

A Practical Theological Approach to Missions?
Furthering the *Missio Dei* Through Effective Short-Term Mission Planning
in African American Baptist Churches

By

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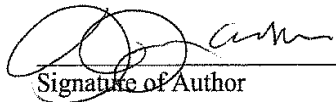
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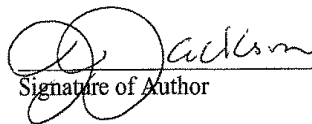
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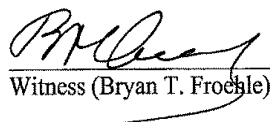
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Abstract

The missio Dei, or the mission of God, calls for the church's movement toward the margins of the world. Current approaches of ecclesiology are challenged as this study proposes more attention to the marginalized, poor, and oppressed worldwide. Fortunately, the developments of the third wave of globalization have led to more opportunities for short-term mission engagements. To increase the effectiveness of these mission endeavors, practical theology serves as a valuable planning tool. While this work primarily focuses on short-term missions and practical theology converging, the African American Baptist Church serves as a rich context for the study. Qualitative research methods are used to gather data on current practices of short-term mission planning from selected African American Baptist churches. The results are used to highlight the intuitive incorporation of practical theological methods and to propose a strategic practical theological planning method for short-term mission planning. This is a work that fundamentally brings short-term missions into conversation with practical theology using the context of the African American Baptist Church. Practical theology and the African American Baptist Church both have much to add to the conversations taking place in missiological research.

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and orientation to missions to this remarkable woman. I am thankful for her guidance, example, and love. Her mission continues now, and always will, through the generations that she influenced. This book is dedicated to Missionary Angelina Della Winters, affectionately called “Mama.”

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Chapter 1

UNDERSTANDING THE *MISSIO DEI*'S CALL FOR MISSIONS

*Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”
And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”*

—*Isaiah 6:8*

The *missio Dei*, or mission of God, is often one of the most misunderstood concepts in the church. Among the many components that play a role in the confusion sits the church and its malleability. While the church should adapt to the needs of the people in the community, it has succumbed to the very adaptation that it was warned against. In many cases, it has become conformed to the world, the Western world to be exact. It has taken on the characteristics of industrialization, materialism, competition, and privatization. It has tightly gripped what Jesus challenges a rich young man to give up in gospel of Mark.¹ The distortions of the Western world, particularly North American

¹ Mark 10:17–31 (NIV).

industrialization and materialism, have caused the mission of God to be replaced with a counterfeit mission. In many cases, this counterfeit mission is characterized by a business-like mindset, in which acquiring and keeping church membership at capacity is one of the primary objectives.

While there is nothing inherently wrong with a focus on membership, it is dangerous to prioritize and to linger on that focus. Attracting and acquiring members is critical to the initial salvation and sanctification process. However, the mission of God, which is to heal, redeem, and mend creation, must eventually be carried out by those very members. The healing, redeeming, and mending of creation are not solely the responsibility of the ecclesial leaders and the small percentage of lay members who volunteer, but it is the responsibility of all of the lay members as well. Just like the rich young man, the members must be given a call to give up a materialistic and selfish religiosity to follow Jesus to the margins and even to the cross.

While the margins can call for many different types of service, the margins that are discussed in this book are the margins of the world where the poor, oppressed, and disenfranchised reside. Short-term missions (which can also be referred to as foreign missions²) are one of the most overlooked opportunities to redeem, heal, and mend

²Short-term missions are one form of foreign missions. While the term “foreign missions” refers to missional engagements outside of one’s community, “short-term missions” is a term that defines the kind of foreign mission as it pertains to time frame. This book moves between the two terms as the initial missional engagements by the African American Baptist Church are referred to as foreign missions. The current practices of the African American Baptist Church, which are discussed in chapter 4, are referred to as short-term missions. The term “foreign missions” is also used in chapter 6 as the discussion of missions is in the context of international missional efforts in general. Finally, there are a few places that I introduce the idea of “transition missions,” which is simply a type of short-term mission engagement. This is a new term and is only used in a

creation. Perhaps the danger, cost, and time involved have caused the previous decline of short-term missions in some parishes. Nevertheless, with the third wave of globalization³ it is possible and necessary for everyone to engage in the work of short-term missions, whether it is through planning, financially supporting, partnering, traveling, building relationships, or praying.

Foreign missions, while once signifying long-term missional engagements and short-term missional engagements that lasted for months at a time (with some variation), are now seeing a new phenomenon develop. As some missiologists refer to it, third wave missions have become a common practice in many parishes. Preceded by the first wave of globalization, which consisted of the development of sailing and nautical devices, and the second wave of globalization, which consisted of the telegraph and the steamship, the third wave of globalization, with its many improvements in the areas of communication and transportation, brought about the notion of third wave missions.⁴ This kind of missional engagement is shorter and more feasible than previous short-term mission engagements. Due to the “compression of time and space,”⁵ modes of communication and travel have been significantly developed. As a result of instantaneous worldwide communication and faster transportation, it is more possible to engage in short-term missions and still meet one’s regular responsibilities. Subsequently, this has made short-term missional engagements more enticing and more possible.

few places when discussing the particularities of current short-term mission practices in the researched African American Baptist churches.

³ Robert J. Schreiter, “Third Wave Mission: Cultural, Missiological, and Theological Dimensions,” *Missiology* 43, no. 1 (2015): 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

While short-term mission work was previously carried out by vocational missionaries, there is now an interest in missions from a diversity of people.⁶ From adults to young people, missional engagements offer a beneficial experience not only for the people who are being helped but also for the missionary who gains exposure to different places and diverse ways of life. This new emergence and embrace of short-term missions has drawn the attention of missiologists from around the world. Because the subfield is fairly new, the literature about this kind of missional engagement is on the rise. This particular text is one of the efforts to discuss this new notion of short-term missions in light of effective planning by the church.

While short-term missions are the responsibility of the church at large, this book focuses on the African American Baptist Church for four reasons. First, the African American Baptist Church was birthed from a history of marginalization and oppression, which allows it to identify and stand in solidarity with those who are suffering in a unique way. Second, the church has a rich history whereby missional efforts, particularly in Africa, were once the primary endeavor for the institution of the church. Third, the church's stance on social transformation and social justice in the twentieth century serves as an exemplary picture of how powerful the church can be. The fight for civil rights displayed the church's ability to challenge and change systems in the United States. Finally, the African American Baptist Church, particularly in South Florida, consists of a mixture of people from the African Diaspora. These churches, more inclined to short-term missions, offer various models of short-term mission planning that are transferrable across denominations and ethnicities.

⁶ Ibid.

Although the context of this work is the African American Baptist Church, the primary focus is maximizing the effectiveness of short-term mission engagements for the church at large. Rather than execution, short-term mission *planning* is highlighted in this book because most of the time dedicated to mission work is spent in the planning phase, and oftentimes the success of the mission trip is determined by the strategic planning that takes place prior to the trip. There are various components to consider in the planning phase of missions. This book makes the case that one of the most important factors for effective short-term mission planning is practical theology. Practical theology is a theory of action that is an “empirically oriented theological theory of the mediation of the Christian faith in the praxis of modern society.”⁷

Practical theology, alongside short-term missions, is one of the central themes in this book. Practical theology is significant for a number of reasons. It is a natural evolution of theological practice as it meets the demands of the postmodern world. Other forms of theology, while extremely valuable, can benefit by incorporating some aspects of practical theology. Without movement toward a practical theology, some older methods of theology can become outdated and irrelevant. Practical theology allows for a thoughtful theology that is responsible and accountable as it takes seriously the experience of individuals as well as the dialogue with the social sciences.

In addition, practical theology has all of the components necessary for the success of short-term missions and church ministry in general. Context, intradisciplinarity, research, and praxis are some of the themes of practical theology that can maximize mission planning, as well as a variety of other ministerial practices in the church. Foreign

⁷ Gerben Heitink, *Practical Theology: History, Theory, Action Domains* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 6.

engagements, often being uncharted territory, will benefit by the thoroughness and delicacy of practical theological tools. Finally, practical theology is treated as a primary topic in this book because it is exemplified by Jesus and is arguably a means by which the *missio Dei* will be accomplished. Jesus does away with outdated dogmatic practices and introduces a contextual, experiential, dialogical, and holistic way of doing ministry. Jesus introduces practical theology.

With practical theology on the side of short-term missions and with the African American Baptist Church as the context, this book provides a rich discussion that will lead to more effective practices of short-term missions. In this text, short-term missions and foreign missions are terms that are used interchangeably depending on the discussion. In fact, I use a third term to describe the new phenomenon that is taking place as it pertains to missions: I use the term *transition missions*⁸ to refer to mission trips that are shorter than the previously understood short-term missions and that are focused on transforming a particular community. These mission trips are short, periodic, continuous, goal-oriented, and purposeful.

This kind of missional engagement was exemplified by all three of the African American Baptist churches that were researched. It is important to note that this kind of mission may be narrower than what twenty-first century missiologists call third wave missions. While third wave missions can be educational and touristic one-time encounters, transition missions are particularly focused on a set goal (which can very well

⁸ Essentially, transition missions are a type of third wave mission. While tourism missions might focus on touring the community and learning the culture, transition missions focus on helping a particular community transition to self-sufficiency and stability.

be long term). Essentially, transition missions are a specific type of third wave mission designed to help communities transition to a place of stability and well-being.

Transition missions serve as a Trinitarian movement that seeks to redeem, heal, and mend the community through the power of the Holy Spirit and through the vehicle of human efforts. In particular, it uses practical theological tools as it gains a careful understanding of the community, and it engages in rich dialogue with the social sciences to propose an action response. It is a mission that enhances not only the community but also the spiritual growth of the missionary. God of the oppressed is revealed when the missionary encounters *the other*.⁹ At the heart of the work is the mission of God, or the *missio Dei*. In essence, this work explores new and effective methods of engaging in short-term missions in hopes of furthering the *missio Dei*.

This first chapter explores the concept of the term *missio Dei*. The African American Baptist Church and Black Theology are used to gain a better understanding of the *missio Dei*, where the distinct and embedded practice of call and response throughout worship services provides a demonstration of the meaning of the *missio Dei*. This discussion is followed by an exploration of the decline of the *missio Dei* due to North American Christianity's failure to observe the "dangerous memory"¹⁰ of Jesus Christ. Finally, this chapter discusses what it means to practice, or *do*, the *missio Dei*. Practical

⁹ Terry Veling, *Practical Theology: On Earth as It Is in Heaven* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005), 127. The term *the other* is used in Veling's work, and will be italicized throughout this book, as it is italicized as a means of emphasis in his discussions.

¹⁰ Johannes Baptist Metz, *Faith in History and Society: Toward a Practical Fundamental Theology*, trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Crossroad, 2007), 89. The term "dangerous memory" is coined by Metz and will be a significant theme throughout this book.

theology and short-term missions are emphasized as critical components to accomplishing the missio Dei.

Defining the Missio Dei

The notion of missio Dei was popularized at the world mission conference in 1952 held in Willingen, Germany. The conference of the International Missionary Council was rather different than the first conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, wherein Christians of that time believed that they would evangelize the world in their generation. The world mission conference in 1952 embraced a more dialogical approach to mission, where listening and learning were the vehicles of interaction with other cultures and faiths.¹¹ During this conference, the term missio Dei received great recognition.

Missio Dei is a term that proposes that there is “a single mission rooted in God’s nature.”¹² The missio Dei is not necessarily an attempt to expand the *church*, but to “redeem, heal, and mend creation.”¹³ This comprehensive objective, or mission, is more about God rather than the church: “Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God.”¹⁴ It is important to note that the mission is not initiated by the church, but that the mission invites the church, as well as other individuals,¹⁵ to participate in the redeeming, healing, and mending of creation. Contrary

¹¹ *International Review of Missions* 92, no. 367 (October 2003).

¹² Stanley Skreslet, *Comprehending Mission: The Questions, Methods, Themes, Problems, and Prospects of Missiology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2012), 31.

¹³ Frans Verstraelen, “World and Mission: Towards a Common Missiology,” *Mission Studies* 1, no. 1 (1984): 35.

¹⁴ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 389-90.

¹⁵ Some theologians argue that God’s mission can involve those of Christian faith as well as those who are nonbelievers. Based on Biblical accounts of God using Rahab and others, it is possible for nonbelievers to participate in the missio Dei.

to what is exhibited in ecclesial settings, the engagement in the mission of God should be without authorship or claim to the right to permit others to take part in the mission.¹⁶

God's Sending Forth

Missio Dei as the mission of God is best understood through Biblical resources as it details “information about how mission unfolded in the time of Jesus, the apostles, and the generation that immediately followed them.”¹⁷ As seen through the incarnation of Jesus, the sending of the apostles, and the work of the church, it is often through embodied beings that God accomplishes God's will on earth. The endless concern for humanity is demonstrated through God's sending forth into the world. This is also evident early in the Hebrew Scriptures when God sends Moses to deliver the Israelites from the land of Egypt:

God is encountered as the one who notices an enslaved people's misery, who witnesses their oppression, who hears their cries and takes heed of their appeals. And then God says to Moses to tell the people that ‘I Am has sent me to you’ (3:14). Rather than being drawn into the mystery of a nameless God, Moses is drawn into the mystery of *the one who sends*. God's name, ‘for all time’ (3:15) is the one who *sends me to you*.¹⁸

This notion of sending forth is consistent throughout Biblical history as the judges, the prophets, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the church are *sent* into the world to fulfill the reign of God.

¹⁶ Skreslet, *Comprehending Mission*, 32.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁸ Veling, *Practical Theology: On Earth as It Is in Heaven*, 49.

This shows that preceding the final eschatological conquest, God actively seeks to accomplish the imminent and tangible coming of the Kingdom. In fact, the Lord's Prayer distinctively beckons the imminent eschatological reign of God, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."¹⁹ "On earth as it is in heaven" signifies the conditions of earth being similar to the conditions in heaven. This plea does not ask for a hasty transition from earth to heaven, but that the will of God be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. In order for this to take place, there must be a willingness of the people of God to respond to the call of God.

Call and Response

Prior to the sending forth, there must be a *call and a response*. Although the prophets and judges are strong pictures of call and response, Jesus presents the best picture of what this looks like: "Jesus takes up God's mission with his whole life as well as his death and resurrection: he becomes the witness, the sign and the sacrament, of what God is doing in the world. He gives his life to be God's mission and those who heed his call to 'follow me' will be asked to give their life to this same *missio Dei*."²⁰ In the same manner that Jesus was a sign and sacrament to the world, the church is to be a sign and sacrament as well. The church, empowered pneumatologically and situated contextually, can arguably be at the forefront of the *missio Dei*'s endeavor. The church is sent forth and is used as an instrument to bring about of the reign of God as Jesus of Nazareth also did.

¹⁹ See Matt. 6:10 (NIV).

²⁰ Kathleen Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2010), 1.

God's call is to be followed by a response from human instruments. This means that "God's mission becomes embodied in a community that seeks to live in dialogue and response to the call of reconciliation and justice, mercy and love . . . all the elements essential for mutual relationship that leads ultimately to loving communion"²¹ or to the coming of God's earthly reign. Call and response can be seen as the hinge of the *missio Dei* and is critical for an understanding of the *missio Dei*.

Call and response in the African American Church. A profound representation of call and response is demonstrated by the African American Church. The African American Church²² demonstrates this notion of call and response remarkably, as the duration of the ecclesial gathering is characterized by this proverbial call and response. Call and response signifies the participation of the people in the worship rituals, sacraments, and preaching:

Participation in the preaching event becomes a communal activity shaping the worship experience. . . . Black congregations feel free to express themselves. . . .

The congregation participates throughout different parts of the service, including

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²² *African American Church* refers to the church that is birthed during the enslavement period and further developed over time. Theologians often refer to this type of church as the *Black Church*. However, due to the ambiguity of the word *Black* in a pluralistic society, I specifically refer to the church as the *African American Church*. While modern African American churches may not embody all of the traditional practices developed during the enslavement period, some traces from the African American culture are still present. While this section highlights the African American Church, the remainder of the book will refer specifically to one sector of the African American Church, the African American Baptist Church. These titles are capitalized, referring to the Black Church as a proper noun, reifying it as a specific thing.

preaching, singing, and prayer. The forms of participation range from freely shaped cacophony to the more dialogical call and response dynamics.²³

Whether uniform or improvised, many African American churches are characterized by call and response throughout the worship service.

The call and response demonstrated by the African American Church is a concrete demonstration of how the church must respond to the call of God. There must be a deep sense of responsibility and an openness to participation in God's activity in the world. This will result in God revealing God's mission to the people of God: "God calls us and God responds to our responses to that call: if we say yes, God invites us to live more fully and deeply in our calling."²⁴ Responding to the call of God ultimately initiates the sending forth into the world whereby God's people are invited to take part in God's activity. When one responds to the call, there is a powerful testimony of the presence of God: "Here I am . . . for you . . . in the Name of God" expresses the deeply felt religious sensibility that when we clothe the naked or respond to the one in need, when we welcome the stranger or answer for the defenseless, we are testifying to God's presence.²⁵

Thus, the notions of call and response and the sending forth, reveal that God has not forsaken humanity, but has chosen to use humanity to restore humanity. God is in the process of moving toward an imminent eschatological reign on earth characterized by redemption, healing, and mending, and this is often referred to as the *missio Dei*.

²³ Dale Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 22.

²⁴ Cahalan, *Introducing the Practice of Ministry*, 30.

²⁵ Veling, *Practical Theology*, 132.

Decline of the Missio Dei

It is clear that one of the major goals of God's mission, or the *missio Dei*, is the movement toward the periphery. German theologian, Johannes Baptist Metz, highlights Jesus's move toward the oppressed and marginalized, criticizing the domesticated Christ developed during the Industrialization period by those he called *bourgeois* subjects. He rejects privatized theology and argues for a political theology that is concerned with those who are poor and oppressed: "A theology that wants to take on critical responsibility for Christian faith in this sense cannot at its core ignore this 'social' and 'practical' relationship; its theory cannot permit one to abstract from the problems of the public sphere, of law, of freedom— in short, the political context."²⁶

Away from the Periphery

At the heart of Metz's theology lies the dangerous memory of Jesus Christ: It holds a particular anticipation of the future as a future for the hopeless, the shattered and oppressed. In this way it is a *dangerous and liberating memory*, which badgers the present and calls it into question, since it does not remember just any open future, but precisely this future, and because it compels believers to be in a continual state of transformation in order to take this future into account.²⁷

This dangerous memory of Jesus Christ is one that is central to the Christian faith. The dangerous memory confronts the world's system that has ostracized those who are

²⁶ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 87.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

oppressed and forgotten, and it confronts modern Christianity in its feeble efforts to move toward those on the periphery.²⁸

Metz blames the failure to move toward the periphery on the Enlightenment and its resulting privatization. Upon the states' emancipation from religion, faith traditions became privatized and subsequently irrelevant: "Religion became a 'private matter' which one 'makes use of' following criteria of cultural needs and sobriety, but which one really does not need (anymore) in order to just be a subject at all."²⁹ Metz furthers this argument by highlighting that the Enlightenment period gave individuals a new means of being sustained, that being "exchange."³⁰ Tradition became trivialized, and authority was reduced to knowledge.³¹

The United States saw the same phenomenon after the Enlightenment period. Just as privatization impacted Christianity in Germany, individualism and privatization impacted and shaped North American Christianity. No religious institute wholly escaped the force of the Enlightenment, including the inherently communal African American Church:

The individualism endemic to the age of the Enlightenment did not spare black religious life. Though black churches nurtured a communal form of care, American culture remained axiomatic to the often 'unreconciled strivings' of African American 'double consciousness.' Thus, black churches emphasized

²⁸ "Moving to the periphery" is a phrase used by Frans Verstraelen in his article "World and Mission: Towards a Common Missiology," 35.

²⁹ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 49.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 51-53.

personal salvation and religious piety under the impact of American individualism.³²

Missio Dei, then, is a call for all churches to refocus on *the other*. It takes very seriously God's preferential option for the poor.³³ It demands that we recognize the gaze of *the other* as we are "being faced":

This intuition of this phrase [being faced] shifts attention from *my gaze*, which tries to bring everything under its surveillance, to the *gaze of the other*, which sees me without my knowing who is looking at me . . . 'with the gaze, look, request, love, command, or call of the other.' It is no longer I who faces being, but the other who faces me. I am looked upon. I am asked after.³⁴

Thus, the missio Dei challenges the North American culture and churches in its movement away from the periphery, and this does not exclude the African American Church.

North American Christianity as the oppressor. If North American Christianity fails to recognize the gaze of *the other*, then North American Christianity becomes the oppressor. Cone supports this claim: "To be human in a condition of social oppression involves affirming that which the oppressor regards as degrading."³⁵ This identifies the bystander as complicit in the offense by omission. Cone specifically argues against white theology in its failure to address the injustice of the oppressed, "Because white theology has consistently preserved the integrity of the community of oppressors, I conclude that it

³² Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches*, 56.

³³ "Option for the poor" is a term used by liberation theologians, and it is considered a running theme throughout the Bible.

³⁴ Veling, *Practical Theology*, 127.

³⁵ James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986), 15.

is not Christian theology at all.”³⁶ Perhaps this notion calls North American Christianity into account in that if North American Christianity preserves its self-absorbed and individualized position, continuing to neglect the gaze of *the other*, then it too can be dismissed as inauthentic.

It seems logical to claim then, that authentic Christianity indeed has a particular subject and a particular way of being Christian. Rather than focusing on the bourgeois individual, it calls for a focus on the poor and those who are considered nonpersons.³⁷ The new way of doing theology demands that the Christian stand in solidarity with those who are marginalized, oppressed, and impoverished: “What contradicts and replaces the New Christendom movement is a journey of Christian love in solidarity with the poor. Christian love is that active solidarity with the neighbor who is ‘other.’”³⁸ Social transformation will only be attained when North American Christianity makes it a practice to see through the eyes of the poor.³⁹

Becoming Christian?

Perhaps the individualistic mindset adopted by North American Christianity is due not only to the individualistic disposition of the North American culture but also to the innate nature of the human being. We can see this notion displayed in the choice between stagnancy and generativity in adulthood, a phase described by theorist Erik

³⁶ Ibid., 9.

³⁷ The term “nonperson” is not intended to dehumanize those who are marginalized but to demonstrate the way that society often treats such persons.

³⁸ Rebecca Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering: An Interpretation of Liberation and Political Theologies* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 51.

³⁹ Ibid., 47.

Erikson.⁴⁰ Erikson proposed that most individuals tend to have a generative inclination in adulthood:

Generativity, for Erikson, means creativity and productiveness, to be sure, but it also means much more. It means, deriving from the same root as generation, the adult person having found ways, through love and work, creativity and care, to contribute to the conditions that will provide the possibility for members of the oncoming generations to develop their personal strengths at each stage.⁴¹

The alternative to becoming a generative human being is stagnancy. Stagnancy involves a continued inward focus whereby one might become his or her own favorite child:

In a major sense, stagnation, if it proves to be more than a transient series of moments in the passages of mid-life, means a condition of being emotionally curved in upon the self As Erikson puts it, one makes of oneself one's own favored child. In stagnation one tries, with pseudo-intimacy, to recoup relational deficits, but without genuine giving of the self or receiving of others.⁴²

While stagnancy forgoes the development of true Christian virtue, generativity coerces that development: "When generativity outweighs stagnation, persons' lives show the strength or virtue of *care*."⁴³ Unfortunately, North American culture does not demonstrate this generativity. It fosters stagnancy and self-absorption, and, as a result, distorted Christianity.

⁴⁰ Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963).

⁴¹ James Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000), 28.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

Fowler's stages of faith. While Erikson proposes that generativity begins in middle adulthood,⁴⁴ this does not mean that self-centered Christianity is inevitable until then. In fact, while the stages of faith development fail to mention any notions of generative development, it is evident and of critical importance in each stage. Authentic Christian development involves a constant inclination to *the other* in all of the stages of faith. For example, it is in the “primal faith”⁴⁵ stage that infants who have been recipients of “rhythms of intimacy,”⁴⁶ finding in father and mother symbols of faith, enter into a first experience of nurturing love and dependence. In the “intuitive-projective faith”⁴⁷ stage, where language and active inquiry emerges, the liturgical stories and symbols exposed to the child must involve some sort of attention to otherness.⁴⁸

The “mythic-literal faith”⁴⁹ stage, related to “concrete operational thinking,”⁵⁰ is where the child relies on “stories, rules, and implicit values of the family’s community of meanings”⁵¹ for faith formation. This stage involves the construction of images of self, others, community, and ways of being in faith. As children in this stage become aware of other perspectives, it allows them to sharpen their own perspectives: “This means that

⁴⁴ Middle adulthood would be considered between the ages of forty and sixty-five.

⁴⁵ Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*, 52.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 53.

⁴⁸ Ibid. Fowler’s first stage of faith consists of “primal faith,” where the first experiences of the infant are dependence-based interactions, with the first symbols of God being that of the caregivers. The second stage of faith is the “intuitive-projective faith” stage, where stories and symbols are better conceptualized as the child is now a preschool child who enters into active inquiry.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 55.

⁵⁰ Ibid. The groundwork for the Fowler’s “mythic-literal faith” rests on Piaget’s notion of “concrete operational thinking.” See Barbel Inhelder and Jean Piaget, *The Growth of Logical Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence: An Essay on the Construction of Formal Operational Structures* (New York: Basic Books, 1958).

⁵¹ Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian*, 55.

they can tell stories with new accuracy and richness. It also means that they can tell stories about right and wrong, good and evil, they can develop a strong sense of fairness based on reciprocity (this means elevating the associations of reward for doing good and punishment for doing bad to the level of cosmic principle).”⁵² It is in this stage that morals of otherness can be established. Family values of otherness can influence the child’s spiritual development as the child recognizes the connection between oneself and *the other*.

“Synthetic-conventional faith,”⁵³ which usually begins in adolescence and consists of self-consciousness and a drawing together of various elements in one’s life, is a critical place where many equilibrate. Although significant face-to-face interactions and experiences are synthesized with stories, values, and beliefs, the resulting ontology is unexamined and unexplored.⁵⁴ This stage is one that develops as a result of one’s exposure to significant elements. Thus, those elements (whether church or family) will have emphasized the importance of a Christianity that faces *the other*. “Individuative-reflective faith”⁵⁵ involves critical reflection on synthesized beliefs. While there is still value and reverence for one’s personal beliefs, there is openness to the beliefs of others. This stage is often accompanied with internal conflict due to the awareness of the possible discrepancies in personal beliefs. This stage entices the individual not only to face *the other* but to allow them into their sacred space.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 57.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 62.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

“Conjunctive faith,”⁵⁶ the next stage signified by permeable boundaries and humble awareness of the emplacement and ontological views of others, inevitably calls for the individual to connect with and respect those who are different from themselves.

This kind of faith

combines deep, particular commitments with principled openness to the truths of other traditions. It combines loyalty to one’s own primary communities of value and belief with loyalty to the reality of a community of communities. Persons of conjunctive faith are not likely to be “true believers” in the sense of an undialectical, single-minded, uncritical devotion to a cause or ideology. . . . They know that the line between the righteous and the sinners goes through the heart of each of us and our communities, rather than between us and them.⁵⁷

This stage, essentially referring to those who are accepting of diverse beliefs, emphasizes a permeability that is valuable to being truly Christian. While some may be relentless as it pertains to their faith tradition, the permeability is relative as it relates to the individualistic tendency of North American Christianity. Stepping out of one’s boundaries and having an openness to the world of *the other* is an invaluable Christian virtue that is modeled by Jesus.

The final stage of “universalizing faith”⁵⁸ involves a widening of perspective where one engages in decentration from the self, a process of expanding

⁵⁶ Ibid., 64.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 67.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

epistemologically and relationally.⁵⁹ This, in the simplest sense, calls the Christian to face *the other* but also to stand in solidarity with *the other*, helping when it is possible.⁶⁰

In essence, in spite of Erikson's proposal that generativity begins during middle adulthood, authentic Christianity has the potential to interrupt this trajectory. Using the stage of "intuitive-projective faith" and the subsequent stages, a new form of Christianity that focuses its attention on *the other* can be developed. These stages of faith leave rich space for Christianity to designate as its new subject those who are considered nonpersons. Thus, it is not only North American individualism or human inclination that marginalizes the poor but it is North American Christianity and its leaders that stand as the oppressors of the poor, as instruction in faith development does not always highlight the importance of facing *the other* or give preferential option for the poor. It is imperative that North American Christianity be deconstructed and reconfigured in light of the *missio Dei*.

Doing the *Missio Dei*

While the term *missio Dei* has gained popularity in the area of missiology,⁶¹ it is a term that is fairly underused and in many cases nonexistent in ecclesial settings. Although the term has found its home within the academy, it is still very much alive in *practice* in congregations. God's gracious invitation to the church to participate in the *missio Dei* is

⁵⁹ Ibid., 68.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 68-69. Fowler notes that the stages of faith are not like stairs that involve a movement from one step to the next because the stages are not to be characterized as being higher or lower. In addition, the stairs analogy does not align because individuals do not move to different stages unaltered. It is through crisis and change that individuals move to different stages.

⁶¹ *Missiology* refers to the study of missions. Various definitions and approaches to missiology can be found in Stanley Skreslet's *Comprehending Mission: The Questions, Methods, Themes, Problems, and Prospects of Missiology*.

exhibited in the task of missions.⁶² While the term *missio Dei*, *missions* refers to “all the specific and varied ways in which the church crosses cultural boundaries to reflect the life of the triune God in the world and, through that identity, participates in His mission, celebrating through word and deed the inbreaking of the New Creation.”⁶³

Missions,⁶⁴ when regarded as a priority and approached with seriousness, offers a new reality for Christians, and it offers an undeniable hope for the world. It shows that God has not neglected the suffering and oppressed: “The option for the poor identifies a new form of Christian life, a mystical/political spirituality of poverty, which, in representation and service, satisfies the world’s hunger, interrupts humanity’s sinfulness, heals history’s diseases, and liberates the oppressed.”⁶⁵ While many churches attempt to satisfy hunger and liberate the oppressed in their local communities, missions ministries provide an opportunity to make a global impact on the marginalized. While this is a significant part of the *missio Dei*, this kind of ministry is often disregarded in many ecclesial settings for a variety of reasons.⁶⁶

In general, the notions of *the other* and “dangerous memory”⁶⁷ problematize the current trends in ecclesiology across various churches in the United States.

⁶² Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 59.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Stanley Skreslet’s *Comprehending Mission: The Questions, Methods, Themes, Problems, and Prospects of Missiology* has proven that there are various existing definitions of missions. While churches can practice missions locally or internationally, the discussion of this research will focus solely on short-term missions.

⁶⁵ Chopp, *Praxis of Suffering*, 24.

⁶⁶ The field research has proven that many churches, although interested in world missions, are not engaged in it due to lack of information and feasibility.

⁶⁷ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 89.

Congregational studies have shown that many church members desire a return: “People are not only members of the church and not only feel connected to the church from merely ideal motives. Naturally, ideal motives certainly play a part too. But these are probably never (entirely) separated from the endeavor to satisfy one’s own needs and realize one’s own interests at the same time.”⁶⁸ Ecclesial leaders have to invest in attracting committed members and creating programs to meet their needs because people want to receive something in return for their time and commitment. When attempting to balance outreach and missional activity into the programs offered, it is not always easy because the majority of lay members are not engaged in ecclesial ministry.

The *missio Dei* beckons those who claim Christianity to tend their own needs and interests and to begin to tend to those who are considered nonpersons. The *missio Dei* calls those of Christian faith to put aside their need to be satisfied and seek out the least, lost, and left out. Third wave missions offer a more feasible way to care for the marginalized around the world. This new method of missional engagement is feasible as it operates within the developments of communication and transportation. Even if traveling is not possible, it offers other means of participation, such as financial support, prayers, or communication with the community. Essentially, the new wave of short-term missions offers a possible remedy for the false and oppressive Christianity that has been developed by North American individualism. While this is helpful for the North American Church at large, it is particularly beneficial for the African American Baptist Church, as it once held foreign missions as its foundation and focal point.

⁶⁸ Johannes Van der Ven, *Ecclesiology in Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 338.

Origins of Foreign Missions in the African American Baptist Church: Reclaiming Africa for Christ

The African American Baptist Church comes from a rich history of missions. African missions were stimulated in the latter part of the nineteenth century, post-Reconstruction period. African American churches, as the center of the black community, promoted the return to Africa for Christian conversion.⁶⁹ Not only were several mission boards formed in the late nineteenth century by various African American Christian denominations, but a few African Americans were sent to Nigeria by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). This unfortunately was not a successful operation for African American missionaries: “Racial tension was ever present and by the late 1870’s William Colley, a black Virginian, with the SBC in Nigeria, decided that blacks should work alone as ‘this is *their* field of labor’. The outcome was that Southern Black Baptists organized the Baptist Foreign Mission Convention, in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1880.”⁷⁰ This was the focus of the convention, which was renamed the National Baptist Convention fifteen years later.⁷¹

The Lott Carey Baptist Foreign Mission Convention was formed in 1897 to keep foreign missions as a central focus of the African American Baptist Church; however, the National Baptist Convention has remained the most populated African American Christian convention worldwide. The past glory of foreign missions in the National Baptist Convention has since been reduced to a fragmented branch of the convention. Annual collections and annual celebrations have replaced a once urgent enthusiasm to support Africa or any other foreign country.

⁶⁹ David Killingray, “The Black Atlantic Missionary Movement and Africa, 1780s–1920s,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 33, no. 1 (2003): 14.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Currently, the amount of African American foreign missionaries is greatly exceeded by the amount of missionaries of other cultural backgrounds.⁷² Foreign missions have indeed been departmentalized in the National Baptist Convention. This is a major deviation from the previous prioritization of evangelizing and standing in solidarity with the poor located outside of the United States, particularly in Africa. Unfortunately, it seems that many congregations have similarly adopted the notion that *missions* is one ministry among many. In spite of its glorious past in the African American Baptist Church, foreign missions ministries have become incidental to the church's existence.

Current Mission Trends in the African American Baptist Church

If the notions of the *missio Dei*, *the other*, and the “dangerous memory” are central to authentic Christianity, then foreign missions must regain primacy and priority in the African American Baptist Church as well as in the Christian church at large. The problem is not that missions ministries are nonexistent, nor is it that missions ministries are idle. In fact, active missions ministries are present in most African American Baptist churches. However, there are three concerns when it comes to current trends in African American Baptist missions ministries.⁷³

The first concern is that some African American Baptist missions ministries might utilize the National Baptist Convention mission books that offer lessons, discussion points, and scripture verses that support the theme of the weekly study. While the mission books offer rich material, it does not always encourage an action plan that follows the

⁷² This is based on a 2014 Foreign Missions Class that took place at the Congress of Christian Education (the educational aspect of National Baptist Convention) in Daytona, Florida.

⁷³ These trends were observed during field research in various ecclesial settings across South Florida.

reading and discussion of the material.⁷⁴ This theoretical approach is beneficial as one component of the missions ministry. However, theory must never exist outside of practice or *praxis* when it comes to authentic Christianity and missional engagement. Perhaps the study aspect of some missions ministries is due to the fact that many African American Baptist missions ministries lack resources for effective missional engagement. This concern is later addressed in one of the interviews conducted in chapter 4.

The second concern is that many of the *active* missions ministries are marginalized, causing a lack of participation from parishioners.⁷⁵ Fragmented as one part of the church, missions ministries become an option for parishioners rather than an imperative. Marginalization causes the missions ministry to become less effective in its efforts of social transformation and less enticing to the congregation. Tragically, when the missions ministry is marginalized, the *missio Dei* is marginalized, and the participation in the imminent eschatological coming of God's kingdom is limited. Missions offers an undeniable hope for the world, as it shows that God has not neglected the suffering and oppressed. Thus, missions as the embodiment of the God-given mandate to those who claim Christianity must not be on the periphery of ecclesial focus.

The third concern is that many African American Baptist churches that engage in missions work concentrate solely on local missions. While attention is being given to

⁷⁴ This is not to say that most churches that focus on study conduct their meetings this way, but it is a standard that has been observed in a few churches, especially those who use the National Baptist Convention mission materials for missions.

⁷⁵ Many of the researched missions ministries that seemed to be flourishing discussed this as a concern. There was often a lack of enthusiasm and participation unless the pastor or leaders begged the parishioners to participate. One church had a strategy that dramatically increased the participation. Chapter 4 discusses the decision made by First Baptist, which caused many parishioners to participate in missions, even if indirectly.

those who would be considered marginalized, this is only one part of the *missio Dei*. Although some parishioners claim local missions as their focus, foreign missions must also remain a missional imperative, especially because there are parishioners who are compelled and willing to engage in this kind of mission. If the notions of *the other* and the “dangerous memory” of Jesus Christ rest on the move toward the periphery and the disenfranchised, many being located outside of the immediate vicinity, then foreign mission projects must be more than a fragmented aspect of the church’s societal engagement.

Although the decline in foreign missions is steep, there are many African American Baptist churches that are engaging in foreign missions. Due to the developments in modern society whereby the compression of time and space has made it easier to communicate and travel,⁷⁶ the African American Baptist Church has been one of the pioneers to engage in foreign missions through transition mission engagements. These current efforts in short-term missions will be used as a departure point for exploring short-term missions in general and for proposing methods of planning short-term missions that are effective in a postmodern world.

Conclusion: The Practical Theological Work of Missions

Missio Dei challenges selfish and theoretical approaches to theology and calls for a launching into the deep. The “sending forth” compels the embodied being to enter into a physical engagement whereby the purpose of God coincides with operationalization. Thus, an *action-oriented* theology is necessary for practicing the *missio Dei*. The African

⁷⁶ Schreiter, “Third Wave Mission,” 9.

American Baptist Church provides a rich context for exploring the meeting of short-term missions and practical theology.

Because missions are rooted in concrete practice, one cannot embrace the mission Dei without embracing the practical theological implications that accompany it. While the postmodern world seems to arch back to the spiritual meaning of life, this is by no means a return to the dogmatic grip that theology once had. The Enlightenment still leaves behind the values of critical thinking, empiricism, and provability. Practical theology is equipped to appease both the spiritually aware and the enlightened minds of those existing in a postmodern world. Practical theology offers empirical research, contextual analysis, intradisciplinary methods, and the notion of praxis, which will increase not only the effectiveness of short-term mission planning and execution but also the participation and investment of parishioners.

In the following chapters I lay out the major discussion points as they pertain to practical theology alongside short-term missions. First, I begin chapter 2 with a general discussion of the foundations of practical theology and the two primary components involved in practical theology—hermeneutics and empirical research. The purpose of this discussion is to familiarize ecclesial leaders and mission workers with an understanding of the discipline of practical theology. This is followed by a paralleling of practical theology with short-term mission engagements. Significant themes from practical theology are discussed and highlighted as pertinent to short-term mission planning. Finally, in preparation for the research, I include a brief overview of short-term missions in the context of the African American Baptist Church.

Chapter 3 begins the discussion of the methods of practical theological research. Key practical theological tasks are highlighted along with social scientific methods that can be used when collecting data during ministerial research. Following a brief overview of practical theological methods, I detail the particular practical theological method used for the research of missions ministries in three African American Baptist churches. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of my rationale for choosing the African American Baptist Church as the context for the research study. Chapter 4 discusses in detail the findings from the three select churches. The results and analysis from the research are laid out in three different sections. After the in-depth discussion of the operations and planning of the missions ministries, reoccurring findings are highlighted as key themes of missions in the African American Baptist churches.

In chapter 5, I synthesize the research findings with a practical theological framework and propose a generic and flexible method for planning short-term missions. This four-step method is followed by a section that compiles a few missional topics that are inherently important when engaging in mission work. Although missiologists explore various topics, four were mentioned as imperatives. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the major importance of missional reflection. The final chapter of this work arches back to the initial discussion of short-term missions in light of the *missio Dei*. I synthesize the notions of the *missio Dei* and foreign missions and propose the phenomenon of the *missio Dei ad mundum*. In this chapter, I refine the claim that the *missio Dei ad mundum* is currently not the central focus of the church and highlight possible reasons why this may be. This chapter concludes with the factors that are needed to reinstate the *missio Dei ad mundum* as a central post of the church. While this is not a

comprehensive or finished work, it is the initiation of a powerful discussion of short-term missions, practical theology, the church, and the *missio Dei*.

However, before we can reach these concluding notions, a deep understanding of practical theology is necessary. The following chapters, chapter 2 and 3, will open up the dialogue between practical theology and short-term missions. They will give a clear understanding of practical theology in general, followed by an appropriation of practical theology as a short-term mission planning tool. The linkage of practical theology and short-term missions is the one of the major premises of my argument for furthering the *missio Dei* through missions.

Chapter 2

PRACTICAL THEOLOGY AND SHORT-TERM MISSION PLANNING

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

—*John 1:14*

This chapter makes the case that short-term missions are practical theological in nature and are most effective when practical theological methods are implemented into short-term mission planning. The first section gives a basic introduction to practical theology, highlighting method, hermeneutics, and action as three critical components of practical theology. The second major discussion centers on practical theology as a critical component of short-term missions. This section discusses the importance of empirical research, contextual analysis, intradisciplinarity, and praxis when planning short-term mission projects. The final move in this chapter is a brief discussion that synthesizes the notions of short-term mission planning and practical theology in the context of the African American Baptist Church.

An Overview of Practical Theology

Friedrich Schleiermacher, the “father of practical theology,” proposed that practical theology was the crown of all of theology. With a figurative image of a tree, he suggested that the roots were the position of fundamental theology while the trunk was the position of systematic theology. The branches and leaves at the top of the tree presented an image of practical theology.⁷⁷ Schleiermacher proposed that practical theology was an emergence and an application of fundamental and systematic theology. This thought has developed, as modern practical theologians are moving toward the notion that all good theology is practical theology. A responsible study of God, religious sources, and tradition will always be accompanied and interwoven with a call to action and transformation. One can never separate knowing from doing, and theory from practice, when engaging in the mission of God. In addition, practical theology cannot simply be reduced to a tool box of good ideas or “applied theology,” but it is a rich field that can be credited for the responsible interconnectedness of theology in the real world.⁷⁸

The paradigm of practical theology consists of theology in constant conversation with the human sciences. This was a one-way exchange first presented by historical theologians and then challenged by the Enlightenment.⁷⁹ In order to keep its relevance, the church would provide answers to the questions from the contemporary world. This

⁷⁷ Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 26.

⁷⁸ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2007). These notions of theology were developed by German theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher, in his attempt to reconcile Christianity with the criticisms of the Enlightenment Era.

⁷⁹ David Tracy, *A Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 5. Paul Tillich’s work represents an early presentation of these ideas, which were then revised by other theologians like David Tracy and Rebecca Chopp.

later became a two-way exchange whereby the church and contemporary world were able to converse back and forth to arrive at a place of transformation. This dialogue, or *dialectical conversation*, is continually evolving and leading to new horizons. Thus, the situations and contexts of the contemporary world are extremely significant within practical theology. They serve as one of the various conversation partners with theology.

Practical theology is a unique form of theology because it pioneered the dialogue between theology and the social sciences. As an equal conversation partner, the social sciences are able to ask questions and challenge theology, while theology is also able to ask questions and challenge the social sciences. This equal and continual exchange has a clear objective of transformation with an orientation to the Divine. Because the destination of practical theology is one that orients to the Divine, many theologians argue that theology should take precedence and priority in the dialogical progression with the social sciences.⁸⁰ In addition to the conversation paradigms being a unique attribute of practical theology, the components of method and hermeneutics are also significant aspects of practical theology.

The Role of Method in Practical Theology

Method is the technique or procedure that is used to respond to the practical problem. Within method, there is often an aspect of empirical research, which is “a conscious process of comparing and evaluating.”⁸¹ Method and research are not only conscious modes of evaluation but also responsible modes of evaluation. When there is a particular phenomenon that the practical theologian knows little about, it is imperative

⁸⁰ Deussen Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 65-68.

⁸¹ Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 233.

that intuitive and methodical research takes place. This research is by no means a replacement of the hermeneutical aspect of practical theology; it simply seeks to attain a more concrete grasp on the present situation. Furthermore, even when the practitioner has adequate knowledge of the situation, it is beneficial that deeper knowledge is attained. Method and research are significant not only in the situational domain but also in the domain of theories that will enable the theologian to better understand the phenomenon.⁸² This seemingly scientific approach to method is one of great significance.

It has been argued that method is an inadequate means of doing practical theology. Gadamer, a German philosopher, rejects the notion that method can lead to truth. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer highlights different hermeneutical aspects of arriving at truth. He makes a firm move against method, criticizing it as a scientific means of finding regularities. Gadamer's notion that science has no place in arriving at truth has been adopted by numerous theologians who believe that the skillful work of practical theology is more artistic than scientific. However, some theologians argue that once the practical theologian has become familiar with the practice, the theologian should be able to enter into an intimacy with the particular situation. This would allow the theologian to creatively approach the problem individually, without being bound by a method, "However, we also know that the best practitioners of any discipline are those who develop a certain 'intuition' or 'naturalness' in the practice of their discipline that takes them beyond attachment to the 'rules' or 'methods' alone."⁸³

⁸² Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 79. Osmer's "Interpretive Task" highlights various examples of how this might occur.

⁸³ Veling, *Practical Theology*, 26. Gadamer's influence is apparent, as Veling's work is well-seasoned with the philosophy of Gadamer.

While some theologians argue that method is an inadequate means of arriving at truth, some theologians contend that method is a necessary component of arriving at truth in practical theology. Without a structure, practical theology can be approached in a rather irresponsible way:

The old idea that practical theology is simply ‘hints and tips’ in ministry dies hard. Meanwhile, the rest of theology is sometimes assumed to have little or no bearing on practical, or what goes on in the world! ‘Relevance’ is left to the practical theologians, and it is often believed that one can get away with a kind of sloppy thought in practical fields which would not be countenanced elsewhere in the theological school.⁸⁴

Furthermore, practical theology should be approached with professionalism and careful praxis:

We would rightly worry if we believed that professional training in clinical medicine or social work, for example, was lacking in intellectual rigour or cohesion. Surely, in as far as practical theology is related to ministerial formation, it should be as emphatic as any form of professional education in its call for stringent standards.⁸⁵

One concern with method is the notion of assuming universality, which some theologians believe takes away from the particularity and individuality of the phenomenon.⁸⁶ Method, however, does not seek to identify regularities, but it uses common experiences as a departure point for understanding a particular situation. There are common human

⁸⁴ Duncan B. Forrester, *Truthful Action: Explorations in Practical Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), ix.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, xi.

⁸⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 4.

experiences that are shared, such as birth, death, love, discouragement, depression, addictions, and pain. While these experiences are never experienced the same way, there are commonalities that can provide the practitioner with adequate information to act as a departure point. It is from this departure point that more research can take place, particularly that which is qualitative. These kinds of methods do not seek to find regularity or universality, but they seek to attain an in-depth understanding, which includes complexities and particularities.

This inevitably allows the theologian freedom to explore the subject at hand. Understanding the results of research is fundamental; however, once there is familiarity and intimacy within the arena, there should be a freedom given to the practical theologian to further explore and probe the phenomenon. The practical theologian should be able to skillfully and intuitively approach this area of practical theology once there has been *intimacy* with the subject:

However, we also know that the best practitioners of any discipline are those who develop a certain ‘intuition’ or ‘naturalness’ in the practice of their discipline that takes them beyond an attachment to ‘rules’ or ‘methods’ alone. They come to know their material or their subject matter so well that they develop an ‘intimacy’ with its inner workings, and their initial schooling in the disciplined application of *method* is transformed into the wondrous creativity of *art*. Knowledge becomes a ‘wisdom’, instruction becomes a ‘craft’, and practice becomes- if not perfect- at least skillful and artful in its creativity and expression.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Veling, *Practical Theology*, 26.

While method is not rejected, there is an allusion to the notion that a mature practical theology is one that approaches every situation in a unique and thoughtful way. Without denouncing method, its place is argued as a departure point within practical theology. This leaves room for the skilled practical theologian to have freedom and to perhaps enter into an experience of play, or unscripted engagement, which leads to an arrival at truth.⁸⁸ Intimacy with the subject matter allows for efficient and skillful approaches to the work of practical theology. This intimacy, however, is arrived at through a complete awareness of the situation that comes about through the work of method as well as hermeneutics.

The Role of Hermeneutics in Practical Theology

Alongside method, hermeneutics plays a major role in the fusion of theology and the human sciences, as it is the “theory of interpretation.”⁸⁹ Its twofold task includes understanding and interpreting. While it was first considered an exegetical and textual exercise, it later became an interpretive tool for theology in general. Although hermeneutics originally emerged as textual interpretation, the scope of hermeneutics more recently includes nontextual sources such as people, spoken words, actions, and gestures.

Many theologians embrace a hermeneutical approach to practical theology, while some go as far to reject method all together:

Human science too is concerned with establishing similarities, regularities, and conformities to law which would make it possible to predict individual phenomena and process. In the field of natural phenomena this goal cannot

⁸⁸ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2006), 102. Play is a notion of Gadamer’s that can be considered a component of method as well.

⁸⁹ Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 179.

always be reached everywhere to the same extent, but the reason for this variation is only that sufficient data on which the similarities are to be established cannot always be obtained.⁹⁰

In other words, there are some theologians who prefer hermeneutics over method as a means of arriving at truth. Instead of utilizing empirical methods, some theologians prefer to approach the phenomenon in isolation, with a deep understanding of the particularities:

Its ideal is rather to understand the phenomenon itself in its unique and historical concreteness. However much experiential universals are involved, the aim is not to confirm and extend these universalized experiences in order to attain knowledge of a law- e.g., how men, peoples, and states evolve- but to understand how this man, this people, or this state is what it has become or, more generally, how it happened that it is so.⁹¹

Thus, some theologians takes a strong stance in the arena of hermeneutics, presenting the notion that only an approach that takes into account the particularities of the situation or phenomena will present an adequate understanding⁹². In spite of these ideas, it is clear

⁹⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2-3.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹² Gadamer's most popular collaborative work, *Truth and Method* gives an elaborate and detailed stance on the inadequacy of scientific methods within the domain of humanities. His presentation of Kant's philosophy, followed by an in-depth discourse on aesthetics, is just an introduction to the displacement of science in human domains. He also presents various ideas that dispel Kant's notion that there can be any method that allows one to understand the human situation. Interpretation and understanding are the events of play that take place without any type of method or structure. Thus, play and hermeneutics are his central modes of understanding and arriving at truth. Gadamer veers into language and hermeneutics in the last part of his magnum opus. He is well-known for his proposals of the hermeneutical circle (which is an ongoing process of uncovering truth), play (which is an effortless and spontaneous tendency that arrives at the event of truth and understanding), prejudices (which is the awareness of the prejudgments or particularities that are brought to the situation), and "fusion of horizons" (which is the

that there is a presence of hermeneutics in method. Nevertheless, both hermeneutics and method are important in practical theology. In fact, the notion of the connectedness between truth and method originated centuries ago.

A Merging of Hermeneutics and Method

With understanding and explanation as the starting point within practical theology, empirical research furthers this understanding, “If one takes the unity of understanding and explanation as a starting point, an empirical approach is not at odds with the hermeneutical and the strategic perspectives. For in the context of a theological theory of action, empirical testing has to do with the development of hermeneutical and strategic theories. . . . Likewise, the hermeneutical perspective has strategic and empirical implications.”⁹³ The hermeneutical and empirical, or understanding and research, go hand in hand with one another.

When thinking about the domains of practical theology, there are actually three circles: the hermeneutical circle, the empirical circle, and the regulative circle. Within the hermeneutical circle is understanding, within the empirical circle is method, and within the domain of the regulative circle is change. Practical theology involves the interconnectedness of the three circles in distinct circulation. The movement between the hermeneutical circle and the empirical circle leads to a meaningful regulative circle. In essence, understanding and research lead to change.⁹⁴

event of understanding where two horizons merge to form a new reality). These are just some of the main themes in Gadamer’s *Truth and Method*.

⁹³ Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 221.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 203. Heitink develops these domains in an explanation of practical theology. His argument is one that Paul Ricoeur influenced. The essence of Ricoeur’s methodological concern was that the movements from understanding to explanation and

The last major component within practical theology, the regulative domain, is the action component. Understanding and research inevitably lead to the regulative domain whereby change is ordered. Once the theologian has an understanding of the phenomenon and has gathered data, careful dialectical movements within those two domains will allow the theologian to determine the action response that will bring about change. This is an important domain because the aspect of change is a key component of practical theology.

Practical theology in question. Practical theology is viewed with skepticism in some academic and ecclesial circles. Some prefer engaging with theology without the interference of the social sciences.⁹⁵ They criticize the inclusion of resources outside of the theological arena. However, an approach that disregards empirical research leaves room for sloppy practical theology. Practical theology loses something once the methodical and empirical aspect is excised from it. Research is often utilized in order to guide the practitioner to responsibly engage in practical theology. It is not a means of quantifying an experience, nor is it a means of universalizing an experience. It simply seeks to gain a full and complete understanding of the complex situation. In the same manner, practical theology suffers when little emphasis is placed on hermeneutics. Method does not seek to dismiss hermeneutics, for when it does, it is no longer method at all. Essentially, both method and hermeneutics are necessary for a responsible and effective practical theology, and that kind of theology is needed in a postmodern world.

As stated earlier, practical theology should be approached with professionalism and careful praxis, “We would rightly worry if we believed that professional training in

from explanation to understanding interact and together offer a meaningful methodology for the human sciences, with purposeful action as its object.

⁹⁵ John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason*, 2nd ed. (London: Blackwell, 2006), 250.

clinical medicine or social work, for example, was lacking in intellectual rigour or cohesion. Surely, in as far as practical theology is related to ministerial formation; it should be as emphatic as any form of professional education in its call for stringent standards.”⁹⁶ Practical theology opens the door for the relevance and effectiveness of ministerial engagement in the twenty-first century.

Practical Theology and Short-Term Missions

Practical theology is absolutely necessary for an effective relationship between the church and the society, especially a postmodern society. The methods and concepts from practical theology can be appropriated for both general and specific church operations. For the purpose of this book, practical theology is used alongside the specific task of short-term mission planning. After discussing the current implications of practical theology alongside short-term missions, it will be viewed in light of the context of the African American Baptist Church. There will be a brief mention of the progression of short-term missions from an isolated practice to an intuitive practical theological engagement.

From Random Practice to Practical Theological Engagement

The isolation of short-term mission projects from theological resources can be traced back to premodern times. During the period of the Enlightenment, a theological encyclopedia developed by Friedrich Schleiermacher placed practical theology (applications of theology) as one of the three components of theology. Although Schleiermacher attempted to argue for the integral place of practical theology in his theological framework, the placement of practical theology as an applied science caused

⁹⁶ Forrester, *Truthful Action*, ix.

a fragmentation between practice and theological theory.⁹⁷ This affected not only missions but also other applications of pastoral ministry: “This so called ‘practical’ theology became principally ‘ecclesiology’ and formed the basis of Christendom. Practical theology served to keep the church going, while the other disciplines were examples of pure, or classical, science.”⁹⁸

Missions ministries felt this separation as theology became estranged from foreign missions: “Theology, in this period, held largely an unmissionary posture because missions was assigned to the practical area which existed to serve the institutional church. Even after the revival of missions in the Roman Church, Protestant theology remained parochial and domesticated.”⁹⁹ Thus, African American Baptist churches were part of the remnant that remained prey to the notion that practical applications were an independent component of the theological encyclopedia.

It seems as though the field of missiology also fell prey to this notion of independence as its theoretical discussions are sometimes estranged from concrete ecclesial engagements with missions. Missiology includes a plethora of texts that focus on theories of foreign missions or short-term missions in light of contextualization, women in missions, cross-cultural friendships, mission history, Biblical notions of missions, common missiology, prophetic dialogue, translating of the message, Trinitarian approaches to missions, pluralism, inculturation, church planting, and a variety of other

⁹⁷ Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 27.

⁹⁸ John Terry, Ebbie Smith, and Justice Anderson, *Missiology: An Introduction* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998), 5.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

topics.¹⁰⁰ While these texts are rich in their different approaches to missiology, only some of them utilize ecclesial missional engagements as a point of departure for their research. Sadly, the dynamic relationship between academic theology and practical application of short-term missions is one that became estranged early on, and the two often still remain in separate domains.

While the term “practical theology” was initially used to refer to applications of theology, it later developed into a theological framework in and of itself. Many practical theologians explain the rationale for such an integral placement by arguing for the interconnectedness of theory and practice.¹⁰¹ Christianity rests on the duality of theory and practice together: “Christianity has consistently tried to affirm that understanding and doing, theory and practice, contemplation and action, and especially knowing and loving, are integrally related and interdependent.”¹⁰² Practical theology, in bridging theory and practice, is arguably the key component that will enhance short-term mission planning and increase its effectiveness in our postmodern and pluralistic world. This notion is exemplified through the following practical theological themes, which require a connection between theory and *practice* for effective short-term mission engagements.

Intradisciplinarity in missions. Intradisciplinarity is a major practical theological theme that is necessary for effective short-term mission engagement. Practical theology rests on the epistemological foundation of intradisciplinarity, whereby practical

¹⁰⁰ This refers to work by Donald Dorr, Scott Moreau, Stanley Skreslet, Dana Robert, David Bosch, Stephen Bevans, Roger Schroeder, Timothy Tennent, and Adam Dodds. While these works are extremely insightful and beneficial, not many of them contextualize their work with concrete ecclesial practice.

¹⁰¹ Richard Osmer, Don Browning, Duncan Forrester, and other practical theologians have argued that practical theology encompasses all of theology as theory and practice operate together.

¹⁰² Forrester, *Truthful Action*, 24.

theology borrows from other disciplines for a cross-disciplinary conversation.¹⁰³ This conversation can be dialogical, in the form of “collaborative give-and-take,”¹⁰⁴ or dialectical, in the form of “point/counterpoint.”¹⁰⁵ In a dialectical conversation, “assertions are made; they are challenged by others; a defense is offered in which good reasons for these assertions are brought forward.”¹⁰⁶ This kind of upward movement, also known as the hermeneutical spiral, is very different than a circular discussion, “This process is not really a circle; if you move around a circle you come again and again to the point from which you started. It is rather a spiral, in the process of which we ascend to higher levels of understanding more appropriate and faithful practice through a constantly moving process of radical questioning.”¹⁰⁷ Dialectical engagements rather than dialogical engagements will foster an upward movement and progression in short-term mission planning.

Thus, in the case of mission planning, this dialectical conversation must include the social sciences. In a postmodern world, theological activity that takes a holistic approach will prove most effective. It will allow missions ministries to move beyond a dogmatic theological undergirding, toward a well-rounded theology that is grounded in the tradition, the human experience, and the culture.¹⁰⁸ Intradisciplinary gives a strong theological grounding because it considers the psychological, sociological, economical,

¹⁰³ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 163.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Forrester, *Truthful Action*, 28.

¹⁰⁸ James Whitehead and Evelyn Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1995), 6, 30. This notion draws upon the theological model of Whitehead and Whitehead, whereby experience, culture, and tradition engage in attending, asserting, and responding, as evidenced by figures 2 and 7.

and cultural implications that are interwoven in a particular phenomenon. The acquisition of information from these different disciplines can be tedious and will be more time-consuming than the mission planning that currently takes place within African American Baptist churches. Empirical research will be necessary for this conversation to commence.

Theology and the social sciences. The notion of the social sciences as a conversation partner with theology will indeed be met by opposition during missional planning. This has been the case in the academy as well. The idea of incorporating the social sciences into the work of theology was met with resistance by some theologians who deemed the social sciences an inadequate conversation partner: “Theology has frequently sought to borrow from elsewhere a fundamental account of society or history, and then to see what theological insights will cohere with it. But it has been shown that no such fundamental account, in the sense of something neutral, rational and universal, is really available.”¹⁰⁹ In addition to the claim that the social sciences fail to offer neutral, rational, and universal truths, it is also argued that the utilization of the social sciences sacrifices pure theological truth.¹¹⁰ These notions, however, display strong and unproven biases against the social sciences. Furthermore, the social sciences are more necessary now in a postmodern society because society values fact-based analysis more than dogmatic notions of truth.

When planning short-term mission projects, the dilemma may not be whether or not the social sciences are adequate conversation partners, but *how* the social sciences are to be incorporated into the conversation. Some theologians have found the incorporation

¹⁰⁹ Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory*, 383.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 390.

of other disciplines useful to theology, but difficult to put into practice. Questions have been raised about which discipline has primacy and priority in the conversation.¹¹¹ There are concerns about the theologian being an amateur sociologist¹¹² unable to gather accurate resources for the conversation to take place.¹¹³

Although limitations are inevitable, it is imperative that the missionary attempt a dialectical conversation between theology and the social sciences. Guidelines and resources will assist the missionary in the process. Irrelevant disciplines must be avoided, leaving the rich conversation to take place between theology and the most relevant science: “It is important, therefore, for those involved in pastoral studies to be clear and overt about the limits of their own vision, competence and ideological preferences so that particular disciplines or aspects of disciplines are not exalted to a position of supreme relevance which they might not deserve.”¹¹⁴ In addition, because the disciplines are multifaceted, pastoral studies must discriminate between various aspects within them.¹¹⁵

Another guideline is that the missionary should approach the social sciences with rigor rather than vague generalizations: “An interdisciplinary activity can be a stimulus to enormous practical and intellectual vigour and rigour in which different ways of seeing the world are brought alongside one another. It can also be an excuse for laziness and the

¹¹¹ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2007), 80.

¹¹² Robin Gill, *Theology in a Social Context* (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2012), 61-67.

¹¹³ Stephen Pattison, *The Challenge of Practical Theology: Selected Essays* (Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley, 2007), 254-59.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 255.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

manufacture of vague generalities.”¹¹⁶ In addition to careful social science based research, ethnographic research of the subjects of study needs to take place as well. Information on qualitative studies, quantitative studies, questionnaires, pilot testing, data analysis, and various other components of research are all available to missionaries for their quest.¹¹⁷ If the scope of the research is beyond the missionary, consulting a professional may be beneficial.¹¹⁸

Contextualization in missions. In addition to the intradisciplinary approach offered by practical theology, this theology also offers a reverence for contexts: “The contextualization of theology-the attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context- is really a theological imperative.”¹¹⁹ Practical theology takes the contexts of its subjects very seriously, as it is rooted in the personal experience of the human being. Practical theology recognizes the “validity of another *locus theologicus*: present human experience,” recognizing that “culture, history, contemporary thought forms, and so forth are to be considered, along with scripture and tradition, as valid sources for theological expression.”¹²⁰ One theologian suggests breaking down *common human experience* by looking at “(1) interpretations of the practices, inner motivations, socio-cultural history of individual agents; (2) interpretations of relevant institutional

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 258.

¹¹⁷ See Donna M. Mertens, *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity with Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009).

¹¹⁸ Gill, *Theology in a Social Context*, 62.

¹¹⁹ Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, rev. and exp. ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), 3.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 4.

patterns and practices; and (3) interpretations of the cultural and religious symbols that give meaning to individual and institutional action.”¹²¹

When planning short-term missions projects, it is important to not only honor the context of the subjects but also remain aware of the context of the missionary. Some theologians suggest the use of some elements of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)¹²² to reveal the context of the theologian: “CPE is effective because it includes in its reflective processes interpretations of the personal dimension of practices. It may use psychology, particularly psychoanalytic theory, to help uncover the repressed archaeology of our personal narratives.”¹²³ The personal narrative of the missionary plays a major role in mission planning and the way that the research is interpreted. It is important to take note of this experiential component along with the personal experiences of the subjects under scrutiny to understand context.

Contextual theology takes seriously the faith experience of the past, including scriptures, as well as the experience of the present, which includes personal life occurrences such as “the experiences of success, failure, births, deaths, relationships, and so forth, that allow persons to, or prevent persons from, experiencing God in their lives.”¹²⁴ Other aspects of context are the subject’s social location, tragic events that are experienced corporately, and social changes throughout history.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology: Descriptive and Strategic Proposals* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 61.

¹²² CPE refers to Clinical Pastoral Education and interfaith professional education for ministry, and is suggested by Browning as well.

¹²³ Browning, *Fundamental Practical Theology*, 61.

¹²⁴ Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 5.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

Missionaries from African American Baptist churches may not approach short-term mission planning with contextualization in mind because it challenges their tendency toward dogmatism, but there are various reasons why contexts must be taken seriously. Aside the fact that “traditional theological positions don’t seem to jibe very well with aspects of northwestern cultures,” the traditional theology has a rather oppressive nature in its disregard for the black and Latin experiences, along with many others.¹²⁶ Furthermore, culture and context consist of meanings and values that inform the ways of life.¹²⁷ Because there are so many in the world, missionary planning will be more effective if the cultural context or way of life is taken into account.

Beyond these external reasons that context should be taken seriously during Christian missions, it is important to note that the heart of Christianity rests on the incarnation of Jesus Christ: “Incarnation is a process of becoming particular, and in and through the particular, the divinity could become visible and in some way (not fully but in some way) become graspable and intelligible.”¹²⁸ God revealed God’s self in a concrete way, showing the significance of our embodiment and particularity, and how they are critical to our perception of God and our relationship with God.

Practices of everyday life. The initial stage of mission planning that includes gathering data and information can capture context and theological concepts by engaging with subjects in their every life experiences. The practices of everyday life reveal deep and interwoven beliefs and cultural realities of the people. The notion of embodiment and *habitus* reveal how practices can uncover hidden factors:

¹²⁶ Ibid., 10.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 11.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 12.

The habitus, the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle, while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation, as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures making up the habitus.¹²⁹

This notion poses that for the embodied being, actions are always rooted in social structures, which in turn conditions their supply and demand, as well as the interests of the actors.

Ethnographic research is extremely important when attempting to understand culture and theology, and it must be incorporated during short-term mission planning to fully grasp the habitus present.¹³⁰ While missionaries will be considered outsiders, it may allow them to see from different lenses to quickly identify authentic culture-defining practices.¹³¹ However, the challenge of being an outsider is that there is always a barrier between the missionary or researcher and the indigenous people. In addition, the possible need for translations will call for a double hermeneutic,¹³² which could interfere with true meaning. Nevertheless, these barriers will remind the missionary or researcher that each is not an expert and that remaining a humble learner throughout the process is essential.

Praxis and missions. Among the many methods presented was the idea of praxis proposed by practical theologian Don Browning. Opposed to the notion that practical

¹²⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 78.

¹³⁰ Christian Scharen and Anne Marie Vigen, eds. *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 16.

¹³¹ Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), 19.

¹³² Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 387.

theology had a theory-practice-theory movement, Browning believed that it was more accurate to identify its inclination toward a practice-theory-practice movement, as it is always initiated with a practice that is revised in accordance with the information acquired. He believed that theory-practice-theory presented a distorted view of practical theology, insinuating that it is initiated with something other than action.¹³³

Many of the methods suggest a theory-practice-theory method, which I believe is an adequate method. While there are moments when practice initiates the process, I believe that there are also moments when theory initiates the process. When setting up a church plant, there is typically a great theory incorporated into the planning stage. Once the church is in operation, which is considered the practice, there are many more instances where theory will come back into the conversation leading to more practice. In the same setting, there may be a development of a youth ministry which initiates with practice, followed by theory, and leading back to practice.

Missions are simultaneously theory- and practice-laden. Browning's notion of practice-theory-practice¹³⁴ may have been accurate before the further development of practical theological thought. However, there needs to be a return to theory-practice-theory. Particularly when it comes to short-term missions, theory must be involved when planning the mission, and it must also be included in the post-mission reflection. Theological reflection will not only serve the purpose of reflecting on the practice or action itself, but it will also be useful for the missionary to personally discover what was gained from the experience. The notion of mutual exchange emphasizes the fact that the fusing of horizons has reshaped both the indigenous people of the foreign land and the

¹³³ Browning, *Fundamental Practical Theology*, 7.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

missionary. Both human texts will have a new horizon after the encounter during missions.¹³⁵ This coauthoring will benefit both the missionary and indigenous people.¹³⁶

The pastoral response will consist of methods of improving mission planning and execution for the future. Practical theology refers to this as the pastoral response, formulated revised practice, or pragmatic task.¹³⁷ This final move before the hermeneutical spiral continues is an action response that results from dialectical movements between theology, empirical research, the social sciences, and cultural and experiential context. Essentially, the final movement is “the task of forming and enacting strategies of action that influence events in ways that are desirable.”¹³⁸ Practical theology provides resources for not only effective pastoral response but also continued reflection and upward movement. This notion of praxis will aid missional planning, allowing it to reach heightened effectiveness. This, along with the aforementioned components, will further the *missio Dei*.

Practical Theology and Short-Term Missions in the African American Baptist Church

With an understanding of practical theology and its intricate linkage to effective short-term mission engagements, it is important to briefly explore these two concepts in light of the African American Baptist Church, the context of study. A previous description of the African American Baptist Church’s history with foreign missions will

¹³⁵ Heitink, *Practical Theology*, 185.

¹³⁶ This concept comes from the ethnographic research approach of Scharen and Vigen in *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 22.

¹³⁷ These terms are from Whitehead and Whitehead’s model (*Method in Ministry*, 86), Swinton and Mowat’s qualitative method (*Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 96), and Osmer’s final task in his proposed four tasks of practical theology (*Practical Theology*, 175).

¹³⁸ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 176.

be connected to the current predicament of missions in the church. The emergence of African American Baptist churches that are pioneering new ways to engage in foreign missions will also be mentioned. They will be highlighted in light of their intuitive attempts to incorporate practical theological tools while engaging in short-term missions.

Missions as Incidental to the Church

Unfortunately, the work of foreign missions is not flourishing in African American Baptist churches as it once was. When the first African American convention—the Foreign Missions Convention—became the National Baptist Convention, foreign missions became one branch among many others.¹³⁹ This is the same structure embodied by the African American Baptist Church today as many African American Baptist churches approach foreign missions as one auxiliary among many. Incidental to the church, missions ministries usually consist of local missions whereby neighboring community needs are met, and more infrequently it consists of an annual trip overseas organized by a few participants who help plan the short-term mission project and then travel to the designated location.

Because many African American Baptist churches have had very little exposure to practical theological information, practical theological methods are generally absent in many of these ecclesial settings. This absence has subsequently prevented the use of practical theology as a method for short-term mission planning. The existing self-driven mission designs implemented by some churches rarely include intradisciplinarity, dialectical movements between the social sciences and theology, a serious undertaking of contextual analysis, and structured tasks that provide transferability whereby other

¹³⁹ Harvey J. Williams III, *Bridges of Faith* (Philadelphia: Foreign Missions Board, 1989).

congregations might utilize the effective models for their own short-term mission planning. While this is the case for many African American Baptist churches, there are some churches that have traces of practical theology in their short-term mission engagements.

Intuitive Practical Theological Engagement

There are a few progressive¹⁴⁰ African American¹⁴¹ Baptist churches that are on the verge of practical theological engagement as they plan annual or biannual short-term mission projects that aid the oppressed, disenfranchised, and marginalized around the world. The ultimate goal of these short-term mission projects is to further the reign of God through “evangelism, healing, feeding the poor, transforming unjust political and socio-economic structures, the stewardship of creation, relief and development work.”¹⁴² While they are attempting to meet the needs of selected communities through various projects, these churches include some aspect of practical theology. These churches approach the planning of short-term missions in a thoughtful manner with careful considerations of the economy, medical and material needs, the spiritual needs of the people, as well as their experiences.

While these missions ministries instinctually incorporate practical theological tools, there is a dire need for user-friendly practical theological resources for short-term

¹⁴⁰ *Progressive* is a term that is characterized by gradual development. I use this term to refer to churches that are culturally relevant and technologically savvy.

¹⁴¹ The term *African American Church* is used to refer to congregations primarily made up of parishioners from the African Diaspora. In these congregations, there are often traditions from Africa that have endured through the generations as well as traces of liberation theology that are present in sermonic styles and worship music.

¹⁴² Adam Dodds, “The Mission of the Spirit and the Mission of the Church: Towards a Trinitarian Missiology,” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 35, no. 2 (2011): 209.

mission planning and engagement. Many missions ministries that are regularly engaged in local and overseas mission projects need practical theological techniques for planning and executing maximally effective missions. Equipping these missions ministries with practical theological tools and exposing other missions ministries to those tools will enhance short-term mission planning and engagement. Although practical theological tools will be applied to short-term mission planning, the information from this book can be applied to local and long-term mission planning and execution. Maximum effectiveness of missions requires a bridging of the gap between mission initiatives and the use of practical theological resources during planning and execution.

Conclusion

While many churches understand the necessity of outside sources to enhance their short-term mission planning, they lack an understanding of the rich tools offered by practical theology. Not only does the work require and presuppose the anointing and empowerment of the Spirit,¹⁴³ but it also demands a *responsible* planning phase for short-term mission projects. Many churches attempt to embark upon mission work with the hope of the Holy Spirit's power, but without the responsible considerations and research that should accompany the work of short-term missions. The success of short-term missions is not solely dependent upon the actual expedition overseas, but the success is indicative of months of careful and responsible planning preceding the trip. While short-term missions last for about one or two weeks, it is the planning that takes up the majority of the time. This planning must include practical theological tools as short-term missions are practical and theological in nature.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 212-13.

Many African American Baptist churches in South Florida are intuitively using practical theological ideas when engaging in short-term missions planning and execution. An in-depth probing of the meaning and methods of missional planning in African American congregations will not only challenge and provoke more ways of engaging in missional planning, but it will also be the means by which social transformation, one of the greatest passions of the African American Church, will reach its highest potential. This dialectical conversation, however, is initiated by practical theology and will take place within the practical theological framework.

Chapter 3

PRACTICAL THEOLOGICAL METHODS FOR SHORT-TERM MISSION PLANNING

Then the Lord replied: “Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it.

—Habakuk 2:2

While the previous chapter gave an overview of practical theology in general, this chapter provides an in-depth discussion of empirical research in particular. Empirical research is arguably the most complex task for the theologian. Some sociologists and theologians even suggest that practical theologians refrain from research engagement.¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, it is vital for the theologian or missionary to be able to perform empirical research as it is a significant part of their work. This chapter begins with a general overview of method in practical theology. It discusses some of the guidelines that are involved when incorporating research into theology.

¹⁴⁴ Gill, *Theology in a Social Context*, 72.

The second part of this chapter gives an overview of significant and basic research methods that can be used in practical theological work. I then provide a step-by-step progression through the actual research method used to gather data from three African American Baptist churches as it pertains to short-term mission planning. The concrete example serves the purposes of both demonstrating the way methods are used in practical theology and of preparing readers for the results in the following chapter. After the example, this chapter concludes with a final discussion of the context of African American theology. Again, this discussion serves two purposes as it demonstrates the first task of practical theological research methods, answering the question of what is going on, and as it gives background information for the research.

Understanding the Connection between Research Methods and Practical Theology

Practical theology is a unique form of theology because it pioneered the dialogue between theology and the social sciences. As an equal conversation partner, the social sciences are able to ask questions and challenge theology, just as theology is able to ask questions and challenge the social sciences. Nevertheless, there is a clear objective of transformation with an orientation to the Divine. Because the destination of practical theology is one that orients to the Divine, theology takes precedence and priority in the dialogical progression with the social sciences.¹⁴⁵

In order to decide on a method, which is the procedure needed to bring about this orientation, a methodology is needed. Methodology is distinct from method as it is the conversation from whence the method develops. There are various methods that can assist practical theologians in their endeavor for transformation. Practical theology offers

¹⁴⁵ Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling*, 65-68.

rich methods for researching churches as there are a plethora of methods that have been proposed and outlined in the domain and literature of practical theology. But prior to exploring methodologies and choosing a method, it is important to understand the dynamics of the symmetrical conversation.

Foundational Correlations in Practical Theology

Practical theology invites the social sciences to enter into a conversation. The initial conversation was characterized by the contemporary world asking questions that theology answered. This method was revised, and it was proposed that there was mutual contribution to the conversation from both the contemporary world as well as the Christian tradition. Further revision to this method resulted in a “critical correlation.”¹⁴⁶ Then it was proposed that in addition to a dialogical interconnectedness between the contemporary situation and the Christian tradition, there should be praxis toward transformation.¹⁴⁷ In essence, this method that leads to a change was aligned with the goal of practical theology.¹⁴⁸

Conversation Paradigms

Some theologians describe the dialogical interaction between practical theology and the human sciences as a conversation between two friends:

¹⁴⁶ Tracy, *A Blessed Rage for Order*, 32.

¹⁴⁷ Chopp, *Praxis of Suffering*, 37.

¹⁴⁸ The “Correlation Method” for practical theology has undergone various revisions. This method originally enabled a one-way dialogue whereby the contemporary situation is able to ask questions and seek answers from theological truths. This was a method produced in an effort to salvage the relevancy of the Christian faith to a vastly evolving contemporary world. Revised methods that stem from the “Correlation Method” evolve as this method fails to allow for an interconnected conversation between theology and the contemporary world. The “Mutual Correlation Method” is a revised version of the “Correlation Method.” It takes the proposal of a one-way conversation and opens the dialogue for a two-way conversation. See Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 77-81.

He [Pattison] bases his model of theological reflection on the metaphor of a conversation between friends, friend who have difference, but who have much in common and much to learn from one another. This conversation takes place between the Christian tradition, the social sciences and the particular that is being addressed (or possible hypothetical outcomes of particular understandings and practices).¹⁴⁹

While there are possible differences and disagreements, there is respect and an openness to learn. Both parties should have a willingness to listen and be attentive to the other parties in the conversation. This dialogue must genuinely seek the truth and be respectful of different perspectives. This conversation could and should lead to discovery.

There is a proposition that the relationship between the theology and the social sciences should be characterized by indissoluble differentiation, inseparable unity, indestructible order, and logical priority of theology.¹⁵⁰ Indissoluble differentiation means that the “two disciplines have specific roles to play.”¹⁵¹ Inseparable unity means that the social sciences enhance our theological understanding just as our theological understanding shapes the lens by which we view the social sciences. Indestructible order and logical priority give theology precedence and priority within the critical conversation.¹⁵² Once these initial parameters are established, the exploration of practical theological methods can begin.

¹⁴⁹ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 80.

¹⁵⁰ Notion of Deborah van Deusen Hunsinger, who draws on the theories of Karl Barth. Within this Christological Perspective on Mutual Critical Correlation, Hunsinger explores a responsible way to bring together theology and the social sciences in *Theology and Pastoral Counseling: A New Interdisciplinary Approach*, 65.

¹⁵¹ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 85.

¹⁵² Hunsinger, *Theology and Pastoral Counseling*, 65-68.

Understanding Practical Theological Research Methods

While there are various methods used within practical theology (which will be discussed later on in this chapter), practical theology is known for having a particular methodological movement that consists of four steps. While some practical theologians refer to these steps as tasks, others might refer to them as movements or phases. Nevertheless, there are four primary components that are usually included when engaging in practical theological work.

Core Tasks of Practical Theology

Practical theological methods often consist of the following four movements. The first movement typically is the phase where information is gathered through observation, attending, and sometimes, empirical data collection. The next movement usually consists of an incorporation of the social sciences to better understand and explain the situation. The third movement is where the theologian seeks to understand the situation in light of theological concepts. It formulates a response that is theologically influenced. The final movement seeks to develop a concrete and practical (yet flexible, due to praxis) strategy by which the desired transformation might be attained.¹⁵³

The language and procedures of practical theological methods can differ from theologian to theologian. For example, a slightly different practical theological method begins with “Descriptive Theology,” which calls for a detailed gathering of information. The next submovement is that of “Historical Theology,” which explores the theories and allows the social sciences to play a role in interpreting the situation. The next submovement, “Systematic Theology,” brings theological concepts and the Christian

¹⁵³ Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 31, 79, 129, 175.

tradition into dialogue with the situation. Finally, the submovement of “Strategic Practical Theology” is one that develops a strategy toward transformation.¹⁵⁴ While this is similar to the previously mentioned method, there are nuances that are slightly different, such as descriptive theology, which emphasizes a *thick* description.

Core tasks of practical theology inclined toward qualitative research. One particular method of practical theology presents something rather unique as it proposes a method that merges practical theology with qualitative research. After an extensive work on defining and describing qualitative research, the authors present a merging of qualitative research with practical theology. The method that they develop is slightly similar to the typical movements of practical theology. The first stage is the “Current Praxis” stage, where there is an identification of a practice or situation that calls for reflection and critical challenge. It is within this domain that one would ask the question, “What appears to be going on?”¹⁵⁵

The second stage is the “Cultural/Contextual” stage, where the application of qualitative research methods begins to ask new questions. It is within this domain that the question is raised, “What is actually going on here?”¹⁵⁶ Rather than a pre-reflective assumption, there is empirical research in the qualitative arena that provides a better understanding of the complex matrix of the situation. The third stage is the “Theological” stage, where there is a critical reflection on the practices of the church in the light of scripture and tradition. It is within this domain that the question is asked, “How are we to

¹⁵⁴ Browning, *Fundamental Practical Theology*, 55.

¹⁵⁵ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 95.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

understand this situation from the perspective of critical faithfulness?”¹⁵⁷ Finally, the fourth stage is the “Formulating Revised Practice” stage, where there are revised forms of faithful practice.¹⁵⁸

Social Scientific Research Methods in Practical Theology

Social scientific research and evaluation methods can also be used in practical theology. This includes a variety of empirical methods such as quantitative methods, single case research, case study methods, qualitative methods, and history and narrative study of lives. These methods are available to practical theologians as they seek to responsibly undertake a particular phenomenon.

Empirical methods. Quantitative research allows collection of data from a large number of people. There are various decisions to make within quantitative research, one being whether the researcher chooses to address one group at one point in time, various groups at one point in time, or the same group at different points in time. Quantitative research is usually performed through the survey method, which will require decisions from the researcher of how they would design the survey instrument, what questions they will ask, and how they will embark upon data collection methods. The major downside is that the researcher would have to rely on the people to provide accurate answers to the questions that they may not know.¹⁵⁹

Another empirical method of research is the single case method. This method focuses on a single case and its goal is to bring about a desired behavior. The data analysis is typically done by a graph that measures the frequency of specified behaviors.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 96.

¹⁵⁹ Mertens, *Research and Evaluation*, 173.

“History and narrative study of lives”¹⁶⁰ is another research method that is based on the topic of study, stories of individuals, or stories of the narrator. This makes the context that surrounds the present challenge visible. This method involves defining the problem, doing a literature review, retrieving historical data, and, finally, synthesizing and evaluating the data. Mertens presents options for mixed methods research, which is when more than one kind of research method is used.

As stated before, method does not always seek to quantify an experience. Within the qualitative methods, there is an appreciation for particularity and phenomenology. Experiences are explored in light of the individual and their interpretation of the experience. Whether the research is a focus group, participatory research, or a case study, the phenomenon is explored in the complexity of its own situatedness. No attempt to regulate the experiences of the individual is present within qualitative research.

Mixed methods are the implementation of various methods as the researcher deems necessary. It is within these methods that a continual and progressive conversation takes place to arrive at truth. Thus, I believe that the hermeneutical circle is a key tool in these methods in particular (as well as most of the other methods), as it evidently seeks to uncover truth that seems to be hidden at every level.

Social scientific research and hermeneutics. Empirical methods always include an aspect of hermeneutics. Generally thinking about questionnaires and surveys may give the notion that experiences are quantified and measured. Nevertheless, even within these surveys, language and human textuality still rely on hermeneutics. Questionnaires do not always consist of multiple-choice questions, nor do surveys always take place on a piece

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 267.

of paper. Questionnaires can be done with open-ended questions that allow individuals to elaborate on their personal experiences. Surveys are sometimes conducted over the telephone, and even then, some researchers discourage this due to the fact that gestures, facial expressions, and body language are inaccessible. Hermeneutically speaking, this can leave the researcher brought up short.¹⁶¹

Even with the accumulation of information from methods that seek individual experiences, these results will most likely be reproduced in a manner that quantifies those experiences.¹⁶² However, information gathered from a large number of people may not seek to share personal experience, but to gather a general consensus for a general purpose. Furthermore, most researchers who seek in-depth individual experiences only use this as a departure point, which is followed by more profound modes of research via mixed methods.

Qualitative methods are concerned with a richer and more complex picture of the phenomenon under study.¹⁶³ There are various methods that are identified with qualitative research, such as case studies, ethnographic research, phenomenological research, grounded theory, participatory research, clinical research, and focus groups. These methods seek a deeper understanding of the subject at hand. This research is usually done through interviews, observation, and participatory observation. These

¹⁶¹ A phrase coined by Heidegger which signifies when the reader is left with gaps.

¹⁶² Gadamer, *Truth in Method*, 4. This is a major argument in Gadamer's magnum opus.

¹⁶³ Mertens, *Research and Evaluation*, 265.

methods are used by many practical theologians and are often argued as most effective due to the complexities of individual experiences.¹⁶⁴

Hermeneutics in methods. Schleiermacher was the first to give value to the human experience within the realm of theology.¹⁶⁵ Other theologians attempted to develop the notion by creating a means to allow conversation and understanding between the human experience and theology. Thus, within all of these methods there is an aspect of hermeneutics. The experiences of the contemporary world must be interpreted in light of the subject. Their understanding of the situation is the departure point for any theological conversation that emerges. The experience is interpreted in light of prejudices, or the foregrounding that the subject brings to the situation. There is great value not only in their experience but also in the construction of their experience. In addition, the theological portion of the conversation is one that is also underpinned with hermeneutics. When theological resources such as scripture are incorporated into the conversation, there is a level of hermeneutics in the interpretation of scripture as well as in the application of scripture to the situation.

Some theologians might suggest that a “fusion of horizons” would have been an adequate and non-methodological arrival at truth, but a “fusion of horizons” can also be a methodological arrival at truth. Methods, as seen in this presentation of methods, are not always stringently sculpted and planned out. Empirical research is not always drenched with numbers and regularity. There is a level of method that simply drafts out a system to

¹⁶⁴ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 44. Along with many other theologians, Swinton and Mowat make a strong case for their preference for qualitative research in practical theology.

¹⁶⁵ Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of the Study of Theology*.

guide the practice, as exhibited above. Within these methods, hermeneutics takes place on both sides of the conversation.

Researching Short-Term Missions in the African American Baptist Church

In light of the variety of practical theological methods, this research utilized the practical theological method proposed by Swinton and Mowat in *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*. This research method involves four stages that are commonly seen in practical theological methods. The “current praxis” stage identifies a practice that requires critical reflection and asks the question, “What appears to be going on pre-reflectively?”¹⁶⁶ The “cultural/contextual” stage then asks the question, “What is actually going on here?”¹⁶⁷ The “theological reflection” stage then involves “critical reflection on practices of the church in the light of scripture and tradition”¹⁶⁸ and asks the question, “How are we to understand this situation from the perspective of critical faithfulness?”¹⁶⁹ Finally, the “formulating revised practice” stage involves the proposal of new forms of practice. This is the stage where all of the information gathered is taken into consideration and synthesized to form an effective response.

Current Praxis

The research commenced with an initial observation of missions ministries within three African American Baptist churches in South Florida.¹⁷⁰ Casual visits to

¹⁶⁶ Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, 95.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ South Florida is highly diverse, which provided highly transferrable results. In addition, the fact that South Florida includes many people of the African Diaspora can possibly be part of the reason that these churches are compelled to engage in international short-term missions. Another reason is the proximity to the Caribbean. Thus, the South

missions ministry meetings took place during this phase. This initial exploration lasted for two months, and simply involved listening to conversations and taking notes of key themes, planning strategies, and significant discussions. A journal was used to record these informal observations. General observations were recorded in a two-column journal, where observations and thoughts paralleled one another. Although this research took place through participant observation, the identity of the researcher was made known before the informal observation phase began. After this two-month phase, key insights that were significant to the research were analyzed. In order to protect the identity of the ministry members and the church, all identifying information was kept confidential. A consent form was given before each meeting to ensure the protection of the participants under study. The information was discussed using pseudonyms. The use of pseudonyms was very critical throughout the entire research process.

Cultural/Contextual

This phase ensured the protection of the identities, keeping them highly confidential. For this reason, this book does not include a detailed description of the three churches, but only the general information already disclosed in the context: *African American Baptist churches located in South Florida*. The three African American Baptist churches in South Florida chosen to be used as case studies are referred to using pseudonyms. The identities of these churches and the leaders were protected in the data gathered and analyzed.

Florida African American Baptist churches served as rich and robust research subjects with much to offer the conversation of short-term mission planning.

During this phase, qualitative research continued at a deeper level. I engaged the three churches in three weeks of formal data-gathering via personal interviews. They signed the consent form before they were able to participate. These three weeks consisted of six sessions, as each leader was interviewed individually. Each session took place in a discrete location and consisted of signing the consent form, filling out the questionnaire, and answering the interview questions. The interviews were recorded for later transcription. Notes were taken during the interview to further probe certain thoughts and to later help refer back to key places and insights in the interview.

The central research questions and subquestions were as follows:

How do African American Baptist churches approach short-term missions?¹⁷¹

How can practical theological tools be useful for short-term mission planning?¹⁷²

In addition to understanding the value of practical theological tools when planning short-term mission projects, it is also important to understand how to implement those tools. Practical theological structures offer greater effectiveness and transferability among neighboring missions ministries. Thus, the final component of the research question was as follows:

How can practical theological tools be appropriated for short-term mission planning?¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ How do missions ministries determine the location and target population for the project? How do missions ministries determine what needs should be met? How are both cultural and theological realities considered?

¹⁷² How does empirical research aid in short-term mission planning? What can short-term missions gain from a dialectical conversation between theology and the social sciences? How does contextualization connect with short-term mission planning? How can praxis affect short-term mission planning?

¹⁷³ Where and when does empirical research take place during short-term mission planning? How does the dialectical conversation take place? How should the action

While many churches may be unable to answer the final major research questions, chapter 5 offers a basic model of what the appropriation of practical theological tools would look like when planning short-term mission projects.

Theological Reflection

Once the research phase was completed, the questionnaires were reviewed qualitatively, searching for significant insights or reoccurring themes. The interviews were then transcribed and highlighted according to key insights and recurring themes. Once all of the data had been reviewed and analyzed, the major extracts were entered into a dialectical conversation with other practical and theological sources. During this stage, normative texts on missions, contextualization, hermeneutics, empirical research methods, and practical theological movements were brought into conversation with the qualitative research data.

This phase allowed the methods of missional planning in these three African American congregations to be analyzed and then engaged in a robust conversation with notions from a practical theological approach. This conversation involved attending, whereby all sides of the arguments were heard. The second part of the conversation involved asserting, which allowed the different elements to enter into a kind of play with the discussion moving back and forth.¹⁷⁴ This movement is rather dialectical in nature as all input helps a new horizon of thought to evolve. Finally the dialectical conversation concluded with a response.¹⁷⁵

response be determined? How should participant reflection be incorporated into mission planning?

¹⁷⁴ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 102.

¹⁷⁵ Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 86-88.

Formulated Revised Practiced

A practical theological method was developed to enhance the effectiveness of short-term mission planning. While this research was useful to the participating mission leaders, the information was also transferrable to other African American congregations.

These churches provide a rich context for this research study. The context and history of the African American Baptist Church is provided at the end of this chapter in order to give a thick description of the research context and preparation for the research findings chapter.

The African American Church as a Context for Research

The term *African American* generally refers to those of African descent and born in America. Consequently, this case study uses the term *African American Church* in reference to churches located in America with *most* of its members being of the African Diaspora,¹⁷⁶ though not necessarily born in America. The African American Church, often referred to as the *Black Church*,¹⁷⁷ is indicative of a church birthed during the enslavement period, serving mostly those of the African Diaspora¹⁷⁸ and consequently bearing a deeply rooted history of the African American experience in the United States.

¹⁷⁶ There are traditions from Africa that have endured through the generations and cultural experiences that are still present in worship. In addition to the African tradition being present in sermonic styles and worship music in African American churches, there are strong tones and traces of liberation theology that are still prevailing in the African American Church. This is a chief identification mark of the African American Church.

¹⁷⁷ I prefer the term *African American Church* as it refers to a particular and specified context and history. The term *Black Church*, once commonly used and widely accepted, now runs the risk of ambiguity due to the variety of blackness encountered in a plural society like South Florida.

¹⁷⁸ While these churches are often characterized by parishioners who are mostly of the African Diaspora, these parishioners may not be born in America.

This section uses the term African American Church rather than *African American Baptist Church* because the history of the Black Church is not just the foundation of the African American Baptist Church but of the African American churches in general. Other denominations, such as African Methodist Episcopal (AME), African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ), Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME), Church of God in Christ, Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and many others also share the rich history of the Black Church. These churches are characterized by traditions from Africa that have endured through the generations and experiences of slavery that prevail in sermonic styles and worship rituals. Characterized by liberation theology and an inherent solidarity, these churches provide a rich context for missiological research.

African American Church and Black Theology. While the terms African American Church and Black Church are the same in meaning, African American Church and Black Theology are rather incongruous when it comes to particular notions of what it means to do theology. The African American Church, particularly the Baptist Church, claims the notion of personal salvation as primal and communal identity as secondary: “Notwithstanding, black churches preserved the doctrines of individual salvation and the reconciliation of humanity envisioned in the Kingdom of God as the primary characteristics of their ecclesial self-image.”¹⁷⁹ Though criticized for this ideology, the National Baptist Convention defended the ontological views of the Black Church: “For example, the National Baptist Convention¹⁸⁰ argued that Black Theology sacrifices the universality of the Christian gospel for a narrow accommodation of blackness and

¹⁷⁹ Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches*, 5.

¹⁸⁰ The National Baptist Convention is the world’s largest African American Baptist Association.

liberation. Moreover, it contended that essentialized blackness further perpetuates the polarization of society.”¹⁸¹

The claims of the African American Church or the Black Church were met by serious opposition as those who advocated for Black Theology criticized their convictions as ineffectual and otherworldly: “Black theologians charged that black churches had abandoned their liberation history for an ineffectual spirituality, and therefore failed to confront adequately the concerns of black people living under racial and economic oppression.”¹⁸² This seeming abandonment was in part due to the individualism that was introduced to the assimilation of the enslaved during the post-Civil Rights era:

Whether surfacing in conservative values, libertine lifestyles, or a capitalistic devotion to personal privilege, the post-Civil Rights era induced a greater assimilation of white American individualism. Though most likely stemming from early American revivalism, individualism in contemporary black religious life regenerated and reinforced the domination of personal salvation and religious piety in American Christianity.¹⁸³

While there seems to be a significant rift or chasm between the African American Church and Black Theology, missiology bridges the gap and demands coexistence between the two. No longer can the Black Church function solely focused on personal salvation and eschatological hope, because its missional conscience calls it to societies where “the

¹⁸¹ Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches*, 4.

¹⁸² James H. Cone, *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church, Where Have We Been and Where Are We Going?* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000), 99-121; Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches*, 4.

¹⁸³ Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches*, 7.

powerful will not relinquish power, where the rich will not redistribute wealth, and where self-interest precludes social interests.”¹⁸⁴ Missional consciousness calls the Black Church to address the *current* unjust systems and *current* real life struggles in neighboring and distant societies. Missional consciousness draws the African American Church not only to a place of personal acceptance of Jesus but also to a place of personal responsibility for *the other*. Missional consciousness provides the argument whereby Black Theology might confront the African American Church and hold it accountable for the “gospel’s liberation ethics.”¹⁸⁵

On the other hand, missional consciousness, as an element of Black Theology, will bring about a revitalized relevance and power for Black Theology. If Black Theology will embrace a missional consciousness and lay claim to the notion of liberation for *all people* as a Christian imperative, it will widen its reach and strengthen its practice. This means that in Black Theology, there would be a concern for the oppressed, including those who are not of the African Diaspora. The cost then, for Black Theology, is a major one. Black Theology’s focus must be *broadened* to claim liberation from oppressive systems for *everyone* who is suffering under subjugation worldwide. This notion might lead to black theologians arguing that Black Theology ceases to be Black Theology; however, this is not the case. Black Theology remains Black Theology so long as it uses as a reference point the sources of Black Theology or, as I have phrased it, African American Theology. In addition to using the experiences of the black struggle for a reference point or a means of standing in solidarity, Black Theology can and should continue to prioritize the concerns of black people. Nevertheless, when there are others

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 9.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

suffering under oppression and injustice, Black Theology is all the more powerful when it stands against it.

Sources of African American theology. The sources that make the African American Church unique are black history, black experience, black culture, and black tradition.¹⁸⁶ These elements differentiate the African American Church or the Black Church from other minority churches and allow the African American Church to hold a prominent place in missiological research. Black experience and black history yield a solidarity distinct from any other form of Christian community. It is black culture that provides an understanding and appreciation for contexts and the contextualization of Christianity for other cultures. Finally, black tradition essentially locates God on the side of the oppressed, marginalized, and impoverished.

Black history. As enslaved African Americans were separated from families, forced into manual labor, treated inhumanely, and beaten and killed, their interpretation of Christianity was formed. Aside from the church gatherings that European Americans allowed African Americans into, there were secret gatherings that took place privately. The black experience of God was highly liberative because of the unthinkable quality of life they endured. God was not just liberator from the current situation, but there was an eschatological hope that when this life was over, there was a better one waiting for those who were saved:

Christ crucified manifested God's loving and liberating presence *in* the contradictions of black life- that transcendent presence in the lives of black Christians that empowered them to believe that *ultimately*, in God's

¹⁸⁶ Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 23-35.

eschatological future, they would not be defeated by the ‘troubles of this world,’ no matter how great and painful their suffering.¹⁸⁷

The notion of getting “saved” for the African American was not simply a result of the Puritan culture that undergirded Christianity, but it was also a call for liberation and hope for a better life out of this world.

While some of the enslaved African Americans continued to reject Christianity, seeing it as the religion of the oppressor, some found a reference point in revivalistic forms of worship. There were a few reasons that Christianity was more accepted: “The similarity between African and revival styles of worship made Christianity seem more familiar to the slaves and helped them to make sense of this new religion in terms of their old one.”¹⁸⁸ From the time of its emergence, African Americans connected with revivals over the form of discipleship that was being forced upon them in the eighteenth century:

Revivals succeeded where earlier efforts failed for a number of reasons. The missionaries and pastors of the Anglican Church had depended upon a slow process of memorization and education to instruct the slaves in Christianity. The revivalist preacher emphasized the immediate experience of conversion as the primary requirement for baptism and so made becoming Christian a less time-consuming and difficult process.¹⁸⁹

This was the initiation of African Americans engaging in preaching, and then establishing their own worship services.

¹⁸⁷ Cone, *Cross and the Lynching Tree*, 2.

¹⁸⁸ Albert Raboteau, *Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans* (New York: Oxford, 1999), 18.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

In 1865, the abolishment of slavery led to a new problem. Unjust systems of oppression continued to marginalize African Americans. The latter half of the twentieth century is marked by a pastor in the African American community who confronted the governmental systems. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his speech, “Where Do We Go from Here?,” argues that the hardest task was not the abolishment of slavery, but the meaningful equality that needed to follow that abolishment. When desegregation took place, African Americans were permitted to dine in restaurants and attend schools previously exclusive to European Americans. Nevertheless, they still lived in slums and drug-infested communities with minimal job opportunities.¹⁹⁰

Black experience. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. argues that the conditions that African American people lived in could be remedied by equality in the job market. Crimes and drug abuse would greatly decrease if African American men were given a fair chance to work.¹⁹¹ On the contrary, African American men did not have success in the job market, the number of single parent homes increased, and the ghettos inhabited by poor African American people were invisible to European Americans. The enslavement period left the African American people deeply wounded.

In contemporary society, there are many African Americans that are still living at a disadvantage when it comes to careers and education. Communities are still drug-infested, African American people are still marginalized, and housing is still poor. Nevertheless, the African American experience encompasses the hope and relentless nature of African American people: “The black experience is catching the spirit of

¹⁹⁰ Martin Luther King Jr., “Where Do We Go from Here?” (speech, Eleventh Annual Southern Christian Leadership Conference Convention, Atlanta, GA, August 16, 1967).

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

blackness and loving it. It is hearing black preachers speak of God's love in spite of the filthy ghetto, and black congregations responding Amen, which means that they realize that ghetto existence is not the result of divine decree but of white inhumanity."¹⁹² The African American experience is one that faces unjust systems and unrelenting poverty, but one that seeks redemption and clings to hope.

Black culture. Black culture is the expression of African American people in the face of oppression and disenfranchisement. African Americans often coped through artistic expression: "Black culture consists of the creative forms of expression as one reflects on history, endures pain, and experiences joy. It is the black community expressing itself in music, poetry, prose, and other art forms."¹⁹³ The African American culture always existed, but became widely appreciated in the United States during the period of the Harlem Renaissance. Characterized by various art forms, black culture is a key source of African American experience and theology: "There are a number of aspects that make up that black experience, including the stories, tales, and sayings of African Americans that have developed as they endured a racist society. These expressions of life may be in the form of songs, poems, narratives, and music."¹⁹⁴ These elements are nuances of African American culture that frequently demonstrate a contextualization of Christian faith.

¹⁹² Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 25.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁹⁴ Peter Paris, *Social Teaching of the Black Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998), 16.

Black tradition. Black tradition¹⁹⁵ is a theology that recognizes God as the liberator: “It is a biblical witness that says that God is a God of liberation, who speaks to the oppressed and abused, and assures them that divine righteousness will vindicate their suffering.”¹⁹⁶ It deconstructs the notion of a domesticated Christ, and reconstructs and relocates Jesus on the side of the oppressed. Not only does it recognize the incompatibility of Christianity and slavery, but it also denounces the notion that *any* people should be oppressed and marginalized. Finally, black tradition calls into account those who subscribe to a form of Christianity that ignores the politically oppressed in society.¹⁹⁷

Sources that signify a point of departure. These sources are significant as they exemplify the credibility and qualification of the African American Church to pioneer deeper missiological engagement. Due to black history and black experience, the African American Church is able to stand in solidarity with those who are suffering and oppressed, drawing on narratives that once depicted their situation. Black culture brings about an understanding of interpreting Christianity and contextualizing it according to one’s own culture. Finally, black tradition allows African Americans to see that God is concerned about the poor and the oppressed. Essentially, the notions of memory, where African American churches have memories of their experiences of hardship; solidarity, whereby they demonstrate understanding, empathy, and sympathy to the suffering; and narrative, where they have stories of their powerful redemption journey (still being

¹⁹⁵ While Cone separates his proposed sources of Black Theology into “Revelation,” “Scripture,” and “Tradition,” I have compiled these three into one—“Black Tradition.” This list is not meant to be an exact replica of Cone’s; rather, it draws on some of the rich ideas that he developed in regard to Black Theology.

¹⁹⁶ Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 31.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

unfolded today), allow African American churches to serve as a rich context for exploring short-term mission engagement. These sources of African American or Black Theology place the African American Church at the heart of a missiological reconstruction.

Conclusion

Practical theology offers new methods for doing the work of ministry. There are various ways to engage in the empirical research of practical theology, such as Osmer's four tasks or Browning's movements. It is important that theologians and missionaries gain an understanding of the operationalization of methods. This chapter provided an example of how one can organize a plan for empirical research. I laid out research blueprints for the study of mission planning in three African American Baptist churches.

This was followed by a thick description of the African American theological context. It is evident that the African American Baptist Church provides a rich ground for missiological research. Exploring methods of short-term mission planning in three churches provides case studies that will be beneficial to African American Baptist churches as they deconstruct and reconfigure short-term mission planning strategies. This research offers the church at large a new approach to missions ministries. While three African American Baptist churches are targeted as case studies in this research, the findings can be applied to churches of any size that are engaged in missions. Not only can the research findings be applied to short-term missions, but it can also be applied to local missions as well.

Chapter 4

EXPLORING CURRENT PRACTICES OF SHORT-TERM MISSION PLANNING

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ ‘The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’

—Matthew: 25:37-40

Findings from the research are presented in this chapter. The three case studies presented in this chapter separately discuss the methodologies and methods used when planning short-term mission projects. Following the case studies is a discussion that correlates key consistencies and themes in the data gathered. These short-term mission practices and threads can be applied to various missional activities. The following research results are able to be transferred to local missions as well as long-term missions.

Three Leading Missions Ministries

Three African American Baptist churches were researched in light of their short-term mission planning strategies. Unsurprisingly, the three churches, all located in South Florida, are engaged in short-term mission projects in various parts of Haiti.

Questionnaires,¹⁹⁸ observations, and interviews¹⁹⁹ were the means of gathering the data about how the planning process and execution of the projects take place. The churches are referred to using the pseudonyms Greater Bethel, Calvary Hill, and First Baptist. The interview participants (IPs) will be referred to as IP 1, IP 2, IP 3, IP 4, IP 5, and IP 6.

Greater Bethel

Greater Bethel is a Missionary Baptist church that is predominantly black, whereby the population is primarily made up of African Americans as well as people from the African Diaspora. The church is culturally aware and relevant and can be characterized as a traditional African American Baptist Church due to its style of worship, preaching, and traditions. The church is considered a megachurch as it serves over 2,000 people.²⁰⁰ The pastor, an African American male, has been preaching and doing ministry for over 20 years. Their church is comprised of various ministries that meet needs of the parishioners and the community. Among these ministries is a missions ministry that is multifaceted.

Functions of the missions ministry. The missions ministry at Greater Bethel involves various kinds of mission work. They partner with local churches on projects, such as feeding people in the community and having food drives. They often work with

¹⁹⁸ See appendix 1

¹⁹⁹ See appendix 2

²⁰⁰ Megachurches can be defined using other factors; however, this paper will identify churches with 2,000 or more parishioners as a megachurch.

Miami Rescue Mission to feed the hungry, and they receive with open arms those who subsequently begin to attend Sunday morning service.²⁰¹ While the ministry is partnering with neighboring churches for home missions, it takes a leading role when it comes to short-term missions. As a major component of their ministry, the mission work in Haiti is highly prioritized by the senior pastor and the parishioners. They welcome neighboring churches to join with them and contribute to the efforts in Haiti.

Not only is partnering with other churches one of the most significant practices of the short-term mission work taking place at Greater Bethel, but Greater Bethel believes that sharing the gospel is of utmost importance.²⁰² They believe that this is not only done through evangelism, but also through tangible efforts to support the community. They value building relationships with the people they are serving in Haiti, whereby mutual respect and learning takes place. These relationships are fostered through consistent communication between the two parties. Finally, one of their major endeavors is to create self-sufficiency by creating projects for the people of Haiti to manage and benefit from.

Participation in the missions ministry. The leaders of this missions ministry in Greater Bethel consist of a small group of people. The pastor of the church, an interpreter, and a couple of others take on the leadership role. They keep in contact with the people of Haiti to determine and arrange what work needs to be done, times to visit, and specific logistics of their trip. This information is used for planning the next mission trip, which is primarily organized by the senior pastor. While there is no committee or involvement of the parishioners during this planning phase, parishioners are informed

²⁰¹ IP 5, interviewed by Jamila Rauf Jackson, October 30, 2014, Greater Bethel. All interviews were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of the interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement.

²⁰² IP 5.

about and invited to help with the needs of the trip. About 75 percent of the members are willing contributors for the mission projects that take place in Haiti.²⁰³ The pastor cultivates the desire and concern for the poor and disenfranchised in Haiti.

The senior pastor, an interpreter, and varying others (two or three different travelers each time)²⁰⁴ travel to Haiti to accomplish goals and maintain continued awareness of the progression of the work in Haiti. During this trip, pictures, videos, and information are recorded. This information is not only shared with the parishioners of Greater Bethel, but it is also shared with the churches that partnered in the Haiti projects, giving donations and other kinds of support. Sharing the information and data from the trip is imperative for Greater Bethel.

Short-term mission project. After the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Greater Bethel targeted one of the poorest places in Haiti. Hours from the capital of Haiti, a school that had been destroyed was still functioning under makeshift tents. Volunteer teachers attempted to keep the school going, but were unable to support their families or sustain themselves. Isolated from water, food supply, and society, a village in the mountains became the focus of Greater Bethel.²⁰⁵ Upon one visit to Haiti, the senior pastor of Greater Bethel was moved by the resilience of the people and their various needs.²⁰⁶ Funds were solicited from the congregation, and the work of building a new facility that would be used as a multipurpose facility had begun. School and worship services could be held in any kinds of weather once this project reached completion.

²⁰³ IP 5.

²⁰⁴ IP 6, interviewed by Jamila Rauf Jackson, October 30, 2014, Greater Bethel.

²⁰⁵ IP 5.

²⁰⁶ IP 6.

In addition to rebuilding the school, the church committed to paying the monthly salaries of what were initially eight teachers and what is now ten.²⁰⁷ They are able to provide for their families while they work towards developing the next generation. Along with the ten instructors, the salary of a pastor in the community is being paid as well.²⁰⁸ Funds are sent and dispersed each month, along with any items that the school or church is in need of. These funds are not only sent, but the pastor of Greater Bethel strategically maintains strong accountability through extensive communication, checks and balances, and visits to the mountains of Haiti.²⁰⁹

Traveling to Haiti at least four times a year, the leadership at Greater Bethel keeps a close relationship with the people being served. The people delegated to the project in Haiti have great appreciation for the pastor and people of Greater Bethel. Countless pictures and videos are taken with each visit.²¹⁰ The documentation and footage evidence that there is progression with the building, an increased amount of students being served, and grateful cross-cultural friends who feel loved and supported.

The last trip to Haiti involved the placement of the roof and plans for putting light in the facility. The pastor of Greater Bethel hopes to provide a purification system for clean water, a program for meals at the school, and a store in the mountains whereby the people are able to access the items that they need without traveling hours down and up the mountain. In the near future, these projects will be completed, and it is their hope that in the midst of all of the people being served at least one young person's life will be changed.

²⁰⁷ IP 5.

²⁰⁸ IP 5.

²⁰⁹ IP 5.

²¹⁰ IP 6.

Planning the mission project. At Greater Bethel, planning for short-term mission projects takes place in two phases. The first phase involves two people who plan the general vision for the short-term mission project, determining the progression of the work. During this phase, the primary person, the pastor at Greater Bethel, works with the pastor in Haiti to ensure that progress is taking place and needs are being met. The second phase involves others individuals on both sides. This small group of people may provide input and assistance as it pertains to logistics for the trip, strategy for the progression, and skill for the work.²¹¹

The first phase of planning takes place on a constant basis. There are rare breaks in the mission planning as the pastor of Greater Bethel is in constant communication with the pastor in Haiti. This incessant communication involves discussing the progress of the building; the anticipated needs in the upcoming plans for water, light, and food; and the unexpected needs that develop along the way. As monthly shipments are often made, the decisions of what to ship and how to ship are ongoing topics of concern.²¹²

The pastor shared an experience of sending a trailer to Haiti. Upon arrival, the trailer was kept in customs for a long period of time. While waiting for clearance for release, an imposter, pretending to be the pastor in Haiti, redeemed the trailer. On another occasion, some goods that were stuck in customs in Haiti for a while were spoiled before they were ever distributed. This difficulty did not deter the mission work in Haiti, but simply led the pastor of Greater Bethel to consider new means of delivery.

The second planning phase takes place over the course of a few months. This phase might involve others who are traveling—about three people in the case of Greater

²¹¹ IP 6.

²¹² IP 6.

Bethel.²¹³ Travel details, transportation, lodging arrangements, and scheduling are all major components of the second planning phase. The time for traveling has to be ideal, not only for the people taking the trip but also for the people of Haiti. For example, there might be political demonstrations or protests that may require that the trip be postponed. The timing and scheduling is of utmost importance because the trip usually lasts for about three days.²¹⁴ Because of the short duration of the trip and rigorous travel involved, the maximum time needs to be allotted to visit the school and talk with the people. In addition to the planned trips, which almost always takes place quarterly, there are unplanned trips that are sporadic.²¹⁵ These unexpected visits hold the people accountable for the work that is to be taking place in Haiti.

All of this is followed by a phase of reflection upon the return to the United States. While time has been spent talking to the people of Haiti (through an interpreter), and assessing needs for himself, the pastor of Greater Bethel gathers with those who traveled, and asks a simple question: “What did you see?”²¹⁶ Not only is this dialogue rich as a part of a new planning phase, but it is also a moment of reflection for the people who are engaging in the work of missions.

Funding the work of missions. The pastor of Greater Bethel engages in a continuous and valuable mission work, but he never neglects to acknowledge his parishioners as one of the most vital aspects of the missions ministry as projects are funded through solicitation. When the children were being educated under bamboo branches and teachers were not compensated for their services, the pastor of Greater

²¹³ IP 6.

²¹⁴ IP 5.

²¹⁵ IP 5.

²¹⁶ IP 5.

Bethel asked the people for support, and they embraced the pastor's vision and gave toward the endeavor. When the need for more materials for the building and for roofing arose, the pastor once again asked the congregation, and they were able to support financially.

In addition to the support from the parishioners of Greater Bethel, funds are solicited from neighboring churches. Flyers, videos, and pamphlets have been created and distributed to inform local congregations and pastors about the isolated village in Haiti. After receiving this information, many neighboring churches have financially contributed toward the project in Haiti. The pastor of Greater Bethel's concern for the poor and oppressed locally, as well as overseas, causes him to share his passion and to influence others to take part in serving the least, lost, and left out. He explains that while many congregations may not have the capacity to launch a short-term missions project, they can partner with other churches who are working overseas by means of material resources, prayer, and financial support.

Calvary Hill

Calvary Hill is another African American Baptist Church with a mixed population of African Americans, people of the African Diaspora, and people of varying ethnicities. Although this church's contemporary style is innovative and unique, it still demonstrates characteristics of the traditional African American Baptist Church in its general worship style, preaching, and institution and practice of traditions. The church is considered a megachurch due to its large population, which significantly exceeds 2,000 members.²¹⁷ The pastor, an African American male, has been preaching and engaging in ministry for

²¹⁷ IP 1, interviewed by Jamila Rauf Jackson, November 11, 2014, Calvary Hill.

over twenty years.²¹⁸ The church has a vast amount of ministries, one of them being the missions ministry.

Functions of the missions ministry. The missions ministry at Calvary Hill is one of many ministries that caters to the needs of people. There is an evangelism ministry that focuses on sharing the gospel to the local community, and the serving ministry that meets the needs in the local community and in the poorest parts of the South Florida area on a monthly basis.²¹⁹ The work of these two ministries allows the missions ministry to focus solely on the work in Haiti. The missions ministry is generally important to the pastor and the church at large. Much of the participation in the church is spread out through a variety of ministries, which impacts the participation in the missions ministry.

At Calvary Hill, sharing the gospel is the primary endeavor for short-term missions.²²⁰ Evangelizing Christ, helping local pastors in Haiti, and witnessing the salvation of the people is a key focus when it comes to short-term missions. As a foundational focus of sharing the gospel, they build on their ministry by finding out what the needs of the people are and ensuring that the poor are fed and clothed in the area in which they are served.²²¹ It is also extremely important that those involved in missions gain an understanding of the culture for themselves and that there are friendships built with the people of Haiti.

Participation in the missions ministry. The missions ministry at Calvary Hill consists of the associate pastor of the missions ministry, the director of the missions

²¹⁸ IP 1.

²¹⁹ IP 1.

²²⁰ IP 1.

²²¹ IP 1.

ministry, and about five other ministry members.²²² They gather twice a month to discuss missions, share information about the upcoming project, and strategize on how to get more participants for the work of missions. While the project is arranged through the associate pastor and the director's dialogue with a particular pastor in Haiti, the information must be approved by the senior pastor and then discussed among the group. There is freedom to engage in a dialectical or evolving conversation with the ministry members regarding the mission work.

The trip is open to those who would like to travel to Haiti and engage in short-term missions work. The obstacle that might prevent more than about eight to ten people from attending is the time and funding for the trip.²²³ Persons must raise their own funds in order to travel, lodge, and eat in Haiti. Those who cannot travel engage in missions through the giving of items and donations.²²⁴ The parishioners are kept involved as ministry members present a pictorial report on the trip, as it pertains to achievements and progression, during general worship services.

²²² IP 1.

²²³ IP 2, interviewed by Jamila Rauf Jackson, November 11, 2014, Calvary Hill.

²²⁴ IP 1.

Short-term mission project. While the first trip to Haiti was made in 2002, the 2012 earthquake in Haiti shook the hearts of the pastor and the members of Calvary Hill. First-, second-, and third-generation Haitians alongside others from the African Diaspora stood in solidarity with the people of Haiti.²²⁵ The first missions initiative was to send support for the people that had been affected by the earthquake. This was immediately followed by a long-term connection with a pastor in Haiti who needed support to repair his ministry.

A relationship and partnership was formed between a prominent pastor in Haiti and Calvary Hill through the church's interaction with Haiti. This particular church had four locations, one being an edifice that served over 5,000 people.²²⁶ It also had a clinic within the church to aid those who needed medical attention. The earthquake destroyed the building, and, as a result, many people lost their place of hope, joy, and provision. Adopting this megachurch as a sister church, Calvary Hill collects funds for the restructuring of the building, which will be able to meet a variety of needs for the people.²²⁷ In the meantime, church gatherings take place under tents, a mobile clinic has been transported throughout the community to meet medical needs, and the work of ministry is continuing in Haiti.²²⁸

In addition to the evangelistic efforts, Calvary Hill has food, toiletry, and clothing drives prior to taking their trip to Haiti. The items collected are taken to Haiti and are dispersed to the people of the community and church, or given to the pastor of the church in order for him to share the items. The pastor and mission members of Calvary Hill have

²²⁵ IP 2.

²²⁶ IP 1.

²²⁷ IP 2.

²²⁸ IP 2.

been able to travel and meet with the pastor and people of Haiti to fellowship and share the gospel with them. These mission trips take place at least two times a year in consideration of the schedules of the mission members and the pastor in Haiti.

Calvary Hill organizes other mission trips that are designated for specific causes. Some of the trips organized by the missions ministry at Calvary Hill have been dedicated to meeting medical needs, educational needs, and, sporadically, orphanage needs.²²⁹ While their primary project is the reconstruction of their sister church, they have been able to meet other needs along the way.

Calvary Hill connected with the pastor in Haiti due to his desire to meet the needs of the masses. This is something the two churches have as a common ground, which created the bond between them. Deeming this massive church in Haiti a sister church, there will be a special church dedication service in Haiti upon the completion of the building.²³⁰ Many members from Calvary Hill continue to give toward the completion of the building, and many plan on attending the special service in Haiti with the pastor of Calvary Hill sometime in the future.

Planning the mission project. At Calvary Hill, planning for short-term missions trips take place in three phases. The first phase consists of general goal-setting by the missions ministry leaders. This framework is then taken to the missions ministry meeting, and the second planning phase commences. This phase is characterized by dialogue and development of ideas within the small group. The third planning phase commences with

²²⁹ IP 1.

²³⁰ IP 1.

approval from the senior pastor and organization of the practical and material parts of the trip.²³¹

The first planning phase involves the associate pastor and director of the missions ministry in dialogue with the pastor from the Haiti project. This phase involves prayer, observation, and listening for which needs are to be met in Haiti. A basic idea is derived and then communicated to the pastor in Haiti. This dialogue welcomes his input, suggestions, and alterations. Some of the previous dialogue with the pastor involved minor details that needed to be considered, while other dialogues involved a complete change in travel dates due to political protests or outbreaks of illness.²³² In the first stage of planning, the pastor in Haiti is greatly valued as an equal and, in many cases, a primary conversation partner.

The next phase of planning involves the two leaders of the missions ministry sharing the proposal with the entire missions ministry, which includes about six other people.²³³ The missions ministry meets two times a month. While the meeting topics vary from missional concepts and missional experiences to the dialoguing of ideas, prior to mission trips the topic is rigorous planning. This dialogical and dialectical experience offers the input of different voices, some being missional experts, first-generation Haitians, and those who bring unique insights to mission work. The plans are discussed, critiqued, and readjusted prior to entering into the last phase.

The final phase of planning involves first, a review of the plans by the senior pastor. This dialogical phase involves questioning, probing, and suggestions. Once the

²³¹ IP 2.

²³² IP 1.

²³³ IP 2.

plans are reviewed and approved, the team is able to begin logistical planning. They begin collecting funds and materials from the parishioners at Calvary Hill, as well as from friends and family members. They simultaneously engage in planning the logistics for the actual travel, which includes airfare, lodging, transportation, food, and scheduled visits to the church community in Haiti. The entire planning process takes place in about three to four months.²³⁴

Funding the work of missions. The work of missions being done in Haiti is made possible by the donations of the people of Calvary Hill. As contributions are given to support the completion of the enormous facility in Haiti, the funds are sent to the pastor and allocated according to the pastor's instruction. In addition, special services, such as a service being held on the anniversary of the earthquake in Haiti, are a means of collecting financial resources to use for the missional endeavor.

First Baptist

First Baptist church is another megachurch that is made up of African Americans, people of the African Diaspora, and a few people of other ethnicities. This Missionary Baptist church is characterized by innovation as well as traditional African American worship styles, preaching styles, and rituals. The pastor, an African American male, has been preaching for over twenty years and has been engaged in ministry for over twenty years as well.²³⁵ This church has a variety of ministries under the umbrellas of five focal ministries.²³⁶ The vast amount of ministries in the church includes a missions ministry, which is located under the evangelism branch.

²³⁴ IP 2.

²³⁵ IP 3, interviewed by Jamila Rauf Jackson, October 31, 2014, First Baptist.

²³⁶ IP 4, interviewed by Jamila Rauf Jackson, November 10, 2014, First Baptist.

Functions of the missions ministry. First Baptist church's missions ministry is engaged in several missional activities, such as local mission work in the community and partnerships with Red Cross, Habitat for Humanity, and the American Cancer Society. In the midst of all of these projects, their short-term mission project is still one of the priorities. While the general purpose of the missions ministry is to give back to the poor and needy who cannot otherwise help themselves, the purpose of the short-term missions project is to feed, clothe, financially support, and send missionaries to orphans and pastors overseas.

This work, taking place in Haiti as well, is highly prioritized by the pastor and the church. For them, sharing the gospel and meeting the needs of the poor go hand in hand. To meet these needs, communication with the people of the community and building a relationship is vital. Creating effective projects that the people of Haiti can maintain and gain from is the long-term goal of First Baptist's missions ministry.²³⁷

Participation in the missions ministry. The missions ministry at First Baptist Church consists of the leader assigned to the missions ministry as well as the members or committee working specifically with the missions ministry. While there are various others under the evangelism ministry, the group that makes major decisions and discusses the work taking place and the necessary mission trips is comprised of those who are specifically a part of the missions group.²³⁸ The information and plans made by the small group are then shared with the entire evangelism department and then approved by the senior pastor, who often dispenses the information to the general congregation.

²³⁷ IP 4.

²³⁸ IP 4.

The lead servant, director of evangelism, a few members of the missions ministry, and, oftentimes, the pastor, travel to Haiti.²³⁹ While the parishioners might not travel, they are directly involved in the work taking place in Haiti due to their monetary donations. All parishioners that give money to First Baptist are inevitably participating in the work of short-term missions in Haiti. They are engaged with the work through videos and pictures that have been made into presentations to keep the members abreast of the people being helped in Haiti.

Short-term mission project. Along with many other churches, the 2012 earthquake in Haiti also caught the attention of First Baptist.²⁴⁰ There was an immediate sense of solidarity, compassion, and responsibility that led them to make an action plan to help the people that had been affected by the natural disaster. As a result of connecting with people who were familiar with the Haitian community, visiting the country, and attempting to aid in any way possible, the pastor of First Baptist and the missions ministry were able to stumble upon an orphanage that desperately needed support.²⁴¹

Left without a mother, father, or family, sixty-five orphans were under the care of a pastor in Haiti.²⁴² When First Baptist became aware of their situation, they decided to assist the pastor in his efforts to sustain the young children. Financial assistance is given to the orphanage monthly in order to meet the needs of the children medically, materially, and physically. The pastor in Haiti also allocates the funds to take care of meals, educational opportunities, and sometimes placements of the children into acceptable

²³⁹ IP 4.

²⁴⁰ IP 4.

²⁴¹ IP 3.

²⁴² IP 3.

homes. This pastor also oversees an orphanage in the Dominican Republic, whereby funds might also be used from time to time to meet the needs of other children as well.

First Baptist not only assists in caring for the children of the orphanage, but this church also oversees about fifty churches across the country of Haiti.²⁴³ They have recognized that the churches in Haiti have overwhelming needs, and they have made efforts to feed, clothe, financially support, and, from time to time, send missionaries in order to offer the maximum level of support. As they attempt to give to the poor and needy who are unable to help themselves, they are keenly aware that the crisis cannot be completely solved.²⁴⁴ Their hope is that they might simply make a difference.

The pastor and a few of the mission members travel to Haiti about once or twice a year. These trips are to bring items, visit the orphanage, and evaluate the progress and needs of the people they are supporting. The international committee, consisting of the legal team, grant-writing team, and communication team (used as interpreters), are all invited to participate in the trip in accordance with the major purpose of the trip.²⁴⁵ Each committee member performs the necessary duties for the mission work in Haiti. As is the case with the other churches, the plans and procedures must be approved by the senior pastor of the church.

Planning the mission project. At First Baptist, the planning process takes place during the quarterly missions meetings and involves three planning phases.²⁴⁶ The first planning phase involves a session of brainstorming, dialogue, and delegation. The second phase of planning involves the individual work of the committee members who are to

²⁴³ IP 3.

²⁴⁴ IP 4.

²⁴⁵ IP 4.

²⁴⁶ IP 4.

complete their assignments and report to the group. The last phase of planning involves putting the official plan together, attaining the approval of the senior pastor, and securing the logistics.²⁴⁷

The first planning phase can be characterized by brainstorming. This phase involves exploration of ideas, and more efficient ways to meet the needs of the orphans and pastor in Haiti. This moment of dialogue or dialectical engagement welcomes the input of everyone who is in the missions ministry. The dialectical engagement leads to a basic action plan which requires each person on the committee to complete an assignment. The lead servant of the missions ministry follows up with the members on occasion and give support when necessary.²⁴⁸

Whether the assignment is focused on logistics, seeking outside resources for funding, or contacting an external resource, the members of the missions ministry enter into the second planning phase. The second planning phase, whereby mission members are responsible for individual assignments, does not necessarily isolate the members. They are still able to dialogue within their committee and collaborate for the completion of their small goals. There is often a meeting held whereby all of the particular assignments are integrated and solidified into a cohesive mission plan. When there is an upcoming trip, the meetings take place formally, informally, and more frequently.

Finally, the last phase of planning involves bringing all of the pieces together and solidifying the plan. This plan is then taken to the senior pastor of First Baptist Church. Once he probes and asks questions about the proposal, he has the freedom of making suggestions or alterations. After the plan has been approved, it is then shared with the

²⁴⁷ IP 3.

²⁴⁸ IP 3.

parishioners of First Baptist. If there are additional needs, the parishioners are invited to give or contribute materially. The last phase involves the finalization of all of the travel logistics.²⁴⁹

Funding the work of missions. First Baptist primarily funds the work of missions through tithe and offering collected by the church. A portion of what is collected each month is allocated to the Haiti project, whereby orphans and people of the communities are supported. In addition to having a regular stream of revenue allocated to this mission project, there are many grants and outside resources solicited to aid the people of Haiti.²⁵⁰ First Baptist plans to involve the corporate world in their efforts to make an impact in the country of Haiti. As they tithe to Haiti and connect the people of Haiti with outside resources, they hope to make a dent in the poverty crisis.²⁵¹

Consistencies and Themes from the Research

The three researched churches offer insightful ideas when it comes to planning short-term mission projects, funding them, and executing them. While the three churches are not exactly alike, there are various notions that are repeated across their missiologies. These concepts, the short-term missions, pastor's heart, passion for the work, taking risks, accountability, and sharing faith, have been either discussed or alluded to in the data collected. The questionnaires and interviews show that these concepts are significant when it comes to short-term missions.

²⁴⁹ IP 3.

²⁵⁰ IP 4.

²⁵¹ IP 4.

Transition Missions

Short-term missions are often thought to be the mission projects that serve a community for a short period of time. Whether this short period of time is one week or three weeks, missionaries are able to serve the community and then return to their home country. The other common kind of mission trip is the long-term mission trip. These are mission trips that are for longer periods of time. The missionary lives in the country being served, learns the customs and practices of the people, and may spend years there before returning home or engaging in missionary work in other locations.

If short-term missions and long-term missions are defined by the different periods of time, what kind of mission work constitutes what is taking place in these three churches? While the mission trip is usually nothing more than a week, the communication with the community or church leaders is on-going through dialoguing, sending items, and continuous planning. As one of the participants of the research put it, “We are not engaging in short-term missions, it’s more long-term.”²⁵²

Thus, the mission work that has attributes of short-term and long-term missions might be best classified as “transition missions.” These missions are characterized by mission projects that are designed to help a particular community for a number of years until the people are able to get on their feet. The goal of transition missions is to offer support, education, and finances, and help the people of the community gain self-sufficiency, whereby they are able to transition to a place where they have ownership of the project. They are able to still be connected to the church community that helped them,

²⁵² IP 5.

and from time to time they may still have need for resources and help, but they have gained independence and empowerment to sustain their community for the most part.

The Pastor's Heart

One of the major themes running through the data gathering process was the emphasis on the senior pastor. All three of the churches engage in transition missions because of the vision and leadership of the pastor of the church. The location and method of assisting is determined by the pastor. The pastor's vision of serving internationally is embraced by the people and subsequently financially supported by the people. All of the interviewees mentioned the senior pastor when asked why the church began engaging in short-term missions, how they were engaging in short-term missions, and how the work was being financed. The pastor is extremely influential in the African American Baptist Church. An engagement with short-term mission or an implementation of practical theological concepts during mission planning will require the enthusiasm of the senior pastor.

Passion for the Work

Another notable similarity among the three churches was the fact that each of the missions ministry leaders had previously engaged in or had been exposed to the work of missions. One person was involved with mission work on another island prior to becoming a part of the church of study,²⁵³ another had been engaged in mission work in another state,²⁵⁴ and still others were engaged in missional endeavors outside of the

²⁵³ IP 5.

²⁵⁴ IP 1.

church and prior to the earthquake in Haiti. One interviewee put it best when she said, “Mission work is not for the faint of heart, it requires a passion.”²⁵⁵

So the question then becomes, is mission work for everyone, or is it not? Many of the interviews highlighted the fact that those involved in the planning and traveling must have a passion and a calling for the work. Nevertheless, those who claim the Christian faith are to pray, financially support, and help in other ways. The passion of Christ was the least, lost, and left out, thus the passion of the people of Christ should also be the least, the lost, and left out.²⁵⁶ The call to lead mission endeavors may be to a small few, but the calling to support the poor and marginalized are to those who claim to be Christian.

Taking Risks

Many who travel to foreign countries for mission work must have a true passion and calling for it because there are major risks involved. Each interviewee shared stories about traveling to Haiti and experiencing protests and riots first-hand, and sickness and different living conditions. One interviewee shared an experience where the mission group was riding a bus. Somehow, they ended up right in the middle of a shoot-out due to political protests that were going on.²⁵⁷ Careful eating and drinking are practices that all of the missionaries have to abide by. A few missionaries mentioned that they bring nonperishable food items and sometimes live off of peanut butter crackers and water for the few days in order to avoid possible sickness.

²⁵⁵ IP 1.

²⁵⁶ The notion of the least, lost, and left out was another reoccurring theme during the interviews.

²⁵⁷ IP 1.

If missionary work is so hard, why do they continue to engage in the work? One missionary shared that she and another leader suffered from vertigo. In spite of the sickness and body aches that they felt while riding long hours through the mountains, something still keeps drawing them back to Haiti. Perhaps the drawing is pneumatological in nature. The urge to continue the work in Haiti could be the influence of the Holy Spirit.

The *missio Dei* is accomplished when people adhere to the pneumatological beckon and leave their comfort zones. This may be what Jesus essentially called the three disciples to do when He told them to take up their cross and follow Him.²⁵⁸ He invited them to leave friends, family, religion, and comfort in order to experience the abundant life of the cross. The cross was simultaneously challenging and powerful. This dichotomy, this risk, is what the people who engage in missions face. They have truly decided that Christ will not bear the cross alone while everyone goes free.²⁵⁹

Accountability

While many people cannot travel internationally due to families, careers, and other obligations, they too can carry their cross through partnering with those who are involved with the mission work. All of the churches are able to get assistance and support from many of the members. One congregation experienced up to 75 percent participation from members through giving financially.²⁶⁰ Another congregation reported that only about 50 percent of the membership contributed to the funding of missions trips.²⁶¹ While

²⁵⁸ Luke 9 (NIV).

²⁵⁹ “Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone” is a famous African American hymn still used in some African American churches in the twenty-first century.

²⁶⁰ IP 3.

²⁶¹ IP 6.

this number fluctuated from church to church, one thing remained constant, accountability.

Two types of accountability were imperative in regards to mission work. The first kind of accountability was that of reports and documentation.²⁶² The proper use and sharing of the funds were important to all of the churches, but one church in particular stood out. They were careful to keep close communication with the leaders in Haiti to ensure that the funds were being used as planned. The work's progress was monitored and the people of Haiti were vigilant and diligent as they distributed the funds. Other churches were also engaged in some form of accountability.

While that sort of accountability is important for the progress of the work, it is also important for the people who are financially giving. The second kind of accountability involves the members of the congregations who are providing financial and material support. The members of the churches need to be assured that the money is being used and that people's lives are being impacted. All of the churches attempt a system of accountability whereby pictures and sometimes footage is captured during the trip to Haiti, and then brought back for the awaiting congregation to witness.

One important aspect of these publications is that the people of Haiti who are being helped are visible. Although the construction of a building or edifice demonstrates how the funds are being utilized, it is important that the people in the congregation see the faces of those who are being helped. Theological aesthetics centers on the question of "What moves the human heart?"²⁶³ The human heart is moved when it stands face to face

²⁶² IP 6.

²⁶³ Alejandro Garcia-Rivera, *Community of the Beautiful* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 9.

with another person. This kind of accountability will encourage more parishioners to give toward the work of missions.²⁶⁴

Sharing Faith

One significant theme that reoccurred through data gathering was that of sharing faith. All of the churches strongly valued the gospel and felt that it was an important part of their engagement with missions. However, the churches varied in their implementation of the gospel message. While one church was direct in sharing the gospel during worship services, another church explained that sharing the gospel was intricately tied into the meeting of needs. One of the interviewees explained that the sharing of the gospel message was something extremely difficult in a place where the culture and religious life was so complex.²⁶⁵

The question remains, “How does one share the gospel in a foreign country?” While it is possible through preaching and meeting needs, the gospel message can be shared through friendship. Conversations that involve the sharing of narratives or life stories always lead to an opening to share the gospel message. Traditional missionary work of conversion was partly responsible for the decline of missions in the 1970s,²⁶⁶ but sharing narratives is more a part of table fellowship or prophetic dialogue²⁶⁷ than a forced conversion. If there is no interest in conversion, fellowship must carry on, and the gospel must continue to be preached nonverbally.

²⁶⁴ Sometimes taking pictures may be offensive in certain cultures, so if gathering footage is not possible, sharing stories with the congregation is another method of moving the human heart.

²⁶⁵ IP 6.

²⁶⁶ Skreslet, *Comprehending Mission*, 1.

²⁶⁷ Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue: Reflections on Christian Mission Today* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2011).

Practical Theology as an Existing Practice

The African American Baptist Church is heavy-laden with traditions and rituals. Worship services characterized by singing, preaching, and ordinances seem traditional. Many of the practices and rules still implemented in African American Baptist churches appear to be dogmatic. From the outside looking in, one might not recognize the strong tones of practical theology. One may not see the movement with culture, implementation of research, dialogue with the social sciences, and practices that are theory-laden and dialectical. Through the research process, it became evident that practical theology was not only at work in the African American Baptist Church but was very present in the missions ministry.

Cultural Sensitivity

In practical theology, the culture is one of the major conversation partners when engaging in any situation. The culture, tradition, and experience in dialogue lead to a pastoral response.²⁶⁸ When it comes to missions, all three of the churches reported taking the culture of the community very seriously. Understanding the culture for themselves and taking into account political and social realities were very important. One of the interviewees talked about the different ways of thinking among cultures. He thought about using a helicopter to bring materials to a remote location to construct an edifice. Upon talking to a few people from the Haitian community, he realized that bringing the materials to the foot of the mountain and allowing the people to carry it to the top would suffice, as it was their culture.

²⁶⁸ Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 86.

The churches value and respect the culture in the community that is being served. The culture is a direct conversation partner within the planning process. Although it is not directly researched in any of the churches, a kind of “play”²⁶⁹ takes place when it comes to cultural excavation. By engaging with the people and living among the culture, the culture is learned in fragments. Furthermore, some of the interviewees were of Haitian decent and were able to truly understand and interpret the culture for other missionaries.

Research-Driven Planning

All three of the churches engage in some kind of research prior to beginning the project. Two of the churches explained the conversation taking place with the people in the Haitian community where they were planning to serve. One of the churches went as far as interviewing parents and listening to the needs of the people who were not considered to be the leaders of the town.²⁷⁰ While the two churches engaged in research with a group of individuals, the other church engaged in an interview with the pastor of the church.²⁷¹ While it was not a formal interview, questions were asked about the needs of the community and the best way to meet them.

In addition to the primary question-and-answer phase that takes place between the missionaries and the Haitian community, there is constant informal research taking place through the duration of the project. Not only do the questions and occasional group interviews occur, but observation, participant observation, and ethnography is also taking place. Although informal, the information is gathered and often used when planning the

²⁶⁹ Play is a notion by Gadamer which refers to as an effortless back and forth which eventually leads to genuine truth.

²⁷⁰ IP 6.

²⁷¹ IP 2.

next part of the project. Empirical or observable research is essential for the churches to be successful in their efforts to serve the needs of the people.

Dialogical Engagements

Dialogue goes hand in hand with research. The research is often taken and interpreted in different ways by the people who are a part of traveling team. In fact the shared information is also interpreted differently by those who are receiving the information second hand. Thus, dialogue is an essential part of data gathering and action planning. Discussions are present during every part of the planning phase, the execution of the plan, and the reflection afterward.

The discussion involves human texts and all of the experience that comes with each individual. The resources they bring to the table stem from educational experience, psychological experience, financial experience, entrepreneurship, medical experience, and other fields that may be represented. While there are not actual textbooks presented at the dialogue table, there are internal resources from the human texts. The dialogue usually leads to a dialectical movement whereby new insights and ideas are derived. As evidenced through the planning phase, this dialogue continues through every stage of the planning process and carries on through the entire project.

Praxis-Oriented

The missions ministries each engage in action-oriented practices. While there is a valuing of the gospel and theoretical concepts, there is a high value placed on meeting the practical needs of the people being served. The needs that are being met are in some instances planned prior to active engagement, as in the case of Greater Bethel, and

sometimes the missions ministry quickly engages in the work prior to moving into a solid plan, as in the case of Calvary Hill.

Both methods are common in ministry and in any other action-oriented engagement for that matter. However, the important part is that all of the missions ministries enter into action and then, as a part of their dialogical and dialectical practice, enter into cognitive engagement. This dialogue is a praxis phase whereby the action that had been performed is met with theory, which in the case of the missions ministries is usually from human texts. This rich dialectical process continues through the duration of the transition mission experience in each of the churches.

Conclusion

As one interviewee thoughtfully put it when asked if he would be interested in practical theological concepts to aid in mission planning, “I think we are engaging in practical theology.”²⁷² All of the data gathered, the common themes highlighted, and the practical theology concepts discussed are elements that point to the fact that practical theology is not only being implemented in mission planning and execution but that it is also being implemented in the African American Baptist Church at large. Practical theology was present at the birth of the African American or Black Church as it took seriously the culture, experience, and theology of African Americans. Practical theology seems like a new concept to churches that have not engaged the new cultures in the community. African American Baptist churches must foster a new conversation that does not abandon the rich traditions of Black Theology but that includes the contemporary

²⁷² IP 5.

culture and experience in the dialogue. The three researched churches show that this is possible and beneficial as they demonstrate a clear engagement with practical theology.

Chapter 5

CONSTRUCTING A SHORT-TERM MISSION PLANNING MODEL

And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins.

—Mark 2:22

The researched African American Baptist churches are certainly the pioneers of a new missiology in the twenty-first century. While there are three different methods of missional planning and models for missional engagements, there are commonalities among the ministries. These missiologies, which seem to have been embarked upon unintentionally, have strikingly similar ideas and distinct traditions connected to African American culture.

This chapter will discuss significant guiding posts in missional planning. This includes a method that cohesively combines particular practices that the different ministries have adopted for missional planning. In addition to using practices that are already in place, additional ideas from missiology will be included. These practices will be used to form an approach to missions that will enrich missional models in churches across the United States. This chapter proposes a general model for short-term mission planning in delineated steps of data gathering, dialogue, response, and reflection.

The second section of this chapter will include a few missional topics that have been repeated themes among the researched ministries. The themes will also include ideas that missiologists have proposed as critical to missional planning and engagement in their research. These themes are highlights that can be considered alongside the missional planning method.

Finally, the last discussion will propose a need for deeper reflection during missional planning, execution, and evaluation. Reflection is a practice that is a missional imperative, as it is necessary for effective and efficient missional engagement. This hermeneutical and dialectical movement will not only impact missional practices but it will also impact the researcher or missionary. This mutual exchange is the result of a “fusion of horizons”²⁷³ and a coauthorship²⁷⁴ that takes place between the missionary and indigenous people.

²⁷³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 304. Gadamer’s notion of “fusion of horizons” occurs when two different texts, in this case human texts, collide and form a new reality.

²⁷⁴ Scharen and Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 22. Scharen and Vigen note that that ethnographic research includes not only the narrative of the indigenous people but the interpretation and hermeneutic of the researcher.

A Method for Short-Term Mission Planning

A general and simplified method for planning short-term missions is ideal for transferability and easy application. This basic method will also allow for malleability, which will enable core tasks to bend in order to meet the particular needs of the specified context.²⁷⁵ The appropriation of these core tasks is necessary to avoid the dangers of being static and irrelevant.

This general method first involves a call to explore the culture before attempting to diagnose what is needed. This is to be done through immersion into the life and practices of the people. In the second phase, a dialogue between the culture, the tradition, and the human experience must take place. Through this dialogue, a hermeneutical engagement occurs. The interactions between the different components lead to the third phase, whereby a plan to help the community is derived. In this plan, the gospel of Jesus Christ is essential to mission work; however, the gospel of Jesus Christ includes social transformation and caring for the poor and the oppressed. In essence, imbedded in the gospel message is the call to assist the poor and socially transform communities.

This brings the missionary to the fourth task, openness for mutual exchange. Those who are engaged in missional work experience a “fusion of horizons”²⁷⁶ as their own ontological views, epistemology, and spirituality encounter and are challenged by those of the indigenous people. A mutual exchange signifies a change in both the indigenous people as well as the missionary workers.

²⁷⁵ This notion of malleability is a concept that Congar applies to the appropriation of Christian traditions to various cultures and times. While there are slight nuances, there is still fidelity to the essential message. See Congar’s *The Meaning of Tradition*, 159.

²⁷⁶ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 304. Gadamer’s notion that two distinct elements coming together will create a new horizon.

Data Gathering

Data gathering is the initial phase when planning short-term mission trips. Forgoing the temptation to plan the actual mission trip, the missionary must plan an initial trip to understand the culture at a deeper level. This engagement, often sparked through a relationship, can also be initiated through research, existing organizations, or firsthand experiences. During this phase, a few of the missionaries begin to observe and learn about the particular culture or community that is to be attended to. The narrative of the community and people are derived through conversations, everyday practices, economy, spirituality, relationships, resources, and a variety of other components. These are synthesized to form the narrative that is loosely put together and loosely understood.

Data gathering can and should be done by the missionary, who must enter into an intimate relationship with the information. The tools that can be used in this research are participant observation, focus groups, individual interviews, and extended immersion within a particular culture or community.²⁷⁷ Limitations are possible and predictable during this phase. In particular, theologians are sometimes discouraged from moving forward in this type of work without consulting experts: “If theologians are to be concerned with the social context of theology- with the way people think within the particular societies in which they are operating- then they must expect to fail in their task if they ignore the critical perspective offered by sociologists.”²⁷⁸ It is sometimes argued that theologians are amateurs when it comes to gathering research: “Too often they ignore the work of professional sociologists and simply assume that they know what their

²⁷⁷ These research methods are discussed in research methods texts as well as practical theological texts.

²⁷⁸ Gill, *Theology in a Social Context*, 71.

fellow human beings think and how they are changing. Yet it is possible that such theologians are simply dignifying their own thoughts by ascribing them to the rest of society.”²⁷⁹

Habitus. It is important to note that empirical research is not always formal and quantitative. Since there is no suggested method of gathering data that must be used during research, this can be done naturally. Oftentimes, qualitative and informal research, such as interviews, observations, and narratives, are valuable for gaining an understanding of a particular community. By observing the *habitus* of a people, there is so much that can be learned:

The habitus, the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of their generative principle, which adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation, as defined by the cognitive and motivating structure making up the habitus.²⁸⁰

Habitus is an instantaneous and unconscious quality, which is full of meaning. The code of the *habitus* is so common that individuals are completely unaware of it: “It is because subjects do not, strictly speaking, know what they are doing that what they do has more meaning than they know. The *habitus* is the universalizing mediation which causes an individual agent’s practices, without either explicit reason or signifying intent, to be none the less ‘sensible’ and ‘reasonable.’”²⁸¹ In other words, *habitus* refers to

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 72.

²⁸⁰ Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 78.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 79.

natural habits that are automatic and that are understood to be the norm by that particular community. It is only when there is an outsider present that those actions or practices might be pointed out and interrogated.

Connectors. It is helpful to begin the short-term mission trip with a contact person in the country who can allow the missionaries to engage in observation, participant observation, interviews, and immersion. Once a trip to a foreign country is organized through a contact person, it will be easier for missionaries to find out where they can live, access transportation and food, and meet people in the community.

As stated previously, connectors are also important because living within the culture will inevitably require translation. People that are bilingual will be able to exchange information between the missionaries and the community. The accompaniment of a skilled interpreter will help the missionaries move beyond boundaries in a shorter amount of time: “Researchers do not always speak the same language as the subjects they wish to interview. While it would always be preferable to learn a new language and to so immerse oneself in a new culture that one would not require the assistance of an interpreter, this is not always possible. But it is possible to use an interpreter in an ethnographic study.”²⁸²

Not only will connectors help translate the language, but they will also be able to translate the customs and culture. While one can see certain things taking place, only an *insider* will be able to fully understand and explain what is going on. There will always be a sense of being brought up short²⁸³ because of the barriers of being an outsider. One

²⁸² Scharen and Vigen, *Ethnography as a Christian Theology and Ethics*, 103.

²⁸³ A notion coined by Heidegger when there is a gap that lacks complete explanation.

can never fully understand the context of *the other*. The interpreters are needed even when the same language is spoken in order to demystify ways of life, everyday practices, and symbols unique to the community. The presence of an interpretive guide will not only excavate hidden meaning for the missionary but it will also remind the missionary to approach the sacred space of *the other* with humility and honor.

Nevertheless, the outsider role remains extremely important as the outsider works alongside the insider: “Outsiders bring important experience, but by themselves can come to exercise hegemony over the community. A rootedness in the community is essential for local theology, but does not in itself guarantee insight.”²⁸⁴ In essence, the outsider may be able to hear things that the insider cannot. Ethnographic work is an important first step when it comes to mission work. While theologians and missionaries are by no means sociologists, they are able to participate and immerse themselves in the culture for the sake of revelation. They bring a different horizon and a different hermeneutic that will help create a new horizon.

Dialogue

This phase involves a dialogue that takes place between the culture, tradition, and experience. These three enter into a dialectical conversation in order to arrive at a proposal for action. It is within this phase that the tradition engages dialectically with the culture and social sciences and with the personal experience of the indigenous people and the missionary.²⁸⁵ This discussion involves a back and forth movement wherein questions are asked and answers are derived, only to be interrogated by more questions. The process continues and occurs at a further developed level each time.

²⁸⁴ Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 20.

²⁸⁵ Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry*, 76.

This process is similar to an induction phase: “Induction, in a most general way, refers to the observation, directed by reflection, of phenomena in the empirical reality. This involves the discovery and naming of classes of phenomena, the discovery of patterns in the phenomena, and the uncovering of comparative, correlative and casual relationships between the phenomena.”²⁸⁶ Reflection is significant during the stage of induction and leads to theological questions and research design.

Response

This phase involves planning the necessary action to assist and support the community. Many would argue that the presentation of the gospel should not be done solely with actions but, more importantly, with words. Usually, black Baptist missiology comes from the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:19-20, when Jesus says, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”²⁸⁷

Essentially, most missiologies are centered on going to make disciples of all nations and preaching the gospel to them. This could also be a result of the traditional Baptist emphasis on missions as conversion: “As early as the 1630s Roger Williams preached to the Indians, and in the 1700s pastors like Hezekiah Smith were to spend several weeks of each year ‘itinerating in the wilderness’ to preach the gospel and form churches in frontier communities. The Philadelphia Association employed an ‘evangelist

²⁸⁶ Van der Ven, Johannes, *Practical Theology: An Empirical Approach*, trans. Barbara Schultz (Leuven, Belgium: Peeters, 1998), 115.

²⁸⁷ Matt. 28:19-20 (NIV).

at large' to travel in destitute areas to preach and form new churches."²⁸⁸ The Baptist tradition valued the preaching of the gospel in order to convert the 'unsaved.' Subsequently, the traditional history of missions is also reflected in contemporary missional approaches.

In contrast to the aforementioned approach, the Great Commission involves more than the last utterances of Jesus before his final ascension. The Great Commission includes *everything* that Christ did before this final command. The Great Commission is about feeding the hungry, breaking cultural barriers, listening to those who are outcasts, healing those who are wounded, visiting those who are sick, spending time with those who are deemed sinful, and spreading the good news to the world.

Matthew 28 is not the only commission by Jesus. Matthew 25 also includes a great commission:

'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord , when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go visit you?' "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ Leon McBeth, *The Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987), 366.

²⁸⁹ Matt. 25:35-40 (NIV).

Unfortunately, there is sometimes a tendency to neglect the practical aspect of missional engagement. After the resurrection, the apostles traveled all over the world with the gospel of Jesus, but they also healed people, shared everything they had, and cared for the widows. Truly, they were doing what they had learned from Jesus. The sharing of the gospel must be accompanied with caring for the needs of the people. On many occasions, Jesus puts the needs of the people first, and subsequently presents them with the gospel message of salvation. Jesus heals the blind, heals lepers, and raises Jairus's daughter from the dead before they are actually faced with the gospel message.²⁹⁰ Many would argue that these acts of kindness are indeed a metaphorical presentation of the gospel message. While they are solid actions by Jesus, they are only a glimpse of the ultimate sacrifice on the cross that constitutes the crux of the gospel.

Practical needs are to be met in accordance with what the indigenous people of the community need rather than what the missionary presumes that they need. "In other words, it is not only the scholar's research agenda that ought to set the course, but rather the project should be meaningfully related to the pressing issues and challenges faced by a particular community."²⁹¹ Thus, it is important to make sure that missional work is meaningful by first surveying the land and culture.

Self-sufficiency and economic empowerment. There should be a goal that involves social transformation rather than conversion or enculturation. The goal should involve a project and a partnership that attempt to foster sustainability in a community. Not only will it build the country from the inside out but it will also empower the people

²⁹⁰ Blind men (see Mark 8:22-26, John 9:1-41), lepers (see Luke 17:11-19), and Jairus's daughter (see Matt. 9:18-19, 23-25; Mark 5:22-24, 35-43; Luke 8:41-42, 49-56) (NIV).

²⁹¹ Scharen and Vigen, *Ethnography as a Christian Theology and Ethics*, xxiii.

and give them a sense of dignity and self-sufficiency. The missionaries should refrain from taking leadership and taking over, and allow the indigenous people to take ownership of the work as well.

Rather than attempting to “save the lost,” it is important to gain an understanding of the spirituality of the people, possibly identifying religious rituals and Christianity in practices that are unfamiliar to the missionary: “To maintain the desired openness and sensitivity to a local situation, it was suggested that the prevailing mode of evangelization and church development should be one of finding Christ in the situation rather than concentrating on bringing Christ into the situation.”²⁹² The most seemingly insignificant tasks are often robust with meaning and significance:

It is true that the operations of walking on can be traced on city maps in such a way as to transcribe their paths (here well-trodden, there very faint) and their trajectories (going this way and not that). But these thick or thin curves only refer, like words, to the absence of what has passed by. Surveys of routes miss what was: the act itself of passing by. The operation of walking, wandering, or ‘window shopping,’ that is, the activity of passers-by, is transformed into points that draw a totalizing and reversible line on the map.²⁹³

This is one of the many practices of everyday life that can be analyzed for rich meaning. This too is the case when it comes to everyday life in foreign countries. The mere act of eating a meal, dancing, washing clothes in the river, socializing as the sun sets, and bathing in the rain as it pours down, could all be activities where God is very present.

²⁹² Robert Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies*, 39.

²⁹³ Michel De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 97.

Rather than the prideful notion that missions is about bringing God to others, perhaps it is important that the missionary make an attempt to understand how God is already present. Sharing narratives about God is a more intimate and relational way to dialogue about God's love and concern for the people. In this moment of ease, discussions about the practical struggles, economic strategies, and opportunities for self-sufficiency are able to take place. In those moments more than ever, God is present.

Reflection

Missional engagement involves mutual transformation. One does not solely come to speak for God but to also hear from God. The sharing of stories, the language event, is not simply one-sided. There is a coauthorship when one explores the culture of another.²⁹⁴ As the indigenous people of the land enter into a dialogue where they share their stories, experiences, and how they see God, it is important that the missionaries authentically engage as well. The culture and belief of the missionary must not be left outside of the experience, but welcomed through narrative. This genuine exchange leads to a mutual transformation whereby the "fusion of horizons" changes both the missionary and the indigenous person.

Missional Themes

The previous inclination to divorce orthodoxy from orthopraxy results in missional engagement in a vacuum that is less effective. Missiology offers a vast array of topics and insights that enhance the practice of missional engagement. While missiological resources include various themes that are essential to missional planning,

²⁹⁴ Scharen and Vigen, *Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics*, 22. This is Scharen's notion of coauthorship between the researcher and the people from the community.

execution, and reflection, many of these themes are instinctually implemented by missions ministries. These themes are not to be considered a method of missional engagement but are best considered alongside the proposed methods for missional engagement.²⁹⁵ Three significant themes as they pertain to short-term mission planning in the African American Baptist Church are the Trinitarian approach to missions, common missiology and partnerships in missions, and prophetic dialogue.

Trinitarian Approach to Missions

The idea of practicing the Trinity will enhance missions in many ways. There are a few concepts for appropriating the doctrine of the Trinity to short-term missions. The first is one that involves the initiation of the work, whereby the *missio Dei* is administered by the Father, further carried out by the Son, and continued through the church by the Holy Spirit's empowerment.²⁹⁶ The reality is then, that the Holy Spirit not only precedes the work of the church, but also that the Holy Spirit is working in and through the congregation to fulfill the assignment of the mission.

Another aspect of a Trinitarian approach relates to the African American ability to simultaneously live in unity and diversity. The Trinity as a relationship demonstrates oneness and separateness at the same time. This notion of corporate and individual identity is seen in the African American practice of Christianity, whereby individual salvation is emphasized alongside community and communal efforts. The Trinity

²⁹⁵ The themes offered in this chapter are by no means an exhaustive listing of missional themes. This list is a small selection of missional themes that are valuable to African American missiological approaches.

²⁹⁶ Dodds, "The Mission of the Spirit," 209-26.

demonstrates that God's central plan for creation is aligned with community.²⁹⁷ This is a valuable concept for missions as missionaries must recognize their individuality but also see themselves in the face of *the other*.

Common Missiology and Partnerships in Missions

Many churches that engage in missions often do so in isolation. Common missiology is a theme that suggests that missions are planned and executed with other organizations. While churches often want to be the leading force on projects, common missiology calls for a joined effort in meeting the needs of communities. More of an impact is made when resources and efforts are brought together for a common goal.

For this to happen, churches will have to “give up their little kingdoms”²⁹⁸ and engage in a shared work of bringing about the *missio Dei*. This may be difficult because of the different visions held by different pastors, the delegation of leadership among the members from the different churches, and the desire for recognition. In light of these concerns, it is important that the pastors gather together to plan and come up with a shared vision. This is then to be carried about by the mission leaders from each church. The three major components of the single mission can then be divided between the churches. Each church, given the ability to take on a different role, can feel as though they are making a contribution. Funds can still be collected from the parishioners of each church, and all of the members will be invited to share in the mission experience.

²⁹⁷ Stan Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

²⁹⁸ Frans Verstraelen, “World and Mission: Towards a Common Missiology,” *Mission Studies* 1, no. 1 (1984): 34-47.

Prophetic Dialogue

In addition to common missiology, it is important to enter into prophetic dialogue and build friendships. Prophetic and dialogue are two phrases that are used to describe missiology both simultaneously and separately. Prophetic refers to the forth telling of what the world will be like when Christ returns. In essence, this is what the missionary does when they try to bring about the fullness of life and meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the community being served. The *missio Dei* is brought to the forefront when the missionaries enter into works of mercy and service. This speaking forth is characteristic of a prophet who speaks forth or brings revelations of the future.²⁹⁹

The dialogue portion points to the fact that God is in constant dialogue with God's people. From the interactions in the Old Testament to the incarnate Christ in the New Testament, God engages with people. In a similar way, missions brings about an interaction and engagement between God and mankind. Missionaries are the instruments of God who not only embody the future but also the person of God.³⁰⁰ Prophetic dialogue also points to the fact that this type of interaction and dialogue prophetically demonstrates what life will be like after the eschatological redemption.

This dialogue not only speaks prophetically, but it also is practical. The dialogue and interaction between people is most powerful when friendships are formed. During research, one of the interviewees stated that “[f]riendship is stronger than what we do.” This powerful statement about friendships is challenging as friendships indefinitely bring about the *missio Dei*. Not only do relationships empower people emotionally but they also help to further the work in the country and to further the sharing of the gospel. The

²⁹⁹ Bevens and Schroeder, *Prophetic Dialogue*, 44.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

vehicle of friendship creates a space for narratives and vulnerability. This produces fertile ground for sharing the gospel message.

Bringing It All Together

The missional themes—Trinitarian approach to missions, common missiology and partnerships in missions, and prophetic dialogue—offer great insights and are important to consider alongside the method for planning missions, as they are also common pitfalls. A Trinitarian missional perspective provides insight when it comes to Christianity and how to see one's relationship with God as connected with missions. Common missiology highlights the great possibilities when mission is done in unity. Prophetic dialogue offers a way of sharing the gospel message both verbally and nonverbally. These components offer essential insights for theory and practice where there seems to be gaps in common practice and a need for commentary. Balancing personal spirituality with solidarity, working together in missions, and prophetic dialogue during missions were only three of the concepts.

Missional Reflection

Missional reflection is an extremely important phase that should be included in planning a mission project. Being able to think about the missional experience, listening to one's heart, and connecting with what was learned are essential to the missionary as mission work not only impacts those being served but also those who have traveled to serve. This sort of mutual transformation takes place when a missionary engages with the culture of the community. This engagement requires respect, vulnerability, and an openness to be changed. This notion implies that there is a change when another culture is encountered: "From the Christian theological perspective, inculturation is understood

to be the process whereby the faith already embodied in one culture encounters another culture. In this encounter, the faith becomes part and parcel of this new culture. It fuses with the new culture and simultaneously transforms it into a novel religious-cultural reality.”³⁰¹

It is at this moment that mutual openness and acceptance is needed: “In practical terms, this process involves the interaction of mutual critique and affirmation. It entails acceptance or rejection of thought forms, symbolic and linguistic expressions and attitudes between the faith-cultures in question.”³⁰² This “fusion of horizons” is a gift not only to one culture, but to both cultures. One is able to experience God in a new way when one is engaged in international mission work.

Missions as Spiritual Formation

As a person on a treasure hunt,³⁰³ the missionary searches for God in the place in which the missionary is serving. The missionary searches for God not only to engage in a rich dialogue about the different experiences with God but also to learn new things about God. The experience of short-term missions is a powerful encounter with God and God’s concern. As two realities collide together, it is a moment where a new horizon is formed. This kind of experience might not happen in the church edifice, as the face of God is seen through the impoverished. If this experience is a significant part of spiritual formation, then more Christians should attempt to engage in missions.

³⁰¹ Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in Africa* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2004), 5.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ An image of a missionary proposed by Bevans and Schroeder in *Prophetic Dialogue*, 32.

Missions as the Ultimate Concern

Christians should engage in mission work not only as a part of their own spiritual formation but also as an ultimate concern. While the “ultimate concern” is often spoken of as a general concern for God that signifies a form of faith,³⁰⁴ this “ultimate concern” is more of a genuine concern for what God is concerned about. If one is truly Christian, one must not ignore the poor and marginalized. Jesus, declaring that He had come for the sick, was always on the move to the periphery. If this is what Jesus did, then those who claim to be followers of Christ must do the same thing. Missions is a signifier of genuine faith or, in other words, a redefined “ultimate concern.”

Missional Reflection for Vocational Growth

Missional reflection needs to be included in the planning phase not only because of its valuable spiritual formation and its signifier of genuine faith but also because of its provision of ministerial growth. As discussed before, missional reflection is a part of praxis that involves action and theory in any order. Reflection on the spiritual experience and the heart of God should be accompanied by reflection on the ministerial work. Discussing what worked well and what needed to be organized should be regarded as a significant part of missional engagement. This part, included in one of the last phases of planning, will increase effectiveness and efficiency for the next trip. While many attempt to end the missional process at the departure home from the airport, it is a rewarding and beneficial experience to gather within the next week and discuss the ministerial aspect of the journey.

³⁰⁴ Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: HarperOne, 2001), 11. “Ultimate concern” comes from Paul Tillich’s explanation of faith in his *Dynamics of Faith*.

Conclusion

The suggested process of planning a mission project, consisting of data gathering, dialogue, action planning, and reflection, must also be accompanied by key themes of Trinitarian missiology, common missiology, and prophetic dialogue. These three themes will bring about successful engagement with short-term missions, avoiding common pitfalls that occur along the journey of missions. In addition, it is important to plan a reflection phase whereby spiritual formation, genuine intimacy with God, and ministerial growth can occur. While this is a phase that people quickly engage in or simply neglect, it is valuable for the spiritual life of the missionary as well as ministerial development. It also helps to move missionaries away from a colonial mindset whereby the goal seems to be the improvement (or Westernization) of the Global South. On the contrary, the goal is mutual exchange and mutual growth for both the missionary and the local people.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION: THE MISSIO DEI AND NECESSARY PARADIGM CHANGES IN THE CHURCH

Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

—Isaiah 58:6-7

This book concludes a rich discussion of practical theology and short-term mission planning in the African American Baptist Church context with a final move toward a proposal to the North American church at large. While the discussion of practical theology alongside short-term mission planning in the African American Baptist Church context is rich, this chapter broadens the context in order to identify primary causes of the inhibition of the missio Dei in the church. This chapter links back to the initial discussion of the missio Dei and challenges the limits of twenty-first century churches. It critiques the United States church in light of its negligence toward the missio Dei. It is important to note that while all of the churches have not neglected the missio Dei, the general perception of the Christian church in the United States is one that is

influenced by the North American culture of industrialization, materialism, and privatization.

In this chapter, I treat foreign missions and the *missio Dei* as a single subject because of their interrelatedness, referring to it as the *missio Dei ad mundum*, or the mission of God to the world.³⁰⁵ The first discussion of this chapter centers on the idea of the *missio Dei ad mundum* being in crisis.³⁰⁶ This crisis is discussed in the context of the North American church at large rather than the African American Baptist Church. The second section briefly discusses notions of why this crisis is taking place in North American ecclesial settings. The last movement of this chapter proposes ways to refocus on the *missio Dei ad mundum*. It calls for a church-wide return to the *missio Dei ad mundum* through short-term mission work.³⁰⁷ It highlights missions ministries as central to the church's existence rather than incidental.

Missio Dei ad Mundum in Crisis

The *missio Dei ad mundum*, although demonstrated in various ways, is significantly exhibited through the work of missions. Unfortunately, the *missio Dei ad mundum* often appears incidental to the church's existence. This is a crisis because ecclesial structures are to constantly engage in God's mission whereby preferential option is given to the poor. In its truest form, the church is simply a means by which the mission

³⁰⁵ Although this is not the only means of accomplishing the *missio Dei*, it is discussed in light of the topic of focus and the research conducted.

³⁰⁶ This is not to say that God is ever in a state of calamity or emergency, but it simply highlights the distraction and disregard in the American church, which includes the African American Baptist Church, when it comes to the mission of God.

³⁰⁷ "Short-term missions" and "foreign missions" are used interchangeably throughout this text, as they both essentially refer to the same practice, which I previously coined "transition missions" in the African American Baptist Church. Transition missions involve short, project-driven trips taking place periodically throughout the year.

of God is to be carried out: “It is not the church that has a mission of salvation to fulfill the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Spirit through the Father that includes the church.”³⁰⁸ Rather than observing ecclesial structures as the vehicles by which the *missio Dei ad mundum* is accomplished, the well-being of the church has been elevated in the place of the *missio Dei ad mundum* as being the primary goal of God. The exaltation of church serves as a distraction from the *missio Dei ad mundum*, as it creates a sense of self-centeredness, a false sense of achievement, and a sense of isolation.

Church as Self-Serving System

Ecclesial structures have become establishments that primarily serve parishioners through sermonic presentations, social activities, and other programs. Parishioners are encouraged to give 10 percent of their income along with free-will offerings, which are often used for the maintenance of the building. Paralleling this primary system, community needs are attended to and, particularly in the African American Baptist Church, social justice is prioritized. Nevertheless, in the American church at large, community needs and social justice seem to be second to the needs of the church. While this is not an immoral system, it is a distracting system. It is a system that has the potential to be more self-centered than mission-centered. It fails to recognize that spiritual growth is at its highest when the parishioners are matriculating into society in order to assist the poor and oppressed.³⁰⁹ This matriculation is failing as many churches, especially the researched African American Baptist churches, attest to the fact that much

³⁰⁸ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 64.

³⁰⁹ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 133-36.

of the work in the church is performed by fewer than 25 percent of the parishioners.³¹⁰

The notion that the church exists to serve the parishioners has narrowed the operation of the mission of God.

Church as Means of False Achievement

The North American church is a seemingly self-centered system, and its regulations provide a false sense of achievement. It provides a means by which people can claim authentic Christianity and righteousness without sacrifice and discomfort. The notion of “joining the church” gives the impression of completion and is suggestive of achievement. Although the committed parishioners are able to participate in various service projects offered by the church, this is, in most cases, the extent of the other-focused consciousness. The building is perceived as the final destination where parishioners await Christ’s return and redemption. This sense of achievement is not just the reality of the parishioners, but seemingly the reality of the ecclesial leaders. The success of the church is determined by the amount of committed parishioners. The leaders of ecclesial structures often feel pressure to keep the church building full when the reality is that the *missio Dei ad mundum* may call for the church facility to dispatch laborers. This sense of achievement is a distortion from the real mission of God, which involves healing and mending all of creation.

The *missio Dei ad mundum* becomes secondary as the mission of God is sacrificed for the mission of the church. By no means are the efforts of the present-day church minimal or arbitrary. This cross that they are carrying is significant, as it is

³¹⁰ Two of the researched churches referred to this statistic as a general tendency in the African American Baptist churches that are considered to be megachurches, serving 2,000 or more people.

characterized by focusing on God in a world that is preoccupied with materialistic and superficial living. Nevertheless, this bearing of the cross is not the end of the journey, but only the beginning. The greatest part of the journey is the sacrifice that takes place *on* the cross. The actual giving up of one's own comfort for the comfort of others is what the cross symbolizes. The solidarity and the self-sacrifice for another is the cross that Christians must bear. This goes beyond attending church, supporting ministry, and living peaceably. Nevertheless, the research proves that attending church has become the primary sacrifice that allows parishioners to claim that they are followers of Christ who are carrying a cross.

Church as Isolated Organism

The *missio Dei ad mundum* crisis is a product of the church's inclination toward isolation. While the notions of a self-serving system and sense of false achievement apply to churches in general, the trait of isolation can be prevalent in the African American Baptist Church. Although there are communities like the National Baptist Convention, many churches still operate as isolated organisms. Many churches across the United States attend the annual convention and may utilize the ministerial materials produced by the National Baptist Convention, but churches operate separately as franchised entities.

The isolation that can be bred in African American Baptist churches can be stifling to the work of the *missio Dei ad mundum*, as it causes the focus to be on the individual church's success rather than on a humble partnership with other churches to accomplish the mission of God. This kind of disposition does not align with the *missio Dei ad mundum* as the term specifically highlights the notion that "God's redemptive action in the world *precedes* the church, meaning that the church should not perceive

itself as the starting point for mission activity in the world.”³¹¹ If the church understands its role in God’s mission, it would more readily partner with other churches to accomplish the *missio Dei ad mundum*. The isolation, however, goes beyond individual churches as it is also evident on a larger scale. The church in general has become isolated in the world, as it is no longer a voice of authority in the society.

Missing Links for the Progression of the *Missio Dei ad Mundum*

If the ecclesial structures are becoming a distraction to the *missio Dei ad mundum*, it is important to look at possible variables that might contribute to that.³¹² There are three missing links that play a role in the decline of the *missio Dei ad mundum*. The lack of authentic Christianity, as discussed previously, is a missing link that stifles the progression of the *missio Dei ad mundum*, causing an inward and private Christianity to replace one that is political and socially transformative.³¹³ In addition, practical theology is an essential tool that is needed for the progression of the *missio Dei ad mundum*. Without practical theology, there will be an inadequate and ineffective method of missional planning and execution, resulting in a futile effort toward the *missio Dei ad mundum*. Finally, the last missing link is an invitation to missions. This invitation will need to be intentional and prioritized. The ecclesial invitation must be visibly supported

³¹¹ Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 55.

³¹² This is by no means an exhaustive or conclusive listing of missing links. These three are chosen focal points in addition to various possible others not mentioned in this work.

³¹³ Metz’s notion of political theology is discussed in *Faith in History and Society*, 60.

by the senior pastor. As the research has shown, it is the senior pastor who presents the vision and directs the parishioners.³¹⁴

Authentic Christianity

A significant missing link for the progression of foreign missions is an authentic Christianity characterized by an outward orientation. Discomfort and risk³¹⁵ are factors that possibly discourage parishioners from outward orientation through the work of missions. Traveling to the poorest parts of the world may call for sleeping on floors, eating little food, living without electricity and technology, using outhouses rather than modern bathrooms, and being vulnerable to new types of diseases and to crimes targeting foreigners. It is by no means comfortable when one journeys on a mission trip, forsaking a comfortable lifestyle in the United States. In spite of all of this, Jesus still leads his followers to the impoverished and disenfranchised.

Jesus, always on the move toward the margins, shows that authentic Christianity is not about being comfortable. His journey was one that was actually suggestive of discomfort and sacrifice as he stated, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”³¹⁶ This particular statement was for those who claimed that they wanted to follow Jesus wherever he went. Jesus was essentially warning them that following him would not always be comfortable. Not only

³¹⁴ As stated previously, this is by no means an exhaustive or conclusive listing of missing links. These three are chosen focal points in addition to various possible others not mentioned in this work. Chapter 4 discusses this notion as well.

³¹⁵ Although the dangers and risks are being discussed here, there are other factors that deter people from missional engagement, such as lacking time or finances. These factors have been previously discussed in chapter 4. Those who are not able to extensively engage in missional execution can assist by contributing financially or materially. They can partner with organizations or groups that are traveling and still be connected to the work on some level.

³¹⁶ Luke 9:58 (NIV).

did Jesus show this by his own actions, but he also demonstrated this when he sent the disciples out two by two, instructing them that they need not carry anything for their journey.³¹⁷ On various occasions, through actions and teachings, Jesus demonstrates that authentic Christianity is not what is seen in North American churches today.

Authentic Christianity is characterized by outward orientation. It is other focused. It is margin focused. As Jesus was always on the move to the disenfranchised, true Christianity beckons Christians to the side of the poor and oppressed. The researched missions ministries and pastors demonstrate an understanding of this truth, as they have often sacrificed comfort, time, and finances to stand in solidarity the people of Haiti. As a part of their Christian experience, they have prioritized helping impoverished Haitian communities. Although many of the research participants expressed a desire to be more efficient in their efforts, they are truly pioneers for a return to authentic Christianity.

Practical Theological Advancement

Another missing link to accomplishing the *missio Dei ad mundum* is that of practical theological advancement. This research made it clear that most of the mission leaders are open to using practical theology in their mission planning and execution. In fact, research findings show that all of these churches were already engaged in some form of practical theology while they initiated foreign mission projects. The church leaders naturally progressed to practical theological thought when they engaged in careful and

³¹⁷ Mark 6:7-11 (NIV). Here, there are indirect notions of hospitality in the ancient world which relate to social justice. There are valuable texts on ancient hospitality that serve as rich supplements to missiological research such as Amy G. Oden, *And You Welcomed Me* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001); Andrew Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in Its Mediterranean Setting* (Sheffield: Phoenix Press, 2005); and John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2001).

effective work to aid the impoverished communities in Haiti. This natural progression signifies the importance and necessity of practical theology in mission work and in ecclesial settings in general.

Although traditional styles are common in African American Baptist churches across the United States, practical theology is arguably evident. While these churches have not pushed for practical theological advancement, they are still operating with a type of practical theology. The practical theology was developed in and for the experiences of enslavement. It was a religious dialogue that included African American psychology and sociology, brutal cultural realities, and Christianity as conversation partners. It was a theology that was action oriented. Sometimes the change occurred internally with a focus on eschatological hope and imagination, and sometimes the response was external, whereby methods of escape from slavery were planned and carried out.

This practical theology is still present in many African American Baptist churches in the twenty-first century as songs, rituals, and sermonic themes have survived through the years. This rich history is valuable and is often still relevant in contemporary society; however, this practical theology must parallel a practical theology that is in dialogue with the dominant society, psychology, and culture of the present. Practical theological advancement will stimulate relevance and power in North American churches. As demonstrated by the three churches that were studied, questioning and probing the society and people will uncover information that must enter into the dialogue with tradition and consequently contribute to action responses. Thus, in light of the *missio Dei ad mundum*, North American churches will be most effective when they enter into practical theological advancement to learn the realities of the society in which they serve.

Practical theological tools that allow missional planning to be most effective are description and data gathering methods that provide rich qualitative descriptions that help missionaries learn what needs are present and what the best ways to meet those needs are. Dialogue allows a thoughtful and thorough dialectical engagement whereby the information gathered is put into conversation with the tradition and the experiences of the people. Response allows for a careful planning phase that consists of developing an action plan. Finally, reflection not only gives a sacred space for personal and ministerial growth for the missionaries but it also welcomes praxis and improvement in missional practices of the missionaries. These tools provide understanding and relevancy, honor and respect, to different perspectives derived from human texts, research, tradition, and ministerial work. Thus, the missing link of practical theology is necessary for the progression of the *missio Dei ad mundum*.

Missional Invitation

In addition to authentic Christianity and the advancement of practical theology, another missing link is that of missional invitation. Missional invitation is extended by influencing of the people of Christ to follow Christ to the margins. The researched participants indicated that when an invitation to missions is presented, there is a greater chance of response from parishioners. As stated previously, this invitation is most effective when presented by the church leadership, particularly the pastor of the church. This is particularly true for the African American Baptist Church. The participation in missional engagement, whether it is through monetary donations or material goods, is tripled when there is an endorsement by the pastor. The motive of this invitation is to redirect parishioners back to the *missio Dei ad mundum*. The church must be available to

hear the call of the Holy Spirit and enter into the work of redeeming, healing, and mending creation. It is important for the pastor or church leaders to prophetically invite the people of God to the work of missions.

The invitation is to not only a physical missional engagement but a missional consciousness. The mind and heart of the people of God should not be focused inward. There should be a concern for the least, lost, and left out, as it is commonly phrased in the African American Baptist Church. This consciousness should be invasive and interruptive. It should invade the minds of the people of God during ecclesial gatherings, and images of the poor should interrupt the traditional rituals. As call and response goes forth throughout the service, the concern for the poor should invade the minds of the people. During the benediction, the consciousness of the marginalized should remain. This invitation should be offered by all ecclesial leaders in an effort to take seriously the dangerous memory and gospel of Jesus.³¹⁸

Refocusing on the Missio Dei ad Mundum

If the church is to fulfill its true purpose, it must refocus on the missio Dei ad mundum. One way that this can be done is through renewed efforts in foreign missions. Refocusing on missio Dei ad mundum will require three major shifts. First it will require Christianity to take for itself a new subject. No longer can the bourgeois individual be at the center of Christianity; as Jesus declared, it is the sick who need a doctor.³¹⁹ In addition, the church will have to take as its method practical theology, which must be learned and practiced by the ecclesial leaders as well as the parishioners in general. Finally, academic research must be interwoven with church practice, developing new

³¹⁸ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 89.

³¹⁹ Mark 2:17 (NIV).

ideas and insights that will progress the work of foreign missions and, consequently, the *missio Dei ad mundum*. The academy and the church must be linked together in order to change society.

A New Subject and a New Way of Being Christian

If the church is to refocus on the *missio Dei ad mundum* through foreign missions, the first major shift needs to be the establishment of a new subject for Christianity.³²⁰ The new subject must be the oppressed and the impoverished. The new subject must be the woman at the well, the blind man on the roadside, the widow who has no financial support, and the lepers who are outcasts in society. They must be the people that Jesus went out of his way to encounter. The new subject must be the ones who are marginalized, disenfranchised, and forgotten. This is both a new and an old subject for Christianity. It is new in the sense that it is a new call to action, but it speaks to the original ministry of Jesus and his followers, how they lived in the world, and how Jesus himself pushed to the margins of society. This is the dangerous memory of Jesus. It is a dangerous memory because “it badgers the present [Christianity], and calls it into question.”³²¹ It aligns present-day Christianity with the life of Jesus and highlights the remarkable differences. The dangerous memory dictates the true subjects of Christianity.

If there are new subjects for Christianity, then there is subsequently a new way of being Christian. Being Christian must no longer be defined by ecclesial membership but by sacrificing for those who were made in the very image of God. It is about encountering God in the face of the poor. It is about worshipping by sacrificing resources and fasting by giving to orphans and widows. This is where the church enters social

³²⁰ Chopp, *Praxis of Suffering*, 47-52.

³²¹ Metz, *Faith in History and Society*, 89.

confrontations and assists and supports those who are in the grips of suffering.³²² This is the model of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, and it is the unchanged calling of the church. Essentially, refocusing on the *missio Dei ad mundum* will not only require a new subject for Christianity but it will demand a new way of being Christian.

Practical Theology as an Essential Missional Tool

New subjects for Christianity and a new way of being Christian call for a new method of practicing that Christianity. Practical theology respectfully takes into account the specific contexts and particularities of the people of focus. While the theologian's personal experiences and beliefs can never be completely divorced from interpretation and understanding, practical theology calls for the inclusion of the context of *the other*. It honors and holds sacred the social location, history, and reality of the individual. As it attends to new subjects, it seeks a deeper understanding of their context and situation. Furthermore, practical theology welcomes an ongoing dialectical engagement with the social sciences. These are disciplines that help excavate meaning and rich information in order to have a better understanding of the subjects. Practical theology then provides the method to transform lives. It synthesizes valuable resources for developing a pastoral response or action plan.

If practical theology is necessary for this new subject and new way of being Christian, which ironically originated in the Synoptic Gospels, it is arguable that Jesus was a practical theologian. Jesus took the context of the people very seriously as he constantly used relevant parables and ideas that the people were familiar with. He understood their religion and created a dialogue that allowed it to be a conversation

³²² Ibid., 87.

partner. The dialogue from Jesus always led to an action that changed lives. If this is the case, then all of those who follow Jesus must enter into practical theological practices. This suggests that practical theology is not reserved for the theologian or the expert but for every person who subscribes to the Christian tradition. Practical theology is necessary for authentic Christian practices and effective missional engagement. Subsequently, inductive reasoning leads one to conclude that practical theology is essential for refocusing on the *missio Dei ad mundum*.

Fusing the Academy and the African American Baptist Church to Further the *Missio Dei ad Mundum*

In order to refocus on the *missio Dei ad mundum*, there must be a closer union between the academy and the church. The level that the academy informs the church must be increased. This will result in the practices of the church being more effective. This will benefit the academy also as it will be able to better contextualize research and enter into a praxis-oriented work. While the relationship between the academy and the church is not completely estranged, as evidenced by many academic sources that use the church for research, the relationship, especially in the African American Baptist Church, has room for improvement.

The breakdown in relationship is evident in the study of mission planning in the African American Baptist Church. While the researched churches have some information from the academy available to them, they are open and willing to utilize any relevant resources. Unfortunately, much of the missiological information offered does not include the African American Baptist context. This is a disservice to both publics, as African American Baptist churches have so much to offer the conversation of missiology and the development of effective mission-planning models. On the other hand, African American

congregations are not strongly represented in theological conversations regarding missiology.

The African American Baptist Church in particular would serve as a rich conversation partner for missiology because the circumstances of its birth and fundamentals of its development serve as ideal concepts for missional engagements. In addition, the history of the African American Church is not only one of solidarity of an unrelenting people but also of social justice and community service. The rich solidarity, memory, and narrative of the African American Baptist Church offer great insight to missiological research. Adding the African American voice to the missiological conversation will provide boundless insights to missiologists and churches around the world. Therefore, there must be an exchange between missiology and the African American Baptist Church in order to bring about effective missiological thought and effective missional planning and action. It is only when the academy and church come together that society can be significantly transformed. With missiology as a conversation partner and a guide for the church, there can be great progress toward bringing about the *missio Dei ad mundum*.

Conclusion

If the aim of the *missio Dei*, or mission of God, is to bring about the coming of God's Kingdom,³²³ it is important to realize that the *missio Dei* is not an attempt to expand the *church*, but to redeem, heal, and mend creation."³²⁴ Many twenty-first century churches have sacrificed the *missio Dei* for church-centeredness, a false sense of achievement, and isolation. The missing links to solve these problems are authentic Christianity, practical theological advancement, and

³²³ Verstraelen, "World and Mission," 35.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

missional invitation. Refocusing on the *missio Dei* will require a new subject for Christianity, a church-wide implementation of practical theological strategies, and a closer relationship between the church and the academy. There must be a shift in the church in these three areas in order to initiate a return to God's mission. Fulfilling the *missio Dei* will not only heal and redeem creation but it will allow God's will to be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

As I stated at the beginning of this book, this research is not conclusive or exhaustive, but it is a work in progress that has merely scratched the surface of missiology in the African American Baptist Church. This text is just one of the many initial discussions of the new form of foreign missions that is emerging in the twenty-first century. There is much more to be said about this new kind of short-term missional engagement and the hopes and limitations of it. Future research can include considerations of contextual analysis, different age groups—particularly young adults—and countless other facets relevant to short-term mission research. The possibilities are endless not only in light of short-term mission topics but also in the context of the rich history, culture, and contributions of the African American Baptist Church. Thus, this initial research is simply the foundation for future research and discussions to follow.

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Age: _____

Gender: _____

Race: _____

1. How does mission work usually take place when the missions ministry initiates it?

(Circle all that apply)

- a. Overseas
- b. Nationwide
- c. Locally
- d. Other: _____

2. How much priority does mission work have in your church?

- a. Highly prioritized
- b. General importance
- c. Low Priority
- d. None existent

3. How many church members participate in mission projects throughout the year?

- a. Almost 100% of the members
- b. About 50% of the members
- c. About 25% of the members
- d. Less than 10% of the members

Why do you think this is?

4. What words describe your church's missional projects? Circle all that apply.

- Overseas missions Clothing drives Food drives Educational help
Toy drives Preaching Hospital visits Funding for buildings
Community missions Long-term missions Short-term missions One-time missions
Fundraising to support missions Church-wide mission campaigns Medical help
Missions under prioritized Missions misunderstood Missions to build friendships

5. What is the purpose of the missions ministry at your church?

*****The following questions are related solely to *short-term mission projects******

6. How often does your church engage in short-term mission projects?
- a. Annually
 - b. Quarterly
 - c. Monthly
 - d. Weekly
7. How many church members participate in these *short-term* mission projects throughout the year?
- a. Almost 100% of the members
 - b. About 50% of the members
 - c. About 25% of the members
 - d. Less than 10% of the members
8. How long does it take for you to plan short-term mission projects?
- a. About 1-3 months
 - b. About 4-6 months
 - c. About 7-9 months
 - d. About a year
 - e. We don't plan the project, just the logistics for those traveling
 - f. Other: _____

9. Who is involved in short-term mission planning? (Circle all that apply)

- a. Missions ministry leaders
- b. Indigenous of the mission location
- c. All ministry members
- d. The pastor
- e. Other: _____

10. What are some strategies that you use when planning short-term mission projects?

11. What works well when it comes to your short-term mission planning?

12. What would you like to see improve when it comes to your short-term mission planning?

13. Rate from most important to least important when planning short-term missions. (1 being most important and 16 being least important)

__ Sharing the Gospel with the community

__ Feeding and clothing the poor

__ Learning the culture for ourselves

__ Gathering historical research about the people

__ Listening to stories from the people

__ Allowing the members who traveled to reflect on their experience

__ Building friendships with the indigenous people

__ Starting projects for the indigenous people to manage and gain from

__ Following up on what was done last time

__ Allowing other churches to participate with us in the project

__ Keeping in contact with the indigenous people after the project

__ Finding out what their everyday practices mean to them

__ Getting into the psychology of the indigenous people

__ Looking at the economic facts about the location

__ Interviewing the individuals before we decide how to help them

__ Planning time to evaluate the mission trip and its effectiveness after it's over

14. How effective would you say your short-term mission projects are?
- a. Highly effective, we are working at our fullest potential
 - b. We are doing better than most missions ministries I have encountered
 - c. I guess it's Okay for now, we are trying to find our way
 - d. It needs a lot of work
15. Have you ever heard of practical theology as a tool for mission planning?
- a. Yes I have heard of practical theology, I would love to learn how to use it
 - b. Yes I have heard of practical theology, but it's too much for our church
 - c. Have I ever heard of what?
 - d. No tools are necessary for mission planning, all you need is God's guidance

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

Opening: Gathering general information about the missions ministry

1. *When you think about missions, what words come to mind?*

If necessary: Please tell me more about what you mean when you say

_____.

2. *What are the current practices of missions taking place in your church?*

3. *How often do mission projects take place? Why?*

4. *How much participation does the missions ministry have from the church members? Why do you think this is?*

Middle: Specific questions related to current short-term mission practices

5. *How important is short-term mission projects to your church in general?*

6. *What is the easiest part when it comes to short-term missions?*

7. *What is the hardest part when it comes to short-term missions?*

8. *What is the planning process like for short-term mission projects?*

i. *How long does planning take?*

ii. *What goes on during the planning phase?*

iii. *Who is involved in the planning phase and why?*

iv. *How do you determine where to go?*

v. *How do you determine what needs are to be met?*

- vi. *Does planning continue during the mission trip?*
- vii. *What happens after the mission trip is over?*
- viii. *Do you use any outside resources for short-term mission planning?*

Questions related to practical theological considerations during short-term mission planning

- 9. *How do you feel about using research during short-term mission planning? Why?*
- 10. *How important is the cultural context when planning short-term mission projects?*
- 11. *Besides religion/theology, are there other areas that are important to consider during short-term mission planning, like psychology, sociology, history, economics, or politics?*
- 12. *Does your short-term mission planning include a phase that involves the spiritual experience or spiritual growth of the people who have traveled abroad?*

If necessary: *What is that phase like?*

- 13. *Does your short-term mission planning include a phase that involves the ministerial reflection and evaluation from the people who have traveled abroad?*

If necessary: *What is that phase like?*

Closing: Final Questions and Remarks

- 14. *Would the church embrace or resist academic resources to assist with short-term mission planning? Why?*

Thank you for these insights. We have a little time left, and I would like to open the conversation to you before we conclude.

15. *Is there anything you would like to add regarding short-term mission planning in African American Baptist churches?*

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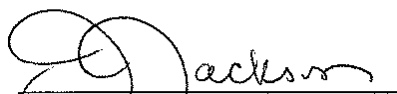
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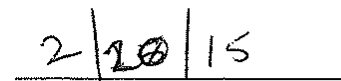
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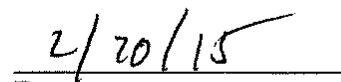
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