ethos,<sup>285</sup> a dialectic methodology, or culture with a counter-hegemonic social agenda, which I assert forms more of a cult rather than a church, because of the inability to function collaboratively with the broader

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<sup>283</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 86, (Google Play 96).

<sup>284</sup> Evans, *We Have Been Believers*, 9.

<sup>285</sup> Cornel West, *Prophesy Deliverance: An Afro-American Revolutionary Christianity*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 108.

society. Evans rebutted these allegations, and cited "...that black churches had abandoned their liberation history for an ineffectual spirituality, and failed to confront adequately the concerns of black people living under racial, and economic oppression."<sup>286</sup> However, in his book "Race Matters", West placed the responsibility of nihilism, and a ghetto Black community ethos that exudes feelings of hopelessness, and lovelessness for African American children, as the responsibilities of all leaders:

We need leaders – neither saints nor sparkling television personalities – who can situate themselves within a larger historical narrative of this country, and our world, who can grasp the complex dynamics of our peoplehood, and imagine a future grounded in the best of our past, yet who are attuned to the frightening obstacles that now perplex us.<sup>287</sup>

Observantly, West's words dismissed saints and normally ascribed problems to the Black Church, and then activist later name churches as only an intermediate institution that affirms the humanity of Black people. Ultimately, West called for praxis outside of the church saying, "...we must focus our attention on the public square – the common good that undergirds our national, and global destinies."<sup>288</sup> In agreement with West, this transformational leadership assessment reflected on the recent protests (e.g. Black Lives Matter, Climate Change, Livable Wages, and Women's Rights, etc.) as shared challenges, and thus fellow participants who could be radically viewed as potential members of the UBHC or even NSBC's Christian Education Ministry, transformed relationships committed/covenanted to together seek limit-acts, under the

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<sup>286</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 4, and 89.

<sup>287</sup> Cornell West, *Race Matters*, (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 2003), 7, 23, and 32.

<sup>288</sup> West, *Race Matters*, 6-7

church's leadership. The radicality called upon in addressing this tension, presented the fourth, and final tension of this assessment: What are the social structural barriers that may prevent this ministry from closing generation gaps between the Black Church's refuge | protection, and exodus | liberation customs, and the postmodern and globalized, in culturally authentic, and equitable | covenantal ways?

Fittingly, this fourth tension was Andrews's fourth task and ultimate goal, re-grounding the liberation ethics of Black Theology in a prophetic role more convergent with religious folklife for African Americans. As a basis, a claim was raised against black theology's one dimension.

...black theology's renunciation of the personal spirituality or 'otherworldliness' within the churches' inner life dismissed the bearing of a narrative member of liberation for the soul, and its egalitarian meaning for black life, and black wholeness. This is a danger of one-world thinking, whether this-worldly or otherworldly. I believe the reproach to black churches with a pre-Civil War characterization of liberation ethics failed due to an unresolved duality between the internal, and external viewpoints of historical revelation.<sup>289</sup>

In addition to the pitfall of one-world thinking, Andrews also ascribed some failure in black churches and the African American experience due to systemic oppression.<sup>290</sup>

Nonetheless, Andrews maintained the claim regarding the failure of black theology in its use of adversarial dialect or revolutionary verbiage such that it compromises its message about God's authority and reign.<sup>291</sup> In agreement with Andrews, theologian Victor Anderson, author of "Beyond Ontological Blackness," opined the need for the African

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<sup>289</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 91-92, and 102

<sup>290</sup> Ibid, 129 (systemic oppression).

<sup>291</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 90, and 131 (adversarial)

American theology to look beyond cultural, and individual thriving, to the corporate life of the Church thriving in inspiring individual fulfillment that corresponds with corporate fulfillment.<sup>292</sup> Fulfillment can lift black churches' psychological perspectives of their cultural challenges, history, biblical presence, emotional semblances, and spiritual satisfaction, for self-affirming African Americans as the "people of God,"<sup>293</sup> and explore new spiritual practices in the new setting. My assessment asserts that Andrews, and Anderson's call for a dual spiritual, and/or emotional, fulfillment additions to the Black Church's social structure remodeling, are not without substantive merit, however, it has long been associated with megachurch movements, and even the megachurches have fallen victim to mass migrations, and pandemics all associated with the harmful themes in the POC Thematic Universe. Nonetheless, the changing contexts have led dissimilar cultures, and generations together, as well as has brought to light a new narrative: People of Color Thematic Universe, coalescing for engaging the mission of God in transforming the 21<sup>st</sup> Century challenges into a postmodern glorification of our Sovereign Lord, Jesus.

In summary, this transformative assessment's recentering of the Black Church social gospel grounding scripture, which led to re-grounding the message, and reframing the church's view of the mission of God, and thus transforming its theme/narrative, all led this assessment in assisting UBHC leadership by offering a transformed framework. The Urban Black Historic Church mission's prior framework was understood as...

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<sup>292</sup> Victor Anderson, *Beyond Ontological Blackness* (New York: Continuum Publishing Co., 1995), 157.

<sup>293</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 90.

Message: enslaved African freedom | Mission: Black liberation | Theme: Black people  
and this transformative assessment offers an appropriate reframed view of the Missio Dei  
as...

socio-cultural equity | ecclesia-covenant reform | People of Color.

### *Chapter Three Conclusion*

In summary, this transformative leadership assessment used the BETH approach for providing urban Black historic churches with a framework for posturing them in reframing their view of the mission of God for their ministries, relevant to 21<sup>st</sup> Century society. First, Analyze enabled the transformational leadership project to consider significant geographical, logistical, social structural, and experiential aspects possibly involved in God's 21<sup>st</sup> Century agenda. Then, Assess provided ways for exploring the Bible from previously enslaved Africans' perspectives in U.S. History, postmodern biblical criticism, which shed light on forgotten resources and roles that could lead UBHC in reclaiming its heterogeneous worldview and faith identity, and thus provide intercultural ministry that is relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century society and faithful to the mission of God. By reviewing the Bible and viewing the present era through the prism of a POC thematic universe, this project revealed untapped opportunities for grounding the possible new roles and providing a foundation for crossing cultural boundaries between the Black Church and others who are not of African descent in the U.S. Last, use of practical theology's mutual critical conversation provided ways of relieving anticipated tension in this process of change while using the contextually relevant, and theologically informed information for addressing new thematic issues of capitalism, consumerism,

and racism, bigotry, classism, and homophobia. The reframed view, which became a universal view of the mission of God for the UBHC and its cultural, structural, and narrative situations in D.C. bridges generational gaps with the new postmodern neighbors and globalized society, and making room for new participants. The next chapter brings together Analyze and Assess to Act on. It is where the researcher assists the Christian Education Ministry leaders in exploring ways to enact the proposed framework in ways faithful to the gospel, authentic to the Black Church witness, and relevant to postmodernity.

## **Chapter Four: Act**

### **Revitalization of an Urban Black Historic Church, Beginning with the Christian Education Ministry**

The work of revitalization is the goal of this whole project. Given that the Christian Education Ministry was one of the Black Church's formal, and informal fulcrums of change throughout the history of NSBC, Christian education was selected as the starting place for church revitalization over the next three years. The focus of this chapter is the third stage of the BETH approach, Act. The project conceptualized what, why, and how the focal ministry leadership's modes or resources could assist in reform for itself, the congregation, and then the emerging communities around the church. Specifically, this Act phase builds on discoveries in the first two phases of analysis and assessment, presented in Chapters Two and Three.

As an experienced and ordained Baptist Pastor in the role of a visiting Resident Theologian at NSBC, I have the respect and tribal authority to invite the focal church's ministry leaders into conversations about their plans in envisioning the Christian Education Ministry's future identity, purpose, and revitalization of their practices. To assist Christian Education in using the discoveries of this project in renewing or developing new praxis, I chose a five-step approach offered by design thinkers, Linda Bergquist and Alan Karr, described in *Church Turned Inside Out: A Guide for Designers, Refiners, and Re-aligners*.<sup>294</sup> Compared to other noted change models offered by pastors

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<sup>294</sup> Linda Bergquist, and Allan Karr, *Church Turned Inside Out: A Guide for Designers, Refiners, and Re-aligners* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2010), 189-203.

and researchers,<sup>295</sup> which advise church revitalizations' beginning from the inside then proceeding outward, Bergquist and Karr's five steps resources the organization's ways and reasons of doing things, which this transformational leadership project considered significant to Black Church leadership's task of making the Christian Education Ministry more receptive to change.

### Design Thinking: Inside - Out Planes Applied to the Ecclesial Remodeling Process

In their book, Linda Bergquist and Alan Karr offer a design thinking process for church renewal.<sup>296</sup> The process maintains the Church's core characteristic, as a human biological organism and spiritual force, while highlighting circumstances under which quantitative and qualitative approaches could assist the church to establish effective practices in line with the mission of God. As an easy read, Bergquist, and Karr used Bible scriptures relevant to the introduction and description of each process and applied explanations of human natural functions as chapter names for deepening each thought.

More specifically, Bergquist and Karr posited that churches in the renewal mode

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<sup>295</sup> Anthony Robinson, *Transforming Congregational Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2003); Soong-Chan Rah, *Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers); Jane Rogers Vann, *Gathered Before God: Worship – Centered Church Renewal* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Know Press, 2004); Frank Viola, *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008).

<sup>296</sup> Bergquist, and Karr, *Church Turned Inside Out*, 31, 33, 50, 77, and 171.

should be either refining,<sup>297</sup> re-aligning,<sup>298</sup> or designing.<sup>299</sup> The “refining”<sup>300</sup> process pertains to assessments, modifications, and/or necessary upgrades in a church’s practices, tangible works, visibilities, and strategies. Next, the “re-aligning”<sup>301</sup> process regards establishing the congruence of a church’s present practices with either its mission and/or vision statements, as well as with a close observation of its normative theology, and language. Last, the “design”<sup>302</sup> process “... encompasses defining needs, articulating ways to address those needs, deciding which elements to include or reject, organizing how those elements relate to each other, and prioritizing them to reflect some greater purpose, and set of values.”<sup>303</sup> Pertinently, this project’s multilayered analysis identified the Christian Education Ministry in the re-aligning process. The assessment offered a path for the ministry’s renewal of its ancestors’ heterogeneous worldviews, recentering their message, and reframing their view of God’s mission, all for developing informed praxis, in this section, which all accounts for re-aligning.

Although topics regarding customs, mission, tradition, values, and vision, were referred to in the design process, they were enmeshed throughout the five planes of the

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<sup>297</sup> Ibid, 37-43, 153, 193, 244.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid, 37, 50, 101, 177, 182.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid, 184-185.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid, 37-43, 153, 193, 244.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid, 37, 50, 101, 177, 182.

<sup>302</sup> Bergquist, and Karr, *Church Inside-Out*, 184-185.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

refining process: 1. Kingdom Intent Plane, 2. Values Plane, 3. Story Plane, 4. Structure Plane, and 5. Surface Plane.<sup>304</sup> In this process, I sought informal discussions with the Christian Education leaders to discuss a mission planning process that normally arises out of this ministry's Annual Seminar. All of the contributors (scholars, panelists, Sr. Pastor, and the Christian Education Ministry leaders) will be included and participants leading the mission renewal process.

*Kingdom Intent Plane: Christian Education Ministry Planning*

The Kingdom Intent Plane causes the local church to function as the Israelites or as Yahweh's representatives for translating the Missio Dei in the Bible into the church's reality. Berquist and Karr described this step as the development of a "biblically-based ecclesiology,"<sup>305</sup> or what I have called remodeling the social structure of the church, found in Chapter 2 of this project. The kingdom intent plane step, which translates as the Christian Education Ministry leadership time for planning the presentation of the new or renewed mission statement, the department's structure, and leadership, and the upcoming activities, normally follows this ministry's Annual Seminar each Spring.

In preparing for the Annual Seminar, I began informal discussions questioning the ways that the Christian Education Ministry develops the mission statement and mentioned how it should coalesce with the outcomes of the Analyze and Assess stages, which describe and biblically respond to the cultural situation deriving from the changes

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<sup>304</sup> Ibid.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid, 190-191.

in the populations and social structures surrounding the church. Consequently, during the Annual Seminar's planning, the Resident Theologian's discussions with this ministry's coordinator led to the construction of a preliminary program of the event, shown in Figure 6. Noticeably, in the draft/preliminary program, acronyms, such as UBHC (urban Black historic church), and direct intentions of including the external community were included, which covertly coalesced with Berquist's and Karr's kingdom intent plane/Missio Dei.

*Values Plane: Exercises for Instructing Attendees*

The success of the Resident Theologian's influence on the Annual Seminar was short-lived due to the immediate surfacing of unmentioned customs and values, which Berquist and Karr called the values plane:

The values plane addresses the elements of self (who you are), community (who you are doing this with – meaning the team starting or leading the church with you), and culture (who you are doing this in light of), filtered through a set of reality checks. What values are related to each element, and how do they fit together? What values are prioritized? Are any values articulated here also values on the Kingdom plane?<sup>306</sup>

The values plane process occurred naturally. It was in this step that the Resident Theologian learned about the ministry's customary Christian Education Symposium, which normally occurs before the Annual Seminar and is routinely scheduled for orienting new members and interested existing attendees about the historical practices that comprise this ministry (Midweek Bible Study, Sunday School, Men's and Women's

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<sup>306</sup> Berquist, and Karr, *Church Turned Inside Out*, 192

small groups, etc.). In addition, during successive planning meetings, when the Resident Theologian inquired about the Christian Education Ministry's existing normative faith texts and asked about their method for developing mission and vision, it was learned that Matthew 28:19-20 had been the longstanding grounding scripture of this department, and was being readopted for the upcoming 2021 year. In addition, in initial meetings, I learned that rather than using the more prophetic and visional resources for engaging the external community, the Christian Education Director proposed using a friendly Black culturally related book, titled *The Bible is Your Black History*,<sup>307</sup> by Theron Williams, which provided biblical discourses from postcolonial biblical criticism. This book would guide the Annual Seminar attendees through an orientation of how their African ancestors were a part of the *Missio Dei* throughout the Bible.

In addition, I noticed that there were leadership customs in operation. In sub meetings, the Pastor, the acting Assistant Pastor, and the Christian Education Director made the most significant decisions about scheduling, liturgy, and mode of delivery. This central control was evident during the Coronavirus pandemic quarantine. The Annual Seminar was initially scheduled, suspended, rescheduled, and then modified from one day to five weeks, whereas each lecturer offered presentations in place of the NSBC weekly Bible Study. Ultimately, and in line with the customs of historic Black churches, the decisions regarding scheduling, order of the programs, and leadership would always derive from Christian Education Director, the Pastor, and the person informally functioning as Assistant Pastor. It was the preponderance of values, customs, and

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<sup>307</sup> Williams, *Your Black History*, 2019.

unmentioned leadership sources that indicated the time for me to do what Anthony Robinson, author of “Transforming Congregational Culture,” said, “get to the balcony”<sup>308</sup> and “identify the adaptive challenges,”<sup>309</sup> which were generational gaps between the existing ministries and the intercultural 21st Century members, as well as cultural boundaries between the church, the external emerging postmodern neighbors, and the globalized community. Foremost lecturers on leadership and change, Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, offer an alternative way for understanding an organization’s culture in getting to the balcony observantly by “...looking for four cultural flags: folklore, rituals, norms, and meeting protocols.”<sup>310</sup> Therefore, rather than participating in discussions, I submitted a model, via email, for presenting to the Christian Education Ministry leaders, about how to locate and convey scriptures that were correlative to the church’s cultural situation, in the Bible (Figure 7). Nonetheless, the Christian Education Symposium and the Annual Seminar occurred online over five weeks with customary members attending faithfully.

*Vision Plane: Christian Education Ministry Creating a Relevant View of their Mission*

According to the unspoken schedule, following the Annual Seminar a period of the mission and vision planning would occur, which was/is the third step that Berquist

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<sup>308</sup> Robinson, *Transforming Church Culture*, 125-126.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid, 126.

<sup>310</sup> Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, and Marty Linsky, *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World*, (Boston, Mass: Cambridge Leadership Associates, 2009), 58.

and Karr called the “Story Plane,”<sup>311</sup>

The story plane indicates how the design team’s story (their hopes, and dreams) fits into God’s story. Your story should be visionary, and hopeful, transcending model, culture, and even values. This plane is where you consider, and clarify your operating principle, the question ‘What kind of church will you start (or do you currently lead)?’ It is also the plane where specific biblical values and theological calling (serving the poor, promoting justice, human wholeness, and healing) are affirmed. What are you hoping for? Are your beliefs, and priorities addressed, or are they merely assumed in the story?<sup>312</sup>

Instead of a planning meeting, the Christian Education Ministry leadership disseminated a Post-Seminar Survey (Figure 8), which gathered many responses. Their responses were important because in design processes are normally collaborative with people working together and the leader helping people to work as a team to investigate, discuss, and make decisions. Thus, collaboratively, in the appropriate spaces, I reiterated the scriptures offered in my presentation, factoring the ministry’s history of having a progressive nature, and using the correlative scriptures: Ex. 19:3-6, Chs. 19-24; 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 7:8-17, and Acts 1:8.

Also, this third step, we scheduled times for developing a vision plan, whereas the Christian Education Ministry’s practice leaders (Sunday-School, Bible Study, and Special Topics) gather over a series of weeks to concretize their hopes in ways that are congruent with their missions for each ministry of the department. This plane will be a time for conversing about stories of promise that could inspire hope and vision with churchgoers and the new residents of the neighborhood. For assisting in viewing a vision plan, I

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<sup>311</sup> Berquist, and Karr, *Church Turned Inside Out*, 192.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

created an online institute, the National Collaborative Institute of Leadership, for aiding this ministry's leadership in viewing an opportunity for renewing the department's faith identity, and a way for involving the external community educationally, all as a part of God's mission. Such items are expected to be completed by July 2021 (altered from 2020 to 2021 due to the Pandemic). Also, consider the framework at the end of Assess, Chapter 2, and Figure 9.

*Structure Plane: How the Planes/Steps Work Together in Reality*

My public presentation was well-received solely as a model because it sits in shadows of the church's historic social structure or ecclesial image. For the mission's benefit, as the Coronavirus vaccine was being disseminated, NSBC and the Christian Education Ministry began planning on best ways for returning to church, which inadvertently necessitated forward-thinking, and new ideas led by, what Berquist and Karr's design approach calls, the "Structure Plane."<sup>313</sup> Accordingly, in this plane, choices are at last made about how a particular church could coordinate in a manner that is consistent with its convictions, a fit for the group, and socially responsive. This is the step where models (structures or models you have at the top of the priority list), standards (your series of expectations or ideas concerning church), and frameworks (how you see the parts cooperating) are embraced or refined, and new one's spring to life. The choices you make here will either help or impede the limit of construction to serve the mission, vision, and upsides of the church. Interestingly, an inquiry was offered from the pastor to

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<sup>313</sup> Berquist, and Karr, *Church Turned Inside Out, Church Inside – Out*, 192.

myself, the Resident Theologian, regarding, What would an urban ministry leadership residency for seminarians and graduate collegial students look like when the church's in-person operations and worship return. This was hopeful/futuristic, and an indicator that this proposed framework had taken root.

*Surface Plane: Ways that People Will Encounter the Ministry, and Church*

The fifth step, the Surface Plane, is the implementation, and operationalization of the new mission. Berquist and Karr describe this step as "... the 'skin' that determines what Garrett calls the user experience in website design."<sup>314</sup> This example of design includes anything from types of love to the congregation's nickname. In a real sense, this plane can mean that any way individuals who come into contact with the congregants will experience the church. However, due to entrenched practices, when surface plane choices ought to consistently derive from the different planes' data, inconsistency should be expected. In this phase, the tensions will be instances of differences, whereas members will agree with data, but hold on to endeared practices, the way we have all ways done it. When leadership says that the ministry mode will trend multiethnic, yet decisions will lean to either prior supporters or the custom ethnic perspective, and the congregation that professes agreement with change still displays the status quo. Expecting these tensions, in the Winter of year 2, I will return to attending Christian Education Ministry meetings for aiding in ideas for making the planes accessible to all attendees. Thus, I return to the finality of the BETH approach:

It is here that the church can begin to move forward with creative initiative and

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

develop new practices and modes of praxis. [...] The resulting praxis then is an informed practice; it is informed by the analysis of situations informed by the rich legacy of the black church; informed by the contextual realities that shape the world today; informed by a critical assessment of practices and faith texts; and informed by the mission and mandate of God for [the] church.<sup>315</sup>

During the Winter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year and Spring of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, amidst informal discussions about this transformational leadership framework and the 5 planes, the Christian Education Ministry's directors should begin collaborating more frequently with the Senior Pastor, along with this ministry's facilitators, regarding seeking ways of transitioning this praxis of mission development, based on this project's trialect, equity | covenant reform | POC, to envisioning the church practices (i.e. Music Ministry, Youth Ministry, Mission Ministry, Deacon Ministry, etc.). This final Structure Plane in the design approach to the Act stage will assist UBHC leadership in moving forward from theoretical change to a precipice of doing change with sagely advice from myself, as the Resident Theologian. I will caution the ministry leadership that real transitions will surface tensions, described in Chapter 3's final subsection, "Assessing God's Universal Covenant in Transforming the Black Plight to People of Color." Most importantly, anticipated tensions occur because this transformational leadership project stages and the design phases, combined, encourage the ministry leadership discussions and visions shift to the matriarchs/patriarchs, participants, and invested members, for their input in how the *Missio Dei* will manifest in the social environment as new or renewed informed practices.

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<sup>315</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 189.

### Healthy Discussions: Decision Moment for Urban Black Historic Church Leadership

At this point, the proposals from my analysis, assessment, and Act call for urban Black historic churches' decisions in applying this project's transformational leadership framework in its various 21<sup>st</sup> Century contexts, whereas healthy conversations must be held. This is huge because my analysis indicates that biblically and historically the transitions of eras have presented key moments for social change. And without healthy decision-making dialogue among formal and informal leadership in the UHBC, a prime opportunity for initiating the body's renewal of its heterogeneous traits, remodeling its ecclesial image, and recasting a relevant narrative, will either be deferred or lost. More importantly, unlike in former era shifts in the U.S., when diverse cultures of enslaved and post-enslaved Africans addressed issues that harmed their Nubian people, by forming a unified faith identity, framing a common mission, and creating synergistic practices, contrastingly, the emerging globalized context with its postmodern qualities foster differences between African Americans and their urban legacy congregations, thus, weakening their cultural strength against evil and diluting their religious prophetic voice. Hence, this part of my project calls for a corrective discussion with Christian love, about literally calibrating the Black Church gospel, its message, and mission. Last and most vitally, this convicting but welcoming invitation must be offered to the leadership of Black historic churches in urban centers regarding the God worshipers' seriousness in selecting an appropriate normative faith text, and adhering to Jesus's mission/the mission Dei. Without such, how can the family of God be realized in this everchanging world?

Relevant to the framework, Smith posited exiting from theological action research

or theory and moving to a recovery of African American faith response, or the praxiological way of knowing and communicating by using the Bible as a resource.

The understanding of phronesis that I have developed [...] is firmly grounded in the redemptive and liberated acts of God on behalf of marginalized oppressed African Americans in their struggle for freedom from slavery and the harsh conditions of racism that they experienced in the 17th through 20th centuries. Black phronesis sees liberation as an ethical good and is practical wisdom that reflects a concern to do or to act in accordance with what should be done by and for an oppressed people who are in need of liberation from socioeconomic, political, and spiritual oppression.<sup>316</sup>

Pertinently, creating Black Phronesis, from context and informed praxis, literally means developing and/or renewing specific types of ministry action plans and/or practices for types of urban Black historic churches' experiences, which is an action-plan, and is beyond the scope of this project. In use, phronesis is the active/inworld realistic/authentic means for addressing expected and unanticipated challenges in all churches, which can affect their continuity amidst harmful tensions in change, and speak to requests for ministry response that might impede church polity. In this study, because tensions are addressed in Chapter Three, "Assessing God's Universal Covenant for Preserving the Black Plight as People of Color," and existentialism is discussed in Chapter Four's subsection, "Limitations in Recovering Relevant African Phronesis," my subsection's healthy talk calls for UBHC leadership's increased seriousness regarding inner Church issues that impact its being.

As a whole, this critical talk regards restoring and furthering unity in the body of Christ, assessed/ led by Urban Black Historic Church leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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<sup>316</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 201

Societal changes in the dawn of this century, reported in Chapter 2, brought a division between message and mission to urban Black historic churches. Accordingly, from the dust of the Antebellum Black Church's care | protection, to the Postbellum African American Church's freedom | liberation, by the dawn of its eldest U.S. descendant, the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Urban Black Historic Church, this body had witnessed the cessation of having a unified message and mission and had become divided into many distinct or incongruent homilies, and targets. I assert that African Americans' massive migrations back to the land on which the plantations stood – the U.S. South, and metro suburbs, the places of their former slavery – as a part culprit. Black Church Scholar, Anthony Pinn, ascribes the preference of suburbs by White people and the movement of their industrial jobs instigated the mass reverse migrations of the African American working class out of inner cities.<sup>317</sup> Activist, Cornell West, attributed the diverse needs of African Americans over and against classism and excessive self-focus, as a part cause of “nihilism”<sup>318</sup> in Black urban communities. Admittedly, although these issues influence this project's healthy discussion, which partly faults the African American culture for its disunity, there exists enough blame to go around, and thus, their key institution, the urban Black historic church, is addressed regarding divisions between its message, mission, and practice.

Raphael Warnock, incumbent U.S. Senator of Georgia and pastor of the historic Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, and in a book he authored and titled “The Divided

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<sup>317</sup> Pinn, *African American Religious Cultures*, 468.

<sup>318</sup> Cornell West, *Race Matters*, 4-5, 15, 108.

Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, & Public Witness,” ascribe the cause of the divide to differing stances between the Black Church, and Black Theology.<sup>319</sup> Warnock started with a quorum and summated with a list who discussed the divide from different angles: monumental writings by C. Eric Lincoln, “The Black Church Since Frazier;” Gayraud S. Wilmore’s thesis, “the de-radicalization of the black church;” J. Deotis Roberts’s outline of “a black ecclesiology of involvement;” and Cecil Cone’s thesis regarding the “identity crisis in black theology.”<sup>320</sup> There were many, but to name a few: a division between the first-, and second-generation voices of black theologians raising new methodological questions; disunion between black theologians, and black pastors; pietistic, and protest dimensions of black faith; and theory versus praxis.<sup>321</sup> Warnock’s preferential side of this divide was reflected through his posit on the central message from the dean of Black Theology, James H. Cone:

Cone identifies liberation as the central message of the gospel, and the most distinctive mark of the historic black churches, and denominations. His work accounts for the difference between his theological assertions regarding the centrality of liberation in the heart of black faith, and the more ambiguous institution a reality of contemporary black churches by making a distinction between the antebellum black church, and the postbellum black church. The former, he argues was revolutionary, while the latter, with few exceptions has

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<sup>319</sup> Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, & Public Witness* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 85-88.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> Ibid, 87-88.

been largely counterrevolutionary.<sup>322</sup> [...] Cone has always insisted that the central theme of the gospel is liberation.<sup>323</sup>

Similarly, an anthology authored by Alton B. Pollard, and Carol B. Duncan, presented an inclusive study by Tamela Tucker-Worgs, which offered subtopics that speak to incongruences in the Black Church's message | mission problem in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Philosophical Fissures, Theological Orientations, and Public Engagements, Prosperity Gospel, Social Gospel, Black Liberation Theology, Non-denominationalism, and the Politics of Black Moral Pathology.<sup>324</sup> Then Otis Moss, Jr. III, pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ, in Chicago, Ill., opined on the division between the message and mission but a different perspective, "The methodology will change, but the message always stays the same. For Jesus always chooses a different method."<sup>325</sup>

While I affirm all of these contributors' identifiers of the divisions between the message | mission in the Black Church due to 21<sup>st</sup> Century changes, the following perilous practice consequences emphasize the significance of this transformational leadership project.

First, while Cone and Warnock rightly posited the message of freedom, and mission of liberation as a continual theme, there is the infrequency of the dialect being

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<sup>322</sup> Lawrence E. Lucas, *Black Priest / White Church: Catholics and Racism*, ed. Raphael G. Warnock, *The Divided Mind of the Black Church: Theology, Piety, & Public Witness* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 88.

<sup>323</sup> Warnock, 88.

<sup>324</sup> T. Tucker-Worgs, "Black Megachurches, and the Paradox of Black Progress," ed. Alton B. Pollard, and Carol B. Duncan, *The Black Church Studies Reader* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 193 – 196.

<sup>325</sup> Otis Moss, III, "Preaching and Poetics: Then Was Then, This is Now," ed. Alton B. Pollard, and Carol B. Duncan, *The Black Church Studies Reader*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 140.

spoken with unity in the most recent years, and mostly during protests about undue minority deaths at the hand of Law Enforcement, followed by government agencies' either half-hearted or non-defense for African Americans as citizens of the U.S. This indicates that freedom is no longer the message of the Black Church. Second, the contrasts in the message, and mission on subtle facets of African American's lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: church participation vs. abortion, denial of insurance shared between LGBTQi companions, their participation in the military, and polarizing political parties. These issues often shun would be key actors in church leadership roles that further cause church divisions, declines in laity-leader participations, and reductions of financial supporters. Last, the array of impending issues, which filter into preaching, splinter the message | mission | narrative trialect in urban Black historic churches. Thus, the urban Black Historic Church must take seriously the need for Black Churches to explore their historic and current ministries and to envision a new future, attune its message | mission | narrative for increasing relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, close division in its ministries' visions, and speak to unhealthy splits with the broader society.

### Limitations In Recovering Relevant African Phronesis

The recovering of informed practices from contemporary descriptions by Africans, African American apologists, and missionaries, should only be renewed if they do not relate to extreme indigent practices that involve types of barbaric actions. The praxis renewals in this project solely relate to the BETH approach, which regards those that are ethical, historical, and theological. In phronesis recovery, theologian, Robert L. Smith, used an entire chapter for explaining how the BETH approach contains both,

existential and theological matters in the renewal or transformation of Black Church informed practices.<sup>326</sup> The existential part of BETH relates to the reality or existence of people and is expressed as a contextual component, where cultural, historical, and social locations are described (e.g. slavery, racism, Christianity, etc.). The theological facet of BETH refers to conveyances of God and is articulated as the systematic component, where African American religious tradition and doctrine, biblical narratives, Black Culture, and Black Spirituals/Gospel music are described. Then, a transcendent element exists in BETH that represents the Divine nature of existential and theological matters,<sup>327</sup> and thus grounds the contextual and system components within the Christian/religious faith tradition. Throughout my transformative assessment, references to the transcendent elements of Christian and Church, which both were respectively, derived by Christ, exist by God's Divine universal desire, and "...do not depend on human understanding, and authority to lend them credence,"<sup>328</sup> were carefully distinguished from Christianity and Black faith identity. Specifically, this project identifies Christianity as a Western world religion with distinct undesired religious and social positions outside of Christian tradition, which were mentioned in the discretions offered by Andrews, regarding existential reductionism.<sup>329</sup> By the same limitation, the Black faith identity or Black faith community are considered as familial populaces to the African culture, who are adherents

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<sup>326</sup> Smith, *From Strength to Strength*, 166 – 185.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid, 171 – 180.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid, 170.

<sup>329</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology*, 32-33.

in other religions, which enable the UBHC to lead in crossing cultural boundaries, include People of Color in ministry and social services. Care must be taken when making these distinctions.

Relevant to my transformational leadership project's purpose, which was an examination of the correlations between the assumptions, values, and meanings that inform the existing practices of the UBHC with this body's context or mission, I found divisions that were not dissimilar to those within NSBC. My assessment asserts that without a relevant message, and a reframed view of God's universal mission, UBHCs will proudly resume traditional practices, and reflective messages about "what we use ta' do" while failing in relevance to 21<sup>st</sup> Century lifestyle and our soul conditions. Given the impact significance of the message and mission, I assert additional questions, and reassert the core question in a broader way: What ministry action plans could compliment this theological action plan? How can the Black Church as a whole reground its message and reframe its view of mission in integral/universal ways, for including all People of Color? I assert the need for including our White brothers and sisters in the populace of People of Color, thus attempting the removal of social dominance or lesser distinctions.

### **Chapter Five: Conclusion**

#### **Reflection: Emerging Theme from Black to Including All as People of Color**

This transformational leadership project was designed and influenced by the Black Church's practices throughout the Antebellum, Postbellum, and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, and the overall work was mitigated through the Urban Black Historic Church contexts and experiences in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I was careful to place all in dialogue with select African

traits revealed through discourses in postmodern biblical criticism, alongside select voices in practical theology, missiology, and Black Practical Theology. Interestingly, Smith's adaptation of Paulo Freire's thematic universe method in describing Nubian people's challenges and progresses in the U.S., and labeling the experience the Black Thematic Universe, caused me to, likewise, critically correlate the worldwide Black Lives Matter experience and rename it accordingly, the People of Color Thematic Universe. As an African American researcher who visibly serves in culturally engendered associations, conventions, and conferences, as well as in cross-cultural discussion groups, all while transiently serving at Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, which is a religious and social beacon in the District of Columbia, our nation's capital, admittedly, my intentionalities seek dissemination of the transformational leadership framework to urban Black historic churches and relevant organizations, in near-effortless ways for their benefit.

In my lifelong experience in African American churches, I firmly attest that they function from the basis of a message | mission dialect that has become unhelpful because it was formed for bettering the lives of post-enslaved Black people. Although, from the 19<sup>th</sup> through 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries this dialect provided a message and mission that culminated with the Black Church leading African Americans in acquiring Civil Rights, the entrance of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century marked a turn of the era with the new era reflecting the need for human rights. I assert that this change in era and epochs also represent new a meaning for the country, guided by a new message, mission, and collective narrative representing all citizens, as a People of Color, whether Asian, African American, Latin America, as well

as Caucasian and immigrants. More important, since African Americans have somewhat achieved liberation in the country, whereas there exists an increase in economic populaces, political offices, and social voices, all along with an emergence that coalesces with other cultures with similar experiences, this body of work provides a trialect, message | mission | narrative, for moving the urban Black historic churches in leading the nation to a bettered society. Most significantly, the nation's experience viewed through the lens of a trialect shed light on additional people involved in the development of the country. Therefore, I propose the following as a framework for creating a trialect: cultural/social equity | covenant reform | People of Color.

Religiously, while this trialect served as a proposal/model for NSBC leadership, as an urban Black historic church facing an emerging postmodern and globalized context, consisting of many cross sectors of Americans (African, Asian, Caribbean, Caucasian, Latina/o, etc.), other UBHCs exist in underserved Black communities surrounded by other topologies, such as affluent high-rises. Yet, the growing populations steadily identify as postmodern and globalized, which this work addressed as People of Color. Also, while it would be nice to imagine that one church could influence all, the Black Church in all forms only listens to its hero practitioners (bishops, and pastors). Thus, despite scholars, church leaders, and activists who have offered published research and thoughtful reflections that uncover and share critical findings, it normally takes many years before theological discoveries (as this one) become significant to the church and society. This fact and divide are unsettling.

I surmise that due to African Americans major themes throughout their existence in the U.S., which began with slavery, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries' lawful racism, and the eclipsing 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Century eras' forms of social hegemony, it will be a challenge proposing the remodeling of the ecclesial images in urban Black historic churches. However, due to the significance of having a vision of church renewal and mission of seeing all of God's postmodern and globalized neighbors in homes and businesses growing around this legacy congregation's sanctuary, one of the senior church leaders in NSBC inquired, "This is similar to the role you took on before the pandemic. I look forward to talking with you about what a Residency Opportunity in Urban Ministry will look like here (Nineteenth Street Baptist Church)." And, to the researcher's surprise, shortly after this informal conversation, a month later, the pastor scheduled a Ministerial Staff Meeting by Conference Call, and emailed the agenda that indicates moving forward in supporting the mission and vision proposed for the church, in Figure 9. In this agenda, the most amazing item was the final topic, which was a healthy discussion about deciding to increase the relevance of Nineteenth Street Baptist Church in the emerging postmodern and globalized neighborhoods and communities surrounding this local urban Black historic church.

## Appendices

Figure 1. Table Listing Urban Black Historic Churches in D.C. Closed or Relocated Since the Year 2000.

Church	Year Opened	Year Closed/Relocated	Information
Metropolitan Baptist Church	1864	2014 Relocated	Originally called Fourth Baptist Church of D.C. relocated to Upper Marlboro <a href="https://metropolitanbaptist.org/our-history/">https://metropolitanbaptist.org/our-history/</a>
Lincoln Temple United Church of Christ	1868	2018 Closed	1701 11th St NW, Washington, DC 20001 (202) 332-2640
Rock Creek Baptist Church	1872	2016 Relocated	Founded in Tenleytown, DC, relocated to then Foggy Bottom, then relocated to Petworth, DC, relocated to 6707 Woodyard Road Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772 <a href="https://www.rockcreekministries.com/our-history">https://www.rockcreekministries.com/our-history</a>
Trinidad Baptist Church	1891	2017 Relocated	1619 Levis Street NE DC, relocated to 1100 Bladensburg Rd, NE, DC relocated to 1625 Benning Rd, NE DC, relocated to 6611 Walker Mill Road, Capitol Heights MD <a href="https://tbcwdc.org/history.aspx">https://tbcwdc.org/history.aspx</a>
Saint Phillips Baptist Church	1891	2019 Relocated	Formerly Bethel Pentecostal Tabernacle, Northeast Corner of North Capitol St., & K St., N.E. Built-in 1891. Relocated to Camp Springs, MD 3415 Brinkley Rd, Temple Hills, MD 20748 (301) 804-3773

			(202) 789-0840
St. Matthews Baptist Church	1905	2017 Relocated	1902 Sunday School Mission - 1903, a site was chosen at 1263 First Street, SE, - 1904 Quander Street – St. Matthews Baptist Church was organized and incorporated in late 1905 - 1105 New Jersey Avenue, SE. - 2001 Brooks Drive District Heights, Maryland 20747 <a href="https://www.stmatthewsbaptist.org/our_mission_and_history">https://www.stmatthewsbaptist.org/our_mission_and_history</a>
Mount Paran Baptist Church	1917	Oral Tr 2000 Relocated	1031 First Street, 101 "L" Street, Southwest 6413 Old Alexandria Ferry Road Clinton, Maryland 20735 301-877-3300 <a href="https://www.mtparanbc.org/about-us.html">https://www.mtparanbc.org/about-us.html</a>
Corinthian Baptist Church	1919	2006 Relocated	4th, and K Streets, NW. 4th, and Q Streets, NW 1615 3rd Street, NW in 1931 44 Q Street, NW. In 1957, 500 I Street, NW 6705 Good Luck Road, Lanham, MD in 2006 <a href="https://corinthianbaptist.com/about/">https://corinthianbaptist.com/about/</a>
Second Baptist Church, S.W.	1925	2011 Relocated	Second, and N Streets, SW - First, and M Streets, SW 1957 - 5501 Silver Hill Road, District Heights, Maryland <a href="https://www.sbcsw.org/history">https://www.sbcsw.org/history</a>
Capital View Baptist Church (For Sale)	1927	2020 Sold	Church meets via telephone conference and videoconference, but the building is being sold as of December 2020
Glendale Baptist Church	1927	1995 1997 1999 2000	4504 Gault Place, N.E to 7610 Central Avenue, Landover, Maryland to 7800 Central Avenue, to

		2014 Relocated	7752 Landover Road, Landover, Maryland (Multicultural Worship Center) to 9033 Central Avenue (The Sanctuary)to 5300 Crain Highway in Upper Marlboro, Maryland. <a href="https://www.tsaks.org/about-us/church-history">https://www.tsaks.org/about-us/church-history</a>
Meridian Hill Baptist Church	1928	2002/2008 Relocated	Relocated from 3130 16th Street NW, DC to 5354 Sheriff Road, Chapel Oaks, MD 20743 History can be located on... <a href="https://meridianhillbaptist.wixsite.com/meridianhillchurch/the-hill-s-history">https://meridianhillbaptist.wixsite.com/meridianhillchurch/the-hill-s-history</a> or <a href="https://sites.google.com/meridianhill.org/meridian-hill-baptist-church/our-story?authuser=0">https://sites.google.com/meridianhill.org/meridian-hill-baptist-church/our-story?authuser=0</a>
Saint James Baptist Church	The 1930s Oral Tr	NIF Relocated	Floyd Gale (former pastor) started on Minnesota Ave/Benning Rd, by eminent domain, the church was moved St. James BC 1112 Kayak Avenue, MD (301) 735-3868 Alonzo Jackson Second St. James – 4024 Minnesota Avenue (202) 583- 8411
First New Hope Baptist Church	The 1930s Oral Tr.	2000 Oral Tr.	Started by Rev. Allen, who died in a wheelchair, the church started as 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street NE (Richard Dinkins) and moved to 4818 Suitland Road, Suitland, MD 20746, (301) 420-1695 Pastor Ronald K. Lead
Southern Friendship Baptist Church	1945	2003 Relocated	935 5th Street, NE. relocated to 4444 Branch Ave, Temple Hills, MD 20748

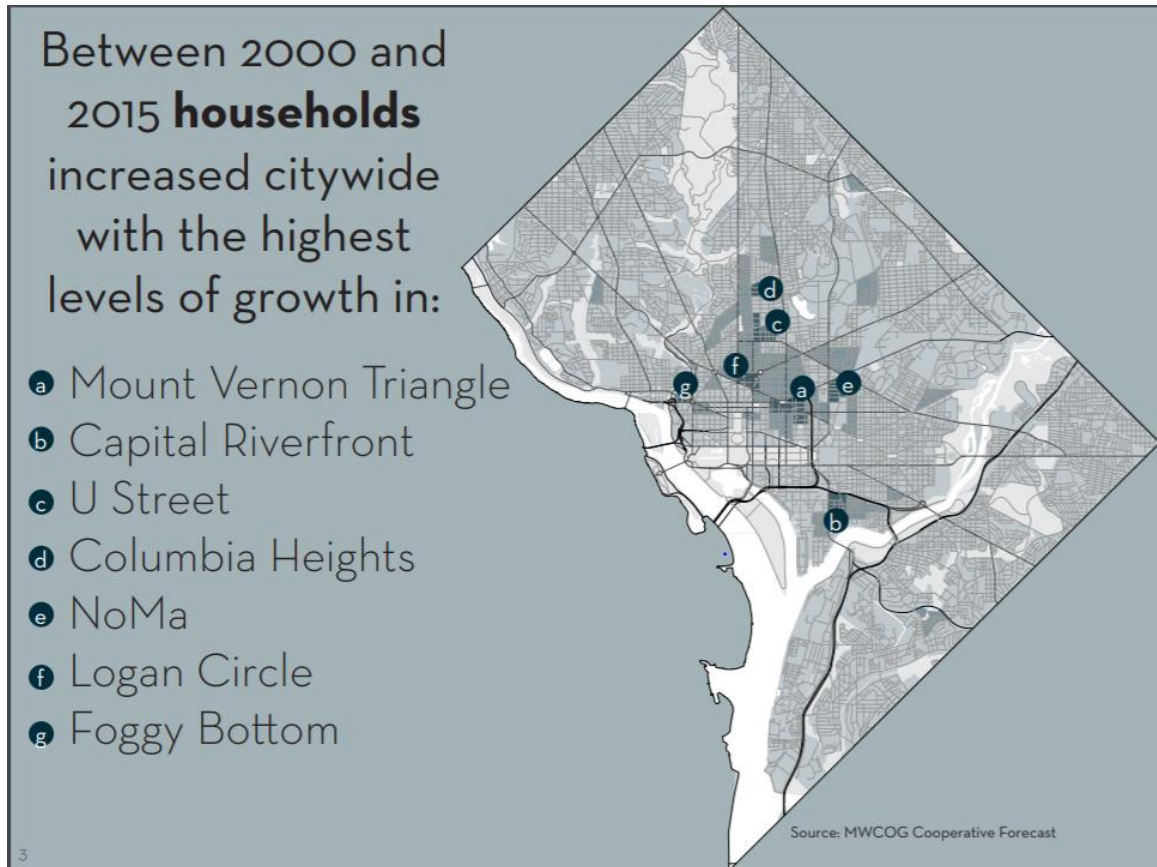
			<a href="https://www.southernfriendship.org/history/">https://www.southernfriendship.org/history/</a>
Carolina Missionary Baptist Church	The 1940s (Oral Tr)	NIF	777 Morton Street, SW, No Information (George Gilbert Pastored) (Call Bishop Ross)
New Home Baptist Church	1957	1997 Relocated	2900 11th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. We moved later to 116 9th Street, N.W., then moved to 1000 M. Street, N.W. before another move to 3497 Holmead Place, N.W. in 1959. On December 5, 1967, the building, and property at 3423 Holmead Place, N.W. was purchased. By November 25, 1979, New Home Baptist Church moved into a reconstructed edifice at 3423 Holmead Place, N.W., Washington, D.C., 8320 Landover Road, Landover, MD 20785. We moved into our new edifice in November 1997 <a href="https://newhomebc.org/about-us/our-history/">https://newhomebc.org/about-us/our-history/</a>
Central Baptist Church	1964	2000 Relocated	Central Baptist Mission - 413 Fourth Street, N.W., in Washington, D.C,
Cole Capitol Hill Baptist Church	1973	1981 Closed	NIF
Gateway Baptist Church	NIF	Closed	NIF – Elijah Sutton died/
Mount Joy Baptist Church	NIF	2018 Relocated	4 <sup>th</sup> Street NW DC 5410 Oxon Hill Maryland (Bruce E. Mitchell/Jeffrey)
The Word Of God Baptist Church	1974	2015 Relocated	78 “P” Street, N.W., - 901 2 <sup>nd</sup> Street, N.E. (1975) - “K” Street, S.E. (1977) - 6513 Queens Chapel Road, University Park, Maryland (2015) <a href="https://twogbc.com/about/">https://twogbc.com/about/</a>

Evangel Missionary Baptist Church (Recently Sold)	NIF	2019 Relocated	3200 22nd St NE, Washington, DC 20018 Relocated from 2122 Jackson St., due to fire to Hyattsville, Maryland
Providence Baptist Church	NIF	Relocated	Kentucky Ave. (Merged Providence - St. John Baptist Church in Upper Marlboro, MD)
Mount Calvary Baptist Church	NIF	Relocated	5120 Whitfield Chapel Rd, Lanham, MD 20706 <u>(301) 577-4882</u>
Mount Rona Baptist Church	NIF	2010 Relocated	13 <sup>th</sup> /Monroe – Had to move out due to earthquake Now located in Clinton, MD (C.A. Thompson)
Harvey Memorial Baptist Church	NIF	Relocated	Pastored by McKinney On Brothers Place SE, DC. When the pastor died after moving the church to PG County on Southern Avenue in Maryland
Progress For Christ Baptist Church (Recently Sold)	The 1970s Oral Tr.	2020	1 <sup>st</sup> / Rhode Island to K Street, 501 E St SE (Capitol Hill), Washington, DC 20003 - Changed the name (Pleasant Lane Baptist Church) John Chaplin – Changed the name of the church due to bad publicity. (google Dan Clair)

Source: Troy L. Denson, “Table of Historic, and Modern Churches Closed or Relocated from D.C. Since the Year of 2020,” (D.C.: Boston University, 2020).

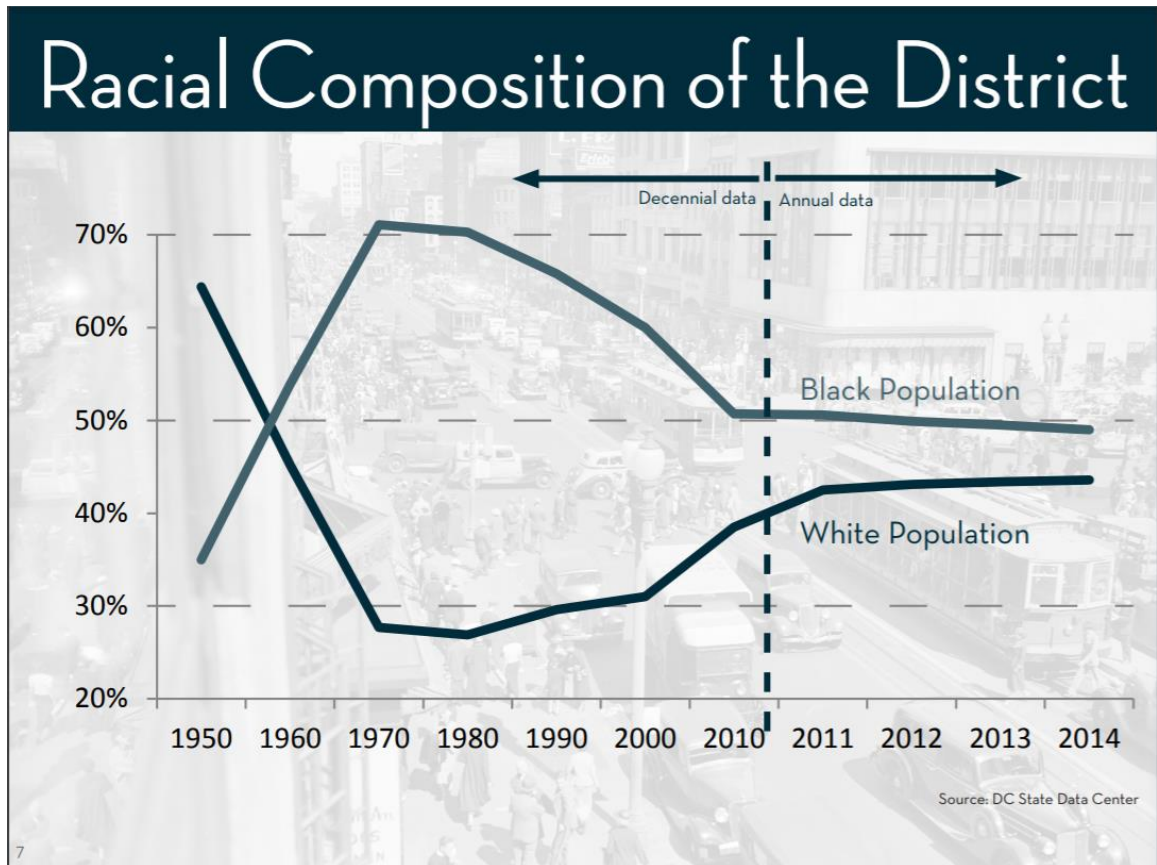
Oral Tr – Oral Tradition

Figure 2. High Growth In Communities Surrounding NSBC – NW Central DC



Source: The District of Columbia Office of Planning. *Population Trend* (D.C., 2016), 3, accessed on March 20, 2021, <https://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dme/publication/attachments/Office%20of%20Planning%20Presentation%20for%20CSCTF%204%2026%2016.pdf>

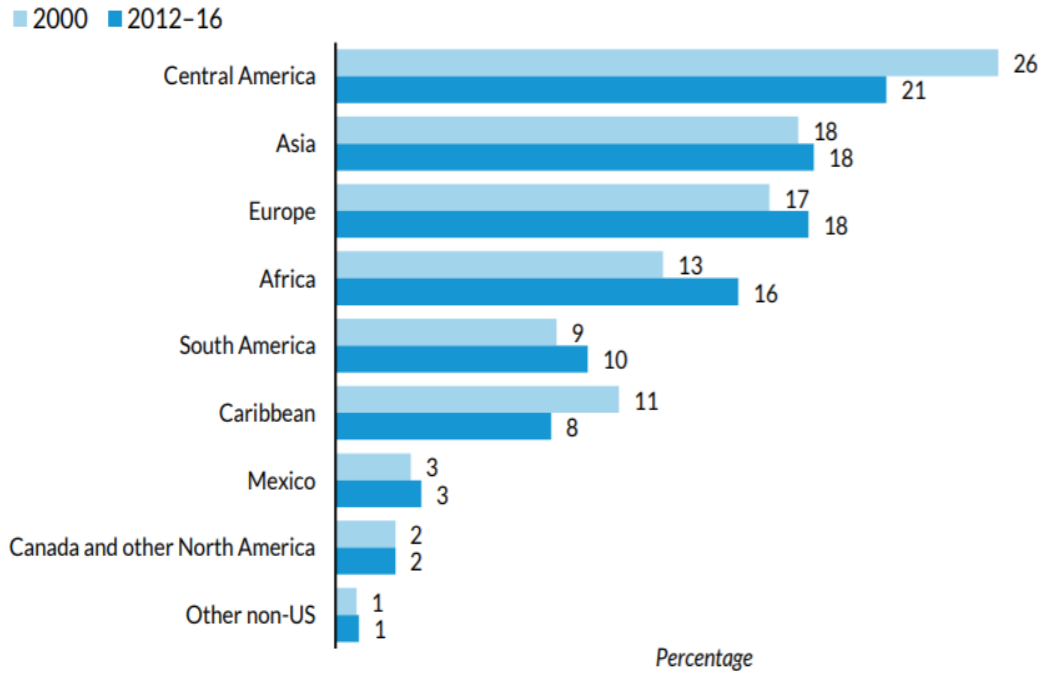
Figure 3. Graph of African American vs. White Population Changes in D.C.



Source: The District of Columbia Office of Planning. Population Trend, 7, <https://dme.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dme/publication/attachments/Office%20of%20Planning%20Presentation%20for%20CSCTF%204%2026%2016.pdf>

Figure 4. Immigration Population Increases 2000 - 2016

Region of Origin for DC's Immigrant Population



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: American Community Survey microdata, 2012-16.

Note: Asia includes immigrants from the Middle East, who are not included in the AAPI focus on immigrants from countries in east, southeast, and south Asia.

Source: Peter A. Tatian, Sara McTarnaghan, Olivia Arena, and Yipeng Su. *State of Immigrants in the District of Columbia*, “Data Profiles of Immigrants from Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean” (D.C.: Urban Institute, 2018), 3-4, accessed on July 2, 2020, [https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99031/state\\_of\\_immigrants\\_in\\_dc\\_brief\\_2.pdf](https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99031/state_of_immigrants_in_dc_brief_2.pdf)

Figure 5. Nineteenth Street Baptist Church Handouts, and Publications



**180<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**  
1839-2019 UPON THIS ROCK...  
NINETEENTH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

*Believing in the Dark:*  
**A Sermon Series**  
*ON*  
**How to Live by Faith in Tough Times**  
By Rev. Darryl Roberts, PhD

**180<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**  
<https://everyblessing.org>  
@Everyblessing.org @nsbcd

**Sunday, October 13, 2019**

**Our Mission**

The mission of the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church is to profoundly *experience*, joyfully *celebrate*, and meaningfully *share* God's grace.

We do this through Christ-centered worship, biblical instruction, prayer, nurturing fellowship, and caring acts that are reflective of our love for God and one another.

We, through the power of the Holy Spirit, proclaim the Gospel and Jesus Christ to all people while supporting the work of missions in our church, our community, our country and the world.


**The Vision**

We exalt the hope, power and glory of Jesus Christ through ministries that transform lives, churches and communities.

**Order of Worship**

Sunday, October 13, 2019  
10:00 AM

Music Provided by the Howard University Community Choir  
and Nineteenth Street Baptist Church Mass Choir

Devotion (9:50 AM)		Deacons
Praise and Worship		
Call To Worship		
Invocation		Brother David Brown
Hymn of Praise	"Standing on the Promises"	No. 271
Responsive Reading	The Christian's Resurrection (No. 667)	Sister Jaia Wilensky
Selections		Kandlelite Choir
Words of Welcome		Sister Briia Wooden
Pastoral Announcements		Rev. James Harris
Offertery		
Preparatory Praise		
Sermon	<b>The Breaking of a New Day</b>	Rev. Darryl D. Roberts, Ph.D., Pastor John 11:1-27
Invitation to Christian Discipleship		
Receiving of New Members		
Altar Call Prayer		
Benediction		
Postlude	"Total Praise"	 Another way to give

\*Worshippers may enter and be seated

*(Nursery available. Hearing devices for the hearing impaired are available. Please see an Usher.)*

## Announcements

**Our Devotional Service** led by the Deacons begins at 9:50 AM. **Praise and Worship Service** begins at 10:00 AM.

**Attention: The Church School** is in need of additional individuals with the desire to perform during our Christmas Production. All ages are welcome. Contact Church School Superintendent Sister Violetta Graham at violettagraham@gmail.com. The first meeting is **this afternoon** following morning worship.

**This Afternoon at 4:00 PM**, we invite you to the **Jarvis Memorial Club's** annual gospel explosion entitled "180 Years - A Journey of Love". Tickets are available.

**I just want to testify!** Share your personal testimony in celebration of Stewardship Sunday. Testimonials should be no more than 150 words and may be submitted from **now through Tuesday, October 15, 2019** by email to dmpoole@msn.com.

**Church Offices 2020:** Deacons-3 vacancies; Deaconesses-3 vacancies; Trustees-6 vacancies (3 running for a second term); Director of Christian Education-1 vacancy; Church School Superintendent-1 vacancy; Church Clerk-1 vacancy; Assistant Church Clerk-1 vacancy; Disbursing Officer-1 vacancy. To nominate a church member for the positions listed, please complete the Nominating Form located in the church office and return it by **October 15, 2019**. **Next Business meeting, Friday, October 18th**, at 7:00 PM.

**Haiti Walk 5K is this Saturday, October 19th!** Donate online at [haitiwalk5k.org](http://haitiwalk5k.org) or come to the Fellowship Hall following service to donate today. Thank you for your support and generosity. See you Saturday for Haiti Walk 5K! Your Haiti Walk 5K 2019 Committee, Sister Andrea Bonhomme and Deacon Kenyatta Hobson, Co-Chairs.

**28<sup>th</sup> Annual Church Family Dinner** - Nineteenth Street Baptist Church-Wyatt A. James Fellowship Hall, **next Sunday, October 20, 2019, 12:30 PM. Tickets Available**

The **October Epistle** is available on the church website. **Deadline for the next issue is October 24<sup>th</sup>**. Send articles to [Epistle@everyblessing.org](mailto:Epistle@everyblessing.org). Send questions or suggestions to [williamsonke@gmail.com](mailto:williamsonke@gmail.com).

**Bring your bleeding or fading 180th Anniversary t-shirt** to the Memorabilia "Shop" on Sundays, to be replaced with a new shirt.

**Dear Church Family,** Thank you for your prayers, calls, cards, words of comfort, monetary gifts, 180th Anniversary t-shirt/mug, cake icing, conversations and caring thoughts during my recovery from two invasive eye surgeries. My faith in Jesus Christ is sustaining me through this ongoing healing process. In times like these, I won't complain because I believe and have No doubt that God will take care with Dr. Jesus' Blessed assurance that I am Never alone. Always with love, Yvonne Dickson, Your Sister In Christ.

**Our Thanks to You!** - Pastor Roberts, Ministerial Staff, Church Family, Former Members, Visitors, Family, Friends, Administration Staff, Communications and Media Ministries, Usher Board, Music Ministry, Transportation Ministry and all who assisted in so many ways to make Homecoming Sunday 2019 a great day of worship, praise, joy and fellowship. A huge thank you to the following boards and ministries who so graciously hosted serving stations: Deacon, Deaconess and Trustee Boards, Building Fund Committee, Christian Mite Society/Flower Committee, Church School, Helping Hand Club, Jarvis Group, Music Ministry, Pastor's Aid Ministry, Progressive Adults, Tuesday Night Bible Study and Usher Board. Congratulations to the 1st Place winner, Deacon Yvonne B. Dickson, 2nd Place winner, Sister Laurie P. Juggins and 3rd Place winner, Sister Alice M. Gray and All who invited guests to join us on this special day. May God continue to richly bless each of you. Missionary Society, Deaconess Hester Jones, President.

The **Church School** is accepting donations for its Thanksgiving Project which distributes gift cards just before Thanksgiving to families in need. See Sisters Dorothy Jordan Curtis, Karen Sidney-Drumgold, Violetta Graham or Robin Williams. Thank You.

**Save the Date - Stewardship Sunday and Expo.** The Building Fund Committee presents Stewardship Sunday on **October 27, 2019**. Guest Preacher, Rev. Dr. Henry P.

Davis, III, Pastor, First Baptist Highland Park. The service will be followed by a Stewardship Expo with Coffee Tasting and reception. We encourage all members to attend and bring a friend. There will also be a second offering to support the Building Fund for capital improvements. We plan to have a glorious time in the Lord! Stewardship Sunday Co-Chairs, Sisters Sybil Barbour and Ferlandia Townsend. Building Fund Chair, Sister Donza Poole.

**Bible Study Fellowship (BSF)** Women's Class, Wednesdays at 6:50 PM, in the Fellowship Hall. Email: [myoungatty@aol.com](mailto:myoungatty@aol.com), text/call 202-423-7578 Deaconess Maureen Young for more details, or just come.

**Christian Mite Sunday is November 10th.** Our 152<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary worship service will honor Veterans. The guest preacher will be the Chaplain of the U.S. Senate, Chaplain Barry C. Black. Here's what we want you to do. **Plan** to attend on Sunday, November 10th, at 10 AM! **Arrive early** for the Dunbar High School Honor Guard's presentation of the flag at the start of service. Invite active/retired service members to worship with us. **Provide** a photograph of any church member (living or deceased) in uniform for a video tribute during the reception. Email the picture with the name and service details to [ChristianMite@everyblessing.org](mailto:ChristianMite@everyblessing.org) by November 1st. (We can scan your photo and return it to you.) **Give** a special offering of \$50.00 for Christian Mite Sunday.

## Events of the Week

### Sunday, October 13, 2019

8:45 AM Church School  
10:00 AM Worship Service  
12:00 PM Church School Christmas program meeting/Missionary Bd. Room  
12:00 PM Global Missions Ministry meeting/Deacons Board Room  
12:00 PM Christian Mite Society meeting/Moore Conference Room  
12:30 PM Mass Choir rehearsal/Sanctuary  
4:00 PM Jarvis Memorial Concert

### Monday, October 14, 2019

Columbus Day Holiday - Church Office closed

### Tuesday, October 15, 2019

7:00 PM Bible Study with Rev. Crosson/Moore Conference Room  
7:00 PM Joint Board Meeting in the Chapel

### Wednesday, October 16, 2019

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Food Pantry  
6:50 PM Women's Bible Study Fellowship  
7:00 PM Mass Choir rehearsal

### Thursday, October 17, 2019

6:30 PM Prayer Meeting  
7:00 PM Rev. Roberts preaches at Faith United Church of Christ 4900 Tenth Street, NE, Washington, DC 20017

### Friday, October 18, 2019

9:00 AM - 12:00 PM Food Pantry  
10:00 AM Set Up for Deaconess Dinner  
7:00 PM Church Business meeting in Sanctuary

### Saturday, October 19, 2019

8:00 AM Haiti Walk 5K in Rock Creek Park  
9:00 AM - 11:30 AM Men's Ministry Fellowship  
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM Deaconess Dinner Set Up committee  
11:00 AM - 1:00 PM Men's Choir rehearsal

## Sermon Notes

Sermon Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Biblical Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Main ideas of the sermon:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Actions I will take as a result of this sermon:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_


\_\_\_\_\_

**We Lovingly Extend Prayer to those facing health challenges, those who are experiencing loss due to death of a loved one and those who simply want prayer:**

Sister McLean Avery  
Deacon Emeritus Walter A. Jackson, Jr. 559 24th Street, NE DC 20002  
Deaconess Philicia Jones 15301 Walbrook Court, 2G, Silver Spring MD 20906  
Deacon Donald Rankin at home for the weekend, surgery on Tuesday  
Rev. Avery Blakeney  
Brother Vernell and Sister Lucille Crawford and Family  
Brother Sherman Mathis  
Sister Ashley Seales  
Sister Jacqueline Sutton

Sister Camille Edwards and Family upon the death of her mother, Sister Cynthia Edwards  
Rev. Reginald Townsend who will be having a procedure this week  
Deaconess Sharon Tucker and Sister Tisha McCray and Family  
Sister Roxanna Bilal, her mother, Edwin Williamson, her nephew, Timothy Crawford, Jr. and Family  
Sister Judy Brandon, her children, Samantha and Nicholas and her mother, Agnes Mitchell  
Deacon Jessie McCrae, her sister, Gerlynn Alford Wright, granddaughter, Calencia McCrae  
Sister Marilynn Mitchell and Family, Deacon R.J. Parker and his mother, Marjorie C. Parker

180<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY 1839-2019 UPON THIS ROCK...  
 NINETEENTH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH



**DONATE TO THE CECE JOHNSON MEMORIAL – 180TH ANNIVERSARY NSBC TEAM**

This year's walk will honor our beloved Cecelia (Cece) Johnson whose legacy was a commitment to serving others. Her efforts led to making the walk a permanent part of the Global Missions Ministry's call to action.

Please help support this worthy cause by registering for the Cecelia Johnson - 180th Anniversary Church Team today. Every donation counts & together we can make a difference to help those in need.

**TEAM WALKING HISTORY**

If you attended Church Services, Bible Study, or Church School here. Or, perhaps you sung in a choir or maybe you moved away. YOU are part of the reason we were able to grow. Your legacy inspired us to form *Team Walking History!*

Please join *Team Walking History* for Haiti Walk 5K. Make a donation to help build a pediatric clinic in Haiti. Also, come to walk, or to fellowship with us on October 19th at Rock Creek Park. SPREAD THE WORD! For more info, go to [www.HaitiWalk5K.org](http://www.HaitiWalk5K.org).

**Haiti WALK 5K**  
 HAITI'S HEALTHY CHILD PROJECT



**Please Help!**  
 Nineteenth Street Baptist Church is financially assisting and spiritually supporting VillageMED in building a pediatric clinic in Laysan, Haiti.

**The Walk will take place on Saturday, October 19, 2019.**  
 Check-in and warm up 7:30 a.m. near the tennis bubble at Rock Creek Park (1600 Street between Colorado Ave. and Kennedy St., N.W.). Parking entrance on Colorado Ave.

We need your prayers, financial support, and encouragement. **Please** ask at least one other person to give a donation.

On the day of The Walk, come fellowship with us at the Lot 24 picnic area. (Restrooms are available).

Please make your check payable to Nineteenth Street Baptist Church (Memo Line: HaitiWalk5k).  
 Online donations: [www.HaitiWalk5k.org](http://www.HaitiWalk5k.org)

Nineteenth Street Baptist Church 4600 1st Street, NW Washington, DC 20011  
 Reverend Dr. Darryl D. Roberts, Senior Pastor  
 Phyllis Wale Cooke, Global Missions Ministry Leader

[www.HaitiWalk5k.org](http://www.HaitiWalk5k.org) [www.VillageMED.org](http://www.VillageMED.org) [www.evenblessing.org](http://www.evenblessing.org)

**Donate to HaitiWalk5k today!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Affiliation/Team name: \_\_\_\_\_

For Committee Use ONLY  
 Cash \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 NSBC Member \_\_\_\_\_ Envelope# \_\_\_\_\_



Scan me

\* You may donate to/Join Cece's Memorial Team, even if you also are a member on another team.

Source: Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, (D.C., 2019), Figure 5.

Figure 6. NSBC Christian Education Seminar Program Preparation - 2021

(Tentative planning structure in the wake of this seminar for the CEM)

Tentative Audience: NSBC Ministry Leaders, Christian Education Ministry Leaders Abroad,  
 Ministry Leaders Abroad, Pastors and Ministers Abroad, and Seminary Students)

The mission of this work is to begin enabling our church and other UBHCs in engaging the mission of God  
 in the diverse community of the District of Columbia.

The Bible is Black History and Future: Envisioning the Black Church's Future  
 Amidst An Ever-Changing Community  
 Christian Education Ministry of Nineteenth Street Baptist Church  
 Sis. Robbs – Director of the Christian Education Ministry  
 Rev. Townsend – Seminar Director & Moderator

Tentative Panelists: Rev. Theron Williams, Rev/Dr. Roberts, Rev. Robin Turner, Rev. Dr. Coleman-Hall  
 Rev. Ed Turner, Rev. Troy Denson

9:00 a.m. Scripture \_\_\_\_\_  
 Prayer \_\_\_\_\_  
 Breakfast \_\_\_\_\_

Forewords & Greeting \_\_\_\_\_  
 Forewords \_\_\_\_\_  
 Moderator \_\_\_\_\_

9:30 a.m. Session 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

10:00 a.m. Session 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

10:30 a.m. Session 3a: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

11:00 a.m. Session 3b: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

11:30 a.m. Lunch

12:30 p.m. Session 4: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

1:30 p.m. Session 5: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2:30 p.m. Session 6  
 Workshop – Write the Vision

1. Let us (Entire Room) Deconstruct an Old Vision Together (15 Minutes) – \_\_\_\_\_  
 Conversation (Work at Tables Led by Presenter)  
 Let us (Entire Room) Reconstruct a New Vision Together (15 Minutes)  
 Conversation (Work at Tables Led by Presenter)

Final Thoughts \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluation (Distribute Forms) \_\_\_\_\_

Benediction \_\_\_\_\_

TLD-01/25/20

Source: Nineteenth Street Baptist Church, *Blacks in the Bible Study Series*, (D.C.: Christian Education Ministry, 2020)

Figure 7. Presentation for Christian Education Symposium

\*\*\*\*\*

**9.6: REFRAMING OUR VIEW OF THE MISSION OF GOD CHURCH MINISTRY FOR RELEVANCE IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY (ACTS 1:8)**

We, Urban Black Historic Churches (UBHC) in D.C., have wandered into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century behind the social, economic, educational, and technology curves. Consequently, since the year 2000 many African Americans have relocated out of the District (population down from 70% to less than 40%). We have lost an average of one UBHC per year due to either relocation or closure, and the remaining congregations have significantly declined in membership, participants, and resources. These are glaring indications that (UBHC) it is time for renewing our faith identity, remodeling our social structure or ecclesial image, and re-grounding our message (meaning), and reframing/re-centering our view of the mission of God, so that we can envision ministries and practices that will be a blessing to the church and the broader diverse community in relevant ways. In reflection of post-Resurrection Jesus and the disciples, who were experiencing a similar context, this the same response given to these new Apostles, in Acts 1:8. And yet it is the same commission to us today. Although implicit evangelism can occur, it is not the purpose. It is a fellowship of saints or witnessing and affirming Christ as a part of the union of people from an African American perspective.

**RE-ANALYZING FAITH IDENTITY  
(ANALYZE PART 1)**

As I analyzed the populace of our church (Nineteenth Street Baptist Church), the surrounding neighborhood, and the broader District, I found that we are "the people of God" amidst "other people of God," and thus should make several commitments collectively as "God's people." First, we have found that there was a need for applying the heterogeneous traits of our African ancestors for reanalyzing/renewing our faith identity as an intercultural part of the emerging postmodern and globalized surrounding neighborhoods. (James Evans; Exodus 19:3-6, ~~Chs.~~ 19-24; 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 7:8-17)

**RE-MODELING SOCIAL  
STRUCTURE/ ECCLESIAL IMAGE  
(ANALYZE PART 2)**

Second, while analyzing the social structure of the Black Church's ministries and analyzing the commitments that our cities have likewise made in shifting the majority of government employment to private industries, and the changing of family neighborhoods to constructions of high density homes, all for accommodating the emerging postmodern and globalized population, I found that there was the need to be willing to remodel our ecclesial image to ways that educate, employ, entertain, inform, and inspire, not only our preexisting members, but also intentionally intersecting with our new brothers and sisters who populate the new housing and privatized entities in meaningful ways to them. (Dale P. Andrews; Liberation -> Reform)

RE-GROUNDING OUR MESSAGE  
(ASSESS PART 1)

Third, after assessing the cultural and structural changes, there exists the need for re-grounding our message of love in the fields of postmodernity and in the soil of a globalized community, so that others may discern that we are willing to learn about them as we grow together. These reforms mean that, just as the historic church's agenda is important, so are the church-works, cultures, families, futures, and languages of those who join. In practice, this

requires a shift from Matthew 28: 19-20 to Acts 1:8, because Matthew is written from a very Jewish perspective, as if everyone else "nations" are "heathens". This scripture has been used by imperialist missionaries for subjugating everyone else. However, African American Apologists and Missionaries affirm Acts 1:8 as the empowerment of the disciples to go out and "witness" the Lord in other environments and settings. Imperialists view "witness" as "martyr"; however the word "witness" should be literally viewed as "observe" or "see" God in other environments and settings. This understanding of the word synchronizes with the actions of the apostles seeing God in Africa and in other places around the world, and affirming the goodness of God in Christ in others as well as attesting the authenticity of others as the people of God, worthy of receiving either the fellowship of the saints or receiving the Holy Spirit, or both. (Vaughn J. Walston, and Robert J. Stevens; bridge cultural boundary and close generational gaps)

REFRAMING/RE-CENTERING OUR  
VIEW OF THE MISSION OF GOD  
(ASSESS PART 2)

Last, because we are all people of God and God cares about all of us equally, in order to see how we can serve together side-by-side intercultural-ly, we must reframe our view of the mission of God, so that our message and mission will come together. And when our "message of love" and "meaning of belonging" and "reframed mission of intercultural service" are clear, we will be filled with the

same Spirit of post-Resurrection Jesus, when he invited us, saying, "You will receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be witnesses of me in Jerusalem and in both, Samaria and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world" (Acts 1:8). In practice this is not a "religious" purpose, it is a shift from Civil Rights to Human Rights (Robert L. Smith)

HERMENEUTIC OUTCOME  
(Vision)  
(ACT PART 1)

Based on the critical information from the UBHC's inherent qualities/traits and the new emerging context that informs its faith identity and ecclesial image, and based on the Black Church's methodology of learning its message and mission, actions are taken. The first action is a hermeneutical outcome that forms a statement of vision, envisioning ministries/ practices for crossing cultural boundaries and closing

generation gaps. And based on the information that I gathered pertaining to the church and it's Christian Education Department, I crafted a sample statement of vision:

*Based on the growing diverse community, God's love for all, and the history of our church, this ministry envisions the church's Christian Education assimilating people from the multi-ethnic, cross-cultural, and of multi-generations in the diverse adjoining*

*communities and neighborhoods, communally gathering for partaking in the Christian Education's courses as scheduled, available, and in feasible ways. (Acts 1:3).*

Although this inherent praxiological methodology can apply to all ministries, especially in a Black historic church, and based on the information that I gathered pertaining to the church and its Christian Education Department, I collaborated with disinterested parties in developing the National Collaborative Institute of Leadership: <https://ncileadership.org>

**HERMENEUTIC OUTCOME**  
**(Renewed/Transformed Ministry)**  
**(ACT PART 2)**



Question and Answer Discussion

Figure 8. Christian Education January 19th Blacks in the Bible Post Seminar Survey

**Jan 19th Blacks in the Bible Study Series**

**Question Title**

1. Did this session meet your expectations?

Yes

No

**Question Title**

2. Was the length of time allowed for this session sufficient to respond to your questions?

Yes

No

**Question Title**

3. Did the format of the study session meet your expectations?

Yes

No

**Question Title**

4. Do you currently attend a Bible study class?

Yes

No

**Question Title**

5. Do you attend Sunday school?

Yes

No

**Question Title**

6. As a participant, did this training increase your awareness and knowledge of the presence of Blacks in the Bible?

- Yes
- No

**Question Title**

7. Are you interested in participating in The Presence of Blacks in the Bible Series III?

- Yes
- No

**Question Title**

8. Are you interested in participating in additional Christian Education virtual classes?

- Yes
- No

**Question Title**

9. Do you have any recommendations for our Christian Education virtual classes?

**Question Title**

10. What ideas or recommendations do you have to strengthen and enrich our Christian Education training?

Done

Source: Nineteenth Street Baptist Church: Blacks in the Bible Study Series (D.C.: Christian Education Ministry, 2021)

Figure 9. Ministerial Staff Meeting by Conference Call

**Nineteenth Street Baptist Church  
Ministerial Staff Meeting by Conference Call**

**June 3, 2021 7:30 pm**

**Agenda**

**Opening Prayer**

**Welcome**

**How Are You?**

**Evangelism Committee  
Chair**

**Reopening Plans  
Your Ideas**

**Assistant Pastor Position  
Who May Apply?  
Potential Responsibilities  
Assistant Pastor Search Committee - Members**

**Ministry Leaders Forum is Tuesday, June 15, 2021 at 7:30 pm  
via Zoom (Zoom details forthcoming)**

**Prayer Requests**

**Closing Prayer**

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