Electronic Thesis & Dissertation Collection

J. Oliver Buswell Jr. Library
12330 Conway Road
Saint Louis, MO 63141

library.covenantseminary.edu

Covenant Theological Seminary

"There's a Gift in It": Transplanted Vocational Ministers and The Quest for Belonging to Vancouver, British Columbia

A Dissertation Submitted to

the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

By

Michael Norris Hsu

Saint Louis, Missouri

2017

Covenant Theological Seminary

"There's a Gift in It": Transplanted Vocational Ministers and The Quest for Belonging to Vancouver, British Columbia

A Dissertation Submitted to

the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

By

Michael Norris Hsu

Graduation Date May 19, 2017

Dr. Donald C. Guthrie, Faculty Advisor _____

Dr. Steven Garber, Second Reader _____

Dr. Philip D. Douglass, Director of DMin Program _____

Abstract

Vancouver, British Columbia has a reputation as one of the most beautiful and desirable cities in the world to live, yet a recent study by the Vancouver Foundation revealed it to be a city where people find it difficult to connect and develop belonging. Literature on exile and place reveals that the quest to discover belonging is universal and the need to develop it is a basic human need. Literature on asset-based community development (ABCD) contends that a satisfying life can only be found as a collective occurrence, that the sharing of gifts in a neighborly covenant of care is vital for sustaining human wellness. The purpose of this study was to explore how vocational ministers who were transplants developed a sense of belonging to Vancouver.

Three research questions guided this study: (1) When first moving to Vancouver, what steps were taken initially to help transplanted vocational ministers develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver? (2) What difficulties were faced when vocational ministers who were transplants sought to develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver? (3) What was the role of certain local networks, particularly neighborhoods and local churches, in helping transplanted vocational ministers develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver? The study utilized a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with seven vocational ministers who had been transplanted to Vancouver and now considered Vancouver to be home. The data was analyzed using the constant comparative method.

The findings of the study were that transplanted vocational ministers need to take initiative in a place like Vancouver to develop a sense of belonging; there is a "gift" and opportunity for connection as a transplant since so many others who live in Vancouver

are in the same situation; learning to love and appreciate the people and the place is important; having friends and guides to help through the transition is vital as well. The difficulties among transplanted vocational ministers in developing a sense of belonging to Vancouver were the fierce individualism, isolation, and independence of many of its residents, the challenging economic environment as an expensive city, the resulting mobility of many and the struggles of older children to adjust and adapt to Vancouver.

The study concluded that while there were many difficulties transplanted vocational ministers experienced when developing a sense of belonging to Vancouver, many opportunities for meaningful connection and ministry arose as a result of those difficulties. Central to one's core identity as an exile in the world is having a sense of a meaningful connection to the mission of God in the world. Vancouver was a place ripe with opportunity for such participation. Churches helped these transplanted vocational ministers understand that sense of mission, and neighborhoods and certain local networks, such as places of work, provided the context for such opportunities as well. Indeed, the prophet Jeremiah seemed to know what he was talking about, "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."[1]

[1] Jeremiah 29:7

To Ama and Agon,

You always delighted in me and found so much enjoyment in me. I've come to know God as the One who knows, loves and sees. I get that because I was seen by you. By your love, I always knew I mattered and that I belonged.

Q. What is your only comfort in life and death?
A. That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

–*Heidelberg Catechism*, Question One

Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

–Romans 12:4-5, *New Living Translation*

The Banions belonged to the Feltner place by the same history as the Feltners, . . . The two families belonged to each other.

–Wendell Berry, *Hannah Coulter: A Novel*, 95.

We are talking about a neighborhood of humans in a place, plus the place itself: its soil, its water, its air, and all the families and tribes of the nonhuman creatures that belong to it.

–Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*, 14.

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.

–John 1:14a, *The Message*

No matter how you get there . . . , human beings have this miraculous gift to make that place home.

–Creed in *The Office* Season Finale, Season Nine

All of God's gifts to us in the gospel are gifts of belonging.

–Kelly M. Kapic, *God So Loved, He Gave: Entering the Movement of Divine Generosity,* 74.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

Tanya, as we approach the half-century mark together dear wife, it is amazing to look back on that English class with Ms. Markowitz back when we were barely sixteen-years-old and consider that we would journey so closely together for so long in the bond of covenant love. For better or for worse we have promised, and God has been faithful. I love you and thank you.

Dad, even as you battle uphill against the ravages of lewy bodies and Alzheimer's, I have always cherished your interest in me and how proud you are of me. Thank you for so often calling me just because you wanted to connect. Even today you called me in the middle of a confusing day. Even though this is not exactly what you had in mind years ago, I am happy to be called Dr. Hsu, the son of Dr. Hsu.

Mom, you have always kept the memory of my heritage alive because of your stories. Your stories, especially of your Ama and Agon whom I never met but know, have kept my imagination alive with hope that I have a place of rootage and history. Because of your gift, I know that I have a rich history of covenant love, loyalty, and affection.

Cassandra, there are certain things we have grieved the loss of through the years. Yet one thing has never changed. You have always been my loving big sister, a constant source of laughter, love, and care. I know that I would not want any other sister than the one I now have and have always had. You are loved dearly, sis.

Mia, dear daughter, I wept when you came into the world, and I knew immediately that we belonged to each other. We still do and even though the years keep flying by, I expect that we will be dear friends and confidants through all of life. The

move to Vancouver has been difficult on you, and I thank you for working so hard to hope for the best in this new country, as hard as that has been at times.

Isaac, your name teaches me to laugh. You have always had an easy-going way about you, very kind and willing to help. You do not know the story so well of how difficult it was for your mom and I to conceive children in our twenties. But when our cynical laughter turned to that of tears and joy by the gift that you were, we knew the perfect name for you. And our joyful laughter continues on thirteen years later.

Calvin, your exuberance for life and connection teaches me every day. All who come in contact with you receive a bit of your zest for life. Even if your mom was not sure about giving you the middle name that you have, I like it because it reminds always that your dad is with you, that you are never alone. Though it was not your choice to move to Vancouver, your courage, thoughtfulness, and strength have fortified me.

Tanya's Family, thank you for your constant cheerleading and welcoming me in so warmly many years ago. Rich and Dianne, Todd and Lori, Steve and Julie, Brian and Nancy, you are all amazing in your own wonderful and unique ways, and I am thankful for your support and interest in me all these years. While the location is about to change, one word signifies for me times of deep, rich familial connection and conversation, "Mahoney." . . . OK, maybe two words, "Mahoney, Cigars." Ed and Gayle, you also have been a great source of support and encouragement through the years; I am thankful.

Grace Chapel, Lincoln, Nebraska, when I walked away from my last worship service, just before moving to Vancouver, I wept bitterly as I walked down Sheridan Boulevard. It was as if a close family member I had grown up with for many years had been torn from me. When you grow up with a community from ages twenty-seven to

forty-two, it forms you. When I think of your name dear Grace, I think of much good, perhaps most the words of Bono, "It's also a thought that could change the world."

Grace Vancouver Church, Vancouver, British Columbia, we are still getting to know one another, but the call of God to Vancouver had to come from a remarkable community if we were to leave Nebraska. It did, and we did. Your faithfulness to the mission of God in Vancouver and commitment to one another told us the first time I interviewed, that you were family we had not yet met. I thank you for your support of my work on this project as it takes time for most to get me. Your patience, care, interest and kindness to our family has been filled with the community riches of a generous God, and I am grateful.

Dr. Donald Guthrie, thank you for teaching me that at the center of faithful human agency is caring. Your pedagogy of caring is formative for all who are blessed and privileged to sit under it.

Dr. Steven Garber, I richly see God as the one who entered covenant, who knows, sees and loves. I also know that as a result I am wonderfully and frightfully implicated. Thank you for teaching me this.

Dr. Tasha Chapman, your support, availability and interest through this project have been highly valued. Thank you for teaching me that failing forward does not mean stumbling so much as letting yourself be led.

Dr. Bob Burns, thank you for pursuing me so intentionally many years ago, first through the Pastor's Summit and later in recruiting me to the Doctor of Ministry program. I could not have known how deeply formative these last six years in the program would be. Thank you.

Faith and Vocation Cohort, Particularly Chad Donohoe, Don Johnson and Honorary Member Paul Woodard, thank you for being a group I could walk with and learn so much from through the beginning years of this project. Chad, thank you for being a friend and brother in Christ for twenty-seven years now- when you wept in your fraternity bedroom with me and T. C. because you knew God had so much for you, I could not have imagined our friendship would become unbreakable and enduring as it has. Don, you have been a good friend through this journey. Paul, thank you for the many conversations—we do not have them enough, but they are always good when we do.

Diablo Dr. Neighbors, Lincoln, Nebraska, the Hsus miss you dearly and continue to get many laughs when I share, "yes, I Pastor Mike lived on Diablo Dr. for eleven years." Through raising our babies together, spending a lot of time drinking beer, roasting marshmallows, and having BBQs on our front driveways, also walking through our sorrows and losses together, I learned firsthand what the ABCD writers spoke of when they described a competent community and neighborly covenant of trust built on kindness and the sharing of gifts. They were talking about you. When we return to Lincoln, we always return "home" to Diablo Dr. first.

Jonathan Gregory, your interest in me and love for me has taught me about spiritual friendship and that my kids know you by your name backwards, Nahtanoj, only puts a smile on my face. Your dissertation journey was quite the trek with its own highs and lows, and as I walked with you through the laughter of our friendship and the challenges of your dissertation journey (which you admirably completed), I thought I might be able to complete this part of my journey as well.

Ingrid Kutsch, your gifts of insight and encouragement have been generously given to me for more than a decade of deep and enduring friendship. Our stories are separated by us being half a generation apart in age, also your family having travelled from Germany, mine from Taiwan. Yet our common vision has brought us together. When I think of all the sorrows that have shaped the beautiful person that you are and see you sign off every little note with "Joy in Jesus," I know the kingdom has drawn near.

Joe Erpenbeck, I was giddy when I learned that John McKnight was coming to Vancouver and that I would be able to hear him speak. Little did I know at the time, that the even greater blessing that evening would be meeting you. You are a gift to me my friend, someone who embodies the very best of what the ABCD writers, your friends and colleagues, describe when they speak of connectors who bring neighbors together to share gifts with kindness and care. You have so generously shared your gifts with me.

Kelly and Tabitha Kapic, viewing the Gospel through the lens of God's generosity and gift was a story I was reading long ago in you prior to Kelly authoring so many books. Your lives were the letter on which the Spirit wrote about us together being a part of a "mutuality of belonging." The many Sabbath days we spent together as young couples preparing meals after worship at St. Paul's were formative, living in close proximity together and learning together in an environment of caring deeply about the things that matter. You are dear friends, the very best Tanya and I have known together.

St. Louis Aunt and Uncle, since I always address you by your Taiwanese titles, I simply refer to you here as St. Louis Aunt and Uncle. Thank you for always opening your home to me and being so welcoming whenever I would travel to St. Louis to do my class

work. Enjoying your company and being able to have breakfast with you each morning before going to my cohort gatherings was always a highlight of my trips to St. Louis.

Research Participants, thank you to the seven of you for being such hospitable people, interested in my work as a transplant and newcomer to the ministry scene in Vancouver. Thank you for the gift of your time, but particularly the gift of your warmth and welcome to me as a ministerial colleague and co-laborer in the faith here in this beautiful lonely city of Vancouver. May your lives and ministries continue to bear much fruit and may you find hope and joy in your ministry endeavors always.

Writing Team, thank you Beth Hart for the enriching and encouraging conversations these last few months as well as the quality editorial work you and your team invested into my work. Also, thank you Bess Ghormley for the many hours of transcription work you did for me always in a perfect and timely manner, allowing me to do the work I needed to do, always at the proper time.

Chapter One

Introduction

From 2002 to 2010, the *Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU's)* livability survey named Vancouver, British Columbia as the best place to live in the world.[2] In 2013, the city was listed by the same survey as ranking third.[3] Receiving perfect marks for healthcare, education, culture, and environment,[4] one might assume Vancouver to be a great place to live. However, Steve Mertl of Yahoo News Canada suggests that Vancouver's reputation as "a model of urban livability" just may have "fragile underpinnings."[5] Mertl cites a 2012 Metro Vancouver study by the Vancouver Foundation that "surveyed 3841 people across metro Vancouver to measure people's connections and engagement."[6] When interviewed by CBC News regarding the findings of the study, Vancouver Foundation CEO Faye Wightman said, "We found that one in four people are finding it difficult to make friends in Vancouver and one in three people

---

[2] Huffington Post, "Vancouver the Most Livable City in North America: Economist," Huffingtonpost.ca, August 28, 2013, accessed March 26, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/08/28/vancouver-most-livable-city-economist_n_3830039.html.

[3] Elizabeth Hames, "Vancouver Ranked Most-Livable City in North America," Metronews.ca, February 19, 2014, accessed March 26, 2014, http://www.metronews.ca/news/vancouver/2014/02/19/vancouver-ranked-most-livable-city-in-north-america.html.

[4] Huffington Post, "Vancouver the Most Livable City in North America: Economist."

[5] Steve Mertyl, "Vancouver Foundation Study Finds Lotusland a Lonely, Isolated Place," Ca.news.yahoo.com, June 19, 2012, accessed March 26, 2014, http://ca.news.yahoo.com/blogs/dailybrew/vancouver-foundation-finds-lotusland-lonely-isolated-place-210758040.html.

[6] Vancouver Foundation, "Connections and Engagement: A Survey of Metro Vancouver June 2012," Vancouverfoundation.ca, accessed March 26, 2014, https://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/sites/default/files/documents/VanFdn-SurveyResults-Report.pdf, 5.

are lonely."[7] The study also found that thirty-five percent of those surveyed did not have any close friends from outside their own ethnic group and that sixty-five percent preferred spent time with people who are just like them.[8] Those who lived in Vancouver for less than five years found it especially difficult to find connection and belonging.[9]

While located in North America, metro Vancouver is an international city of approximately 2.3 million people where forty-four percent of the population does not claim English as their first language[10] and nearly forty-two percent are visible minorities. Chinese represent nearly half, and East Indians from Southern Asia represent nearly a quarter of that subgroup.[11] Vancouver is truly a city of immigrants and transplants. While Vancouver residents highly value diversity, nonetheless those surveyed by the Vancouver Foundation said they preferred to be with others from their same ethnic group; thereby, fueling greater disconnection and isolation from others in the city.[12] As a 2010 Angus Reid poll found, people in Vancouver were among the loneliest in the country.[13]

---

[7] CBC News, "Poll Paints Vancouver as Less Than Friendly or Inclusive," Cbc.ca, June 18, 2012, accessed March 26, 2014, http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/poll-paints-vancouver-as-less-than-friendly-or-inclusive-1.1172356.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Vancouver Foundation, "Connections and Engagement: A Survey of Metro Vancouver June 2012," 9.

[10] Statistics Canada, "Greater Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada," Statcan.gc.ca, accessed March 26, 2014, http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-cma-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GC=933.

[11] City-Data, "Census Metropolitan Area of Vancouver, British Columbia," City-data.com, accessed March 26, 2014, http://www.city-data.com/canada/Greater-Vancouver.html.

[12] The 2012 Vancouver Foundation survey states, "We found that while people embrace diversity and value what it brings to our community, most think that people prefer to be with others from the same ethnic group as their own." Vancouver Foundation, "Connections and Engagement: A Survey of Metro Vancouver June 2012," 27.

[13] Vancouver Foundation, "Connections and Engagement: A Survey of Metro Vancouver June 2012," 15.

Problem and Purpose Statements

The disconnection Vancouverites reported poses a significant barrier to their wellness; as Pastor Randy Frazee writes, "We were created with a connection requirement, and if this requirement is not satisfied, we will eventually die. If we ever became convinced of this, it would make our pursuit of connecting a higher priority."[14] Organizational development expert Peter Block and community developer John McKnight refer to a nine-year study that found people with the fewest social ties have the highest risk of dying from heart disease, circulatory problems, and cancer.[15] Political scientist and author Robert Putnam states, in *Bowling Alone*, that those who do not belong to any local groups, in joining just one local group, cut their risk of dying the next year in half.[16] The 2012 Vancouver Foundation reports a similar finding to this requirement of connection for wellness:

> Our survey shows a link between loneliness and poor health. People who are alone are twice as likely to report fair or poor health as people who do not feel alone. . . . Research shows that, over time, lonely and disconnected people can move to the fringes of social networks. . . . We need friends the way we need air and water and shelter. . . .[17]

Bolstering the case for the strong tie between connection and health, the Vancouver Foundation study explored the connection between loneliness and poor health and between human community and wellness. As French philosopher and political activist

---

[14] Randy Frazee, *Making Room for Life: Trading Chaotic Lifestyles for Connected Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 27.

[15] Peter Block and John McKnight, *The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods* (Oakland: Berrett-Koehler, 2010), 20.

[16] Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), 331.

[17] Vancouver Foundation, "Connections and Engagement: A Survey of Metro Vancouver June 2012," 15.

Simone Weil has written, to be rooted is perhaps the most important need of humans, "To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. . . . A human being has roots by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of a community."[18]

In addition to the concerns with Vancouverites' disconnection, this problem questions the church's impact in Vancouver as an institution the holy scriptures call to seek the welfare of the city.[19] At the heart of people's welfare as humans created in God's image is the need for connection and belonging. As Jürgen Moltmann writes:

> Likeness to God cannot be lived in isolation. It can be lived only in human community. This means that from the very outset human beings are social beings. They are aligned towards human society and are essentially in need of help (Gen. 2:18). They are gregarious beings and only develop their personalities in fellowship with other people. Consequently, they can only relate to themselves if, and to the extent to which, other people relate to them. The isolated individual and the solitary subject are deficient modes of being human, because they fall short of the likeness of God.[20]

From a theologian's perspective, Moltmann makes the case that to bear fully the image of God means to be connected in human community; on the other hand, to be in isolation is to suffer a significant deficiency. If the welfare of the city is questionable, then God's people must ask if they have been faithful to the prophetic words of Jeremiah 29. Qualitative researcher Brené Brown adds that bringing the residents of the city into a rich

---

[18] Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots* (London: Routledge, 1952), 43.

[19] Jeremiah 29:7.

[20] Jürgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 223.

connection with one another assists them in fulfilling their telos. As Brown writes, "connection is why we are here."[21] She states:

> We are psychologically, emotionally, cognitively, and spiritually hardwired for connection, love, and belonging. Connection, along with love and belonging (two expressions of connection), is why we are here, and it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives.[22]

Brown asserts that a sense of purpose and connection is at the heart of people's purpose and essential to their wellness.

To be restored to a place of belonging and connection is at the heart of the Bible's promise for all people and nations. For those who give their lives to Christ, the restoration of belonging and connection begins with one's relationship to God. The New Testament writer the apostle Paul speaks of the "groaning" of a fallen world where God's children await eagerly the fullness of their adoption.[23] The language of adoption in the Bible means God's children are brought into the full embrace of God and his family, "As our Maker is our Father, so our Savior is our brother, when we come into the family of God."[24] Scottish theologian and pastor James Buchanan explains the change in status that accompanies one who has come into the full embrace of God:

> "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends" (John 15:15);– and a still closer and dearer relation is said to exist in consequence of adoption; for "Thou art no more a servant, but a son, and an heir

---

[21] Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (New York: Gotham Books, 2012), 68.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Romans 8:23-6.

[24] J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973), 190.

> of God through Christ." (Galatians 4:7) The privilege of adoption presupposes pardon and acceptance, but is higher than either.[25]

As Buchanan explains, the promise of the Bible is that for those who place their faith in Jesus Christ, the status of full membership and acceptance into the family of God—adoption—is conferred to the individual. Research professor of theology and author J. Todd Billings says of this status of adoption, that believers "enter into the playful, joyous world of *living as children of a gracious Father, as persons united to Christ and empowered by the Spirit*."[26] Billings explains how the benefits of salvation come to believers through union with Christ, "a key biblical and theological motif for salvation."[27] He continues:

> in salvation we receive not only forgiveness (justification) but also new life (sanctification) as a gift. Thus, sanctification is not simply "our response," initiated by our asking "what would Jesus do?" Sanctification, like justification, is a gift that we receive in union with Christ.[28]

Billings supports the notion that the Bible's message of salvation centers around the gift of being united with God through Christ. Teacher and writer Steven Garber describes this relationship between God and his people as one of "covenant":

> the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob connects to his people through covenant, saying with word and deed, "I know you, I know about you, and I choose to love you. I will be in relationship with you." . . . with that relationship comes a revelation. This is who I am. This is what I am like. This is who you are. This is how

---

[25] James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1867; repr., 1991), 262-3.

[26] J. Todd Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 25.

[27] Ibid., 35.

[28] Ibid., 28.

> you are to live. He is the one who knows and understands and loves, and therefore makes his ways known.[29]

Protestant reformer John Calvin connects the concept of union with Christ (and covenant) to creation, explaining that even prior to sin's entrance into the world, Adam was "united and bound to his Maker."[30] Building off of Calvin's thought, Billings writes, "Thus, when the Spirit comes to us in redemption, uniting us to Jesus Christ, we do not lose our true identity; rather, it is restored."[31]

Whereas Brown speaks of connection as the human telos, Billings speaks of human identity as wrapped up in connection with God in Christ. Ethics professor Oliver O'Donovan writes, "human beings meet with God within relations of particular belonging."[32] Theology professor, Kelly M. Kapic says that these various ways of describing our connection and loving relationship to God are "gifts of belonging":

> All of God's gifts to us in the gospel are gifts of belonging–gifts we receive and experience in terms of belonging to God. . . . While we experience God's grace in countless ways, we should keep in mind that his grace is grounded upon our belonging to God.[33]

Union with Christ offers men, women, and children of all nations restoration to God and one another, and similarly, God's created order is a recipient of the promise of this

---

[29] Steven Garber, *Visions of Vocation: Common Grace for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014), 93.

[30] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, eds. J.T. McNeil and F.L. Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1559), 2.1.5.

[31] Billings, 33.

[32] Oliver O'Donovan, "The Loss of a Sense of Place," *Irish Theological Quarterly* (1989): 55.

[33] Kelly M. Kapic, *God So Loved, He Gave: Entering the Movement of Divine Generosity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 74.

restoration, “that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”[34]

Regarding the Bible’s opening chapter, theologian Michael D. Williams applies the concept of covenant to the created order, “Genesis 1:26-28 indicates that there is more to bearing the divine image than a personal relationship with God. It also involves relationship with creation. . . . Man is called to be God’s agent, the mediator of God’s covenant with creation.”[35] Old Testament scholar, Ellen F. Davis states:

> From a Biblical perspective, the covenant is not purely a two-way relationship between human beings and God. The covenant is a three-way relationship, . . . thinking about the aftermath of the flood story in Genesis when God makes a covenant with kol basar, "all flesh," . . . all of the nonhuman creatures.[36]

This “three-way relationship” involves God’s people but also the created order. Reinforcing the importance of people’s connection with God, one another, and the created order, pastor and writer M. Robert Mulholland explains the creation context, saying:

> The creation context is essential. It is not God’s intention only to form persons in Christlikeness for the sake of others. This is an inseparable part of God’s greater purpose for the redemption of all creation. In John’s vision God says, “Behold, I am making all things new” (Rev. 21:5). The phrase “all things” has a particular significance in the Jewish pool of images John utilizes to convey his visionary experience. It is used to describe God as the creator of all things, in other words “all things” is a cipher for “creation.”

---

[34] Romans 8:21, see also Acts 17:26.27 and Revelation 21:22-26.

[35] Michael D. Williams, *Far as the Curse Is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 60.

[36] Ellen F. Davis, “Office Hours with Ellen Davis on Christians and Creation,” Youtube.com, April 9, 2010, accessed March 26, 2014, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g54FweREl-Y.

> John's vision is portraying the renewal of creation, not simply the renewal of believers as many interpret this passage.[37]

Mulholland states that the scriptures focus not only on individual salvation but also on restoring the created order. Therefore, from a biblical perspective, the restoration of human belonging to God and other humans must always be understood in the context of the achievement of the fullness of God's restoration program for the created world.[38] Borrowing from Calvin, theologian Herman Bavinck explains the Reformed doctrine of common grace by describing the work of the Holy Spirit in creation:

> He (God) had and, after the fall, continued to have a purpose for his creation; he interposed common grace between sin and the creation–a grace that, while it does not inwardly renew, nevertheless restrains and compels. All that is good and true has its origin in this grace, including the good we see in fallen man. The light still does shine in the darkness. The spirit of God makes its home and works in all the creation.[39]

According to Bavinck, the Holy Spirit works through creation, "restrains and compels," as God brings the rest of the created order into the same hope that his children have, i.e., connection, belonging, union, and covenant. This vision of the broader renewal of the created order prompts theology professor Douglas John Hall to describe the theocentric (God-centered), anthropocentric (human-centered), and geocentric (creation-centered) as interdependent spheres of faith's concentration.[40]

---

[37] M. Robert Mulholland, "Spiritual Formation in Christ and Mission with Christ," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 6, no. 1 (2013): 16.

[38] Ephesians 1:3-10. In this classic passage on the believer's "union with Christ," Christ's wondrous work of redemption is described in verse 10, "as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."

[39] Herman Bavinck, "Common Grace," *Calvin Theological Journal* 24, no. 1, trans. Raymond C. Van Leeuwen (April 1989), 51.

[40] Douglas John Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1986), 200.

Anglican clergyman and Old Testament scholar Christopher J. H. Wright reminds that the redemptive work of Christ includes creation within its purview:

> So our care for creation is motivated not solely by the fact that it was created by God and we were commanded to look after it, but also by the fact that it has been redeemed by Christ, and we are to erect signposts towards its ultimate destiny of complete restoration in Christ. God's redemptive mission includes creation. Our mission involves participating in that redemptive work as agents of good news to creation, as well as to people.[41]

Wright says that the mission of God's people includes serving as agents of good news to creation as well as to people.

Referring to creation in the particularities of the local and peoples' relationship in the local and to it, Christian spirituality historian Philip Sheldrake writes, "'Belonging' involves both a connection to specific places and also our existence within networks of stable relationships."[42] Sheldrake says, "Without a sense of place there is no centering of the human spirit."[43]

According to these various writers and theologians, connection is at the heart of God's redemptive work for the world. As Brown writes, connection is why people are here,[44] and as Billings writes, believers' union with Christ restores to them their true

---

[41] Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 60-1.

[42] Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 10.

[43] Ibid., 115.

[44] Brown, 8.

identities.[45] Sheldrake adds that these meaningful connections happen within the context of specific places in God's created world. In addition to a network of stable relationships, Sheldrake writes, that belonging also involves a connection to specific places.[46]

Relationships of connection are vital to the world's telos and the restoration of true human identity, yet Vancouverites reported a sense of disconnection within their multicultural and international city. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to research how transplanted vocational ministers developed a sense of belonging to Vancouver.

Because vocational ministers often feel a keen sense of calling to uproot and "Go from your country and kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you,"[47] such transplanted individuals were interviewed. To understand the desire and need of humans to belong to a people and a place, the research explored the literature areas of exile and place. Theology professors and authors Steven Bouma-Prediger and Brian Walsh write that the themes of exile, homecoming, and belonging are those of universal interest, "it seems that there is indeed something universal about narratives of exile and return, of homelessness and the perilous journey back home. Humans are incurable storytellers, and our stories seem to be preoccupied with home."[48] Also, to understand how some have sought to develop belonging on the local level, literature on asset-based community development (ABCD) was explored.[49]

---

[45] Billings, 33.

[46] Sheldrake, 10.

[47] Genesis 12:1.

[48] Steven Bouma-Prediger and Brian J. Walsh, *Beyond Homelessness: Christian Faith in a Culture of Displacement* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 10-1.

[49] The term Asset-Based Community Development was coined by John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann of the ABCD Institute in Evanston, Illinois.

Research Questions

Much of the research on belonging, i.e. "home," revealed the dialectic between rooting and sojourning. Moltmann called these dimensions of life repose and movement; he explains how they find rhythm in God:

> To be on the move and to come to rest; to arrive home and to go out: we have to fulfill the claims of both these dimensions of our lives. Repose and movement aren't opposites. We have to preserve repose in movement, and remain capable of movement in repose. In the rhythm of the two our life is alive and in harmony with the God who journeys with us, and who dwells among us.[50]

As Moltmann states, repose and movement must find a place of rhythm in the Christian life; how do they do so in the context of the people and places of Vancouver? To understand this question, the purpose of this study was to research how vocational ministers who were transplants developed a sense of belonging to Vancouver. Therefore, the following research questions guided this study.

1. When first moving to Vancouver, what steps were taken initially to help transplanted vocational ministers develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?
2. What difficulties were faced when vocational ministers who were transplants sought to develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?
3. What was the role of certain local networks in helping vocational ministers who were transplants develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?
    a. What was the role of a local church in helping vocational ministers who were transplants develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?
    b. What was the role of a neighborhood in helping vocational ministers who were transplants develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?

[50] Jürgen Moltmann, *Shekinah: The Home of the Homeless God*, in *The Longing for Home,* ed. Leroy S. Rouner (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 183.

Significance of the Study

This study has significance for the people of Vancouver, for Grace Vancouver Church, and for all who seek to put their roots into the metropolitan city sometimes referred to as "the lonely city." As the referenced writers have said, to live in isolation is to suffer deficiency. Connection is a requirement; therefore, to understand the process of how transplants developed a sense of belonging to Vancouver is vital to the effectiveness of Christians bringing the hope and healing of Christ to Vancouver. Specifically, this study seeks to assist vocational ministers, who themselves often make difficult transitions to new situations, understand the process of developing a sense of belonging in a new context and city. Once vocational ministers are able to develop a sense of "repose in the movement," they will be able to help other Christians develop it as well. Lesslie Newbigin refers to the important work of vocational ministers as a ministerial priesthood that guides and sustains the priestly people of God.[51] So this study has significance for the local ministries of vocational ministers.

In addition, this study has significance for Christians who live outside of Vancouver in the broader world population, much of which is increasingly moving towards living in urban centers.[52] This study has significance for pilgrims who are adjusting to a difficult move to another city after having been rooted in their previous

---

[51] ". . . every member of the body is called to the exercise of this priesthood, and that this priesthood is to be exercised in the daily life and work of Christians in the secular business of the world. But this will not happen unless there is a ministerial priesthood which serves, nourishes, sustains and guides this priestly work. The priestly people needs a ministering priesthood to sustain and nourish it." Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 234-5.

[52] "Humanity's march toward the city has reached a new benchmark. In 1900 only 14 percent of the world's population lived in urban areas; that number has grown to 30 percent by 1950. In 2008 the world's population was evenly split between urban and rural areas, but in 2011 the world became predominantly urban. The numbers are even more striking in developed areas where, on average, 74 percent of the population lives in urban areas." Stephen T. Um, *Why Cities Matter: To God, the Culture, and the Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2013), 26.

place. The desire and quest to belong is universal. Pulling up roots is a common human experience and to discover orientation in the process is a memory that often fortifies hope.[53]

This study also has significance for those who have been in one place for many years (perhaps through multiple generations), to find a life of meaning and deep value in the metaphorical life of sojourn.[54] This discovery benefits not only the individual but the welfare of the entire community in which that individual is situated as well.[55] This kind of healthy and connected community is what ABCD writers Peter Block and John McKnight call, "a competent community."[56] For the people of Grace Vancouver Church, Vancouver as well as a world that needs "competent communities," this study has

---

[53] As one example, in preparing for this research, a Doctor of Ministry dissertation that was consulted included a moving word of acknowledgment written to the researcher's children: "To my beautiful children: Dusty, Kami, Calen, John, Jacob, and Annie Blue. You were all still living at home when we went to St. Louis ten years ago. In a very real sense, we went through seminary together. I uprooted your lives from our home in Tennessee and you treated it as a grand adventure. Your love and support sustained me then and blesses me still. You truly are a 'heritage from the LORD. . .'" Steven L. Jones, "Pastors Thriving in Marriage and Ministry: Pursuing Health in Marriage While Leading through Church Conflict" (Covenant Theological Seminary, 2013). In his acknowledgment to his children, Jones described the rhythm of "repose and movement" of which Moltmann wrote.

[54] In Wendell Berry's *Hannah Coulter,* the relationship of two such families is described: "The Banions belonged to the Feltner place by the same history as the Feltners, going back a hundred and fifty years. The two families belonged to each other. The Banions had been faithful to the place, and their work had gone into it, year after year, generation after generation." Wendell Berry, *Hannah Coulter: A Novel* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2004), 95. The Banions were the Feltners' hired hands and, along with the Feltners, were an integral part of the communal fabric of the fictional rural town of Port William, KY.

[55] "If we speak of *healthy* community, we cannot be speaking of a community that is merely human. We are talking about a neighborhood of humans in a place, plus the place itself: its soil, its water, its air, and all the families and tribes of the nonhuman creatures that belong to it. If the place is well preserved, if its entire membership, natural and human, is present in it, and if the human economy is in practical harmony with the nature of the place, then the community is healthy" Wendell Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993), 14.

[56] ". . . in too many cases, we are disconnected from our neighbors and isolated from our communities. Consequently, the community and neighborhood are no longer competent. When we use the term community competence, we mean the capacity of the place where we live to be useful to us, to support us in creating those things that can be produced only in the surroundings of a connected community." Block and McKnight, 9.

significance. Finally, since the telos of the world, the missio Dei, holds at the center of its hope the restoration of God's children as well as God's created order, this study has significance for all who desire to glorify God and live in partnership with the purpose of God for the world.[57]

Definition of Terms

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) – A term coined by John McKnight and Jody Kretzmann of the ABCD Institute in Evanston, Illinois; an approach that recognizes the strengths, gifts, talents, and resources of individuals and communities. ABCD helps communities to mobilize and build on these for sustainable development.[58]

Belonging – The innate, human desire to be part of something larger than oneself.[59]

Connection – An energy that is created between people when they are seen, heard, and valued.[60] In addition, connection is a sense of repose that one has when oriented to a place considered to be home.[61]

Common Grace – Grace extended to all persons through God's general providence, for example, his provision of sunshine and rain for everyone.[62]

Community – An aggregation of people or neighborhoods that have something in common. It is both a people and an experience of connectedness.[63]

Exile – Displacement and alienation from the place that gives identity and security, from all shapes and forms that gave power to faith and life.[64]

---

[57] Romans 8:19-25.

[58] Coady International Institute, "About ABCD," Coady.stfx.ca, accessed November 4, 2014, http://coady.stfx.ca/themes/abcd/.

[59] Brown, 145.

[60] Ibid.

[61] In Berry's *Jayber Crow,* the protagonist Jayber observes upon returning to his home country, ". . . it seemed to me that even if everything had been changed, I would have recognized it by the look of the sky." Wendell Berry, *Jayber Crow* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2000), 93.

[62] Millard J. Erickson, *Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 69.

[63] Block and McKnight, xvii.

[64] Walter Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, Second ed., *Overtures of Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 7.

Home – A place where people feel they belong, and a place where, in some sense, belongs to people.[65]

Local Associations – Three or more people who come together by choice and mostly without pay because of a common interest. The common interest may be as simple as to be together, and visionary as to change the world.[66]

Vocational Ministers – Those who serve in work that is explicitly Christian and ministerial.

missio Dei (mission of God) – The work, purpose, and aim of God for his creation, all people and for human history.

Neighborhood – The locale where one lives.

Pilgrim – The sojourner who comes from foreign lands and is alien.[67]

Place – Space that has historical meanings, where some things have happened that are now remembered and that provide continuity and identity across generations, in which important words have been spoken that have established identity, defined vocation, and envisioned destiny.[68]

Parish – A bounded space where a local church serves its community, where the pastor and people are intimately connected in the life of the neighborhood.[69]

Rooting –The real, active, and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future.[70]

---

[65] Frederick Buechner, *The Longing for Home* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 7. Wendell Berry's character Jayber Crow describes this sense of home upon returning to the place of his upbringing, "I still belonged to it in a way, but it didn't any longer belong to me." Berry, *Jayber Crow*, 89.

[66] Block and McKnight, xvi.

[67] Martin E. Marty, *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America* (Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1984), 3.

[68] Brueggemann, 4.

[69] Leonard Hjalmarson, *No Home Like Place: A Christian Theology of Place* (Portland: Urban Loft Publishers, 2014), 123.

[70] Weil, 41.

Sojourner – A "resident alien," meaning to be in a place, perhaps for an extended time, to live there and take some roots, but always to be an outsider, never belonging, always without rights, title, or voice in decisions that matter.[71]

Transplants – Those who are not indigenous to the culture in which they now live.

[71] Brueggemann, 6.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to research how transplanted vocational ministers developed a sense of belonging to Vancouver. When interviewed by CBC News regarding a 2012 metro Vancouver study, Vancouver Foundation CEO Faye Wightman said, "We found that one in four people are finding it difficult to make friends in Vancouver and one in three people are lonely."[72] The study also found that thirty-five percent of those surveyed do not have any close friends from outside their own ethnic group and that sixty-five percent preferred spending time with people who are just like them.[73] Those who lived in Vancouver for less than five years found it especially difficult to find connection and belonging.[74] The literature review began with a focused study in Ezekiel 37 on the connection between ancient Israel's hope of resurrection and return from exile to the land of God's promise. Then, three particular relevant literature areas were reviewed to provide a foundation, inform the research, and provide opportunities for interpreting and discussing the findings. These areas focused on literature concerning themes of exile, place, and asset-based community development.

[72] CBC News, "Poll Paints Vancouver as Less Than Friendly or Inclusive."

[73] Ibid.

[74] Vancouver Foundation, "Connections and Engagement: A Survey of Metro Vancouver June 2012," 9.

Ezekiel 37 and Israel's Hope of Resurrection

What does the Bible have to say about the human desire to belong? Ezekiel 37 provides a prominent example of this desire. In the passage, prophetic words of hope come to a people who have been taken into Babylonian captivity. Ancient Israelites would have experienced exile from God's presence as the equivalent of death; therefore, the description of Israel's condition in their exile is that of being in a "valley of dry bones."[75] Death and exile were understood to come as a result of "the effects of the covenant curse [of God] on his people."[76] The promise of new life and resurrection from the dead was one where the people anticipated being brought out of their exile and returned to the abundance and fruitfulness of the land of God's promise and dwelling. To be back in the land was the hope of restoration to God, of new life, and of resurrection for those who considered themselves dead. The Psalmist describes, "By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion. On the willows there we hung up our lyres."[77] Leslie C. Allen writes of Ezekiel's prophecy, "The prophetic oracle triggers a movement from disorientation to reorientation."[78] Allen says of exile, "The experience of exile is a veritable graveyard; to live again is to return to the land. . . . an oracle of salvation [is given], . . . of a return to the land that symbolized return to

---

[75] Ezekiel 37:4.

[76] Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 385.

[77] Psalm 137:1-2.

[78] Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word Books, 1990), 185.

living fellowship with Yahweh."[79] Peter C. Craigie agrees and describes the focus of Ezekiel's prophecy:

> The collapse of Jerusalem had seemed to drive the nails into the coffin that was their exile; there was no more hope of a return and new life in their homeland. But again the prophet was commanded to speak: the graves of exile would be opened (verse 13) and the people would return to their homeland with the gift of new life. The prophecy, . . . its focus is on the restoration of moribund exiles to new life in their original homeland.[80]

Ezekiel's prophecy focuses on restoring the exiles to new life in their original homeland. Moshe Greenberg writes regarding Ezekiel 37, "In a new metaphor the multistaged resurrection of the vision is reduced to two stages–opening of graves and raising those in them. The unfinished business of the vision . . . is then completed by the restoration of the people to their land (vss. 12-13a)."[81] Greenberg continues, "Early Christian sources mention a . . . Jewish reading of the vision closer to what we should judge to be the correct reading – as a metaphor for the restoration of Israel."[82]

Craigie writes of the valley of dry bones passage also having an eschatological horizon:

> The valley of dry bones typifies the human race as a whole, exiled from God their Creator, and therefore missing that fullness of life which God planned for every creature. And the proclamation of the prophet becomes the proclamation of the gospel, that there may be a fullness of life for all mankind in a new land.[83]

---

[79] Ibid., 186-87.

[80] Peter C. Craigie, *Ezekiel*, *The Daily Study Bible Series* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), 260-61.

[81] Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, *The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 748.

[82] Ibid., 750.

[83] Craigie, 261.

For Craigie, the valley of dry bones typifies the human race as a whole, alienated from the creator, but given the hope of life in a new land. Greenberg elaborates upon the idea of hope, saying, "the bringing to the land of vs. 12 is augmented by the promise of the people's lasting settlement therein (cf. 36:28)."[84] David N. Freedman applies the suffering of the exiles in Ezekiel to a broader context, saying, "the overarching, historical purpose of her suffering is the world's conversion."[85] Regarding these captives in Babylon, the Lord tells Ezekiel to offer a prophetic word of hope, "Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel."[86]

The role of land is central to the people's restoration and their hope of resurrection. In Ezekiel 37:14, the promised gift of the Spirit brings life and the promise of "re-placement" in "your own land." Ezekiel 37:21 describes the restoration of Israel as the nation returning to the land and being re-constituted as one unified and "landed" nation. As Joseph Blenkinsopp writes, "It is the spirit activated through prophetic preaching which bonds the community together and gives it the will to live . . . . When that future becomes reality with return to the land, the community will finally acknowledge the truth of the prophetic word."[87]

---

[84] Greenberg, 748.

[85] David N. Freedman, "Son of Man, Can These Bones Live?," *Interpretation* 29 (1975): 186.

[86] Ezekiel 37:12.

[87] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Ezekiel*, *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 173-74.

Ezekiel 37:25 anticipates the just reign of the promised Davidic King[88] and his everlasting rule where the people dwell in the land where they and their children also dwell forever with God. The hope of resurrection for the Old Testament people was in their re-placement back to a land of promise and hope. As Blenkinsopp states regarding this hope of resurrection in Ezekiel's vision, "It foresees a fourfold honoring of ancient promises–ruler, land, covenant, and temple."[89]

When the New Testament period opens, the genealogy of the coming "son of David"[90] is organized around the central motif of Israel's captivity and exile, "So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations."[91] The birth of the Christ-child comes from the conception of the Holy Spirit in the womb of Mary, and his given name is Jesus since "he will save his people from their sins."[92] This passage promises hope to the Jewish person that the son has arrived to bring new life through his resurrection from the dead, in order to restore his people to fellowship with God and once again constitute them as a landed people of promise.[93] Allen explains:

> Naturally Christian (and Jewish) development in the conception of salvation envisaged the literal re-use of Ezekiel's metaphor of

---

[88] 2 Samuel 7:12-17.

[89] Blenkinsopp, 176.

[90] Matthew 1:1.

[91] Matthew 1:17.

[92] Matthew 1:21.

[93] As Hebrews 12:22 reads, "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, . . ."

> death and resurrection of the people of God. More true to the original intent of the passage is the seeming echo of v. 9 at John 20:22, in the breathing of the risen Christ upon the disciples, bestowing the Holy Spirit. . . . In different ways both these references relate the passage to the inauguration of eschatological hope.[94]

Allen sees the New Testament's usage of Ezekiel's metaphor of death and resurrection as pointing the church to the inauguration of eschatological hope in the risen Jesus breathing his Spirit upon his disciples. In the Gospel of John, Jesus describes himself as the true temple of God.[95] The book of Hebrews says that Jesus, by virtue of his death and resurrection, became the guarantor of a better covenant.[96] Therefore, Jesus is the true Davidic ruler, the true temple of God, guarantor of God's covenant promises, and redeemer of "the land" of heaven and earth, "For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross."[97] In Matthew's beatitudes, Jesus describes the forward-looking hope of God's people in the language of inheritance, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."[98] Jesus takes Psalm 37:11–that tied the promise of eschatological hope of deliverance from exile for the Israelite of old–and universalizes the promise to the whole earth. Christ's resurrection ultimately secures the promise of "land" and the gift of the Spirit. Ezekiel's vision foresaw Christ's resurrection accomplished.

---

[94] Allen, 188.

[95] John 2:19.

[96] Hebrews 7:22.

[97] Colossians 1:19-20.

[98] Matthew 5:5.

This hope of returning to a place of orientation for the Israelite first and then the New Testament believer second, signified a return from displacement, to a place of orientation or home. In other words, the hope of displaced believers is the hope of belonging to God in a cosmic home of his and their dwelling, "In my Father's house are many rooms."[99] Bouma-Prediger and Walsh describe this universal hope and longing to belong as universal, "it seems that there is indeed something universal about narratives of exile and return, . . . our stories seem to be preoccupied with home."[100] In what sense is the promise of home local? In what sense is it universal? In what sense is the promise of home a present hope? In what sense is it a future reality? This study explores these questions by seeking to understand how transplanted vocational ministers sought to develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver.

The study's focus now turns to the literature areas of exile, place, and asset-based community development.

Exile: Displacement and Dislocation

The Psalmist in his exile and sorrow cries out, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"[101] Many others echo and elaborate upon the Psalmist's description. Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor, defines exile in this way, "Exile means breaking with family, friends, acquaintances, surroundings, culture, language, and work. Exile means beginning again–elsewhere–an existence filled with ambition, anxiety, and

[99] John 14:2a; also see NASB translation that renders, "many dwelling places."

[100] Bouma-Prediger and Walsh, 10-1.

[101] Psalm 137:4.

occasional reward, in the midst of new friends or adversaries."[102] For Wiesel, exile means breaking with familiar surroundings and beginning again. Professor of theology and history of spirituality Belden C. Lane expounds upon Wiesel's description of exile as breaking, saying, "the feeling of void, even dread, that results from the deprivation of place."[103] Similarly, Palestinian-American Edward Said wrote of exile that it "is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being. Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past."[104] Bouma-Prediger and Walsh describe exile as the prophetic word for displacement, "The prophets had a word for such sociocultural, geopolitical, and religio-economic displacement: *exile*."[105]

Bouma-Prediger and Walsh utilize the language of landlessness, [106] homebreaking,[107] and wilderness[108] to describe exile, "Wilderness is Israel's most radical memory of landlessness. The wilderness is a site of chaos reminiscent of the 'formless void' before the dawn of creation."[109] Walter Brueggemann suggests that Christians, by virtue of their public claims regarding the gospel, are pushed to the margins of society

---

[102] Elie Wiesel, *Longing for Home*, in *The Longing for Home,* ed. Leroy S. Rouner (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 23.

[103] Belden C. Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative of American Spirituality* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988; repr., 2001), 35.

[104] Edward Said, "The Mind of Winter: Reflections on Life in Exile," *Harpers*, September, 1984, 51.

[105] Bouma-Prediger and Walsh, 19.

[106] Ibid., 17.

[107] Ibid., 15.

[108] Ibid., 17.

[109] Ibid.

and become "outsiders to the flow of power."[110] They find themselves in a place of exile by virtue of their commitment to the alternative world of the kingdom of God with its concomitant commitments.

Lee Beach expands the idea of exile to explore its emotional, spiritual, cultural, and social impact. Beach says, "Exile implies much more than simple geographical dislocation; it can be a cultural and spiritual condition as well. It is the experience of knowing that one is an alien, . . . perhaps even in a hostile environment where the dominant values run counter to one's own."[111] Similarly, Paul Tabori describes "inner exile" as "being an outcast within one's own country."[112] Susan Robin Suleiman expands Beach's "traditional definition of exile."[113] Suleiman writes that exile, "designates every kind of estrangement or displacement, from the physical to the geographical to the spiritual."[114] Said calls exile the "perilous territory of not belonging."[115] Said locates the experience of "rootlessness" or dislocation in the postmodern ethos that permeates culture today, and which subsequently sets up a cultural narrative that defies those who embrace a meaningful eschatological vision of all of life.[116]

---

[110] Walter Brueggemann, *Cadence of Home: Preaching Among Exiles* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 11.

[111] Lee Beach, *The Church in Exile: Living in Hope After Christendom* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015), 21.

[112] Paul Tabori, *The Anatomy of Exile: A Semantic and Historical Study* (London: Harrap, 1972).

[113] Beach, 21.

[114] Susan Robin Suleiman, *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances*, ed. Susan Robin Suleiman (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 2.

[115] Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile: And Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granata Books, 2001), 177.

[116] Ibid.

While exile can apply to sojourners and pilgrims, Sheldrake writes of "the contemporary crisis of place," and says, "People in the West are increasingly an exiled and uprooted people, living 'out of place.'"[117] Sheldrake assesses that mobility's increase in value since the Second World War has contributed to the problem,[118] "Remaining in the same place has come to symbolize a lack of choice, an entrapment, which is the lot of the poor, the elderly and people with handicaps."[119]

Sheldrake also assesses that media and technology contributes to modern placelessness.[120] Social theorists, such as Arjun Appadurai, have called this problem "deterritorialization."[121] Sheldrake explains, "Rather than the 'global village' with its strong communitarian imagery of locality, media and information technology are just as likely to create communities with no sense of place. In a 'dramatically delocalized world' what is locality?"[122]

Media and information technology creates communities that are "dramatically delocalized" with no sense of place. The French anthropologist Marc Augé utilizes the term "non-place."[123] Sheldrake comments regarding Augé's term:

> He distinguishes between place, full of historical monuments and creative social life, and non-place where no organic social life is possible. By non-place Augé means the contexts where we spend

---

[117] Sheldrake, 8.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid.

[120] Ibid., 9.

[121] Arjun Appardurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

[122] Sheldrake, 9.

[123] Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (New York: Verso, 1997).

> more and more time such as supermarkets, airports, hotels, motorways, in front of the television, sitting at a computer and so on. These experiences bring about a fragmentation of awareness that leads to incoherence in relationship to "the world."[124]

Augé uses the term "non-place" to describe the various contexts where people spend more and more time but lose their sense of place in the world. Barbara Kingsolver's novel *Animal Dreams* illustrates this concept as Kingsolver describes the protagonist, Codi Noline, as a "home-ignorer."[125] Bouma-Prediger and Walsh write of Noline's character, "Her name is *Noline,* and her story is that of a young woman with 'no line,' with no sense of who she is, or of her lineage, her genealogy, her 'place.' But she is striving to find home."[126]

Various scholars attribute the loss of place to modern urban and vagrant lifestyles. Michael Northcott writes about the loss of place in cities, "The modern city celebrates and facilitates mobility at the expense of settlement, movement at the expense of place."[127] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight agree and elaborate:

> Urbanization and the loss of community can be thought of as partly economic, partly a path to sustain empire, and partly the result of losing our connection with God and each other. In Scotland, if you were exiled, thrown out, or somehow detached from your clan, you would be called a "broken person." Broken people are people without community, which is really a death sentence.[128]

---

[124] Sheldrake, 8.

[125] Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal Dreams* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990; repr., 2013), 77.

[126] Bouma-Prediger and Walsh, 8.

[127] Michael Northcott, "A Place of Our Own," in *God in the City: Essays and Reflections from the Archbishop of Canterbury's Urban Theology Group*, ed. Peter Sedgwick (London: Mobray, 1995), 122.

[128] Peter Block, Walter Brueggemann, and John McKnight, *An Other Kingdom: Departing the Consumer Culture* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2016), 30.

Deeply influenced by E. M. Forster's *Howard's End,* written in 1910,[129] Berry writes that much of the effect of urbanization has been a loss and withdrawal of affection from local places, especially on account of "industrial ugliness."[130] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight connect "mobility and isolation" with an "empire narrative" built on market ideology;[131] they say the consequence is that "[s]piritual life and relational life become disassociated from place."[132] As people lose their sense of place, they no longer have a story to tell and there is no longer any connection and aliveness. They explain, "You don't have a story, but you can buy a new refrigerator. And it is amazing that a refrigerator can be more seductive than a people with a story. Commodity replaces narrative."[133]

Nicholas Carr states that technology and devices force people to live in "the shallows."[134] Carr concludes that a significant part of people's displacement is their inability to think deeply about things.[135] In 1973, Peter Berger wrote that the "mass of data and ideas with which the individual is bombarded by modern communications media augments the scale of his biographical designing board."[136] The "designing board" for

---

[129] E.M. Forster, *Howard's End*, Rev. ed. (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002).

[130] Wendell Berry, *It All Turns on Affection: The Jefferson Lectures & Other Essays* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2012), 33-4.

[131] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, 41.

[132] Ibid.

[133] Ibid., 41.

[134] Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011).

[135] Ibid., 115.

[136] Peter Berger, *The Homeless Mind* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 76.

Berger is the way people see themselves through the potential for social mobility in the world, identifying oneself according to this vast amount of data. Berger explains, "It may give him a sense of expansiveness and freedom. It may also mediate experiences of rootlessness and anomie."[137] According to Berger, this proliferation of global accessibility of information through technology has contributed in part to "the secularizing effect of pluralization."[138] Much of the result has been "a deepening condition of 'homelessness.'"[139]

Pressing into the Old Testament's theme of exile, biblical scholar Daniel L. Smith-Christopher acknowledges that there has been controversy among scholars in determining the degree of the oppression for God's people under foreign occupation and while in exile; nonetheless, he asserts that the conditions for God's people were quite dismal, regardless of which foreign occupiers were present (Assyria, Babylon, and Persia being immediately obvious in the Old Testament as well as the second temple period). Smith-Christopher writes that a close study of Old Testament passages on exile reveals a "lexicography of trauma."[140] In exploring various Old Testament passages that refer to exile, Smith-Christopher concludes that exile was generally a traumatic occasion for God's people.

Quoting from Leviticus 26:32-34, Old Testament scholar Ellen F. Davis explains that the reason for Israel's exile and the desolation of her land was chastisement for

---

[137] Ibid.

[138] Ibid., 82.

[139] Ibid.

[140] Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (Minneaopolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 71.

disobedience.[141] Davis' explanation for displacement and dislocation of God's people and the curse on the land is similar to Brueggemann's, who writes, "The Bible ponders the folly and carelessness that cause people securely landed to give it up."[142] Exploring Daniel 9:1-27, John S. Bergsma refers to the Persian period as a "penitential era."[143] Personal responsibility for the condition of exile was a consistent theme among those who took up the theme of exile from an exegetical perspective.

Hope and Re-Placement

Along with exile's despair, scholars also address hope and re-placement as consistent themes. Brueggemann speaks about a prophetic and poetic voice who "calls a name, bestows a vision, summons a pilgrimage."[144] This voice of hope reverses what Brueggemann calls a "land-expelling history;"[145] instead, God promises a "land-anticipating history [that] can only begin with One who in his speaking makes all things new."[146] Brueggemann references Abraham's summons in Genesis 12 to leave a place of "coercion and hopelessness," also signified by the barrenness of his wife Sarah.[147] As Abraham comes to the promise of re-placement, the promise of land, God says, "'To your descendants I give this land.' That's all. No bargaining, no condition, just a flat, bold,

---

[141] Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*, Reprint ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 62.

[142] Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, 15.

[143] John S. Bergsma, "The Persian Period as Pentitential Era: The 'Exegetical Logic' of Danel 9:1-27," in *Exile and Restoration Revisited: Essays on the Babylonian and Persian Periods in Memory of Peter R. Ackroyd*, eds. Deirdre Fulton, Lester L. Grabbe and Gary N. Knoppers (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 50.

[144] Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, 16.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Ibid., 17.

[147] Ibid.

unqualified one-liner that changed everything. Thus to the husband of the barren one, to his descendants the land."[148] Abraham's hope was wrapped up in his "re-placement" to the land of God's promise. Similarly, Bergsma points to the greater divine purpose behind exile as "progressively putting an end to sin, atoning for iniquity, and moving salvation history on toward its goal."[149] Christian communities have kindled such promises throughout the ages. Among the Puritans of New England, Lane explains that faith was nurtured by the "exigencies of exile."[150] Philip Sheldrake writes, "In a sense, it seems that the marginal ground *between* fixed places is where God is most often encountered."[151]

Beach highlights exile as an opportunistic occasion, "exile was for Israel a time of immense creativity, as it was also for the early church.[152] Beach writes, "While exile was devastating for Israelite life and faith, and life for the early church was a continual challenge, their circumstances proved to be a time of development that generated a better future for both."[153] Continuing to strike a note of optimism regarding exile, Beach writes, "For Israel, exile did not lead to an abandonment of faith or utter despair. On the contrary, exile was the impetus that inspired the most creative literature and daring theological articulations in the Old Testament."[154] Beach gives Ezekiel 10:15-22 as an

---

[148] Ibid., 19.

[149] Bergsma, in *Exile and Restoration Revisited: Essays on the Babylonian and Persian Periods in Memory of Peter R. Ackroyd*, 62.

[150] Lane, 143.

[151] Sheldrake, 34.

[152] Beach, 24.

[153] Ibid., 27.

[154] Beach, 56.

example: the glory of Yahweh leaves the temple and flies to be with the exiles in Babylon.[155] Another is Jeremiah 29:4-7, where blessing comes to Babylon as the exiles work for the good of their captors.[156] As Beach establishes, "Exile brought about a renewed sense that Israel had a role to play among the nations of the world in declaring the supremacy of Yahweh."[157] Smith-Christopher looks at generalized studies of disaster and quotes disaster theorist Claude Gilbert: disasters only become "disastrous" for people when the group is unable to "cope, redefine, and reconstruct."[158]

Also bringing a hopeful vision and speaking to Appadurai's deterritorialization, Steven Garber does so by writing about the concept of covenant:

> the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob connects to his people through covenant, saying with word and deed, "I know you, I know about you, and I choose to love you. I will be in relationship with you." . . . with that relationship comes a revelation. This is who I am. This is what I am like. This is who you are. This is how you are to live. He is the one who knows and understands and loves, and therefore makes his ways known.[159]

Garber says that far from distracted, God connects with his people through covenant; in essence, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob provides a way out of Berger's "deepening condition of homelessness."[160] For J. A. Middlemas, the repatriation of the Israelites back to their homeland under the reign of the Persian King Cyrus is the

---

[155] Ibid., 59.

[156] Ibid.

[157] Ibid., 62.

[158] Claude Gilbert, "Studying Disaster: Changes in the Main Conceptual Tools," in *What Is Disaster: Perspectives on the Question*, ed. E. L. Quarantelli (London: Routledge, 1998), 17.

[159] Garber, 93.

[160] Berger, 82.

dawning of a new day when Yahweh's wrath has come to an end and the resumption of his divine presence and protection.[161] This moment signifies the renewing of covenant relations between God and the people.[162] Repatriation to the land of God's promise is the renewing of covenant relations by the God who loves, sees, and redeems.

Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight imagine an alternative to the prevailing market ideology of culture, instead participating in a neighborly covenantal culture of renewal. They call this alternative way of life in community, a neighborly covenant, "Imagine the human benefit of an alternative to the market ideology that defines our culture. We call this the Neighborly Covenant because it enlivens and humanizes the social order. . . . What we are proposing is language for alternative ways to a covenantal culture."[163] Marrying the concepts of covenant and neighbor, Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight define covenant as "holding a relationship sacred."[164] They continue, "Traditionally, it meant with God or a higher power. Here it is about our relationships with neighbors and even strangers."[165] They say, "The language of covenant speaks to a market built on neighborliness, kinship, and common ownership. These are the cornerstones of the neighborly economy. Another kingdom. A covenantal relationship is based on a vow. It requires an act of imagination about neighborliness."[166]

---

[161] J.A. Middlemas, "Going Beyond the Myth of the Empty Land: A Reassessment of the Early Persian Period," in *Exile and Restoration Revisited: Essays on the Babylonian and Persian Periods in Memory of Peter R. Ackroyd*, eds. Deirdre Fulton, Lester L. Grabbe and Gary N. Knoppers (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 176.

[162] Ibid.

[163] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, xxii-xxiii.

[164] Ibid., 62.

[165] Ibid.

[166] Ibid., xxi.

Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight use the language of covenant to speak to "an other kingdom," an alternative to the ideology of the modern consumer market economy. Wendell Berry speaks of a kingdom he calls the great economy; Berry says that it governs and runs everything:

> the first principle of the Kingdom of God is that it includes everything; in it, the fall of every sparrow is a significant event. We are in it whether we know it or not and whether we wish to be or not. Another principle, both ecological and traditional, is that everything in the Kingdom of God is joined both to it and to everything else that is in it;[167]

Whereas Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight speak of an alternative ideology to the prevailing philosophy behind the modern consumer market economy, Berry describes all economies, including the prevailing consumer market economy as accountable to this great economy. Whereas Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight present a hopeful vision for "re-placement" in local communities and neighborhoods, Berry reminds that all lesser economies that do not abide by this neighborly covenant are accountable to a great economy. Garber names the God of that great economy (Berry's "Kingdom of God") as one who sees, knows, and loves.

Core Identity

A hopeful, divine vision for God's exiled people leads various writers to conclude that exile becomes a "core identity" of God's people. Beach writes "the people of God are by nature exilic;"[168] he explores the stories of Esther, Daniel, and Jonah in the Old Testament and 1 Peter in the New Testament as "a particular kind of exilic literature that

---

[167] Wendell Berry, *Home Economics: Fourteen Essays* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 1987), 54-75.

[168] Beach, 24.

offers a hopeful vision and compelling model of life in exile."[169] Beach continues, "Perhaps exile is the way that the people of God should understand themselves at all times in their history."[170] Beach says, "Exile is, in its very essence, living away from home. This is at the heart of the Christian faith, as we live away from our ultimate eschatological community. Furthermore, exile is a result of understanding ourselves as distinct people, strangers in the world."[171]

Exile is how Christians self-identify and this theme is at the heart of the Christian faith. Beach adds of Jesus' ministry, "Exile played a distinct role in the ministry of Jesus. He is foremost a model of exile insofar as he is depicted as one who is away from his true home (Jn 1:1-14; Phil 2:3-8). Furthermore, we can identify ways in which Jesus' ministry contains exilic overtones."[172]

Jesus self-identified with the theme of exile. As Craig Evans writes, "Jesus identified himself and his mission with an oppressed Israel in need of redemption and that he himself was the agent of redemption."[173] Beach concludes, "Exile as a lens for understanding the situation of Israel, Second Temple Jews and the early church is not only an appropriate way of perceiving the historic situation, but it is also a potent resource for helping us to understand our own."[174] Smith-Christopher agrees with Beach

---

[169] Ibid., 26.

[170] Beach, 20.

[171] Ibid., 21.

[172] Ibid., 112.

[173] Craig Evans, "Aspects of Exile and Restoration in the Proclamation of Jesus," in *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Perspectives*, ed. James M. Scott (Boston: Brill, 2001), 328.

[174] Beach, 136.

that being exilic is a core identity of God's people in the scriptures; Smith-Christopher describes this condition as a "diaspora existence."[175]

Beach also names the biblical accounts of Esther, Daniel, and Jonah as versions of a "diasporic advice tale."[176] He defines the diasporic advice tale, saying, "This literature provided a narrative response to exile that helped Israel see how its identity as God's people could be embodied in real exilic situations. This form of exilic literature was a clear expression of Israel's hope in its future."[177] Beach writes that in this form of literature, the protagonist could be understood as representing the exiled nation, in these particular cases, Israel–as a whole. Beach continues, "Furthermore, the protagonist's actions offer advice for how the nation should behave while in captivity."[178] Beach writes that these "tales" featured characters who were "able to thrive in their displaced context and even rise to places of significant influence."[179]

Following the vision of John Calvin, the Puritans of New England self-identified as "pilgrims and strangers in the world."[180] Calvin compared the life of God's children on earth to that of a bird flitting from one branch to another, never resting for long in any single nest.[181] While the Puritans saw themselves as God's chosen people in the New Israel of America, pride was always a temptation; therefore, serious cautions were made

---

[175] Smith-Christopher, 200.

[176] Beach, 65.

[177] Ibid.

[178] Ibid.

[179] Ibid., 66.

[180] Lane, 143.

[181] Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1959), 128.

"against sinking one's roots too deeply and presuming too recklessly upon God's gracious placement of his people."[182] As Robert Cushman reminded his people at Plymouth in 1622, "Our dwelling is but a wandering, and our abiding but as a fleeting, and in a word our home is nowhere but in the heavens–in that house not made with hands, whose maker and builder is God."[183] As John Cotton similarly instructed his people at Massachusetts Bay, "Christ is not bound to any place."[184]

Reinforcing the notion that exile is a core Christian identity, Sheldrake writes that while exile was always due to the curse of sin upon God's people, faith was nurtured (Lane) and even conceived "on the road."[185] As Sheldrake writes, "In a sense, it seems that the marginal ground *between* fixed places is where God is most often encountered."[186] Regarding the monastics and their writings, Majorie O'Rourke Boyle writes that there was often a "religious rejection of home."[187] Sheldrake says of monasticism that it "developed strands that emphasized displacement and exile in a quite literal way . . . and also a more metaphorical emphasis on pilgrimage."[188] In much the same way, St. Augustine of Hippo understood the perpetual state of the Christian to be exile and therefore pilgrimage:

---

[182] Lane, 143.

[183] Robert Cushman, "Reasons and Considerations Touching the Lawfulness of Removing Out of England Into Parts of America," (London, 1622), quoted in Lane, 143.

[184] Charles E. Habrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 13-16.

[185] Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity*, 34.

[186] Ibid.

[187] Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Divine Domesticity: Augustine of Thagaste to Teresa of Avila* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1997).

[188] Sheldrake, 114.

> What makes a Christian's heart heavy? He is a pilgrim and yearns for a country. . . . And if all things work together to make you fortunate, and the world in every way smiles on you, you nevertheless groan because you see that you are set on a pilgrimage. You feel that in the eyes of the foolish you certainly possess happiness but not as yet according to Christ's promises.[189]

For Augustine, pilgrimage and the perpetual state of exile made sense of the groaning and yearning of the human heart, for the promises of Christ had not yet come in their fullness. Regarding the monastics' beliefs, Sheldrake writes, "pilgrimage is of the essence of Christianity . . . Life is a roadway which the Christian must travel in perpetual pilgrimage."[190] The monastic ideal of spiritual poverty and rejection of material possessions became the measure of personal identity.[191]

Normalizing and Mission

In Israel's history as well as the history of the Christian church, there have been times when life for the believer seemed to "settle down" and take on a pattern of a more ordinary life. Regarding the exilic experience of Israel, Beach writes, "once the trauma of initial captivity had subsided, life did settle into a certain pattern that included the undertaking of normal human activities for both those in Babylon and for those left in the land."[192] Vadim Jigoulov writes that under Persian control, Israel had relative freedom to self-govern, "Overall, though, they (Persian kings) allowed the territories under their

---

[189] *Augustine of Hippo: Selected Writings*, ed. Mary T. Clark (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 249-50.

[190] Sheldrake, 116.

[191] Ibid.

[192] Beach, 53.

domain to remain autonomous, free of direct, hands-on oversight."[193] J. A. Middlemas writes that not all descendants of the Judahites from the deportations of 598, 587, and 582 BCE chose to return to their homeland. Instead, some continued to live and prosper in Egypt and Babylon,[194] and their labors bore fruit in the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible (produced in Egypt) as well as the Talmud (produced in Babylon).[195]

As God's people normalize their daily activities and retain their distinctive core identities as an exilic people, mission comes into view. Smith-Christopher explores the exilic, prophetic literature of Jonah and concludes, the "key to Jonah is the repentance and transformation of the enemy."[196] David N. Freedman agrees, "the overarching, historical purpose of her suffering is the world's conversion."[197] Joseph Blenkinsopp observes that in exile Israel begins to see herself as a confessional community that is now open to new converts.[198] Having utilized the language of a "diaspora existence"[199] to locate the exilic identity of God's people in the Old Testament, Smith-Christopher says, "To be a diaspora people is to be a people of mission."[200] In fact, Beach contends that the

---

[193] Vadim Jigoulov, "Administration of Achaemenid Phoenicia: A Case for Managed Autonomy," in *Exile and Restoration Revisited: Essays on the Babylonian and Persian Periods in Memory of Peter R. Ackroyd*, eds. Deirdre Fulton, Lester L. Grabbe and Gary N. Knoppers (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 147.

[194] Middlemas, in *Exile and Restoration Revisited: Essays on the Babylonian and Persian Periods in Memory of Peter R. Ackroyd*, 57.

[195] Ibid.

[196] Smith-Christopher, 132.

[197] Freedman, 186.

[198] Joseph Blenkinsopp, "Second Isaiah–Prophet of Universalism," *JSOT*, no. 41 (1988): 86.

[199] Smith-Christopher, 200.

[200] Ibid.

essence of "exilic hope" was that "suffering will be redeemed and that Israel's faithfulness will be held up as an act of witness to the nations."[201]

Place: Eschatological Paradox of Present Hope and Future Reality

Jürgen Moltmann likens the Jewish idea of shekinah with the Christian idea of Christ's incarnation:

> "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in their midst" (Matt. 18:20), say the Jewish Shekinah and the Christian Jesus in the same words. This experience also leads to a new expectation, for the experience of the creative and awakening divine Spirit is no more than a foretaste of the coming glory, which will fill the whole world.[202]

Moltmann says the experience of the indwelling presence of God in his shekinah as well as God in Christ creates a new expectation, a foretaste of coming glory. Inge argues for a continuity between the Old Testament anticipation of the coming God by his Spirit and Christ's incarnation in the New Testament, writing, "the importance of particular geographical location as it is understood in the Old Testament has been superseded by the person of Jesus Christ."[203] Inge summarizes, "space has been 'Christified' by the incarnation."[204]

Moltmann ties God's indwelling presence in his shekinah together with God–in Christ's incarnation–new expectation of coming glory, and thus he anticipates a filling of the world. This eschatological vision is similar to Brueggemann's reversal of history for

---

[201] Beach, 89.

[202] Moltmann, *Shekinah: The Home of the Homeless God*, 179.

[203] Ibid.

[204] John Inge, *A Christian Theology of Place* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003), 57.

the Israelites turning to a land-anticipating history.[205] Jesus spoke of this expectation as the meek inheriting the earth.[206] Brueggemann speaks of the anticipated hope of a permanent residence, i.e. rootedness on the earth with God. Meanwhile, the God who makes this promise of a permanent residence, "roots" with people on their sojourn back home. Leonard Hjalmarson speaks of this anticipated home as the kingdom yet to come, "The hunger for roots becomes first an earthed experience, and then a hope for something more, the kingdom yet to come."[207] Inge writes, "The final promise, in the New Testament as in the Old, is of *placedeness."*[208] Going back to the creation account, Jonathan R. Wilson writes:

> The incarnation *is* a new way of God's being present, but it is a coherent continuation of the story of the God who seeks out the first humans in the garden after their sin (Gen. 3), who comes to Abram and calls him (Gen. 12), who appears to Moses and comes down to deliver the Israelites from Egypt (Exod. 3). This same "condescension" climaxes in the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, and will be consummated in God's condescension to dwell with redeemed humankind in the new creation (Rev. 21).[209]

Wilson says that while the incarnation is a new way of God being present with his people, it is also a coherent continuation traced throughout scripture of God's "condescending" commitment to dwell with his people.

---

[205] Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, 17.

[206] Matt. 5:5.

[207] Hjalmarson, 112.

[208] Inge, 58.

[209] Jonathan R. Wilson, *God's Good World: Reclaiming the Doctrine of Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 220.

Place and Pilgrimage

Hjalmarson writes, "Our physical journey in place roots us, and then acts as a symbol and foretaste of the coming age, a restored world order under the reign of God."[210] Hjalmarson and Moltmann recognize the dual realities of "rooting with God" in anticipation of a future home as well as being on the move as God's people sojourn:

> To be on the move and to come to rest; to arrive home and to go out: we have to fulfill the claims of both of these dimensions of our lives. Repose and movement aren't opposites. We have to preserve repose in movement, and remain capable of movement in repose. In the rhythm of the two our life is alive and in harmony with the God who journeys with us, and who dwells among us.[211]

As Moltmann says, to find harmony requires that individuals find repose and movement.

When writing about sacred space, Lane describes repose and movement less as a rhythm and more as a tension between the local and the universal, "sacred space always possesses a double impulse–a movement which is at once centripetal and centrifugal, a pulling in and a pushing out from a center, a tendency alternately toward localization and universalization."[212] To explain this tension, Lane utilizes the language of paradox, "The idea hinges on yet another essential paradox that human existence is an ever-renewed tension between exile and home. There is always the desire of the settled to be unsettled and the unsettled to be settled."[213] For his example, the Puritans came to the new world

---

[210] Hjalmarson, 112.

[211] Moltmann, *Shekinah: The Home of the Homeless God*, 183.

[212] Lane, 152.

[213] Ibid.

with the firm conviction they were God's pilgrim people and that New England was God's chosen place.[214] Lane explains:

> Puritans found themselves caught between being centered and being scattered, placed and uprooted, frightened and enchanted by the same beauteous and rugged space in which they dwelt. Such is the subtle and convoluted hermeneutic that Puritans brought to the landscape of New England.[215]

The Puritans brought a centered and scattered hermeneutic to their New England landscape. Philip Sheldrake states that the notion of pilgrimage balanced with a strong sense of place resonates with the modern person, "We seek both firm roots and yet a capacity to deal with continuous change."[216] Sheldrake locates these sentiments in the nature of the trinitarian God of the Bible who reveals himself to his people. Sheldrake states, "The Christian revelation of God suggests a dialectical relationship between particularity and universality."[217] Sheldrake prefers the language of "interrelatedness and communion" over tension or rhythm when writing about the trinitarian roots of pilgrimage and place. Sheldrake writes, "Christian Trinitarian belief affirms God as a space in which the particularity of the divine persons is not merely held in tension with, but consists of their interrelatedness and communion."[218] As God's people shape the world and sojourn through it, they do so in a way that reflects the trinitarian God.

---

[214] Ibid., 142.

[215] Ibid., 152.

[216] Philip Sheldrake, *Living Between Worlds: Place and Journey in Celtic Spirituality* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1995), 3.

[217] Sheldrake, 167.

[218] Ibid., 167-8.

Sheldrake implies an ontological necessity as humans bear God's image (imago Dei) and live into the world as responsible agents, as imago Mundi.

Sheldrake wonders how humans approach their built environments and local communities as "sacraments or anti-sacraments . . . revelations of God or denials of God."[219] The dual features of the particularity of place and the universality of human sojourning through the cosmos therefore represents the experience of displacement of believers who faithfully live on this side of glory as well as those who seek to honor God through responsible stewardship of God's world. Sheldrake brings some resolution to the dual tension of particularity and universality when he writes, regarding the Jesuit line that came from Ignatius Loyola, that their vision of "pilgrimage" was first and foremost grounded not so much in an "other-worldly spirituality" as much as the idea that the whole inhabited world, the *oikumene,* was the house of God and his people.[220]

God, People, and Place

Regarding the 17th century North American Puritans, Belden Lane writes, "what kept the Puritans from flying headlong into the flame of God's consuming majesty, . . . was their concept of covenant."[221] Lane writes:

> The covenant became the means by which a mysterious, unpredictable God of glory could be seen to act with unerring dependability. Central to Puritan thought was the conviction that this very God of inaccessible light, who dwells beyond the Cloud of Unknowing, had voluntarily chosen to limit his majesty so as to enter covenant with human subjects. The God who could be tamed by no one had tamed himself, pledging to honor the mutual obligations of covenant.[222]

[219] Ibid., 168.

[220] Ibid., 118.

[221] Lane, 134.

[222] Ibid.

The Puritans drew their spirituality from Calvin's *Institutes,* and Lane summarizes that they understood God as present in the particulars of localized existence primarily through the concept of his covenant with his people.

A similar thought to covenant, Calvin often utilized the doctrine of union with Christ, "But he [God] unites to us by the Spirit alone. By the grace and power of the same Spirit we are made his members, to keep us under himself and in turn to possess him."[223] John Murray similarly writes, "Union with Christ is really the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation not only in its application but also in its once-for-all accomplishment in the finished work of Christ."[224] Billings writes, "To speak about Calvin's theology of union with Christ is to speak about a cluster of related thoughts and images in his thought related to participation, union, engrafting, and adoption."[225] The language of adoption in the Bible means God brings believers into the full embrace of God and his family, "As our Maker is our Father, so our Saviour is our brother, when we come into the family of God."[226]

Drawing on the rich Reformed tradition passed down from Calvin, Scottish theologian and pastor James Buchanan explains the change in status that accompanies one who has come into the full embrace of God:

> "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends" (John 15:15);–

---

[223] Calvin, 3.1.3.

[224] John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955; repr., 1993), 161.

[225] *Calvin's Theology and Its Reception: Disputes, Developments, and New Possibilites*, eds. J. Todd Billings and I. John Hesselink (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 50.

[226] Packer, 190.

> and a still closer and dearer relation is said to exist in consequence of adoption; for "Thou art no more a servant, but a son, and an heir of God through Christ." (Galatians 4:7) The privilege of adoption presupposes pardon and acceptance, but is higher than either.[227]

As Buchanan explains, the Bible promises that for those who place their faith in Jesus Christ, God confers the status of full membership and acceptance into his family. Billings says of this status of adoption, that believers "enter into the playful, joyous world of *living as children of a gracious Father, as persons united to Christ and empowered by the Spirit.*"[228] Billings also points to this central doctrine that the benefits of salvation come to believers in union with Christ, "a key biblical and theological motif for salvation."[229] He continues, "in salvation we receive not only forgiveness (justification) but also new life (sanctification) as a gift. Thus, sanctification is not simply 'our response,' initiated by our asking 'what would Jesus do?' Sanctification, like justification, is a gift that we receive in union with Christ."[230]

Like Buchanan, drawing from the Reformed tradition, Billings states that the heart of the Bible's message is the gift of being united with God through Christ. Christ has come to restore what was lost in Adam's fall. Referencing creation, Calvin explains that even prior to sin's entrance into the world, Adam was "united and bound to his

---

[227] Buchanan, 262-3.

[228] Billings, 25.

[229] Ibid., 35.

[230] Ibid., 28.

Maker."[231] Billings writes, "Thus, when the Spirit comes to us in redemption, uniting us to Jesus Christ, we do not lose our true identity; rather, it is restored."[232]

Utilizing similar relational language to union with Christ, Tim Laniak ties God's presence with his people to covenant as did the Puritans; Laniak prioritizes covenant in relationship to God's people over land and temple.[233] Laniak roots covenant in relationship.[234] Similarly, Steven Garber writes that covenant meant that God said to his ancient people Israel, "I will be in relationship with you."[235]

Abraham Kuyper writes of covenant, "the all-important Calvinistic dogma; . . . showing that the waters of the Church do not flow outside the natural stream of human life, but cause the life of the Church to proceed hand in hand with the natural organic reproduction of mankind in its succeeding generations."[236] Kuyper explains how God's relationship with those who confess his name extends to their children. Kuyper says that in the notion of covenant, God can be found "sealing in its connection between the life of grace and the life of nature."[237] Therefore, Kuyper connects the work of Christ's redemption and grace to the world of nature. In regards to this connection with the world of nature, Kuyper writes:

---

[231] Calvin, 2.1.5.

[232] Billings, 33.

[233] Tim Laniak, "Esther's Vokcentrism and the Reframing of Post-Exilic Judaism," in *The Book of Esther in Modern Research*, eds. Sidnie White Crawford and Leonard J. Greenspoon (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 82.

[234] Ibid., 79-82.

[235] Garber, 93.

[236] Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1931; repr., 2002), 65.

[237] Ibid.

> that it placed the believer *before the face of God,* not only in His church, but also in his personal, family, social and political life. The majesty of God and the authority of God press upon the Calvinist in the whole of his human existence. He is a pilgrim, not in the sense that he is marching through a world with which he has no concern, but in the sense that at every step of the long way he must remember his responsibility to that God so full of majesty, who awaits him at his journey's end.[238]

Like Lane's description of the Puritans, Kuyper also describes the majesty of God as the occasion by which the covenanted people of God are held as worshippers of God. Kuyper further implies that grace has come to redeem nature, rather than to dispose of it. In similar fashion, Herman Bavinck referred to the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century as a "Reformation of the natural."[239] Michael D. Williams agrees and writes, "Genesis 1:26-28 indicates that there is more to bearing the divine image than a personal relationship with God. It also involves relationship with creation. . . . Man is called to be God's agent, the mediator of God's covenant with creation."[240] Michael E. Wittmer writes, "But though salvation begins with us, the God who redeems us does not want us to keep redemption to ourselves. He wants us to share his grace with the rest of creation, redeeming society, the animal kingdom, and even the earth itself. God wants it all."[241] Wittmer goes on to quote Kuyper's well-known saying, "There is not a square inch in the

---

[238] Ibid., 71-2.

[239] Bavinck, 63.

[240] Williams, 60.

[241] Michael E. Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth: Why Everything You Do Matters to God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 188-89.

whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over *all,* does not cry: Mine!"[242] Agreeing with Wittmer, Ellen F. Davis states:

> From a Biblical perspective, the covenant is not purely a two-way relationship between human beings and God. The covenant is a three-way relationship, . . . thinking about the aftermath of the flood story in Genesis when God makes a covenant with kol basar, "all flesh," . . . all of the nonhuman creatures.[243]

Davis states that the covenant God makes is a "three-way relationship" that involves his people but also the rest of the created order as well.

Lane describes how the Puritans discovered God's presence in the particulars of creation:

> So long as the faithful remained true to the terms of this manner of binding God to themselves, they could generally be assured of the divine blessing as they read it off the landscape in which they lived. In the beauty of a Gloucester sunrise, the expanse of fields planted in winter rye, they received tokens of God's loving care, always undeserved and always an occasion for wonder. As God's covenant people, they knew themselves to be sons and daughters of royalty–rapt in awe and bound by love.[244]

The Puritans looked to the created order to see tokens of God's loving care and presence, drawing from Calvin's doctrine of God's created order as "a theater of his glory."[245] Susan Schreiner writes:

> In Calvin's understanding, sin neither annihilated the natural realm nor thwarted God's purpose in creation. Divine immutability guarantees that the original purpose of creation is irrevocable; the natural order remains the subject of God's

---

[242] Abraham Kuyper, "Souvereiniteit in Eigen Kring," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. and trans. James D. Bratt (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 488.

[243] Davis, "Office Hours with Ellen Davis on Christians and Creation," accessed March 26, 2014.

[244] Lane, 134.

[245] Calvin, 1.14.20; 2.6.1.

> preservation, a reflection of his glory, and the object of restoration. According to Calvin the immutability of election finds its parallel in God's faithfulness toward the preservation and restoration of creation. Therefore, not only does God save the elect but he maintains the integrity of nature, governs the cosmos and history, and reclaims the "work of his hands."[246]

Schreiner states that Calvin and other reformers held together the immutability of divine election as well as the preservation of the natural order due to God's faithfulness over it. John Inge who is quite critical of the Protestant Reformation, nonetheless wrote, "Even Calvin, noted neither for his natural theology nor his sacramental approach, referred to the natural world as *theatrum gloriae dei,* a threatre in which the glory of God is manifested."[247] Despite Inge's negative assessment of the Reformation, nonetheless he borrows from Calvin, "the world, graced by God, can be the 'theatre of his glory' . . . The term 'theatre' is useful here."[248] Sheldrake writes of Calvin's vision that "The *loci communes,* the ordinary places of the world itself, become the stage on which divine revelation is acted out."[249] As Calvin wrote:

> Meanwhile, being placed in this most beautiful theatre, let us not decline to take pious delight in the clear and manifest works of God. For, as we have elsewhere observed, though not the chief, it is, in the point of order, the first evidence of faith, to remember to which side soever we turn, that all which meets the eye is the work of God, and at the same time to mediate with pious care on the end which God had in view in creating it.[250]

---

[246] Susan E. Schreiner, *The Theater of His Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin*, vol. 3, *Studies in Historical Theology* (Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1991), 5.

[247] Inge, 62.

[248] Ibid., 89.

[249] Sheldrake, 63.

[250] Calvin, 1.14.20.

Calvin describes the sacredness of the world and the "pious care on the end which God had in view in creating it."[251]

Martin Luther, on the other hand, de-emphasized sacred space. Luther preferred to speak of community as sacred. Sheldrake explains, "[Luther] concentrated on the *sacred community* of the Church and downplayed the physical locations, such as church buildings, that might be understood as a *sacramentum* of that community."[252] Luther wrote of the world as the Lord's; nonetheless, because Luther primarily viewed the world as a profane place, believers were said to have a strained relationship to it at best. For Luther, word and sacrament celebrated in the midst of the assembly alone qualified as a holy place. Laniak agrees with Luther's assessment (as explained by Sheldrake), describing how God prioritizes his people over and above place, "God is available to them [His people] anywhere first, then at a designated somewhere."[253] Similarly to Luther and Laniak, Vinay Samuel writes, "Christian identity is not confined to place."[254]

On the other hand, John Inge writes of a "relational view of place"[255] but does not limit relationship to God and his people; Inge includes place. Inge writes that we must understand "place as relational to both God and his people."[256] Regarding the incarnation, Inge expounds, "the importance of particular geographical location as it is understood in

---

[251] Ibid.

[252] Sheldrake, 62.

[253] Laniak, 82.

[254] Vinay Samuel, "Strangers and Exiles in the Bible," *Transformation*, April-June 1995, 28-9.

[255] Inge, 47.

[256] Ibid., 46.

the Old Testament has been superseded by the person of Jesus Christ."[257] He summarizes, "space has been 'Christified' by the incarnation."[258] Unlike Luther, instead of marginalizing place as a result of this supersession of Christ, Inge sees it as giving place meaning, "God relates *to* people *in* places, and the places are not irrelevant to the relationship but, rather, are integral to divine human encounter."[259] Inge notices a recent resurgence in books on popular piety within the Reformed tradition—books that take on the notion of pilgrimage as a model for understanding the Christian life.[260] Inge finds that the books speak often on journey as a spiritual endeavor but make little mention of a destination. Inge writes that because of the reformers' interest in rooting out idolatry and the later movement of the Enlightenment undermining anything remotely resembling superstition, physical pilgrimages mostly disappeared among western Protestant Christians.[261]

Sheldrake explains also that the early church understood the place of God to be primarily the people of God and that "Christianity was powered by a belief that revelation was focused not on a land or a temple, but on a person, Jesus Christ."[262] For the early church, the primary emphasis on the sacredness of place was the sacredness of God's people in relationship to Christ in that place.

---

[257] Moltmann, *Shekinah: The Home of the Homeless God*, 179.

[258] Inge, 57.

[259] Ibid., 58.

[260] Ibid., 101.

[261] Ibid.

[262] Sheldrake, 37.

Regarding Lane's assessment of the Puritan experiment, after the first generation, Luther's fears of God's people becoming "too at home in the world" may have appeared to have received some validation.[263] By the second and third Puritan generations, the particular and local had become the primary emphasis of the people. Sight of the wellsprings of the rich faith heritage that brought their parents and grandparents to the new world was lost, "The sense of amazement at the grandeur of a covenanting God would cease to hold the Puritan imagination in quite the same way as it once had."[264]

Critiques of Protestantism

John Inge places much of the blame for the loss of a Christian understanding of place on the Protestant Reformation:

> It is no accident that the discoveries of Newton and Galileo arose, as we saw, from a theology which was interested in the infinite and the all-powerful rather than the particular. It is no coincidence either that in the same epoch as these scientists were working, the Reformation was separating theology from the material and particular. In medieval times locality had been a vital ingredient of a world view which, as I have already intimated, enabled the sustenance of a 'spiritual geography', but Reformed thought would have no truck with what came to be regarded as superstition.[265]

Inge argues that the reformers lost the vision for locality as they emphasized the infinite and the all-powerful to the neglect of the particular and local. In reflecting on the once medieval, now Calvinist, cathedral in Berne, Switzerland, Denys Turner mourns the Calvinist architectural revision of whitewashed walls, stripped altars and plain glass

---

[263] Lane, 147.

[264] Ibid., 146.

[265] Inge, 28-9.

replacements, calling it "a place of absence."[266] Inge draws the conclusion, "The danger, surely, is that in refusing to identify God with the particular, the Reformed tradition has fueled the rise of a secular conviction that God is not just absent, but non-existent."[267] Sheldrake writes that the Reformation tradition has an "ambivalence towards place as a revelation of the sacred."[268] Sheldrake writes that because the word became the primary symbol by which God's people move towards the eschatological kingdom of God; therefore, "The physical world, images and ritual need to be questioned because they tend to divert people from placing their security in God alone."[269]

Seeking to find a middle ground between the two traditions, Franz Leenhardt locates Catholic and Protestant emphases between two strands of biblical tradition; the Abrahamic and the prophets and Moses and the Gospel of John.[270] Sheldrake writes of these two strands, "The Abrahamic strand includes the prophets, St. Paul and the Protestant Reformers. The primary symbol is the word, our critical sense is hearing and the fundamental spiritual dynamic is a movement towards an eschatological Kingdom."[271] Regarding the Catholic influence, "associated with Moses or the Gospel of John, [the Catholic tradition] places its emphasis precisely on *being located.*"[272] Sheldrake writes regarding the Catholic emphasis, "The location is precisely on *being*

---

[266] Denys Turner, "The Darkness of God and the Light of Christ: Negative Theology and Eucharistic Presence," *Modern Theology* 15, no. 2 (April 1999): 155.

[267] Inge, 119.

[268] Sheldrake, 61.

[269] Ibid.

[270] Franz Leenhardt, *Two Biblical Faiths: Protestant and Catholic* (London: SCM Press, 1964).

[271] Sheldrake, 61.

[272] Ibid., 62.

located. The location is primarily in a human community which is the carrier of the tradition. The kerygma is mediated through place, local particularities and the sacramental space of community."[273]

Location is quite central to the Catholic view of blessing being mediated through the heart of Christ's message through sacred places. Also in seeking to find a middle ground, Sheldrake argues for a proper balance between "an ethical approach to place" (Protestant tradition) and "a sacramental sensibility in which the particularities of place may point beyond themselves to the mystery of God" (Catholic tradition).[274]

Loss of Place as a Contemporary Crisis

Simone Weil writes, "To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul."[275] Philip Sheldrake observes that the proliferation of the theme of place in a wide range of contemporary literature, from various disciplines, "partly reflects what a number of commentators refer to as a crisis of place in Western societies–a sense of rootlessness, dislocation or displacement."[276] Referring to the ancient practice of removing the flesh and organs of the dead, Michael Frost assesses the problem with much of contemporary life as being "excarnated."[277] Frost likens this ancient practice of excarnation to "another kind of excarnation, . . . an existential kind in which we are being convinced to embrace an increasing disembodied presence in our world."[278]

---

[273] Ibid.

[274] Ibid., 63.

[275] Weil, 43.

[276] Sheldrake, 2.

[277] Michael Frost, *Incarnate: The Body of Christ in an Age of Disengagement* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014), 9.

According to Frost, the challenge of contemporary society is that it has defleshed the human experience by treating people as objects or ideas.[279]

This cultural trend has impacted the church in its reflection of a "disembodied approach to the mission of the church, a drift toward nonincarnational expressions, where disembodied advocacy is preferable to the dirt and worms and compost of localized service."[280] Agreeing with Frost, Oliver O'Donovan writes, "contemporary Western society is marked by a loss of the sense of place, and its intellectual traditions, far from controlling the loss, have encouraged it."[281] O'Donovan elaborates, "local roots and rootlessness should be, one would think, a major topic of conversation among theologians who habitually read the Bible."[282] Brueggemann agrees, "Land is a central, if not *the central theme* of biblical faith."[283] Brueggemann builds his case by locating the central human problem in that of anomie, i.e. homelessness:

> The central problem is not emancipation but *rootage,* not meaning but *belonging,* not separation from community but *location* within it, not isolation from others but *placement* deliberately between the generations of promise and fulfillment. The Bible is addressed to the central human problem of homelessness (*anomie)* and seeks to respond to that agenda.[284]

Brueggemann argues that land is the central, biblical theme because the central problem is the loss of rootage, placement, and belonging. Similarly, Edward Said calls exile the

---

[278] Ibid., 10.

[279] Ibid., 11.

[280] Ibid., 12.

[281] O'Donovan, 48.

[282] Ibid., 44.

[283] Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, 3.

[284] Ibid., 199-200.

"perilous territory of not belonging."[285] Said locates the experience of rootlessness or dislocation in the postmodern ethos that permeates culture today, and its subsequent cultural narrative that defies a meaningful eschatological vision of life.[286]

Sheldrake writes of "the contemporary crisis of place," saying, "people in the West are increasingly an exiled and uprooted people, living 'out of place.'"[287] As mobility's value rose after the Second World War,[288] Sheldrake assesses, "remaining in the same place has come to symbolize a lack of choice, an entrapment, which is the lot of the poor, the elderly and people with handicaps."[289] Sheldrake also assesses that media and technology contributes to modern placelessness.[290] Social theorists such as Arjun Appadurai have called this problem "deterritorialization."[291] Sheldrake writes, "rather than the 'global village' with its strong communitarian imagery of locality, media and information technology are just as likely to create communities with no sense of place. In a 'dramatically delocalized world' what is locality?"[292]

Media and information technology creates communities that are "dramatically delocalized" with no sense of place. The French anthropologist Marc Augé utilizes the

---

[285] Said, *Reflections on Exile: And Other Literary and Cultural Essays*, 177.

[286] Ibid.

[287] Sheldrake, 8.

[288] Ibid.

[289] Ibid.

[290] Ibid., 9.

[291] Appadurai.

[292] Sheldrake, 9.

term "non-place."[293] Augé uses the term "non-place" to describe the various contexts where people spend more and more time but lose their sense of place in the world.

Nicholas Carr states that technology and devices can force people to live in "the shallows."[294] Carr concludes that a significant part of people's displacement is the inability to think deeply about themselves and their world. Peter Berger wrote in 1973 that the "mass of data and ideas with which the individual is bombarded by modern communications media augments the scale of his biographical designing board."[295] The "designing board" for Berger is the way people see themselves through the potential for social mobility in the world; as Berger writes, identifying oneself according to this vast amount of data, "It may give him a sense of expansiveness and freedom. It may also mediate experiences of rootlessness and anomie."[296] According to Berger, this proliferation of global accessibility of information through technology has contributed in part to "the secularizing effect of pluralization."[297] Berger writes, much of the result has been "a deepening condition of 'homelessness.'"[298]

Incarnation as Recovery of Place

Jürgen Moltmann uses the language of dwelling, by describing "a new theology of the Shekinah [that] came into being" during Israel's exilic period.[299] Moltmann

---

[293] Augé.

[294] Carr, 115.

[295] Berger, 76.

[296] Ibid.

[297] Ibid., 82.

[298] Ibid.

[299] Moltmann, *Shekinah: The Home of the Homeless God*, 174.

explains, "Shekinah means the descent and special indwelling of God in the midst of Israel and in his temple on Zion."[300] Moltmann describes God as the one who in his shekinah "suffers the exile of his people. . . God's Shekinah has become homeless, and wanders restlessly through the dust of this world's streets."[301] Beach writes of Ezekiel 1 that the "key idea in the vision is that of a God who is not restricted to Jerusalem. He is on the move and is going into exile with his people."[302] Moltmann links God's shekinah with the incarnation of Jesus, "So the Israelite statement that 'God dwells in the midst of his people' (Ezek. 37:27) can be transferred to Jesus the Christ: 'The fullness of deity dwells in him' (Col. 2:9)."[303]

W. D. Davies, in his landmark work *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine*, takes the concept further, "the Jesus of the fourth gospel is not a disincarnate spirit, but a man of flesh and blood who hungered and thirsted and was weary with his journey. His flesh was real flesh, and he was geographically conditioned as all men."[304] Thomas F. Torrance writes regarding the particularities of Jesus' descent to indwell human flesh:

> By the Incarnation Christian theology means that a definite point in space and time the Son of God became man, born at Bethlehem of Mary, a virgin espoused to be a man called Joseph, a Jew of the tribe and lineage of David, and towards the end of the reign of Herod the Great in Judaea. Given the name of Jesus, He fulfilled

---

[300] Ibid.

[301] Ibid., 175.

[302] Beach, 58.

[303] Moltmann, *Shekinah: The Home of the Homeless God*, 179.

[304] W.D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 335.

> His mission from the Father, living out the span of earthly life allotted him.[305]

In addition to pointing out the particularities of Jesus' localized and earthly life and ministry, Torrance writes, "Jesus Christ is the actual Mediator between God and man and man and God in all things, even in regard to space-time relations."[306] Torrance concludes that "the faith and understanding of the Christian Church that in Jesus Christ God Himself in his own Being has come into our world and is actively present as a personal Agent within our physical and historical existence."[307]

Zach Eswine agrees, writing:

> The Bible says plainly that Jesus had a hometown. He grew up not in every place, but in one place. . . . The Holy One of God became a man–and this incarnation included limiting himself and inhabiting a locality on the earth. I think this is something of what my mom meant by "roots."[308]

Eswine connects Jesus coming to inhabit human flesh with the importance of his own sense of place and rootage. Inge also explicitly states Eswine's connection:

> if we are to reassert the importance of the body, we must, by implication, reassert the importance of place, and vice versa. The two are inseparable, since place is always there at the first level of human experience: just as there is no experience of place without body, so there is no experience of body without place.[309]

Inge established the body's integral place. Inge further establishes the centrality of particular places as the locales of God's interactions in the world, "it is clear from the

---

[305] Thomas F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Incarnation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 52.

[306] Ibid.

[307] Ibid.

[308] Zack Eswine, *Sensing Jesus: Life and Ministry as a Human Being* (Wheaton, Il: Crossway, 2013), 61.

[309] Inge, 53.

incarnation that *places are the seat of relations or the place of meeting and activity in the interaction between God and the world.*"[310] Inge adds that the incarnation "initiates an unprecedented celebration of materiality and therefore a place in God's relations with humanity."[311] Philip Sheldrake says the incarnation "offers an image of God's irrevocable commitment as *remaining.*"[312] Sheldrake contends that the very idea of Christ's incarnation communicates the importance of place, presence, and indwelling.

Scientist John Polkinghorne connects the resurrection of Christ with the importance of place, "Jesus' risen body is the transmuted and glorified form of his dead body. This tells us that in Christ there is a destiny for matter as well as for humanity. In fact, our destinies belong together, precisely because humans are embodied beings."[313] Inge builds off of Polkinghorne's insights, "just as to have a body is necessary to have a place for that body in the here and now, . . . the material nature of the resurrection world and our embodiment within it will necessitate place, too."[314] The philosopher Martin Heidegger writes in an article "An Ontological Consideration of Place," that to be a person literally means to be in a particular place; Heidegger called a person a "Dasein," or "being-there."[315]

---

[310] Ibid., 52.

[311] Ibid.

[312] Sheldrake, 29.

[313] John Polkinghorne, *Serious Talk, Science and Religion in Dialogue* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 108.

[314] Inge, 142.

[315] Martin Heidegger, *The Question of Being* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1958), 26.

The World as Sacrament

Thomas Traherne broadens the definition of incarnation to include the cosmos; he refers to the world as God's body, "How do we know, but the World is that Body, which the Deity hath assumed to manifest his beauty."[316] Alexander Schmemann writes, "the world is meaningful only when it is the 'sacrament' of God's presence."[317] Wendell Berry encourages people to treat creation as a sacrament, "To live, we must daily break the body and shed the blood of Creation. When we do this knowingly, lovingly, skillfully, reverently, it is a sacrament."[318] Whereas Traherne refers to the world as God's body, Schmemann writes of it as finding meaning only when viewed as God's sacramental presence, Berry writes of human responsibility to live in the world recognizing it as a sacrament.

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)

In 2015, Cormac Russell wrote a paper called "Asset-Based Community Development: Looking Back to Look Forward."[319] In the paper Russell explains:

> ABCD is the method designed to also mobilise the inside forces that are the basic source of community power, a power that not alone includes everyone in a process of total place transformation but also forms the basis of holding technocracy, and corporate interests at bay.[320]

---

[316] Thomas Traherne, *Centuries of Meditation* (New York: Cosimo Books, 1908; repr., 2009), 90.

[317] Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World*, Rev. ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladmir's Seminary Press, 1973), 17.

[318] Wendell Berry, *The Gift of Good Land: Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 1981), 281.

[319] Cormac Russell, "Looking Back to Look Forward: The Intellectual Heritage of Asset-Based Community Development," Nurturedevelopment.org, June 19, 2015, accessed October 25, 2016, http://www.nurturedevelopment.org/blog/looking-back-to-look-forward-the-intellectual-heritage-of-asset-based-community-development-cormac-russell-new-book/.

[320] Cormac Russell, *Asset-Based Community Development: Looking Back to Look Forward* (Cormac Russell, 2015), Kindle.

Russell says that ABCD is a method that seeks to mobilize the people, i.e., "inside forces," of a community as the basic source of community power and to keep corporate interests from rendering those forces powerless.

Key Influencers Upon McKnight

Russell says that John McKnight, a founding father of ABCD, "speaks of the capacity of neighbourhoods to restore conviviality and for people to recover for themselves a practical and sustainable ecology, a living democracy and mutual prosperity, what he now refers to as a 'culture of community.'"[321] In an interview with Russell, McKnight shared about nine key influencers on his development of ABCD. The first was Saul Alinsky, most known for his book *Reveille for Radicals*.[322] Alinsky believed power to be in an organized network of people; his method was to "confront and create conflict with institutions. They set out to get people organised, committed and prepared enough to be willing to march on a factory, or go to city hall and confront the mayor!"[323] McKnight writes of Alinsky, "Saul said that nobody ever gave any power away voluntarily, that it's a struggle, and you have to create conflict."[324]

The second key influencer was Ivan Illich. Illich was a Roman Catholic priest who ran a center that sought to teach cultural sensitivity to North American missionaries in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Illich was also very critical of the Roman Catholic Church.[325]

---

[321] Ibid.

[322] Ibid.

[323] Ibid.

[324] Ibid.

[325] Ibid.

Illich said that if institutions grow and become powerful through time, they go from being relatively productive to becoming less and less so in time. They begin to decline in productivity until they become counter-productive.[326] Illich spoke of "crime-making criminal justice systems" and "stupid-making schools;" he spoke of "dependency creating governance and social service systems."[327] Illich utilized the language of "iatrogenesis" which means "doctor created disease."[328]

A third key influencer was McKnight's professor Franklin Haiman who taught "Group Dynamics" at the School of Speech at Northwestern University.[329] Haiman grew interested in freedom of speech and became an important figure in the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Haiman was involved with the board of the Illinois Division of the ACLU and helped McKnight to get the job of Executive Director from 1960-1963.[330] McKnight says while working at this position of Executive Director, he worked with people who were mostly marginal.[331] He learned, "the way to really reform society is to create a community where the people at the edge are inside, not making new rules and laws that will keep them further outside."[332] McKnight says, "I believe in the importance of people at the margins, something which became clear later in my life through the

---

[326] Ibid.

[327] Ibid.

[328] Ibid.

[329] Ibid.

[330] Ibid.

[331] Ibid.

[332] Ibid.

ABCD effort."[333] McKnight states, "Therefore, at its baseline, community building is about getting the greatest number of contributions by the greatest number of people (and that includes 'labelled people')."[334]

A fourth key influencer on McKnight was a medical doctor named Robert Mendelsohn, "Bob [Mendelsohn] has a very strong belief that healthful knowledge lay in the community and that medicine was stealing 'health' from local communities."[335] McKnight continues, "What's needed to avoid harm is for professionals to conduct a neighbourhood impact statement, . . . a community impact statement for professionals, . . . like how many grandmothers' knowledge and roles will be displaced by what you do?"[336] From Mendelsohn's perspective, professional services contribute to a local community where productive citizens are at the center first. McKnight continues, "communities and citizens are the principle producers of well-being, . . . The idea should be that the centre of life is the community and productive citizens. Then the question is: can experts be of help?"[337]

Fifth, McKnight speaks of Robert Rodale as a key influencer who "really got the organic movement started in the United States."[338] Rodale taught McKnight "that the way the natural world works is an example and a metaphor for the way that community

---

[333] Ibid.

[334] Ibid.

[335] Ibid.

[336] Ibid.

[337] Ibid.

[338] Ibid.

works."[339] McKnight writes, "Up until that time I'd only focused on what I would call socio-economic space of neighbourhoods. I'd never thought about that space in terms of it being underpinned by the land. It was Bob [Rodale] that brought that into my thinking."[340] McKnight speaks of how early farmers in the United States would chop down trees and mono-crop land with wheat year after year until the land no longer produced wheat because it lacked nutrients. Nature, however, has a strategy for recovery of the land by producing first "fast-growing plants with big leaves," then a second layer of plants that needs shade until it grows larger than the first. The growth pattern follows a natural succession of recovery until trees finally appear as the climax of that recovery process.[341] McKnight used this recovery process as a metaphor for the rebuilding of community in the United States and Canada, "At this time in my life it's probably the recovery process that I am most interested in because most neighbourhoods in the United States and in Canada are not places of connected people. . . . What is it that will enable succession in human communities?"[342] Rodale helped to enliven McKnight's imagination about the recovery process found in nature.

A sixth key influencer was professor of social work at Ohio State University, Jerry Miller. As head of the juvenile correction system in Massachusetts, Miller introduced best practices, and they became among the best in the United States. Nonetheless, Miller concluded, "even at its best, a reformatory is the worst thing you could do to prevent kids from being recidivists. At its best it was still the worst thing.

---

[339] Ibid.

[340] Ibid.

[341] Ibid.

[342] Ibid.

Now we're beginning to hear echoes in practice of Ivan Illich's institutional counter-productivity."[343] Miller's book *Last One Over the Wall* documents the process of arriving at his conclusions.[344] McKnight states, "So Jerry (Miller) made clear to me that Illich was right. Institutions start out doing something constructive and then they level out, decline and then reverse themselves and become crime-making reformatories."[345]

A seventh key influencer upon McKnight was Judith Snow. Snow "lives her life using a wheelchair and needs 24-hour attendance to enable her to participate."[346] Snow, "led the fight in Canada to get labelled people income instead of services. . . . she became the first person in the province of Ontario to get an annual personal budget from the government - $120,000 – to use for her own wellbeing."[347] McKnight states that she is now a wonderful speaker, trainer, and enabler, but because she needs to have round-the-clock support, she needs more money than most people.[348] After being on a personal budget instead of social services for a few years, Snow was asked how many social services for disabled people she had used in the last year; she replied, "In the last year I have used two services that are unique to me. And one of them I didn't want. . . . But as regards all the services that I was dependent on before, I've used none."[349] Snow says that, with the exception of a specialized wheelchair, she did not need very many social

---

[343] Ibid.

[344] Jerome G. Miller, *Last One Over the Wall: The Massachusetts Experiment in Closing Reform Schools* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1991; repr., 1998).

[345] Russell, *Asset-Based Community Development: Looking Back to Look Forward*.

[346] Ibid.

[347] Ibid.

[348] Ibid.

[349] Ibid.

services once she was given a personal budget. McKnight states, "The service system needs her. She doesn't need it."[350] McKnight says of Snow, "she rarely uses specialized services. Yet in the whole architecture of service institutions, she's the poster child of neediness! So she is the great living proof that the huge edifice of specialized services is largely not needed by many labelled people."[351] McKnight questions whether in fact those "labeled" as "needy" truly need the service system as much as the service system needs them. Therefore, people should recognize their needs as much as those who are the object of their services but also limit their power to disable the capacities of citizens to solve their own problems.[352] McKnight says of Miller and Snow, "I learned that kids were made bad by 'great' reformatories and people were made disabled by disability services."[353] McKnight continues by sharing Snow's list of the gifts and assets that vulnerable people bring to community.[354] Snow said of those with disabilities, "Individuals have unique gifts . . . people often privately mention receiving these gifts

---

[350] Ibid.

[351] Ibid.

[352] John McKnight, *The Careless Society: Community and Its Counterfeits* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), x-xi.

[353] Russell, *Asset-Based Community Development: Looking Back to Look Forward*.

[354] 1) hospitality; 2) making people feel happy; 3) listening; 4) providing a home; 5) grounding; 6) slowing people down, reorienting people to time and place; 7) helping people appreciate simple things; 8) helping people appreciate their own abilities; 9) skill-building; 10) pushing people to be better problem solvers; 11) causing people to try things they've never done before; 12) causing people to research things they never encountered before; 13) networking; 14) reaching out to people and breaking down barriers; 15) asking questions that everyone else is too shy to ask; 16) bringing people together who otherwise would never meet; 17) economic; 18) providing jobs to people who want supplemental income, like artists; 19) providing jobs to people who need to work odd schedules like homemakers; 20) providing jobs to people who otherwise have few or no marketable skills; 21) emotional/spiritual; 22) often very forgiving; 23) often loving and inspiring love; 24) offering opportunities to do something that clearly makes a difference; 25) reorienting values from success to relationships.

after getting to know someone labelled disabled. Imagine if we went public about them and intentionally built these gifts into everyday life."[355]

McKnight shares of an eighth key influencer, Stan Hallett. Hallett observed, "that what happens in many lower income neighborhoods is that they become dependent on a grants economy."[356] In addition, Hallett noted, "most people in the university doing needs research end up with grants."[357] Hallett said to McKnight, "what your research finds doesn't grow out of grants: I haven't heard about grants in any of these neighbourhood stories. So this is the reverse: it's an asset-based economy."[358] McKnight comments, "And so that's why we called them assets. They are local resources that, correctly connected, will create much more together than they do apart."[359] McKnight continues, "And it's the connection that is the most important: the asset is always there but the connection and how it's achieved is the critical issue. So that's how Asset-Based Community Development happened to get named."[360]

A ninth key influencer upon McKnight stated in the interview with Russell was Peter Block. Block has spent most of his life as an organizational consultant.[361] Over the course of about ten meetings together in Cincinnati, the fruit of their discussions was *The*

---

[355] Russell, *Asset-Based Community Development: Looking Back to Look Forward*.

[356] Ibid.

[357] Ibid.

[358] Ibid.

[359] Ibid.

[360] Ibid.

[361] Ibid.

Abundant Community co-authored by Block and McKnight in 2010.[362] McKnight says, "We (Block and McKnight) were from very different worlds and yet had many complementary views and visions."[363] McKnight writes, "For me, Peter added a great emphasis on the personal. . . . (Block) thinks intimacy amongst people is essential for useful, positive, productive things to happen."[364] McKnight concludes, "Peter helped me see that the most important community asset, the gifts of the individuals, is deeply personal, not just words or categories."[365]

Healthy Communities

Wendell Berry speaks about a neighborhood of humans in a place*, "*If we speak of *healthy* community, we cannot be speaking of a community that is merely human. We are talking about a neighborhood of humans in a place."[366] Preservation of the people, nonhuman creatures, and place together in practical harmony are contributing factors to healthy communities. The natural surroundings of a neighborhood, along with the humans who reside there, comprise Berry's understanding of the "membership" of a neighborhood.

In Berry's novel *That Distant Land,* Elton Penn receives the gift of good land from his neighbor Jack Beechum as well as the help of another neighbor Wheeler Catlett. Elton realizes that he is unable to repay his debt, "I can't repay him (Jack Beechum),

---

[362] Block and McKnight.

[363] Ibid.

[364] Ibid.

[365] Ibid.

[366] Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*, 14.

Wheeler. And now you've helped me, and I can't repay you."[367] Catlett responds by describing the currency with which friendship and neighborliness is exchanged; he describes that what is unique about a healthy neighborhood is that "gifts" are exchanged without expecting repayment, "The life of a neighborhood is a gift."[368]

Berry describes a "community economy" that is not built primarily on competition and scarcity, but on a robust human imagination that sees the value of neighborly kindness and affection. Imagination enables affection as the currency with which a neighborly and kind "community economy" is built.[369] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight speak similarly of trust, "All the research and political theory about associational life says its base is trust. Money does not hold it together. The currency of contracts is money. The currency of covenant is trust."[370] In speaking of the influence of Stan Hallett, Block and McKnight write of the potential of "a neighborhood [that] can raise a child, provide security, sustain our health, secure our income, and care for our vulnerable people."[371] Block and McKnight state that the strength of a local community is built on the gifts of local people. Henderson, Hunter, and Spinks travelled around the United States interviewing non-Christians to gain their perspective on Christian faith and the church. They conclude that people inside and outside the church have a desire to

---

[367] Wendell Berry, *That Distant Land* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2004), 287.

[368] Ibid., 287-88.

[369] Berry, *It All Turns on Affection: The Jefferson Lectures & Other Essays*, 14.

[370] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, 5.

[371] Block and McKnight, xiii.

serve.[372] One individual they interviewed stated, "Don't invite me to church–invite me to serve."[373] Beach writes regarding the process of integration into a local church, "For some people conversion occurs only after the chance to belong to a church community that truly invites them to be a part of its inner life and to participate in a genuine way."[374] These authors speak to the value of an asset-based approach to growing a local church community and inviting people to relationship with Christ. As Inge writes, "If members of Christian communities could learn to be good neighbors to one another and to the larger communities of which they are a part, they would have something infinitely worthwhile to offer to the world. And it would be the very best form of evangelism."[375] Inge contends that the witness of Christian communities depends in large part upon the ability of churches to live out their Christian witness as good neighbors.

The Three Universal Properties of ABCD

Block and McKnight state that the three universal properties of their movement known as Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) are: the giving of gifts; the presence of association; and the compassion of hospitality.[376] The giving of gifts is how, "the gifts of the people in our neighborhood are boundless. Our movement calls forth those gifts."[377] The presence of association is when, "In association we join our gifts

---

[372] Jim Henderson, Todd Hunter, and Craig Spinks, *The Outsider Interviews: A New Generation Speaks Out on Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), 135.

[373] Ibid.

[374] Beach, 164.

[375] Inge, 136.

[376] Block and McKnight, 4-5.

[377] Ibid., 4.

together and they become amplified, magnified, productive and celebrated."[378] The compassion of hospitality is when, "we welcome strangers because we value their gifts and need to share our own. Our doors are open. There are no strangers here, just friends we haven't met."[379]

Block and McKnight use the term, "citizen economy," a community that they describe as competent, "A competent community increases the likelihood of a better future. What we need for real prosperity is what money can't buy. . . . Call it a citizen economy, one based on gifts and local abundance."[380] Block and McKnight contrast the value of a "citizen economy" from one built primarily on consumption; they are quite critical of what they deem to be the lie of consumer society that sends the message, "purchased experience and services" are the pathway to a full and satisfying life.[381] Block and McKnight write that the promise of a consumer society is so deep that people take their identity from their capacity to purchase and believe that a fulfilling life can be purchased.

Critique of Consumer Society and the Loss of Neighborliness

Block and McKnight write, "The way to the good life is not through consumption. It is, instead, a path that we make by walking it with those who surround us. It is the way of a competent community recognizing its abundance."[382] They continue:

---

[378] Ibid.

[379] Ibid., 5.

[380] Ibid., 97.

[381] Ibid., 9.

[382] Ibid., 18.

> Real satisfaction, as opposed to counterfeit satisfaction, is a collective occurrence. It can occur only through our relatedness, our associational life, our neighbors, and our community. When we seek satisfaction at the mall, neighborhood and community pay the price. This is a loss, because we cannot rediscover durable satisfaction without community.[383]

According to Block and McKnight, "durable satisfaction" can only come through people's relatedness and their local community. As Pastor Randy Frazee writes, "We were created with a connection requirement, and if this requirement is not satisfied, we will eventually die. If we ever became convinced of this, it would make our pursuit of connecting a higher priority."[384] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight connect people's "mobility and isolation" with an "empire narrative" built on market ideology;[385] they say the consequence is that "Spiritual life and relational life become disassociated from place."[386] As people lose their sense of place, they no longer have a story to tell, and there is no longer any connection and aliveness, "You don't have a story, but you can buy a new refrigerator. And it is amazing that a refrigerator can be more seductive than a people with a story. Commodity replaces narrative."[387] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight write that what is needed is a shift in beliefs, language, and narrative of neighborhood and covenant.[388]

---

[383] Ibid., 57.

[384] Frazee, 27.

[385] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, 41.

[386] Ibid.

[387] Ibid., 41.

[388] Ibid., 44.

In his 1995 critique of consumer society in North America, *The Careless Society: Community and Its Counterfeits,* McKnight writes:

> Many of us have come to recognize that as we exiled our fallible neighbors to the control of managers, therapists, and technicians, we lost much of our power to be the vital center of society. We forgot about the capacity of every single one of us to do good work . . . . We have become too impotent to be called citizens and too disconnected to be effective members of community.[389]

McKnight writes of the structure of a consumer society forgetting how to care for its own by the simple call to citizenship and responsibility to one another. As Block explains in *Community: The Structure of Belonging*:

> The challenge for community building is this: While visions, plans, and committed top leadership are important, even essential, no clear vision, nor detailed plan, nor committed group leaders have the power to bring this image of the future into existence without the continued engagement and involvement of citizens.[390]

Block writes that community building is primarily dependent on the continued engagement and involvement of those who are an engaged part of the process–citizens. This is why for the leader, convening, "naming the question" and listening are all critical to the role of leadership.[391] For Block, meaningful change in community includes work in one or more small groups; as he writes, "The small group is the unit of transformation."[392]

---

[389] McKnight, 172.

[390] Peter Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2008), 79.

[391] Ibid., 88.

[392] Ibid., 95.

Block and McKnight write that once citizenship is lost, so is the power of neighboring that makes people most human and fulfilled, "When we contract out those competencies that family and community have lost to consumerism, we lose the power and pleasure of neighboring. We lose the exchange of qualities that make us most human and fulfilled."[393] McKnight writes, "the good life is not just a fully serviced life, but a life filled with care, power, and continuity that come from being part of a community."[394] In a similar way, Berry critiques the forces of globalization driven by the political interests of supranational corporations.[395] Berry states that the problem is when production and profitability replace affection and care and neighborliness. Berry offers a solution that people should "always ask how local needs might be supplied from local sources, including the mutual support of neighbors."[396]

As citizenship declines, professionalism is on the rise. Writing in a section against "professionalism" and the assumption of a consumer society that knowledge and care must primarily be purchased, McKnight critiques those, "societal agents who announce to citizens and their communities, 'You will be better because we know better. . . they destroy the sense of community competence by . . . commodifying the citizens' capacity to solve problems and to care."[397] McKnight states that the primary problem with the

---

[393] Block and McKnight, 56.

[394] McKnight, 119.

[395] Wendell Berry, *Another Turn of the Crank* (Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1995), 15.

[396] Ibid., 21.

[397] McKnight, x-xi.

professional sector is the "*needs* of servicers and the mechanics of their systems."[398] He writes:

> Professionalized services communicate a worldview that defines our lives and our societies as a series of technical problems. The technical definition is masked by symbols of care and love that obscure the economic interests of the servicers and the disabling characteristics of their practices.[399]

McKnight writes that servicers are increasingly an alienated class of people, themselves in need of support, respect, care, and love. Therefore we should recognize their needs as much as those who are the object of their services but also limit their power to disable the capacities of citizens to solve their own problems.[400]

Daniel Kemmis writes, "until corporations are presented with a public which understands and practices citizenship, their own capacity for citizenship will never be fully brought into play."[401] Kemmis argues for learning inhabitation*, "*To in*habit* a place is to dwell there in a practiced way, in a way which relies upon certain regular, trusted, habits of behavior. . . . In fact, no real public life is possible except among people who are engaged in the project of inhabiting a place."[402] Kemmis says that living well in a place requires that people learn to inhabit that place, explaining how "Deep-seated attachment to the virtue of neighborliness is an important but largely ignored civic

---

[398] Ibid., 52.

[399] Ibid.

[400] Ibid.

[401] Daniel Kemmis, *Community and the Politics of Place* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 137.

[402] Ibid., 79.

asset."[403] Kemmis expounds, "In valuing neighborliness, people value that upon which citizenship most essentially depends. . . . So it is that places may have a role in the revival of citizenship. Places have a way of claiming people.[404] Kemmis refers to neighborliness as "that upon which citizenship most essentially depends" and the nurturing of civic virtues that lead to a community's competence. Block and McKnight utilize the phrase "community competence" which is defined as, "the capacity of the place where we live to be useful to us, to support us in creating those things that can only be produced in the surroundings of a connected community."[405]

In light of the general loss of neighborliness and citizenship, what is needed is a shift in narrative. Writing to a corporate audience, Block says, "The shift in framing is that people and families are a pool of gifts and capacities, not a series of needs and deficiencies."[406] Block and McKnight write, "A community that has the capacity to support lives of satisfaction holds a different set of beliefs than those the consumer economy teaches us."[407] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight describe this alternative vision of life from that of market ideology as a neighborly covenant:

> Imagine the human benefit of an alternative to the market ideology that defines our culture. We call this the Neighborly Covenant because it enlivens and humanizes the social order. . . . What we are proposing is language for alternative ways to a covenantal culture.[408]

---

[403] Ibid., 119.

[404] Ibid.

[405] Ibid.

[406] Block, 169.

[407] Block and McKnight, 66.

[408] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, xxii-xxiii.

Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight speak of a way of engaging the world through the ideas of both neighborliness as well as covenant. Block and McKnight write about what they describe as the basic tenets of an abundant community built on this neighborly covenant: What communities have is enough; People have the capacity to provide what they need in the face of the human condition; People organize their world in a context of cooperation and satisfaction; People are responsible for each other; People live with the reality of the human condition.[409] As Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight write, "To believe in abundance is to believe that we have enough . . . Even in the wilderness of an uncertain future."[410]

Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight also speak to the "human condition" as involving knowledge of fallibility; they call it a "permanent and natural condition . . . attentive to the limits of growth."[411] Block and McKnight write that in an abundant community, not only must gifts be shared in common, but also sorrows; they write that the "range and variety of sorrows we bear gives us fuel for community and connectedness."[412] Sorrow and death are not problems to be solved.[413] McKnight says, "we are not saying that everything can be done within the realm of the relationships of community. We will always fail to be God. . . . The professionals are trying to be

---

[409] Block and McKnight, 66.

[410] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, 9.

[411] Ibid., 16.

[412] Block and McKnight, 69.

[413] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, 17.

God."[414] McKnight continues, "And the most obvious personal limit is that we have pain and suffer, and we die. . . . We cry with each other. . . . We . . . remember Charles every Saturday night. These are community rituals that recognise suffering and pain and death."[415] McKnight says of this recognition of personal limits that "one of the most helpful things I learned from Illich is that progress depends on understanding limits. And if you don't, you'll begin to act like God."[416]

Placed Experience, Practice of Parish, and Hospitality

In addition to a shift in narrative, also what is needed is a recovery of a sense of placed experience. Hjalmarson refers to a local neighborhood as that which "defines a particular kind of placed experience."[417] Hjalmarson suggests that the gospel response to viewing neighborhoods as a place to consume, rather than serve and invest, is "to recover the practice of parish."[418] Hjalmarson says, "the old practice of parish offers the hope for a recovery of placed-ness in local mission and ministry;"[419] he defines a parish as a "bounded space where a local church served its community. The pastor and people were intimately connected in the life of the neighbourhood."[420]

Sparks, Soerens, and Friesen bring together the idea of a healthy community with its human and nonhuman elements with Hjalmarson's notion of a church intimately

---

[414] Russell, *Asset-Based Community Development: Looking Back to Look Forward*.

[415] Ibid.

[416] Ibid.

[417] Hjalmarson, 122.

[418] Ibid., 123.

[419] Ibid., 122.

[420] Ibid., 123.

connected in its neighborhood. They emphasize the shared life of the members of the local church in that parish geography, "it [parish] refers to *all the relationships (including the land) where the local church lives out its faith together.* It is a unique word that recalls a geography large enough to live life together (live, work, play, etc.) and small enough to be known as a character within it."[421] Sparks, Soerens, and Friesen refer to the geography large enough to live life together and small enough to have a defining character to it. Block and McKnight define the word community as "both a place and an experience of connectedness."[422]

Block and McKnight define "community competence" as, "the capacity of the place where we live to be useful to us, to support us in creating those things that can only be produced in the surroundings of a connected community."[423] With similar language of the necessity of community to provide support, Sparks, Soerens, and Friesen name that support as a participation in God's reconciling and renewing vision in the context of a parish, "Proximity in parish allows you to participate in God's reconciling and renewing vision in ways you really can't do as an individual."[424] In addition to community competence, Block and McKnight also speak about a community way in this context of a connected community, "people outside institutions, connected by choice and usually affection, who together decide what they want to participate in creating."[425] The theme of

---

[421] Paul Sparks, Tim Soerens, and Dwight J. Friesen, *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches Are Transforming Mission, Discipleship and Community* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014), 23.

[422] Block and McKnight, xvii.

[423] Ibid.

[424] Sparks, Soerens, and Friesen, 23.

[425] Block and McKnight, xvii.

voluntary choice as well as affection arises when Block and McKnight describe this community way. Berry states similarly, "A community cannot be made or preserved apart from the loyalty and affection of its members."[426]

Hospitality is another mark of healthy communities. Block writes that community wellness in large part depends on the level of social capital that exists in that community, "Social capital is about acting on and valuing our interdependence and sense of belonging. It is the extent to which we extend hospitality and affection to one another."[427] Block writes, "This is a core quality of a hospitable community, whose work is to bring to play the gifts of all its members, especially strangers."[428] Block and McKnight go on to say that "Hospitality is the essence of community competence."[429] They continue:

> Hospitality is the signature of not only an abundant community, but a confident one. The extent of hospitality becomes a measure of the belief that people have in their community. . . . Welcoming strangers is not just an act of generosity, it is also a source of vitality and learning.[430]

According to Block and McKnight, hospitality is at the heart of an abundant community. Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight write regarding the centrality of welcoming the neighbor in the Bible, "The holiness of God in the biblical tradition is then transposed into the awesomeness of the neighbor."[431]

---

[426] Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*, 121.

[427] Block, 5.

[428] Ibid., 139.

[429] Block and McKnight, 79.

[430] Ibid.

[431] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, 15.

Towards a New Creation

Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight write of the common good or the commons:

> The commons is the modern stance for a life not centered on profit and wealth. Belief in the commons says there are resources and wealth that belong to us all. It is reversing enclosure. It is a secular, political break with the commercial empire. The commons is a stance against empire that calls for the circular flow of money, for wealth to be returned to local hands.[432]

Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight write of a vision of life and business that is concerned for the common good, a political break from the commercial empire. They write about the creation of a new culture of the commons, "A more communal life comes to be when a group of citizens, over time, decides what they have to invent to build a neighborhood. In this way, neighborhood connectedness becomes a movement."[433]

Block and McKnight write that the cultural traits of this kind of abundant community that is concerned for the common good are that of: unhurried time, space for silence, and storytelling.[434] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight speak of the "secular sacraments of neighborliness;"[435] they describe that just as there are disciplines that belong to faith, so are there disciplines that belong to community: time, food, and silence.[436] They write, "Time, food, and silence are three major disciplines for creating

---

[432] Ibid., 48.

[433] Ibid., 55.

[434] Block and McKnight, 92-96.

[435] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, 61.

[436] Ibid., 62.

the conditions for neighborliness and producing social re-ordering. Those disciplines recognize the human condition, which the hubris of our market culture denies."[437]

Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight add in their 2016 volume, *An Other Kingdom,*[438] to Block and McKnight's 2010 book *The Abundant Community*[439] the idea that an abundant community is in many ways a community with "religious ideals," those bound together by "secular sacraments" and a "neighborly covenant":

> Imagine the human benefit of an alternative to the market ideology that defines our culture. We call this the Neighborly Covenant because it enlivens and humanizes the social order. . . . What we are proposing is language for alternative ways to a covenantal culture.[440]

This basic re-ordering of society contains a vision of mutual commitment and obligation to the common good as well as a participation in particular disciplines that involve "ritual" and strengthen the culture of the place.

In reflecting on Jesus' beatitude in Matthew 5:5, that the blessed meek will inherit the earth, Jonathan R. Wilson describes this collective re-ordering of society as a movement towards meekness, towards a new creation:

> people recognize that the best way to survive and flourish is to join together the powers of many. Thus, the various powers of many are joined together for the collective good, which enables the constituents to survive and flourish as part of the group more than each could on his or her own. This collectivism, the subordination of one's power to the interests of the group, might be described as a form of weakness. . . . In light of this reality, it is crucial to recognize that the declaration of Jesus that the meek will inherit

[437] Ibid.

[438] Ibid.

[439] Block and McKnight.

[440] Block, Brueggemann and McKnight., xxii-xxiii.

> the earth must be located within Jesus' story–that is, within the redemption of creation for the new creation. . . . Meekness, then, is not simply the disposition to restrain one's power in order to conform to any telos. Rather, throughout Scripture and especially in the life and on the lips of Jesus, meekness is the disposition to restrain one's power so that it aligns with the redemption of creation for the new creation.[441]

Sharing a theological kinship with Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, Wilson writes that to submit ourselves to the "collective good," to exercise mutual hospitality and outreach for the sake of the community is a form of meekness located in Jesus' story and an alignment with the redemption of creation towards a new creation.

Summary of Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to research how vocational ministers who were transplants developed a sense of belonging to Vancouver. This literature review began with a focused study in Ezekiel 37, on the connection between ancient Israel's hope of resurrection and return from exile to the land of God's promise. Then, three particular relevant literature areas were reviewed to provide a foundation, inform the research, and provide opportunities for interpreting and discussing the findings. These areas focused on literature concerning themes of exile, place, and asset-based community development.

[441] Wilson, 229.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This study explored the process and experiences among various transplanted vocational ministers as they sought to develop a sense of belonging to the international and urban city of Vancouver, British Columbia. This study assumed that the disconnection Vancouverites report poses a significant barrier to their well-being and questions the impact the church is having in Vancouver as an institution called by holy scripture to seek the welfare of the city.[442] In order to address this purpose, the research identifies three main areas of literature research focus that are central to how transplanted vocational ministers developed a sense of belonging to Vancouver. These included the areas of exile, place, and asset-based community development. To examine these areas more closely, the following questions served as the intended focus of the qualitative research:

1. When first moving to Vancouver, what steps were taken initially to help transplanted vocational ministers develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?
2. What difficulties were faced when vocational ministers who were transplants sought to develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?
3. What was the role of certain local networks in helping vocational ministers who were transplants develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?
    a. What was the role of a local church in helping vocational ministers who were transplants develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?

[442] Jeremiah 29:7.

b. What was the role of a neighborhood in helping vocational ministers who were transplants develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?

Design of the Study

Sharan B. Merriam, in her book *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, defines a qualitative case study as an "intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit."[443] Merriam identifies four characteristics of qualitative research: First, qualitative research focuses on process, understanding, and meaning. The researcher seeks an emic perspective, that of the participant. Second, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. Third, the process is inductive, allowing the data to lead the research toward a theory. Fourth, the product is richly descriptive.[444] This study employed a qualitative research design and conducted semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data gathering. Qualitative research has several characteristics that make it appropriate for the nature of the research focus of this study; one primary characteristic is its focus on meaning and understanding. Merriam writes:

> The overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making, and describe how people interpret what they experience.[445]

---

[443] Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 46.

[444] Ibid., 14.

[445] Ibid.

The qualitative research design fits the nature of the research that seeks to gain understanding and meaning from the process vocational ministers underwent to develop belonging to the city of Vancouver.

Participant Sample Selection

This research required participants who were able to communicate about their own experiences of having developed a sense of belonging to Vancouver. Therefore, the purposeful study sample consisted of a selection of seven vocational ministers who had been transplanted to Vancouver and now considered Vancouver to be home. Participants were purposefully chosen from among vocational ministers since they lead others in understanding and growth in the Christian life. Four were serving in some form of a pastoral role. One was in a place of transition after a long-time pastorate. Another served in a broader role working to bring churches together and to serve the poor through a Christian charity he founded. And a seventh served as a communications director in one of the larger evangelical churches in Vancouver.

Participants were chosen for a typical nonprobability, purposeful, and unique sampling in order to provide for information-rich data from those selected.[446] Because the Vancouver Foundation study described those who had lived in Vancouver for less than five years to find it especially difficult to find connection and belonging, participants were sought who had lived in Vancouver for at least five years. One research participant had lived in Vancouver for four years, the other six had lived in Vancouver for at least five years. Because memory recall of the transplant and rooting process was important, participants were sought who had lived in Vancouver for twenty years at the most. One

[446] Merriam, 76-80.

research participant had lived in Vancouver for twenty-two years, the other six had lived in Vancouver for less than twenty years. Because these vocational ministers must have been transplants, participants were sought who had moved as adults from outside of the province in which Vancouver resides, British Columbia, into the province, ideally for the first time. One research participant had spent some time in and out of the province of British Columbia as a young person, another had lived one summer in Vancouver prior to a permanent move to the city. The other five research participants had never lived in the province of British Columbia prior to their move. They must have resided in Vancouver for most of the year and considered it to be their home. All of the research participants fit this description. Furthermore, these participants must have given some degree of intentional thought and effort towards the themes of home, journey, calling, planting, and rooting.[447] This criterion was met by the self-reporting of the vocational minister and the final determination of the researcher, based on a one-page demographic questionnaire the research candidate had completed. Having some passion and interest in the themes of belonging, place, and journey was a criterion as well, that in the case of the one research participant who had lived in British Columbia some through her youth, did not disqualify her from serving as a research participant. There was diversity as to the particular ministry vocation each participant was in, the places from where the participants moved, their ages at the time of move,[448] number of children, marital status, faith traditions, size

[447] The notion of responsible agency was behind the concept of interviewing vocational ministers who were transplants who had "developed a sense of belonging to Vancouver."

[448] The researcher had hoped to find more research participants who had been transplanted as "settled adults" and moved to Vancouver somewhere around their forties or beyond, but such people were not easy to find. Two of the seven research participants fit this description at the time of their move to Vancouver. Settled adulthood was thought of as those who have journeyed through and beyond Garber's proverbial "valley of the diapers" of their twenties and thirties. Steven Garber, *The Fabric of Faithfulness: Weaving Together Belief and Behavior During the University Years* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1996), 20.

of faith communities as well as gender. The final study was conducted through personal interviews with these transplanted vocational ministers. They were all invited to participate via an introductory letter or email, followed by personal contact. All expressed interest and gave written informed consent to participate.

As mentioned, the participant was asked to complete a one-page demographic questionnaire before the interview. The questionnaire asked for information concerning the selection criteria. It also requested information of particular interest to this study.

Data Collection

This study utilized semi-structured interviews for primary data gathering. The open-ended nature of interview questions allowed "the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic."[449] Ultimately, these methods enabled this study to look for common themes, patterns, concerns, and contrasting views across the variation of participants.[450]

A pilot test of the interview protocol was performed to help evaluate the questions for clarity and usefulness in eliciting relevant data. Initial interview protocol categories were derived from the literature but evolved around the explanations and descriptions that emerged from doing constant comparison work during the interviewing process.[451]

Data analysis was performed along with data collection so as to mitigate the loss of "reliable and valid data."[452] Coding and categorizing the data while continuing the process of interviewing also allowed for the emergence of new sources of data (from the

[449] Ibid., 90.

[450] Ibid., 269.

[451] Ibid., 30-1; 175.

[452] Ibid., 207.

interviews) that helped answer the research questions (and thereby influence subsequent interviews).[453]

Seven vocational ministers were interviewed for sixty to ninety minutes each. Prior to the interview, the vocational ministers each received a letter of the interview schedule (time, date, and place). In order to accommodate participant schedules, the researcher met the vocational ministers in the most convenient location in Vancouver. The researcher recorded the interviews with a digital recorder. After each interview, field notes with descriptive and reflective observations were written.

Data Analysis

As soon as possible following each interview, the researcher had each interview transcribed by hiring a specialist. This study utilized the constant comparison method of routinely analyzing the data throughout the interview process. This method provided for the ongoing revision, clarification, and evaluation of the resultant data categories; as Merriam states, "data often seem to beg for continued analysis past the formation of categories."[454] When the interviews and observation notes were fully transcribed into computer files, they were coded and analyzed using the constant comparative method (and various colored highlighters). The analysis focused on discovering and identifying common themes, patterns, concerns, and contrasting views across the variation of participants, and then identifying congruence or discrepancy between the different groups of participants.

The interview protocol contained the following questions.

---

[453] As conveyed by Dr. Tasha Chapman of *Covenant Theological Seminary* in an email dated November 13th, 2014.

[454] Merriam, 189.

1. Think of a time when it "hit" you that you were now living in Vancouver? Can you describe that moment for me?

2. What were some things that you did to try and settle into the city? What did you find helpful for you and your family? What remained difficult for you and your family?

3. What role did a local church play in helping you to get settled here? (Probe Question: Are you able to describe some of the characteristics about your church community that you appreciated during that time of adjustment?)

4. What role did a neighborhood play in helping you to get settled here? (Probe Question: What were some of the characteristics about your neighborhood you appreciated during that time of adjustment?)

5. Tell me about some times when Vancouver began to feel like home?

6. Looking back, what were some important steps to take to help getting settled here? (Probe Question: What were some missteps?)

7. Blue Sky Question… if you could give advice to someone who is new to Vancouver and struggling to develop a sense of belonging, what would it be?

Researcher Position

The researcher is an evangelical Christian who has been an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America for seventeen years, having served in some form of local church work for twenty-two. The researcher and his family moved to Vancouver in 2013 after having been in their previous city for fifteen years where their children were born, raised, and rooted deeply in their local community, church, and neighborhood. The research is not only of great interest to the researcher but also of great relevance to his personal journey, process, and growth. The researcher believes that very few topics in the Christian life are more important than understanding that of place and belonging (and the Christian's responsibility, by faith, to develop a sense of them). What is more, the researcher believes that the people of Vancouver, a city filled with transplants, can be helped by the research.

Study Limitations

There were a number of limitations to this study. First, the researcher, being fairly new to the city of Vancouver, had limited contacts and networks, so was able to interview only seven vocational ministers. Second, only vocational ministers were interviewed. A broader perspective from community leaders outside the evangelical world of vocational ministers would provide much information-rich data, but because of the limitations of resources and time on the part of the researcher as well as his relative newness to Vancouver, also the need to minimize complexity in the research, the decision was made to limit the research to seven evangelical vocational ministers. Third, the diversity of churches and neighborhoods represented throughout Vancouver on account of differences of size (parish or congregation), ethos and regional make-up assumed vastly different experiences. So the researcher was limited from being able to draw too many definitive conclusions about "what works" to develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver. Fourth, the term "vocational minister" covers a wide range of individuals in different kinds of vocational ministry situations, so the relationships of the participants to their local associations of church and neighborhood were diverse and could not be thought of as consistent in sameness with one another. Finally, the study was very much situated in and limited to the city of Vancouver, British Columbia in Canada; therefore, the findings of this study may not always be transferable to other cities of similar size where its people struggle with developing belonging and finding meaningful connection. In addition to the study having the limitations of being situated in a North American context, the differences between the countries of the United States and Canada are significant as well. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the reader when seeking to apply the findings of this

study to their particular setting, to test its applicability in their particular context; as with all qualitative studies, readers bear the responsibility to determine what can appropriately be applied to their context.

Chapter Four

Findings

The purpose of this study was to research how vocational ministers who were transplants developed a sense of belonging to Vancouver. The assumptions behind the study were that residents of the international urban city of Vancouver find it difficult to develop a sense of belonging, that connection is a basic human need, and that the desire to belong is universal. The hope was to discover insights into how vocational ministers can help the people of God as well as their cities flourish as a result of understanding the quest to develop a sense of belonging in a place like Vancouver. In addition to listening to the stories of those who had moved to Vancouver as transplants with a sense of call, the researcher was also interested in seeking to understand the role of local church communities and neighborhoods in helping transplanted vocational ministers develop a sense of belonging to the city. The conviction was that God in Christ came to redeem the whole of his created universe, inclusive of people and place. So the interest of the researcher was seeking to understand the roles of locality and community as the particular places of this redemptive and restorative work. Therefore, the following research questions guided this study.

Research Questions

1. When first moving to Vancouver, what steps were taken initially to help transplanted vocational ministers develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?

2. What difficulties were faced when vocational ministers who were transplants sought to develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?

3. What was the role of certain local networks in helping vocational ministers who were transplants develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?

    a. What was the role of a local church in helping vocational ministers who were transplants develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?

    b. What was the role of a neighborhood in helping vocational ministers who were transplants develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?

In this chapter, seven research participants are introduced and common themes and relevant insights pertaining to the research questions are presented.

Introductions to Study Participants

Seven Vancouver vocational ministers were selected to participate in this study. All had lived in Vancouver from four to twenty-two years. One of the participants moved to Vancouver in her early twenties, another two in their mid-twenties, two more in their late twenties, and two more as "settled adults" near their forty-year mark.[455] With the exception of one research participant who had lived in the province as a child and later as a student and another who had spent one summer in Vancouver, all the research participants moved to Vancouver from outside the province of British Columbia, never having lived there previously. The research participants also described their quest to develop belonging to Vancouver in different stages, depending on the number of years spent and seasons of life associated with schooling, neighborhood, family, and work. All names and identifiable information of participants were changed to protect identities.

---

[455] The researcher thinks of "settled adults" as those who have journeyed through and beyond Garber's proverbial "valley of the diapers" of their twenties and thirties. Garber, *The Fabric of Faithfulness: Weaving Together Belief and Behavior During the University Years*, 20. The original intention was to find more research participants who had been transplanted as settled adults and moved to Vancouver somewhere near or around their forties or beyond, but such people were not easy to find. Two of the seven research participants fit this description of being "settled adults" at the time of their move to Vancouver.

Jane has lived in Vancouver for fourteen years and originally moved at the age of twenty-one to marry a Vancouverite man serving in youth ministry. Jane moved from Calgary, Alberta, where she spent her formative years. Following the move, she and her husband had two children in the next three years. With the exception of one summer previous to her move, Jane had never lived in British Columbia. Both Jane and her husband are Canadians, both with an ethnic Chinese background. Jane currently serves as the communications manager at a large church in central Vancouver.

John has lived in Vancouver for eighteen years and first came, along with his wife, to pursue theological education at Regent College. John moved to Vancouver from Edmonton, Alberta, at the age of twenty-five, married but without children. Three children would be born within the first seven years of moving to British Columbia, and a fourth would come thirteen years after the move. John had never lived in the province of British Columbia prior to moving to Vancouver. Both John and his wife are Canadians. John currently serves as the site pastor of a church on the east side of Vancouver. While his role as site pastor is relatively new, John has served with the church for ten years.

Sally has lived in Vancouver for nineteen years and first came to pursue theological education at Regent College. Sally moved to Vancouver at the age of twenty-five as a single woman and remains single today serving as the morning congregation pastor of a local congregation on the east side of Vancouver. Sally had never lived in the province of British Columbia prior to moving to Vancouver. Sally was born in the United States, spent most of her formative years in Japan as a child of missionaries, returned to the United States for her university years and also spent time studying in Central

America. Including her first five years in Vancouver, Sally recalls having moved thirty times before turning the age of thirty.

Jack has lived in Vancouver for seventeen years and first came to pursue theological education at Regent College. Jack moved from Columbus, Ohio, at the age of twenty-seven and was single at the time of his move. Jack would meet and marry a Vancouverite woman at his local church near the end of his time studying at Regent. Seven years after his move to Vancouver, Jack and his wife would have twins, and another child would come two years after the twins. Prior to his move to Vancouver, Jack had never lived in the province of British Columbia. Following his time at Regent, Jack was the founding chaplain and program coordinator of an initiative that sought to provide meals and shelter five days per week for those in need. Currently, Jack serves as the executive director for a small Christian charity whose mandate is to equip congregations, charities, and change-makers who work alongside the poor for the well-being of their neighborhoods and the metro Vancouver region.

Fred has lived in Vancouver for twenty-two years and first came with his wife to pursue theological education at Regent College. Fred moved to Vancouver from Calgary, Alberta, at the age of twenty-nine as a father of two children under the age of four. While Fred was born in Princeton, New Jersey, Fred spent his formative years in the province of Ontario. Fred had never lived in the province of British Columbia prior to moving to Vancouver. While Fred is a dual citizen of Canada and the United States, his wife grew up in Germany before immigrating to Calgary in her thirties. Until a recent transition, Fred had served as pastoral team leader of a church on the west side of Vancouver for seventeen years.

Mick has lived in Vancouver for five years and first came to plant a church in the heart of the downtown Yaletown area with his wife and two children (ages six and eight at the time). Mick moved to Vancouver at the age of thirty-nine after spending fifteen years in London with his wife planting a church. Mick had never lived in the province of British Columbia prior to moving to Vancouver. Mick and his wife are from South Africa, and Mick currently serves as the lead elder of his downtown church.

Lisa has lived in Vancouver for four years. Lisa moved to Vancouver at the age of forty-one, after spending three years in Los Angeles, California, where she was working on a Master of Divinity. Lisa moved with her husband and their three children who at the time were ages sixteen, fourteen, and twelve. Lisa is self-described as a "professor brat" having moved frequently because of her father's work as a professor of geography. Lisa recalls that she attended different schools for nine out of the first thirteen years of her schooling, in Canada and the United States. As a result, Lisa spent some time "in and out" of the province of British Columbia during both her childhood years and university years. A couple of years into her recent move to Vancouver, after serving as a lay volunteer at her local church, Lisa was hired as the pastor of missional engagement of a satellite location of her church, located on the east side of Vancouver. Both Lisa and her husband are Canadians.

Initial Steps Taken to Develop a Sense of Belonging to Vancouver

The first research question explored how transplanted vocational ministers developed a sense of belonging to Vancouver. Several themes emerged between the interview participants: the importance of taking initiative, love for Vancouver and its people, and the importance of mentors, friends, professors, and guides.

Taking Initiative

Lisa spoke of moving to Vancouver through a difficult transition for her family. She said that she "just began to volunteer in a lot of capacities and thought, . . . I'm just going to do what I do: start new things, help people with other things, get to know people in my church community." John said he remembered thinking "We probably need to really do some more to help make some new friends, so . . . take the initiative a little more." John recalled that he and his wife picked couples each week at the theological school, Regent College, where he was taking classes: "We would say, 'Hey, we'd love to have you over for dinner.'" John said he remembers the dinners being enjoyable but also "a lot of work." John said, "These new relationships required quite a bit of energy, and it was going to be some time before they felt close and comfortable and safe." Jane spoke of "learning to find joy in doing the things you don't naturally like." Jane spoke further of "stepping out of your shell" and gave advice to new people to Vancouver to find a small church where they could serve and connect. Jack put it this way, "Don't wait for somebody else to invite you in. Take the initiative."

Canadian Reticence and a New Life

John spoke of why it might be important to take initiative to develop a sense of belonging in a place like Vancouver; he spoke of a reluctance for people in Vancouver to "take the first step." John said that people in Vancouver "generally hang back" and that if "everyone does that, that's kind of death to community." John said, "You've got to get the ball rolling, take some initiative, because I think quite easily people who move to Vancouver could just be totally locked into isolation waiting for something." Jack referred to this reluctance that John spoke of as a "Canadian reticence." Jack said that

people in Vancouver tend to think, "We'll stick to our thing." While Jack spoke of this reticence as "very Canadian," he also referred to Vancouver as a place where people come to re-create themselves. He said that this reticence gets "exacerbated by Vancouver's . . . 'I've come . . . leaving behind whatever life I had, because I want to create a brand-new life.'" Fred explained that Vancouverites are extremely busy and also "self-possessed and self-determined." Agreeing with Jack's observation that Vancouverites can isolate themselves from others and that people come here to re-create themselves, Fred said, "Life here is about, 'I know what's best for me.' And so you're going to meet a whole bunch of people who have deliberately moved here, who are remaking themselves." Fred elaborated by saying that such folks are "carving a fresh track for themselves." Lisa described this extremely individualistic and self-focused approach to life in Vancouver as part of an "anti-God kind of sentiment." Fred elaborated further on what he called a Canadian ethos: "The unspoken agreement is, you can do whatever you want as long as you grant me the freedom to do whatever I want." Fred continued regarding this ethos, "Let's just not get in each other's way of our own pursuit of pleasure."

Opportunity, Gift, and Openness

Fred soon turned to a positive note, "I'd say if you want a sense of community, you need to prepare to commit to it deep, sacrificially, and long-term." Fred continued, "You're going to have many disappointments, but there are other people here who are genuinely interested in community and being deep friends." Fred spoke of the limited capacity of many Vancouverites to make deep connections, "They (Vancouverites)

probably aren't capable of creating that (community and deep friendship) for themselves. But they will respond if you love them."

Sally also saw a positive side to the transitional nature of many in Vancouver. Sally said regarding the experience of being uprooted and struggling with orientation in a new city that it could be helpful "to realize that probably you're not the only one feeling that way. In fact, probably a lot of people are." She said "there's a lot of . . . people that are even newer." She said of folks who are new to Vancouver, "You actually may have a particular capacity to connect with newcomers in a way." As Sally said, "There's a gift in it." She said at her church during Sunday morning worship services that she tells new people, "There's just as much chance that they (others) are visiting this week as you are." Sally said her words of encouragement on Sunday mornings are often stated in this way, "So will you take the initiative in welcoming even though you're new?"

Lisa explained this opportunity in this way, "Jesus was an outsider, you're an outsider, what does it mean to cultivate people, . . . looking for the people that you can invest in immediately?" Along with Sally, Lisa also used the language of gift, "Who needs what you have, so that you can create community with people who are also craving it?" Lisa said that her primary connections in her large church when first arriving in Vancouver was with new people, "transient people who needed connections in the city. . . . So you can find places where other people are new." Lisa said that as a new person, "you're open to any opportunity to connect to people." Sally and Lisa saw opportunity in the "gift" of being new to Vancouver and offering the gift to others through initiating connections with those looking for them.

John said that regardless of the general reluctance of Vancouverites to initiate connection, when he has taken the first step, sometimes the interest has been "reciprocated" and that while risk was involved, "It's been a generally positive experience." Jack said when bringing "people into your space, your home, your activities, . . . whatever you do down at the beach" that his experience has been that "people enthusiastically respond." John said, "I think there is a desire to actually connect and help."

A Gifts Economy of Mutuality

John spoke of the power of having needs and giving others an opportunity to serve with their gifts. He said, "If you need something, it is actually a powerful community building thing to not run out and buy it, but to actually ask your neighbor if you could borrow it, from yard tools, to eggs, to whatever. . . . I think there is a desire to actually connect and help." He utilized the word, "mutuality" as holding forth the power of connection and explained, "I think that's actually an untapped kind of key . . . especially as Christians, to not always be the one thinking, 'Well, I'm going to be the person to bless others,' but that mutuality of saying, 'I'm really stuck here; I'm wondering if I could get your help.'"

Lisa used the language of "mutual belonging." Lisa spoke of missional literature that speaks of this kind of neighborly belonging, "This is mutual belonging. You belong to them; they belong to you. What does it look (like) to be truly interdependent, in the same way that we're dependent on God? What does it mean that our neighbor has an opportunity to love us as well?" Lisa went on to describe a wonderful opportunity that opened for her university-aged daughter regarding a summer job. Lisa said the neighborly

relationship began with her needing a vacuum, asking her neighbor and her neighbor exclaiming, “Oh, I get to be a neighbor! I’m so happy!” Lisa said the job opportunity for her daughter came about in this way, “And this new neighbor who just has a couple conversations (with Lisa), hands me this gift.” Agreeing with John that neighbors have a desire to help and connect, Lisa said following this moment of connection with her neighbor, “And I thought, . . . we all want to be good neighbors.”

Fred spoke of a missionary couple that he coaches. This couple spoke of having plumbing needs, but the pipes were set in concrete: “And so in desperation he (the husband) went to these friends. And they descended on his home, . . . and they jack hammered the pipes and then got a plumber in. . . . And this was the turning point. It started off as a disaster.” Fred continued regarding his coaching session with this missionary couple, “And as we debriefed it after, he said, this was the weekend when we moved into this neighborhood. We had a real need, and our people really came to help. . . . It all changed forever because we had a real need.”

Belonging, A Perennial Pursuit

While the two vocational ministers who had lived in Vancouver for four to five years described the quest to develop a sense of belonging as a newer challenge, the other five who had lived in Vancouver for much longer spoke of the arrival of new seasons and stages of life where the same questions were pertinent. After living in his neighborhood for twenty-two years, Fred spoke of being open to a potential move and new chapter in his and his wife’s lives and ministries. Grieving some of the loss of what was once a robust community in his neighborhood and transitioning from a longtime pastorate, along with his wife who was on staff at the same church for many years, Fred stated, “the

charm of living on the west side is really evaporating, and we're now open to going anywhere. In fact, we're hungry for maybe a more needy community, where there is a bit more community and fellowship." Commenting on the challenging economic environment of Vancouver and how congregation members sometimes choose to live together in intentional ways, Sally who has lived in Vancouver for nineteen years said:

> These last two, three years have really been a bit of a crisis for all of us, . . . I've really questioned, . . . feel disillusioned with Vancouver, whereas I used to be enamored by it. And part of me doesn't want to be here anymore. And if it wasn't for this community (her church), I don't think I would be.

Jack, who has lived in Vancouver for seventeen years, shared that he and his wife sometimes talk about going "somewhere less expensive . . . less urban." Jack says that for right now he believes this is "where we need to be." Jane who has lived in Vancouver and in the same house for fourteen years said, "I love my neighborhood, but . . . ever since I've been here, as soon as I landed in my house, I've wanted to leave." Jane then spoke of the busyness and the noisiness of the street where her house is located. Jane said:

> I love my neighbors, and I love Queen Elizabeth Park and Van Horne School and, . . . all my neighborhood walks. I love the neighborhood. But I think because I don't like being on 41st Avenue, there's always a part of me that wants to get out and move somewhere else.

John who has lived in the greater Vancouver area for eighteen years, shared of the time leading up to him planting an east side church out of the larger mother church in central Vancouver where he was on staff. A friend had given to him a book called *The Art of*

Neighboring.[456] Reading the book, John said he began asking questions about what mission meant to love one's immediate neighbors. John said of that time:

> I was starting to feel just this generalized restlessness, like maybe I'm ready for a change in some way, just not really articulating that out loud, but just . . . feeling a little unsettled, in a good way, like maybe wonder, what's next? Around that time the leadership started talking about . . . planting something in East Van, which is where I live, where my kids go to school. It's my neighborhood. . . . East Van is huge, but that's where I resonate with. And the very early ideas of this would be that we would do something that was intentionally . . . missional.

John also spoke of how only in the last couple of years he has developed what Jack referred to as a "neighborhood ethic." As John and his family moved out of their mother church to plant a smaller satellite church, John shared, "in the last two to three years, . . . we've been more conscious of our immediate neighborhood and how we can try to build bridges. And the simple things just like writing their names on the fridge, trying to remember to pray for them sometimes, stopping by."

Along with the two vocational ministers who were newer to Vancouver, these five who had lived in Vancouver for a number of years also asked similar questions related to belonging and the shape of call and ministry. Some spoke of their immediate neighborhoods; others spoke of the city of Vancouver in general and what it meant to belong to it. These vocational ministers who had been long-term residents of Vancouver continued to ask similar questions to the newer residents regarding how one develops a sense of belonging to the city. They revealed that the quest for belonging is a perennial pursuit.

---

[456] Jay Pathak and Dave Runyon, *The Art of Neighboring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012).

Love for Vancouver and Its People

A second theme that emerged between these interview participants who were transplants to Vancouver was the role of love for Vancouver and its people. Love was described as both a gift of God as well as a summons to faithful human agency. Fred spoke of opening his heart to God, asking the Lord to "help me feel like this is our home." He also spoke of a friend he had met who loved Vancouver often "quite exuberantly sharing his love for Vancouver." Fred said between his prayers and his friend's enthusiasm for Vancouver, "that sort of caught fire in my heart and I realized . . . I want to embrace that kind of spirit of appreciation and gratitude for Vancouver as well." Fred described this developing of a love for Vancouver as "an interweaving of God's agency and mine."

Love for Natural Beauty and Ethos

Jack said regarding his appreciation for the natural beauty of Vancouver, "I was quite stunned that within a few months of landing in Vancouver, it felt more home than home. . . . Psychologically, it felt like this was the place I should have been all along." In addition to appreciating the physical beauty, Jack also was deeply drawn to the ecumenical spirit in Vancouver among various churches that he had witnessed through the Regent College community: "But the collegiality and the fellowship across sectarian lines at Regent [College] seemed, even at this early stage, to be reflected within the churches I had shopped around."

Whereas Jack spoke glowingly of the ecumenical spirit among Christians, Jane spoke of the political climate reflecting biblical priorities in a way her conservative church upbringing did not acknowledge. Jane said, "I don't think I ever asked myself,

'What does it mean to belong to Vancouver?' I think I just started to love Vancouver." When asked what she began to love, Jane responded by referring to both the natural beauty as well as the political ethos of the city, "The greenery, the kind of liberal political feel." Jane continued, "I started to really appreciate how social justice is an integral part of the Bible. . . . there's actually biblical roots to liberal politics; that just completely blew my mind."

Sally also spoke of the natural beauty of Vancouver by referring to the mountains, "I grew up in the northern island (of Japan), so mountains and snow, . . . the land . . . was a draw." Regarding the natural beauty of Vancouver, Jane had spoken of taking photos of cherry blossoms. When Fred spoke of the time he began to take notice of the natural beauty of Vancouver for the first time, he also spoke of Vancouver's cherry blossoms, "I noticed that there were people parking on 43rd Avenue in the spring, taking pictures of that block because it is an arch of cherry trees that were all in blossom."

In addition to talking about the mountains, Sally also spoke of finding "a place among exiles" in the Regent College community, "a group of Australian and New Zealand folks. . . . And there were some Japanese. . . . it was a mix of people." Whereas for Jack the ecumenical spirit was key to love and appreciation for Vancouver, and for Jane it was the "liberal political feel," for Sally it was the diversity of fellow students at Regent College. She said, "I did kind of fall in love with the place right from the beginning." Sally also spoke of a spiritual director who presented to her "an image of a plant being planted and blooming." As a missionary kid, Sally had moved thirty times by the age of thirty. Praying with her spiritual director, Sally began seeing the wonder of a plum tree in her Vancouver neighborhood, "it was quite significant (after one or two

years) to be able to know the cycles of the tree, like, . . . it's going to get this kind of blossoms on it and this kind of fruit." Sally saw the natural beauty of Vancouver providing lessons about the spiritual life of planting and growing with fellow Christians. As she reflected many years later, having lived in Vancouver for nineteen years, "It's not just this place, it's a particular people I feel called to."

Appreciation and Enjoyment of People and Place

Fred spoke of his house getting broken into twice during his early years in Vancouver and that there was little consequence for such crimes in a place like Vancouver. He described a "dark side of Vancouver, the real lawlessness and hedonism." Fred said a breakthrough came when "we realized we can love a place even though you don't love everything about that place." Fred also met a friend who "was effusive. He just loved Vancouver. And most times you were talking to him, he would share something he was appreciating." His interactions with this friend caused Fred to ask, "Why am I here? What do I love?" Fred began to think about features of the culture of Vancouver and words such as "creativity, globally-aware, open-minded, playful, flexible, opportunistic" arose. Fred said, "Those are the positive qualities we saw."

Mick reflected that though he did not grow up in Vancouver (or Canada for that matter), nonetheless, "There are places we love. There are people we love. . . . there is a real passion for the place that God has put us in." Mick continued, "When I am away, I'm looking forward to coming home. And here is home." Similar to Fred beginning to appreciate distinctive features of Vancouver, Mick commented that people who are new to Vancouver should look for "things to love and just to really talk about well." Mick used the language of "cultural sensitivity" that is important for people from other places

and cultures, who might be inclined "talking about how great their old context was," to look for features of Vancouver to appreciate and verbally affirm. Mick said that the lack of such sensitivity can be a "disruptor . . . [that] prevents healthy relationships from being built." Mick also spoke of "enjoying people" as vital to developing a sense of belonging to Vancouver. Near the end of his interview, Mick gave a theological reflection, "In the kingdom, I think, cultures are celebrated and wonderful."

When speaking of the neighbor who provided her daughter with a great summer job, Lisa said, "I need to own this moment, . . . enjoy the relationship, the mutuality." When reflecting that "this was the place I should have been all along," Jack said, "I was enjoying the city." Jane said a significant part of growing to love Vancouver was "I started to actually enjoy nature. . . . gardening, getting your hands dirty, like, noticing the different kinds of trees, the greenery." Fred spoke of his early years in Vancouver serving as an outreach coordinator at a local church and how he was led to help the congregation consider what it meant, "Just loving people, and not doing anything because you're hoping they come to church." Fred said he challenged the congregation, "Would I do this with 'Bob' even if I knew he would never come to my church?" Fred continued, "So all of a sudden, you're just doing things that you enjoy with people who you do enjoy being with, and it's genuine."

Mentors, Friends, Professors, and Guides

A third theme that emerged from these vocational ministers who were transplants was the role of mentors, friends, professors and guides.

Mentors and Friends

Mick spoke most extensively about the role of mentors and friends. Being a South African who had spent his previous fifteen years in the United Kingdom as a church planter prior to moving to Vancouver, Mick spoke about the difficulty of learning the nuances of a new culture. Mick spoke at length about the importance of "cultural sensitivity" and referred to himself as being like a "third-culture kid." Mick recalled his time in the United Kingdom, "I remember when we lived in the UK, often thinking, 'I feel very at home here, but I'm not British.'" Mick said, "I think one of the . . . things for me that has been massively helpful has been friends who have invested with us in planting the church, and who have really cared for us from the outside." Mick then went on to share about "a couple in Manchester in England and a couple from Fredericton in New Brunswick who've come regularly to serve the church, to be with us." Mick continued, "They just come in two or three times a year. . . . They've been [a] tremendous help to me in terms of forming our team. They've been a real support to [spouse] and me at different points." Discussing a difficult period in ministry, Mick said, "They were able to come in and say, 'Here's what we think; let's just pray with you guys, let's walk through this.'" Mick was also quite animated regarding the importance of having mentors and friends help a vocational minister "navigate . . . this new context." Mick said, "build [a] friendship with someone who's been there longer than you and has walked in your shoes to some degree, because they can probably help you process some of these things." Mick went on to give an example from his former ministry location: "When I moved to the UK, I feel like there were guys who probably were ahead of me, who I was able to

talk with and who were able to help me process, help me understand what I was feeling." In the Vancouver context, Mick said regarding the profile of this sort of friend or mentor:

> I think it would probably need to be someone who's gone through some sense of cultural change themselves. And so it could be a Vancouverite who's lived in another place for a significant amount of time, and who has experienced cultural shock, cultural disconnection, and is able to help one process that.

Mick gave an example of a recent conversation, "I had just a fascinating conversation the other day with a guy who leads a church on an interim basis, and he just made this comment. He said, [of Canadians], 'We're very accepting until you offend us, and then we hate you.'" Mick seemed to be in awe of this cultural insight.

Professors, Spiritual Directors, and Pastors

John spoke of one professor at Regent College who helped him to transition to serving in the local church as a young pastor in his twenties. John quoted the professor:

> John, until you're thirty-five, you don't know yourself well enough. I want to encourage you to see your ministry and your church as a laboratory where you can . . . try your hand in different aspects of ministry and discover what you're learning about yourself and how you're wired and what makes you come alive. . . . Ideally, it's a place where you can take risks and fail and that will not be fatal, but a learning experience. But I want you to see this as a . . . laboratory.

John spoke of the challenges of transitioning into his local church as a young man and finding that the situation was less idealistic than what he had imagined as he studied at Regent College. John said that his professor's words helped him "Step back and actually have a little more humility." He said after receiving his professor's words, he was then able to say to himself, "Okay, I'm learning a lot here. Some of it is by negative example, but I'm learning from that."

Sally described being mentored into "leadership and responsibility" in ministry. She described the role of a spiritual director who helped her imagine planting and blooming in one place for a long time. At the time of her interview, Sally had lived in Vancouver for nineteen years after having moved thirty times before the age of thirty. Also, Sally named a Regent College professor and his spouse who had moved into her neighborhood on the east side of Vancouver and, along with another pastoral mentor and his spouse, would help her integrate life and ministry.

In his early years in Vancouver, along with several Regent College students, Jack was also a part of the same local church and neighborhood community as Sally. Jack spoke of the vital roles of the same Regent College professor and spouse and also pastor and spouse for him as a young theological student. This church on the east side of Vancouver had a "neighborhood ethic" and was being revitalized in its outreach efforts to its local community. As Sally spoke of a neighborhood prayer breakfast every Wednesday morning at 6:30 a.m. led by her professor, she quoted Dorothy Day from her autobiography *The Long Loneliness,*[457] "It all happened while we sat there talking." Jane also spoke about the role of being attentive, present with people, but added the notion of spontaneity. Jane also spoke of the role of Regent College and the education her husband received. Jane spoke of an "urban course" where she and her husband learned about the importance of "being in your neighborhood and having spontaneous interactions with whoever you see on the street, and those connections being the most valuable ones and the ones where God works the most."

---

[457] Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of the Legendary Catholic Social Activist* (New York: Harper, 1952).

Regent College

Five out of the seven research participants spoke of the significant role Regent College played in developing a sense of belonging to Vancouver. For four out of five of these vocational ministers, Regent was the reason for moving to Vancouver, to pursue theological studies. For the fifth vocational minister who spoke of Regent, Jane moved to Vancouver to marry her future husband who had lived in Vancouver for most of his life but also began a study program at Regent during the early years of their marriage.

Sally spoke of initially becoming "embedded" into the Regent community upon first moving to Vancouver. Sally spoke of the influence of an Australian professor at Regent who had written about intentional community. Sally also spoke of the influence of this professor's spouse. Sally moved into the same neighborhood with this professor and his spouse and become a part of the same church community also in the neighborhood.

Jane stated that the Regent community was her primary place of belonging when she first moved to Vancouver, "I found a lot of belonging at Regent College. Because [husband] started at Regent, and I identified more with Regent that I did with [husband's] church." Jane said, "I very much missed my group in Calgary. And I found the most belonging at Regent, with [husband's] classmates." Jane added, "I found identity with [husband's] cohort at Regent, because they're all about my age." Jane also spoke of her husband's formation in urban and missional engagement by talking about "all the stuff he learned at Regent."

When Jack was asked, "What brought you to Vancouver?" he answered, "It was Regent." In addition to appreciating the "fellowship and collegiality across sectarian lines" demonstrated by the Regent community, Jack also spoke of being a part of a small

church of fifty people, approximately twenty of them Regent students. This was the same church community Sally had joined. Jack stated of the church that it was "very much on the way to becoming a neighborhood church." Jack described the church forming as a result of the merger of two declining church and the developing of "a culture of hospitality and openness to the neighborhood."

John spoke of his wife getting a job at Regent in their second year in Vancouver while he studied at Regent; he said of his studies, "I really enjoyed that." John also spoke about having other Regent couples over for dinner, to try and get to know people. John spoke of both the vital role of a Regent professor in helping him to understand ministry in the local church as well as struggling to apply some of the "ideals" he had learned at Regent to the challenges of local church ministry.

Fred spoke of being "deeply connected at Regent." Fred reflected on the events leading up to the decision to move to Vancouver. He was considering theological education and while he was considering mainly American institutions, a friend from Calgary said to him, "Just over the mountains is one of the best schools in the world, if not, North America. You should check out Regent." As he read about Regent's focus primarily to equip laity, Fred said he was not sure if Regent would be a good fit as he felt called to pastoral ministry. Fred continued, "But [Regent President], who was the president, was personally contacting everyone who expressed interest in Regent. And so he and I had a wonderful . . . half hour conversation." [Regent President] convinced Fred that he would receive a wonderful pastor's education "enriched by experiences of having . . . quite committed lay people around you in the classes." Fred spoke of what he considered to be the "golden years," when "Regent students could still afford to live on

the west side" and when the new church he and his wife were pastoring was filled with "tons" of Regent students.

Difficulties Faced When Seeking to Develop a Sense of Belonging

The second research question explored difficulties faced when transplanted vocational ministers sought to develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver. Several themes emerged from the interviews including a fierce sense of individualism among Canadians that leads to isolation, the cost of living in Vancouver, and struggles of older children to adjust.

Isolation, Individualism and Consumerism

Fred spoke of more recently trying to provide support for some new local pastors: "I've gone out of my way to try and welcome them, not wanting them to just be crushed by the coldness of Vancouver." Fred continued, "People are not only busy here, but they are extremely self-possessed and self-determined. So life here is about 'I know what's best for me.'" Fred commented that people in Vancouver are "quite egocentric." Fred went on to describe a "Canadian ethos" which he called "extreme." Fred contrasted this Canadian ethos with an American one:

> Americans think, "Oh, it's good to get together, because we're stronger as a group." Canadians think the opposite, if there's something big happening over there with a bunch of people, they'll get away from it, because they don't want to get sucked into someone else's agenda. . . . the unspoken agreement is you can do whatever you want as long as you grant me freedom to do whatever I want. Let's just not get in each other's way of our own pursuit of pleasure.

Fred spoke of this fierce autonomy as part of a Canadian ethos. Lisa spoke of this individualistic approach as stemming from the problem of a "consumer-oriented society."

She named the problem not so much as "Canadian" as "North American." Lisa said, "Mostly we're consumers. Mostly we're materialists, in our natural, sinful selves. We consume, we acquire, and we're individualistic." Lisa concluded, "I think we have a lot to learn on what it means to be collaborative, generous, to build community." Lisa also mentioned that with her kids being older (only one of three kids still in high school), she has been "isolated from my traditional means of volunteering, connecting, reaching out." She continued:

> if I'm going to connect with people, it's not going to be through the schools, because I don't have kids there anymore. And I can't go and meet moms in the park and chat with them, or invite them to my house over picking mangoes, . . . because they think I'm weird.

Lisa spoke of being further isolated from others as a result of her particular stage of life. She described the ways of connecting at this point in her life as "slower" and "way more organic, way more natural."

Agreeing with Lisa and Fred's assessment of the isolationist mindset of many Vancouverites, John commented, "I think we've all heard these stats a thousand times, the Vancouver Foundation saying that the biggest social problem is loneliness and isolation. So this seems to be our poverty here in Vancouver." Jack spoke of the political and social culture of Canada where "Religion is what you leave at the door. It is not a public faith." Jack referred to Lisa's notion of the problem of materialism and consumerism when he spoke of the material prosperity of Canada. Jack said this prosperity in Canada has led to spiritual complacency, "We've got it so good, right? So what does the gospel really need to speak to, other than confirming that life is nice?"

Living on the wealthier west side of Vancouver for over twenty years as a renter, Fred lamented much of the loss of neighborliness and community as even more "money" has come into the west side in recent years. Fred said, "It's a kind of insane situation, where people are so wealthy, so well-resourced, not healthy; wealthy: that they can really live without their neighbors, at least survive. They are certainly not thriving." Fred spent time between recalling his neighborhood that was once far more open to meaningful connections to his current situation where the neighborhood has become more closed off as a result of the influx of foreign buyers and wealth. Fred spoke of a neighborhood group his wife, who is also a vocational minister used to lead, "a mom's group." But Fred lamented that today, "if they're struggling with parenting, they hire a nanny, they go to a consultant or a counselor or whatever. But they solve everything with money. And they will not admit a weakness." Fred went on to talk about a missionary couple he coaches. This missionary couple spoke of having plumbing needs where pipes were set in concrete, "And so in desperation he went to these friends. And they descended on his home, . . . and they jack hammered the pipes and then got a plumber in. . . . And this was the turning point. It started off as a disaster." Fred continued regarding his coaching session with this missionary couple, "And as we debriefed it after, he said, this was the weekend when we moved into this neighborhood. We had a real need, and our people really came to help. . . . It all changed forever because we had a real need." In sharing this story, Fred continued his lament for the lack of neighborliness in his current west side neighborhood, "So maybe that's why this is such a sick neighborhood now, is because no needs or assets are being shared." With sadness in his voice, Fred concluded, "Just the

other day I was thinking, we're not in the neighborhood that we were. It's gone. And I've lost hope that we can get it back."

Economics

The second theme that emerged when exploring difficulties faced among transplanted vocational ministers seeking to develop belonging to Vancouver was the economics of Vancouver as a very expensive city to live in.

An Expensive City

Jack said, "The economics of the city shuts you out, not just the housing, but lots of other stuff." Jack described wanting to move back into his original neighborhood where his church had developed a "neighborhood ethic," but by the time they were ready to move back, the area was no longer affordable. Jack lamented that early on, the neighborhood signified a place where he "lived, worked and worshipped within two blocks" and where all his friends were "within certainly a ten-minute cycle, and probably a ten-minute walk." However, they "missed it (the affordability index) by about three years."

Sally, who was a part of the same church community and neighborhood as Jack in those early years, spoke of the vision of "cluster housing" that some of the church leaders and members had promoted for members. Members were encouraged to move into the neighborhood near the church. Meanwhile the church was a significant part of purchasing and starting a couple of community houses for food and shelter programs, caring for those in "vulnerable life circumstances" and fostering "intentional Christian community." Sally described those early years as "the beginning of a movement of people like me who were drawn to the vision, moving into the neighborhood, locating here. . . . The vision

also drew in more people who were already in the neighborhood." Sally said, "probably sixty, maybe even seventy percent of the people were in walking distance of the church." Sally said of her current situation as morning congregation pastor of that same church, "In the last five years, . . . it's changed so drastically with housing prices." The church currently is building low cost housing units near the church. However, Sally also knows that the economics in Vancouver make it important for the church to help its members understand what intentional Christian community looks like outside of the immediate neighborhood of the church. Sally mentioned that currently five of their members drive in from North Vancouver, and that "if one more person comes [from North Vancouver], we'll probably try to start one [a home group] out there."

When speaking about how his neighborhood on the expensive west side of Vancouver has changed over twenty years, Fred lamented the sense of neighborliness that has been lost as more wealth has come in:

> It's absolutely heartbreaking. People who move into our neighborhood now, they only hear the stories. And they say, "Wow, that's not our experience." We've talked to so many who have moved into our neighborhood and found it so unwelcoming. They've said, you know, ". . . We're just not finding the neighborliness here. So we're moving out."

Fred continued in his lament:

> it's not quite true, but it feels like the only people who can afford to move into this neighborhood are now wealthy offshore Asian investors, right? And then they don't live here. If they do live here, they live here six months a year. We just don't see them. Their kids live here, but the parents aren't here. So all manner of dysfunction. So there's a lot to mourn.

The loss of neighborhood and a sense of place to Fred, who has lived in the same neighborhood in Vancouver for over twenty years, was palpable and visceral as he appeared to be openly grieving the loss during the interview.

Mobility

The economics of Vancouver led many of these vocational ministers to talk about the general mobility of people in Vancouver, making connection more difficult. Jack called it "the mobility factor." He said, "So you can enjoy a place. The place doesn't change that much. . . . But the relationships have moved on. A lot of people have left town." John mentioned good friends of his that "have to move again, because their landlord says, 'I'm selling the place.' They're not moving around. I think they'd like to stay put. But this is about the second or third time they've had to move within, well, three or four years. It's just a big deal." Mick said:

> I think renting has become . . . has certainly been a part of our thinking in terms of settled-ness. It's a different thing owning a home to being in a rental place. . . . I think the reality is there is more of a temporary element in your thinking on neighborhoods when your situation isn't permanent. . . . I think my sense is that your rootedness in an area does have some connection to your sense of longevity or ownership within the area.

In addition to the mobility factor resulting from the challenging economics of the city for many, Sally added, "the statistics of the number of people in Vancouver who are actually from Vancouver, are born in Vancouver, are very low." Referring to the multiculturalism of Vancouver, Mick described the city as a "mix of cultures." People have come to Vancouver from all over the world.

Struggles of Older Children

While only two of the research participants moved to Vancouver with children over the age of five years, those two vocational ministers spoke at length about the difficulties their children experienced adjusting to life in Vancouver.

Difficulty in Transition

Lisa moved to Vancouver at a time when her three children were ages sixteen, fourteen, and twelve. Lisa said for her oldest who moved to Vancouver for her final year of high school, "It was horrific." Lisa even called the move for her oldest "a cataclysmic disaster in so many ways." Her youngest "had a very hard transition" as well. The middle child did a little better in the transition, due to personality and temperament. Lisa said that due to the struggle of the two kids, the oldest especially, that she became "depressed" and "super exhausted, . . . trying to find my way." Lisa said, "I lost those two transitional years." Mick moved to Vancouver with an eight-year-old and a six-year-old; he said that both children had a "very tough first year," particularly the older one. Mick stated:

> I think the biggest (difficulty) was the kids. They really struggled with the cultural adaptation. I think we thought that we were moving them at a really good age. But I think they were far more rooted than we realized, in their context in London.

The struggles of their children transitioning to Vancouver was discussed at length by the research participants who had older children at the time of the move.

Role of Schools

As Mick and Lisa spoke of the difficulties of their children adapting to Vancouver, they also mentioned the schools as a significant factor. Mick said of his children, "They came into a school that was, I think, on their second or third acting head. I don't think they had solid leadership in the school for probably three years." Lisa spoke

of the challenging school environment for her oldest child who struggled the most, "We probably didn't put her in the best school environment, probably not in the best program." Regarding the struggles of her youngest child, Lisa said, "She had a very hard transition as well. I think some of it had to do with . . . she didn't have the greatest grade seven class. She talks about it being a horrible year."

Role of Certain Local Networks in Helping with Developing a Sense of Belonging

The third research question explored the role of certain local networks, specifically the role of churches and neighborhoods, in helping vocational ministers who were transplants develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver. The participants shared about the role of churches and neighborhoods in helping them to develop this sense of belonging. Also the theme of places of occupation viewed as a kind of "work neighborhood" arose as well.

Role of Churches

When discussing the role of the local church in helping transplanted vocational ministers develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver, the first theme to emerge was that of the significance of the relational closeness of the people of the church.

Close Relationships

When Jane described the small congregation from her early years in Vancouver, she said that the church family "quickly formed [as] a very tight-knit group." John described serving on the staff of a church ministry where he wasn't aligned ministry-wise, but that he appreciated the people, "I felt caught in a bit of a system that I struggled with and didn't really like, . . . But the people were so darn nice and friendly, and so that's really what sustained me and kept me in it." John spoke of people in the church

taking much of the initiative to have him and his wife over for dinner, “So relationally it was good.” John said of his wife, “She too felt relationally connected at this church.” Mick said, “I think we’ve just developed some great friendships in the church, and a real sense of team in the church. . . . I would say the church community has been massive for us.”

Mission and Service

Fostering a sense of belonging to Vancouver for transplanted vocational ministers was also aided by their participation in mission and service. Jane also spoke about the sense of mission that the members of the church had. Jane made a comment about the many conversions to Christ they saw at their small church, “A lot of new believers and baptisms.” Jane spoke of the energy of the small church coming together with “so much passion for God’s kingdom.” Jane reflected further, “I didn’t know how good it was, you know? At that time, you’re always just, like, looking for . . . something bigger, something more professional, something . . . you don’t realize the gift that it is to be . . . a small church plant that has so much energy.”

Mick spoke to the ministry efforts of his small church community, of which he is the lead elder, “trying to build a church community that reflects what we read about in Acts 2 has been one of our core values.” Mick spoke further with passion of seeing more churches in other places around the city planted. Jack spoke of his church being an “intentional community” and one that was “very much on the way to becoming a neighborhood church.” Lisa spoke of getting “past the foyer moment” and finding people who “have the concept of journeying with, making space for others, loving, praying with, listening to.” Sally spoke of “the story I was stepping into” of a church that was

intentional in engaging the neighborhood for Christ. Fred spoke of serving as the director of outreach at his local church where his job was "to find new ways for our congregation to connect to our community." Fred said that his job was to lead the church by asking questions such as "Who are these neighbors? What's important to them?" Fred said that his church underwent an initiative in friendship evangelism, one about "kingdom relationships." Fred said that through the process of the friendship evangelism training and seeking to understand the Vancouver culture, members of his congregation were encouraged to reach out to neighbors in genuine ways:

> We just called it friendship, kingdom relationships. Just loving people, and not doing anything because you're hoping they come to church. So you have to keep checking your heart. "Would I do this with Bob even if I knew he would never come to my church?" And so all of a sudden, you're just doing things that you enjoy with people who you do enjoy being with, and it's genuine.

Culture of Hospitality and Grace

In addition to close relationships and mission, experiencing a culture of grace and hospitality also helped transplanted vocational ministers adjust. Jack spoke of how his church "established a culture of hospitality and openness to the neighborhood." Sally spoke of the same community, and she spoke of it as being a community of "forgiveness and grace." She continued:

> I had done something that I was embarrassed or ashamed of, or something like that, and [I realized], "Oh they still love me," and . . . whereas before, I'd just always move, and I felt like I put my best, a good, face for whatever context. . . . But I realized their ugly sides are coming out too. And yet we learned this journey of forgiveness and grace together.

Lisa also spoke of a "journey" of grace and hospitality that she and her husband found in the larger church into which they first came:

> If you can get past the foyer moment and find some other connection, it's easier to get around the table in the faith community. It's easier to find people who . . . kind of have the concept of journeying with, making space for others, loving, praying with, listening to. So . . . there were two or three people at [Lisa's Vancouver Church] that we had a loose connection with. . . . we were able to make some loose connections that began to . . . help us navigate the need for somebody to have dinner with, somebody who had kids that was walking through stuff with. So just those early connections in the faith community . . . welcome you in.

John mentioned that due to the influence of various Asian groups in his church and some of the strengths of their cultures, a culture of hospitality was present where "people just thought . . . we need to have them (John's family) over for dinner." John said this allowed his family to "connect pretty quickly, and we didn't have to take all the initiative."

Role of the Neighborhood

When discussing the role of the neighborhood, the first theme to emerge was the value of walking to various places.

Walking

When Jane was asked to give advice to someone who was new to Vancouver and struggling to develop belonging in the city, her answer was straightforward, "Go to a small church and walk everywhere."[458] Jane began talking about an urban course her husband was taking at Regent College at the same time she was walking her kids to preschool. Jane commented:

> And because we're volunteering in the preschool, volunteering at the school, and taking the kids to school, I start to walk. And this was the huge thing about [husband's] course. . . . we need to walk more. Everything needs to be in walking distance. It's . . . . Urban mission. And so . . . it's actually a gift that we're on our feet.

[458] In addition to Jane's advice being simple and straightforward, it was also notable in particular because Jane and her husband both serve on staff at one of the largest evangelical churches in Vancouver.

Sally described her church on the east side of Vancouver becoming more engaged with the community and that possibly as many as seventy percent of their members were within walking distance of the church:

> because the church had become more and more community engaged, neighborhood engaged, there also drew more and more people that were already in the neighborhood. So you know, ten years ago, what would that would be, 2007? probably sixty, maybe even seventy percent of the people were in walking distance of the church. I'm not very good with numbers. But we counted . . . the majority walked or biked to church, I'd say.

Mick said that it took a while to become oriented to how neighborhoods functioned in Vancouver, but that they had the advantage of walking most places:

> And I would say it took us awhile to get into really grasping the functioning of neighborhoods within Vancouver. . . . at the same time, we didn't have a car for six months, so in those first six months, we walked everywhere. We carried our shopping in our backpacks.

Mick added that while he no longer lives in the same neighborhood he did when he first moved to Vancouver; nonetheless, many of the families from his church remain in his old neighborhood:

> And actually, interestingly, . . . there are still three families from the church that live within one block of where we lived. And within five blocks, there are probably fifteen to twenty people who now live in that area. So that . . . has been significant. And we may be seeing something of that happening now. It's probably a bit early to tell. So I certainly think we're becoming more neighborhood-focused. At the same time, I think we really feel a sense of God having spoken to us about planting a church that's for the city.

Fred spoke of a Y2K New Year's Eve gathering when he and his wife stayed up until 4 a.m. conversing with neighbors. Fred reflected, "That's something that [Fred's wife] and I never do. But we had so much fun. I remember [Fred's wife] and I thinking,

we're the only sober ones here. Like, everyone else is pretty hammered. But no one misbehaved." Fred described that moment as significant for finding a sense of belonging to his neighborhood:

> And that was, I think, when we crossed the line and started [thinking] . . . okay, these are our neighbors, these are people we hang out with. Now we would stop and talk when we're walking our dogs or walking our kids. We belonged. And we now saw ourselves enmeshed in a neighborhood of relationships, rather than, this just happens to be the street where we live. So we were in the street rather than just using the street. It was a huge shift.

John spoke of in more recent years, developing a neighborhood consciousness:

> I would say it's probably in the last two to three years that we've been more conscious of our immediate neighborhood and how we can try to build bridges. And simple things just like writing their names on the fridge, trying to remember to pray for them sometimes, stopping when they're outside, . . . But just stop and chat for a moment. Some of them, they've been over. We've been over to their place.

Jack described some of the city design of Vancouver to encourage walking, "So I think in most parts of town, most neighborhoods, there is that strong walkable business district, where you can get everything you need just off the storefronts. You don't need to go to a mall." Jack referred to Vancouver as a city of "walkable villages." Jack also described his early years in Vancouver, "I lived, worked, and worshiped within two blocks, . . . So. . . anything I needed to buy was there, . . . Nearly all of my friends were within certainly a ten-minute cycle, and probably a ten-minute walk." Jack reflected on how today, after moving around through his eighteen years in Vancouver, he was hoping to move forward in developing connection and belonging, "We may have our primary

Christian friendships be the people that we see every day because their kids go to our school, they live down the block, we bump into each other on the sidewalks."

Mission to Neighborhood, Sometimes Through Church

The second theme to emerge when discussing the role of the neighborhood was having a sense of mission to the neighborhood. At times this sense of mission to the neighborhood was through the church with a shared vision for the neighborhood. At other times, this sense of mission was through the vocational minister's personal sense of call to their own neighborhood. In each case, it was a deep conviction bore out of a sense of purpose and call to one's neighbors.

Sally spoke of her spiritual director presenting an image of "a plant being planted and blooming." At the same time, people from her church community were beginning to talk a lot about "intentional community, . . . together with people that normally don't have places of welcome, and being located in a particular neighborhood, sharing life together." Sally said, "that was kind of the story I was stepping into." Speaking of being a part of that same community as Sally at that time, Jack said, "This was a church that when I first started going had maybe fifty people, and twenty of them were Regent [College] students, . . . and it was very much on the way to becoming a neighborhood church." Fred spoke of a time when several neighbors would begin coming to his church, "Five of our neighbors re-ignited their faith and started coming to church. Then there was a couple of other families that never had faith, and they started coming from the neighborhood too." Fred said this is when his church was a "community church" and when the pastors lived in the community. Fred described those days as "the glory days, where we were reaching neighbors." Fred reflected further, "there was a very strong

sense of community, and a neighborhood is not just where you live; a neighborhood is where you belong and you love to be with your neighbors."

Taking the focus off the institutional church, Lisa talked about how she believed house churches might be the key to helping neighbors learn about God. Lisa felt, "people that are furthest away from God are not likely to come to our churches, maybe ever." Lisa commented that the "institutional church" is therefore needing to accept a "different expression of church," if it wishes to reach people who are "not yet followers of Christ." Lisa said that she was not interested "to catalyze small group community anymore." As great as it was to do such work in the past, nonetheless Lisa also said, "It always was dissatisfying to me." Lisa explained the reason for her dissatisfaction was "It wasn't connected to mission . . . it's connected to loving and creating community together. But then we just get too tight, . . . it's painful to add new people to your community and be transparent with them." Lisa said her understanding of mission now is to "live fairly locally." Lisa said that the way to offset the difficult challenges of catalyzing community and keeping small groups open to outsiders is to see the vital role of the neighborhood in mission. Lisa said:

> But how do you create those environments where you do life-on-life with everybody who comes into your community, whether they're mature, whether they're old, whether they're children, whether they're new believers, whether they're seekers? . . . All that requires a neighborhood.

Lisa also talked about missional literature that discusses "mutual belonging." Lisa said, "You belong to them; they belong to you. What does it look [like] to be truly interdependent, in the same way we're dependent on God?" Lisa described her neighbors all being created in the image of God and asked, "What does it mean that our neighbor

has the opportunity to love us, as well?" Lisa then went on to share a story of a neighbor, after a few short conversations, providing a wonderful summer job opportunity for Lisa's university-aged daughter. Lisa's personal sense of mission to her neighborhood was communicated with much conviction and appeared to be very important to her.

In more recent years, as John began grappling with a sense of restlessness regarding his sense of calling, a friend gave him the book *The Art of Neighboring.*[459] The fruit of this time in his life was what led him eventually to "move out" of the larger mother church and serve as site pastor of a smaller church plant on the east side of Vancouver. John reflected on some of the questions *The Art of Neighboring* brought up for him:

> If Jesus says love your neighbor, what if he means love your actual neighbor? And I just started thinking, "I actually don't know that many neighbors. And I'm so in my church world." . . . So some of these things converged, and I just thought, maybe I can take five minutes. Maybe I can write some names on my fridge. Maybe I can look for ways to build bridges or have a barbecue.

Having similar thoughts to Lisa, John said, "one of the things I think about is, can a small group morph to become a missional group? And I'm not sure they can . . . if they are established." While John spoke of his recent thoughts on the question of neighborhood and belonging, he also spoke of years ago when he had first moved to the greater Vancouver area, serving on a maintenance committee at his apartment co-op. He spoke of the committee giving a "context for relationships." While the concept of serving his immediate neighborhood was newer to John's understanding of mission, reaching others with the love of God was not.

---

[459] Pathak and Runyon.

Block Parties

A third theme that emerged when discussing the role of neighborhoods was the role of neighborhood block parties. Fred spoke of the significance of a neighborhood Y2K New Year's Eve gathering when he and his wife stayed up until 4 a.m. conversing with their neighbors. Fred described that moment as significant for finding a sense of belonging in his neighborhood:

> And that was, I think, when we crossed the line and started [thinking] . . . okay, these are our neighbors, these are people we hang out with. Now we would stop and talk when we're walking our dogs or walking our kids. We belonged. And we now saw ourselves enmeshed in a neighborhood of relationships, rather than, this just happens to be the street where we live. So we were in the street rather than just using the street. It was a huge shift.

Lisa spoke of a street one block north of hers that for seventeen years has had a neighborhood block party, "All the neighbors come out, they sing, they hang out, they barbeque, they talk, they meet new neighbors." As one who organizes and gathers people, Lisa thought, "I need to copy them" for her own neighborhood block. John described moving into a new neighborhood in more recent years and being invited to a neighborhood block party of about 120 people. John reflected:

> It is kind of weird (the awkwardness of having so many new neighbors greet you). But having said that, those first few weeks of just landing there and neighbors going, "Oh you moved in right over there; welcome," it did help a little bit to kind of feel, "Okay, here's where we are. Here's some of our neighbors."

As a long-time resident of Vancouver, John reflected on his sense of developing belonging to his Vancouver neighborhood more recently. John demonstrated that the need to develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver is a perennial need that involves a lifelong journey.

Work Neighborhood

While the researcher did not directly explore places of occupation and their particular role in helping transplanted vocational ministers develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver, the topic did arise. For John, it arose when asked about how to help Vancouverites in his church develop belonging given what Jack termed "the mobility factor" of many in the city. John spoke of one of his members who works nine to ten hour days and sees an investment into his colleagues as his primary place of calling. John translated a conversation with this church member, "I get into work at 7:30 a.m., I'm out of there by 6:30 p.m. . . . get time to see my kids before I tuck them in. It's really hard for me to connect with my neighbors, but I really feel . . . my coworkers are my neighbors, because I'm with them for, . . . nine or ten hours a day." John went on to describe how this man serves as a team leader in his place of work and buys his team breakfast once a week where the team talks about issues outside of the workplace. John said, "So I feel a great sense of connection with my physical neighborhood; he senses it with his work neighborhood. And I think that's great. That's where you are." John spoke of highlighting at his church through short interviews "small, simple stories of people taking initiative or trying to build a bridge with their neighbor" and that stories like this one regarding an individual's "work neighborhood" were included as well. The connection with the question regarding the transitional nature of many people in Vancouver neighborhoods and the answer John gave seemed to imply that for some, one's place of occupation is a more steady and consistent environment than one's physical neighborhood in Vancouver.

Lisa spoke of the significance of her husband's workplace as a place of connection, mission and belonging for her family:

> We're starting to develop a very strong community at his workplace, as well, even though they're far away. Yeah. The big cross-cultural moment was getting invited to his Hindu office manager's house for the giant feast. She taught my daughter how to cook dinner. I've never seen a prayer room anywhere, . . . than the prayer room in her house. She is the most devout Hindu woman I've ever met. She adores Mark. We talk to her of faith. She's always [saying], "oh, we have a celebration, a Hindu celebration." She (the Hindu office manager) goes [on], . . . "we're reading the Bible."

It seemed that for these research participants, open doors in places of occupation were important to develop what Lisa referred to as a "belonging moment." John implied that with the transitional nature of many people in Vancouver, places of occupation might be as stable and consistent an environment for connection and belonging as physical neighborhoods. As John said to his church member sharing about seeing his work as his primary place of connection, belonging and mission, "that's where you are."

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to research how vocational ministers who were transplants developed a sense of belonging to Vancouver. Therefore, the following research questions guided this study.

Research Questions

1. When first moving to Vancouver, what steps were taken initially to help transplanted vocational ministers develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?
2. What difficulties were faced when vocational ministers who were transplants sought to develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?
3. What was the role of certain local networks in helping vocational ministers who were transplants develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?
    a. What was the role of a local church in helping vocational ministers who were transplants develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?
    b. What was the role of a neighborhood in helping vocational ministers who were transplants develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?

In this chapter, seven research participants were introduced and common themes and relevant insights pertaining to the research questions were presented. When reviewing the overall data, there were certain themes that were prominent regarding the difficulties for transplants to develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver. The research participants spoke of a "Canadian reticence" and the "poverty of isolation and loneliness" that seems to plague the west coast urban city of Vancouver. Vancouver is also an expensive city; one research participant referred to it as a "city of renters," which in turn contributed to the mobility and transient nature of many of its people. Another research participant spoke of the "coldness of Vancouver," and those with older children inevitably spoke of their struggles to adjust to life in Vancouver. The role of finding a good school for their children was significant in the sharing of such research participants.

Nonetheless, despite the difficulties of developing a sense of belonging to a city like Vancouver, many of the research participants saw hopeful opportunities in identifying with the idea that they all live together as a "city of exiles." There was the sense that everyone is "in this together." Several of the research participants spoke of the importance of taking initiative to develop a sense of belonging and not just waiting for someone to invite them in. Others spoke of the beauty of their neighbors as image-bearers of God and that most desire to be good neighbors and meet needs together by sharing gifts in a "mutuality of belonging." Almost all the research participants referred to the natural beauty of Vancouver and appreciating much of its culture and ethos. Others spoke of the importance of finding appreciation and enjoyment for the place of Vancouver and its people. Also, many of our research participants spoke of the vital role of having

mentors, friends, professors, spiritual directors, and pastors to help them make sense of the difficulties of transitioning to life in Vancouver.

Finally, local churches, immediate neighborhoods and "work neighborhoods" played a vital role in helping transplanted vocational ministers develop a sense of belonging. Research participants spoke of serving alongside one another in their local churches with passion and a sense of togetherness and mission. One spoke of journeying into a community of forgiveness and grace, another of the members of the church taking the initiative to invite his family over for dinner repeatedly. Neighborhoods also played a vital role in helping these vocational ministers develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver. Walking was a prominent theme that arose as one research participant spoke of Vancouver as a "city of walkable villages." Block parties were also significant for some of our research participants to develop a sense of belonging; for one participant, after a significant Y2K New Year's Eve party where he and his wife spoke to neighbors until 4 a.m., the comment was made, "So we were in the street rather than just using the street. It was a huge shift."

To one extent or another, for most of the research participants, the neighborhood represented some sense of mission, sometimes as part of a larger church vision for the neighborhood, at other times as an individual calling. One research participant felt that her primary connections of depth were in her local church rather than her neighborhood, another felt a call to lead a church for "the whole city" (though he did appreciate the role of immediate neighborhoods in mission). Another research participant only in more recent years was coming to appreciate the role of neighborhoods in mission. The remaining four research participants were fully formed in their conviction in what one

called a “neighborhood ethic.” One research participant among these four had lived in Vancouver for four years and had committed to ministering to her immediate neighborhood in the small moments of daily life, to seek out those places of “mutual belonging.” Her lead pastor, with whom she co-ministers, also one of the research participants of this study, stated:

> I would encourage people to look for small, simple ways to connect, to take the initiative. We've found that just a little bit of initiative has gone a surprisingly long way in connecting with people. It does mean taking a risk. It means going over there and knocking on the door and just saying, “Hey, we're having a barbecue tomorrow, wondering if . . .”

For this research participant and her lead pastor, in addition to physical neighborhoods, “work neighborhoods” also represented stories of “small, simple ways to connect, to take the initiative.”

For three out of the four research participants who were fully formed in a “neighborhood ethic” and who had lived in Vancouver for approximately two decades, explicit comments were made regarding the growing challenges in recent years of rooting deeply into the neighborhoods of Vancouver. One openly grieved that the “neighborhood spirit” he and his wife enjoyed for many years in their neighborhood had “fallen apart,” with so many “anchoring families” having moved out and “invisible neighbors” with considerable wealth having moved in.

Chapter Five

Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to research how transplanted vocational ministers developed a sense of belonging to Vancouver. In Chapter Two, the literature review began with a focused study in Ezekiel 37, on the connection between ancient Israel's hope of resurrection and return from exile to the land of God's promise. Then, three particular relevant literature areas were reviewed to provide a foundation, inform the research, and provide opportunities for interpreting and discussing the findings. These areas focused on literature concerning themes of exile, place, and asset-based community development. The following research questions guided this study.

1. When first moving to Vancouver, what steps were taken initially to help transplanted vocational ministers develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?
2. What difficulties were faced when vocational ministers who were transplants sought to develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?
3. What was the role of certain local networks in helping vocational ministers who were transplants develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?
    a. What was the role of a local church in helping vocational ministers who were transplants develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?
    b. What was the role of a neighborhood in helping vocational ministers who were transplants develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver?

In Chapter Four, seven research participants were introduced and common themes and relevant insights pertaining to the research questions were presented.

Summary of the Study and Findings

This study provided insight into the difficulties as well as the opportunities presented when transplanted vocational ministers moved to Vancouver and sought to develop a sense of belonging to the city. Wendell Berry wrote of healthy communities, "We are talking about a neighborhood of humans in a place, plus the place itself: its soil, its water, its air, and all the families and tribes of the nonhuman creatures that belong to it."[460] The researcher was interested in understanding how transplants developed a sense of belonging to the place of Vancouver and how they contributed to the overall health of the community. Furthermore, the researcher sought to understand what contributes to the wellness of the people of Vancouver and what constitutes effective mission to the welfare of the city, with the assumption that God in Christ had come to redeem the entirety of the created universe. Therefore, research was pursued regarding the means and obstacles for achieving a sense of belonging to Vancouver among transplanted vocational ministers. Particularly, exploring the role of churches was chosen because God's people comprise such communities and because God's people are also called to seek the welfare of the city.[461] The role of neighborhoods was chosen because neighborhoods comprise the locales and the broader contexts out of which people live and carry out much of their daily lives.

Summary of the Literature Review

The literature review explored exile, place, and asset-based community development. Exile spoke to the painful experience of displacement and dislocation.

---

[460] Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*, 14.

[461] Jeremiah 29:7.

Place was a literature area that revealed an eschatological paradox of present hope and future reality. In the literature, in some ways, to seek to be "placed" was the exile's hope; however, the "placed" were concerned that their core identity, as exiles on the move, had been lost. Understanding both sides of this dialectic, Moltmann wrote, "To be on the move and to come to rest; to arrive home and to go out: we have to fulfill the claims of both these dimensions of our lives. . . We have to preserve repose in movement, and remain capable of movement in repose."[462] The third and final literature area of asset-based community development revealed three universal properties as developed by John McKnight and his colleagues of the ABCD Institute: the giving of gifts, the presence of association, and the compassion of hospitality. In addition to McKnight's work as a community developer and Peter Block's work as an organizational development expert, Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann joined the ABCD team in 2016 by co-authoring a book with McKnight and Block. McKnight and Block had written *The Abundant Community* in 2010; Brueggemann joined the two to write, *An Other Kingdom* in 2016. Brueggemann added the Old Testament idea of covenant to McKnight and Block's vision, and the three men proposed the idea of a "neighborly covenant" that provides an alternative to the prevailing and empty consumer market ideology.[463] Block and McKnight described a community that is both "competent" and "abundant," built on these basic tenets: What communities have is enough; People have the capacity to provide what they need in the face of the human condition; People organize their world in a context of cooperation and satisfaction; People are responsible for each other; People

[462] Moltmann, *Shekinah: The Home of the Homeless God*, 183.

[463] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, xxii-xxiii.

live with the reality of the human condition.[464] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight spoke of particular rituals that constitute neighborliness as being kinds of "secular sacraments."[465] They explained, "Time, food, and silence are three major disciplines for creating the conditions for neighborliness and producing social re-ordering. Those disciplines recognize the human condition, which the hubris of our market culture denies."[466]

Summary of Findings

Regarding the overall findings that arose among the research participants, there were certain themes that were prominent regarding transplanted vocational ministers developing a sense of belonging to Vancouver. Those themes revolved around the challenges and opportunities of being a transplant to Vancouver as well as the important role of certain local networks such as churches and neighborhoods.

Challenges and Opportunities

The research participants spoke of a "Canadian reticence" and the "poverty of isolation and loneliness" that seem to plague the west coast urban city of Vancouver. Vancouver is also an expensive city to live in; one research participant referred to the many people who rent, which in turn contributed to the mobility and transient nature of many of its residents. Those with older children spoke of the struggles of their children to adjust to life in Vancouver. The role of finding a good school for their children was significant in the sharing of such research participants.

---

[464] Block and McKnight, 66.

[465] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, 61.

[466] Ibid.

Nonetheless, despite the difficulties of developing a sense of belonging to Vancouver, many of the research participants saw ministry opportunities in identifying with the idea that they all live together as a "city of exiles." Feeling out of place and being from somewhere else is a common experience in Vancouver. One research participant said of being a transplant to Vancouver, "There's a gift in it." Several of the research participants spoke of the importance of taking initiative to develop a sense of belonging. Others spoke of the beauty of their neighbors as image-bearers of God and that most people desire to be good neighbors and meet needs together by sharing gifts together in a "mutuality of belonging." Almost all the research participants referred to the natural beauty of Vancouver and appreciating much of its culture and ethos. Others spoke of the importance of pursuing appreciation, love, and enjoyment of the place of Vancouver and its people. Also, many of the research participants spoke of the vital role of having mentors, friends, professors, spiritual directors, and pastors to help them make sense of the difficulties of transitioning to life in Vancouver.

The Vital Roles of Churches and Neighborhoods

Local churches and immediate neighborhoods played a vital role in helping transplanted vocational ministers develop a sense of belonging to the city. Research participants spoke of serving alongside one another in their local churches with passion and a sense of togetherness and mission. Neighborhoods also played a vital role in helping these vocational ministers develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver. To one extent or another, for most of the research participants, the neighborhood represented some sense of mission, sometimes as part of a larger church vision for the neighborhood, at other times as an individual calling to one's own neighborhood. One research

participant felt that her primary connections of depth were in her local church rather than her neighborhood; another felt a call to lead a church for "the whole city" (though he did appreciate the role of immediate neighborhoods in mission). Another research participant, only in more recent years, was coming to appreciate the role of neighborhoods in mission. This research participant also wanted to give some flexibility to the term "neighborhood" to signify, for some, other spheres of influence (e.g., work). The remaining four research participants were fully formed in their conviction of a "neighborhood ethic," a term one participant coined. Nonetheless, for three (out of these four) who had lived in Vancouver for approximately two decades, they were aware of how the challenges of rooting deeply into the neighborhoods of Vancouver have deepened in recent years in light of the city's challenging economic environment. These research participants who had lived in Vancouver the longest revealed that the pursuit of belonging was a perennial quest. The fourth research participant among this group, who had lived in Vancouver for the shorter period of four years, had committed to ministering to her immediate neighborhood in the small moments of daily life, and had sought out those places of "mutual belonging." This research participant also spoke of finding "belonging moments" in her husband's place of occupation where a strong community was forming. Her lead pastor, with whom she co-ministers and one of the research participants, gave more flexibility to the term "neighborhood," saying, "I would encourage people to look for small, simple ways to connect, to take the initiative. We've found that just a little bit of initiative has gone a surprisingly long way in connecting with people."

Discussion of Findings

The researcher began his work on this project dissertation in 2011, in part because of his affinity for Wendell Berry's writings. Berry wrote of the "loyalty and affection" of the members of a local community that holds that community together.[467] At the time of starting this project, I was living in Lincoln, Nebraska in the United States and had lived in the general area between the states of Kansas and Nebraska for thirty-two out of my forty years. I loved the heartland. I had grown so familiar with the charm and ruggedness of the plains: open spaces, big sky, harrowing winds, and powerful thunderstorms. Its people showed kindness, hospitality, and forthrightness. But I also did not always fit in with my surroundings as an Asian-American growing in and around rural populations, with low percentages of non-whites and low exposure to other nations and cultures. As one example, my high school football coach, who was a good man and a farmer, also labelled me "quarter-jap," not as a term of derision but one of genuine affection. I am twenty-five percent Japanese, and I tackled the best and the hardest on the football team. When "coach" thought about the Japanese, he thought of kamikaze jet fighters, and he wanted the entire team to know that "Hsu hits like a kamikaze jet fighter." So my nickname for the rest of the season would be "quarter-jap." I was not particularly offended by the label, because I understood it came from a place of affection and appreciation for my football playing ability, but I also had a sense that I inhabited a unique place in the world of rural Kansas that very few of my friends, peers, mentors, teachers, and coaches understood. Another significant part of that experience is that I

[467] Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*, 121.

would meet a cute sixteen-year-old girl in my eleventh grade English class who would eventually become my wife, now of nearly twenty-two years.

How did my family end up in Kansas of all places? After immigrating from Taiwan to Chicago, my father finished his medical residency and was offered a job to practice as a urologist M.D. with a Chinese doctor in Topeka, Kansas. While not many Asians lived in Topeka at the time, my dad felt flattered that this older Asian doctor would show so much interest in him, so he moved the family to Topeka when my sister and I were still little. A few years later, the entirety of my mother's family, her parents, my grandparents, her two sisters, my uncle, and their families uprooted from the Chicago area to Seattle when my uncle took a job with Boeing. Every year, we would travel from Topeka to the Pacific Northwest to visit my beloved maternal grandparents, aunts, uncle, and cousins. The deaths of my maternal grandparents in 2002 (grandfather) and 2006 (grandmother) would be a devastating to me personally. When I took a couple of months off from my pastoral responsibilities following the death of my grandmother in 2006, a dear man and Benedictine monk, from whom I sought counsel regarding my grief, asked me to describe what I appreciated about my grandparents. As I shared through tears of grief, I described how my grandparents gave me a sense of safety, orientation, and place in the world. Their love always carried me through life and reminded me how much I mattered, that I belonged. When I became a follower of Jesus Christ as a first-year university student, the love of the triune God simply "clicked" for me; after all, my Buddhist grandparents had loved me so well through the years. It was not difficult for me to run hard and directly into the embrace of the triune God of heaven and earth; after all, by their love my grandparents had paved the way for me. This project is dedicated to

their memory, to my Agon (grandfather in Taiwanese) and my Ama (grandmother in Taiwanese).

When the opportunity in 2013 arose to take a call to Grace Vancouver Church in Vancouver, Canada (roughly two and a half hours by car to Seattle), a strong sense of draw towards my grandparents' memory opened for me. Whether memories of day ferry trips to Vancouver Island with my grandparents or day trips to the greater Vancouver area to have wonderful Chinese food, I wanted to be close to the memory of my beloved Agon and Ama. After fifteen years of fruitful ministry and developing lifelong friendships in Lincoln, Nebraska, my wife, kids, and I left a growing and flourishing church family and a connected neighborhood. We moved to Vancouver in 2013 to serve the family of Grace Vancouver Church and to live in a neighborhood in south Vancouver. For the first time in my life, by all external appearances, I "fit in" and found myself to be more "same" than "different" from the surrounding culture. The mosaic of various Asian cultures across the greater Vancouver landscape made it so, for the first time in my life, I had to adjust to gaining a sense of normalcy regarding my race and ethnicity in a place. In a number of ways, I have loved living in Vancouver, appreciating that eating dim sum and sushi could be thought of as "normal" activity rather than strange, or simply riding my bike along the waterfront on a beautiful Vancouver summer day with the mountains in the background. Nonetheless, my family and I have grieved the loss of what was home for so many years. After three and a half years in Vancouver, we still have a lingering sadness about the friends, neighbors, church, and place we left behind in Nebraska. I still follow the regional sports teams in the Kansas area and stay in touch with old friends. Even as I write this chapter, my alma mater, the University of Kansas' basketball team is once

again seeded number one in the NCAA March Madness tournament and primed for a deep run into the tournament. I am full of both excitement and anxiety because I care so much about Kansas basketball. I tell anyone who will listen that the inventor of the game of basketball, James Naismith, was the first coach at KU, a Canadian, and a Presbyterian minister. I am a KU graduate, a Presbyterian minister, and I live in Canada. I play basketball every Monday night at one of the local community centers in Vancouver, not because I am good at basketball but because through the years, basketball found a way to take up residence in the dwellings of my heart. How could the Lord have been so kind to me to bring all these worlds together for me in something as basic as a round ball?

I have realized that even as I felt alienated at times and was away from a sense of home those many years in the heartland of the US, also I was at home in other ways as well. As I have drawn closer to my grandparents' memory and have explored more fully the sameness of being in a region that, in some ways, puts me more at ease, in other ways, I have deeply grieved the loss of the loving, hospitable, and welcoming people in a part of the central United States, some of the people who knew no better than with good intentions to call me "quarter-jap." I am an exile and sojourner in the world, but I also have roots because of God's presence with me and the common graces that have always been around me. Such graces have reminded me of what I now know: my hope in Christ's resurrection holds an ancient promise that points to the heavens and then back down to the renewal of the earth. I know that people like me, the meek who so deeply long for being at home and who do so much grieving along the way, someday will inherit the earth. The research revealed that this longing for home is universal, "it seems that

there is indeed something universal about narratives of exile and return, of homelessness and the perilous journey back home."[468]

Causes of Our Exile

So what did the research reveal to be primary contributors to the human sense of exile, homelessness, and the longing for home? Davis wrote that from the perspective of the Bible, the larger context around human exile is chastisement for disobedience.[469]

Disobedience and Folly

Brueggemann wrote that the exile of God's people was due to "folly and carelessness."[470] The curse of disobedience for us as a human race is what Brueggemann termed a "land-expelling history."[471] Brueggemann's hope of restoration lie in God's promises: a "land-anticipating history [that] can only begin with One who in his speaking makes all things new."[472] We are in exile and away from home because of our autonomy from the God who alone is the meaning of home, "In my Father's house are many rooms."[473] Providing modern commentary, Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight connected our "mobility and isolation" to an "empire narrative" built on market ideology; they said the consequence is that "Spiritual life and relational life become disassociated from place."[474]

---

[468] Bouma-Prediger and Walsh, 10-1.

[469] Davis, 62.

[470] Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith,* 15.

[471] Ibid., 16.

[472] Ibid., 17.

[473] John 14:2a; also see NASB translation that renders, "many dwelling places."

[474] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, 41.

Mobility and the Glut of Information Technology

The glut of information technology also exacerbates the condition of our homelessness. As early as 1973, Peter Berger was writing about the "mass of data and ideas" that redesigns the human mind to think of the appeal of the endless and expansive possibilities in the world.[475] Berger wrote, regarding this redesigning of the human mind, "It may give him a sense of expansiveness and freedom. It may also mediate experiences of rootlessness and anomie."[476] Many years later, Sheldrake agreed with Berger writing, "rather than the 'global village' with its strong communitarian imagery of locality, media and information technology are just as likely to create communities with no sense of place. In a 'dramatically delocalized world' what is locality?"[477] Northcott explained, regarding the loss of place in cities, "The modern city celebrates and facilitates mobility at the expense of settlement, movement at the expense of place."[478] Stephen Um has written that most of the world population today lives in urban centers.[479] Berry wrote that much of the effects of urbanization and globalization has been a loss and withdrawal of affection from local places, due to what he called "industrial ugliness."[480] Berry reflected

[475] Berger, 76.

[476] Ibid.

[477] Sheldrake, 9.

[478] Northcott, 122.

[479] "Humanity's march toward the city has reached a new benchmark. In 1900 only 14 percent of the world's population lived in urban areas; that number has grown to 30 percent by 1950. In 2008 the world's population was evenly split between urban and rural areas, but in 2011 the world became predominantly urban. The numbers are even more striking in developed areas where, on average, 74 percent of the population lives in urban areas." Um, 26.

[480] Berry, *It All Turns on Affection: The Jefferson Lectures & Other Essays*, 33-4.

on E. M. Forster's 1910 assessment of ill effects of urbanization due to the general movement of the human population away from the countryside.[481]

Fierce Individualism and Isolation in an Urban Setting

The research participants spoke at length regarding the fierce individualism that leads to a sense of isolation and the breakdown of connection and meaningful community in the urban center of Vancouver. While the topic of modern information technology did not arise explicitly in the various interviews, it was difficult to ignore that the participants and researcher were speaking in an urban setting with the chimes, bells, and whistles of smart phones going off all around us in offices and coffee shops. One interview was conducted with a significant delay, and the researcher sat alone for a few minutes, recorder paused, while the research participant left the room to attend to an important call that came in on the cell phone. Another interview was conducted with the research participant checking the smart phone regularly because of the expectation of important news from a family member. In a sense, for a research participant, let alone any Vancouverite, to engage in a conversation about the glut of information technology contributing to their sense of displacement and dislocation would be similar to asking a fish to discuss the influence of polluted river water on its life. While there might be some awareness as to the ill effects of the dirty water, such effects would not always be easy to detect. Also, the irony was not lost on the researcher that he was using the rather advanced technology of a recording device to conduct the interview, distracted at times by his own smart phone, preparing to have his electronic files emailed to a transcription specialist in Nebraska and to have his worked edited by an editor in Florida (with the

[481] Forster.

exchange also by email). So the researcher was reliant on the very tools of an information age in order to draw certain conclusions about the severe limitations of those tools for bringing about human connection and flourishing. Nonetheless, the broader point of value was to consider that our technology unchecked continually presses us away from the connection requirement for human contact that we have and towards Marc Augé's "non-places."[482]

The research participants understood the challenges of transplants developing a sense of belonging to Vancouver. As John said, "loneliness and isolation . . . [are] our poverty here in Vancouver." The participants understood the consequence of mobility's celebration and the effects of mass information and technology's glut upon their lives in the modern west. The participants understood our isolation and general disconnection from one another in a place like Vancouver. They understood the folly of our belief that purchasing power and the consumer as king was folly. They understood what Block and McKnight were saying when they wrote:

> Real satisfaction, as opposed to counterfeit satisfaction, is a collective occurrence. It can occur only through our relatedness, our associational life, our neighbors, and our community. When we seek satisfaction at the mall, neighborhood and community pay the price. This is a loss, because we cannot rediscover durable satisfaction without community.[483]

The research participants understood that "durable satisfaction" could not be rediscovered without community. Fred spoke of fierce autonomy being part of a Canadian ethos. Jack referred to Vancouver as a place where people come to re-create

---

[482] Augé. Augé used the term "non-place" to describe the various contexts where people spend more and more time but lose their sense of place in the world.

[483] Block and McKnight, 57.

themselves thinking, "I've come . . . leaving behind whatever life I had, because I want to create a brand-new life." Fred said, "Life here is about, 'I know what's best for me.' And so you're going to meet a whole bunch of people who have deliberately moved here, who are remaking themselves." Many Vancouverites seem to be descendants of Barbara Kingsolver's Codi Noline in *Animal Dreams.* Noline, is a "home-ignorer."[484] Bouma-Prediger and Walsh wrote of Noline's character, "Her name is *Noline,* and her story is that of a young woman with 'no line,' with no sense of who she is, or of her lineage, her genealogy, her 'place.' But she is striving to find home."[485] Agreeing with the critique of ABCD writers Block and McKnight, Lisa spoke of this individualistic approach to live in Vancouver stemming from the problem of a "consumer-oriented society." She named the problem not so much "Canadian" as "North American." Lisa said, "Mostly we're consumers. Mostly we're materialists, in our natural, sinful selves. We consume, we acquire, and we're individualistic." Lisa concluded, "I think we have a lot to learn on what it means to be collaborative, generous, to build community." Lisa was describing what Davis assessed as exile being a consequence of our chastisement for disobedience and what Brueggemann said to be on account of human "folly and carelessness." Living on the wealthier west side of Vancouver for over twenty years as a renter, Fred lamented much of the loss of neighborliness and community as even more "money" had come into the west side in recent years. Fred said, "It's a kind of insane situation, where people are so wealthy, so well-resourced, not healthy, wealthy: that they can really live without their neighbors, at least survive. They are certainly not thriving." Fred spent time between

---

[484] Kingsolver, 77.

[485] Bouma-Prediger and Walsh, 8.

recalling his neighborhood that was once far more open to meaningful connections to his current situation where the neighborhood had become more closed off as a result of the influx of foreign buyers and wealth. As Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight wrote concerning our "mobility and isolation," with an empire narrative built on market ideology, the consequence has been that "Spiritual life and relational life become disassociated from place."[486]

Mobility Due to An Expensive City

Exacerbating the problem of mobility as a cultural value, the research participants described mobility as a necessity in light of the economic challenges of an expensive city. Jack commented that the "economics of the city shuts you out." Jack referenced the costs of living in Vancouver as the primary contributor to what he himself termed as "the mobility factor." John spoke of friends and acquaintances who had to move out of their neighborhoods, despite desiring to stay, simply because their landlords were selling their places. Referring to the number of people who rent in Vancouver, Mick commented, "I think the reality is there is more of a temporary element in your thinking on neighborhoods when your situation isn't permanent." John implied that some press into their "work neighborhoods" where relationships of stability may be more constant and reliable than those in immediate neighborhoods in Vancouver. Sally added, regarding the vast number of transplants to Vancouver, "the statistics of the number of people in Vancouver who are actually from Vancouver, are born in Vancouver, are very low." Interestingly, those who move in and out of Vancouver are not often from the mobile west but from Asia. Vancouver has become a destination spot for many nations,

[486] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, 41.

especially those comprising the Pacific Rim. Vancouver represents a nexus between east and west and the same shared universal problem for all people of struggles with displacement and dislocation.

An Exilic Identity

Yet, to turn to a more positive note, the sense of disconnection in a modern urban center like Vancouver provided opportunities for faith and the reconstruction of hope. Describing exile in the Bible, Beach wrote, "For Israel, exile did not lead to an abandonment of faith or utter despair. On the contrary, exile was the impetus that inspired the most creative literature and daring theological articulations in the Old Testament."[487] Beach also wrote, "Exile brought about a renewed sense that Israel had a role to play among the nations of the world in declaring the supremacy of Yahweh."[488] When writing about much of the trauma of exile for the Old Testament people of God, Smith-Christopher looked at generalized studies of disaster and quoted disaster theorist Gilbert who said that disasters only become "disastrous" for people when the group is unable to "cope, redefine, and reconstruct."[489]

Sheldrake said of the incarnation of Christ that it "offers an image of God's irrevocable commitment as *remaining.*"[490] Garber wrote that God's commitment to his people has always been to be in relationship with them through the concept of covenant, "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob connects to his people through covenant, saying with word and deed, 'I know you, I know about you, and I choose to love you. I will be in

[487] Beach, 56.

[488] Ibid., 62.

[489] Gilbert, "Studying Disaster: Changes in the Main Conceptual Tools," 17.

[490] Sheldrake, 29.

relationship with you.'"[491] Lane wrote of the Puritans, from where the researcher traces his own theological tradition, that "what kept the Puritans from flying headlong into the flame of God's consuming majesty, . . . was their concept of covenant."[492] Lane said, "Central to Puritan thought was the conviction that this very God of inaccessible light, who dwells beyond the Cloud of Unknowing, had voluntarily chosen to limit his majesty so as to enter covenant with human subjects."[493] This hopeful sense of God's presence with his people through a covenant relationship led many writers to describe exile as being a core identity of God's people. God is with his people, even as they sojourn; as Moltmann wrote of God, "[he] suffers the exile of his people. . . has become homeless, and wanders restlessly through the dust of this world's streets."[494] Beach wrote of Ezekiel 1 that the "key idea in the vision is that of a God who is not restricted to Jerusalem. He is on the move and is going into exile with his people."[495] Through covenant, God makes a home with his people as they sojourn through the world. God's people have a home with him by virtue of their union with him as well as look to their final eschatological home when they will finally be at rest. Beach wrote of this core identity of God's people, "Exile is, in its very essence, living away from home. This is at the heart of the Christian faith, . . . Furthermore, exile is a result of understanding ourselves as distinct people, strangers in the world."[496] Exile was the broader context for God's people out of which opportunities

---

[491] Garber, *Visions of Vocation: Common Grace for the Common Good*, 93.

[492] Lane, 134.

[493] Ibid.

[494] Moltmann, *Shekinah: The Home of the Homeless God*, 175.

[495] Beach, 58.

[496] Ibid., 21.

for faith and the reconstruction of hope arose. This exilic hope has always been a part of the core identity of God's people.

The "Gift" of Exile

Carrying the same hopeful vision with them, many of the research subjects saw the opportunity for ministry in Vancouver in light of the general displacement and dislocation of so many people in the city. Sally said, regarding the experience of being uprooted and struggling with orientation in a new city that it could be helpful "to realize that probably you're not the only one feeling that way. In fact, probably a lot of people are." She said, "there's a lot of . . . people that are even newer." She said of folks who are new to Vancouver, "You actually may have a particular capacity to connect with newcomers in a way." Sally said, "There's a gift in it."

Within a few months of moving to his new, south Vancouver neighborhood in 2013, the researcher experienced his car being broken into, the tires on his mini-van being slashed by a disgruntled neighbor, another neighbor yelling with anger at him for something he did not do, and an older couple upset with him for parking a car in front of their house. I learned that people in my Vancouver neighborhood count public street parking as "private" if the spot happens to be in front of their house. Admittedly, when one neighbor shared this revelation with me, I had to fight every urge to keep my eyes from rolling far into the back of my head. After all, the last time I checked, the city owns the street. Counting two houses to the north and one house to the south of the researcher's home, including his own home, families from seven nations are represented: Romania, China, India, Japan, Mexico, Germany, and the United States. Because of the challenging economics of Vancouver, most houses contain two families; we (the researcher's family)

share our house with another family that lives on the bottom level. Because of the intersection of various customs, cultures, and religious expressions, most neighbors do not connect in a casual and friendly manner as was the case with my former suburban neighborhood in Nebraska. In addition to grieving the loss of a neighborhood in Nebraska that was truly a village (though far more homogenous than the one I now live in), within a few months of moving into the south Vancouver neighborhood, my family and I had experienced coldness and even a fair amount of hostility.

Nonetheless, my wife received a gift recently when our Romanian female neighbor was in the front lawn, and my wife simply asked, "how are you?" This woman had only lived in Canada for a few months and despite the fact that her new husband was also Romanian, he had lived in Canada for many decades. This woman began to share with my wife about some of her loneliness and how in Romania neighbors knew each other and were friendly with everyone; she was clearly grieving the loss of her home country. The woman shared that Vancouver was such a cold place where neighbors do not share lives together, doors are closed, and people do not know each another. Then this woman began to share how she had an English-speaking exam she was needing to take that she felt grossly under-prepared for and that she had a lot of concerns about the upcoming exam. My wife simply responded, "I can help you with your exam." Our neighbor responded with a look of pleasant surprise, "Are you a teacher?" My wife responded, "No, but I speak English!" Within a few days, my wife was in this neighbor's living room, helping her prepare for the exam. My wife understood this neighbors' loneliness and identified with her sense of exile—away from a place of familiarity and welcome. My wife saw an opportunity to love and care for this fellow neighbor who

shared a different, but similar, story to hers. Recently, this woman's husband called me because he owns and operates an auto-body glass shop, and my front windshield on my mini-van had a significant crack in it. He wanted to see if I was ready to have it replaced, as we had discussed a few weeks ago. I scheduled a time today to bring my mini-van to his shop. The same neighborhood, where the tires on my mini-van were slashed a couple of years ago, is also the source of restoration for my fractured windshield.

On a small, but significant level, there is a "gifts economy of mutuality" being shared between this Romanian couple and my family. As Sally said, regarding being a transplant to Vancouver, longing for connection and belonging, "there's a gift to it." As Beach wrote regarding the essence of exilic hope, "suffering will be redeemed and that Israel's faithfulness will be held up as an act of witness to the nations."[497] Fred said, "You're going to have many disappointments, but there are other people here who are genuinely interested in community and being deep friends." Fred said, "They will respond if you love them." Lisa mused, "Who needs what you have, so that you can create community with people who are also craving it?" John spoke of the power of having needs and giving others an opportunity to serve with their gifts. The seeds of community were certainly planted with the simple conversation my wife had with our neighbor and the subsequent conversations that have followed since.

Made for Mission and Service

As transplants, most of the research participants understood the role churches and neighborhoods have in helping them develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver: mission and service was core to their exilic identity as servants of Christ. Perhaps they first

[497] Ibid., 89.

understood the alienation of displacement experientially and knew something about being an exile and pilgrim. Being a Christian in a city like Vancouver is not always easy. As Brueggemann wrote, Christians, by virtue of their public claims regarding the gospel, are often pushed to the margins of society as "outsiders to the flow of power."[498] Regardless of the extent to which they had adjusted to life in Vancouver, the participants held onto mission as a key motivator in helping them to develop a sense of belonging to the city. I think of Jeremiah 29:7, where the prophet tells the Old Testament exiles in Babylon to seek the welfare of the city and to pray for it. God's people are clearly animated, motivated, and strengthened by mission and service. Desiring to see people know Christ and to serve alongside others who share this same desire was central to many of the research participants when they spoke of their sense of developing belonging to Vancouver. Freedman wrote, "the overarching, historical purpose of her [Israel's] suffering is the world's conversion."[499] Blenkinsopp said that in exile Israel begins to see herself as a confessional community that is now open to new converts.[500] Referring to exiles as a diaspora people, Smith-Christopher wrote, "To be a diaspora people is to be a people of mission."[501]

With a Local Church Community

Participating in mission and service fostered a sense of belonging to Vancouver for transplanted vocational ministers. Jane spoke about the sense of mission that the church members had and commented about the many conversions to Christ they saw at

---

[498]Brueggemann, *Cadence of Home: Preaching Among Exiles*, 11.

[499] Freedman, 186.

[500] Blenkinsopp, "Second Isaiah–Prophet of Universalism," 86.

[501] Smith-Christopher, 200.

their small church, “A lot of new believers and baptisms.” She spoke of the energy of the small church coming together with “so much passion for God’s kingdom.” Mick spoke to the ministry efforts of his small church community, of which he is the lead elder, “trying to build a church community that reflects what we read about in Acts 2 has been one of our core values.” Mick spoke with passion about seeing more churches planted around the city. Jack spoke of his church being an “intentional community,” and one that was “very much on the way to becoming a neighborhood church.” Lisa spoke of getting “past the foyer moment” and finding people who “have the concept of journeying with, making space for others, loving, praying with, listening to.” Sally said, “the story I was stepping into” at her church was an intentional community engaging the neighborhood for Christ. Fred spoke of finding “new ways for our congregation to connect to our community.” Fred said that his job was to lead the church by asking questions, “Who are these neighbors? What’s important to them?”

As Part of a Neighborhood

A number of research participants saw their neighborhoods as a place of mission. At times this sense of mission to the neighborhood was through their church’s location with a shared vision for its neighborhood. At other times, the research participants felt a personal sense of call to their own neighborhoods. For at least two of them, they spoke of “work neighborhoods,” in addition to immediate neighborhoods, as primary places of connection and belonging for their families. In each case, a deep conviction was bore out of a sense of purpose and call to one’s neighbors.

A number of the research participants had a “neighborhood ethic” and recognized the universal properties of asset-based community development: the giving of gifts, the

presence of association, and the compassion of hospitality.[502] Lisa spoke of missional literature that discusses mutual belonging, "This is mutual belonging. You belong to them; they belong to you. What does it look (like) to be truly interdependent, in the same way that we're dependent on God? What does it mean that our neighbor has an opportunity to love us as well?" John also used the language of mutuality. John said, "If you need something, it is actually a powerful community building thing to not run out and buy it, but to actually ask your neighbor if you could borrow it, from yard tools, to eggs, to whatever. . . . I think there is a desire to actually connect and help." John continued, "I think that's actually an untapped kind of key . . . especially as Christians, to not always be the one thinking, 'Well, I'm going to be the person to bless others,' but that mutuality of saying, 'I'm really stuck here; I'm wondering if I could get your help.'" Fred spoke of having a "real need" and allowing people to help with that need.

In Wendell Berry's collection of short stories *That Distant Land,* Elton Penn receives the gift of good land from his neighbor Jack Beechum as well as the help of another neighbor Wheeler Catlett. Elton realizes that he is unable to repay his debt: "I can't repay him (Jack Beechum), Wheeler. And now you've helped me, and I can't repay you."[503] Catlett responds by describing the currency with which friendship and neighborliness is exchanged; he describes that what is unique about a healthy neighborhood is that "gifts" are exchanged without expecting repayment: "The life of a neighborhood is a gift."[504] Berry described a "community economy" that is not built

---

[502] Block and McKnight, 4-5.

[503] Berry, *That Distant Land*, 287.

[504] Ibid., 287-88.

primarily on competition and scarcity, but on a robust human imagination that sees the value of neighborly kindness and affection. Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight spoke similarly of human trust, "All the research and political theory about associational life says its base is trust. Money does not hold it together. The currency of contracts is money. The currency of covenant is trust."[505] These ABCD writers, along with the research participants, understood the value of a gifts economy of mutuality, affection, kindness, and trust in developing community wellness as well as strengthening the individual's sense of belonging to a community. This ability to live by a neighborhood covenant of mutual belonging gives to the individual a story that is bigger than that individual, where "The currency of covenant is trust."[506] As John Inge wrote regarding mission and neighborliness, "If members of Christian communities could learn to be good neighbors to one another and to the larger communities of which they are a part, they would have something infinitely worthwhile to offer to the world. And it would be the very best form of evangelism."[507]

Recommendations for Practice

In light of these findings, it is helpful for both vocational ministers as well as the people they serve to keep in mind some basic questions of identity that this paper has explored as well as the role of mutuality in mission.

---

[505] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, 5.

[506] Ibid.

[507] Inge, 136.

Questions of Identity

This dissertation began by stating how true Christian identity is restored when God comes to people in redemption by his Spirit and unites them to Christ.[508] Brueggemann also discussed the restoration of Christian identity, but in regard to place. Brueggemann described exile as displacement and alienation from the place that gives identity and security.[509] Beach described the place of exile as the context around the formation of the identity of God's people. Beach referred to the biblical accounts of Esther, Daniel, and Jonah, and stated, "This literature provided a narrative response to exile that helped Israel see how its identity as God's people could be embodied in real exilic situations."[510] A number of writers described how exile, while a painful experience at many levels, nonetheless has always been a part of the core identity of those who follow Christ. As Beach wrote, "exile is a result of understanding ourselves as distinct people, strangers in the world."[511] Faith has always been nurtured in the "in-between" places; as Sheldrake wrote, "In a sense, it seems that the marginal ground *between* fixed places is where God is most often encountered."[512] So it is important to understand the centrality of the Christian's identity being rooted in a covenant relationship in union with Christ, as one continues to journey in faith in a place of exile.

---

[508] Billings, 33.

[509] Brueggemann, *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*, 7.

[510] Beach, 65.

[511] Ibid., 21.

[512] Sheldrake, 34.

More than a Personal Relationship with God

In addition, it is important to understand that while the Christian faith includes a personal relationship with God, it also includes the greater redemptive purpose of God in restoring the whole of creation. Christians must see the places they inhabit as the broader context around the formation of their identities as children of God, also as providing opportunities for relationship. The context of place can be thought of as a "creature" with which Christians are called into relationship, to care for and appreciate. As Michael D. Williams wrote, "Genesis 1:26-28 indicates that there is more to bearing the divine image than a personal relationship with God. It also involves relationship with creation. . . . Man is called to be God's agent, the mediator of God's covenant with creation."[513] Michael E. Wittmer wrote, "But though salvation begins with us, the God who redeems us does not want us to keep redemption to ourselves. He wants us to share his grace with the rest of creation."[514] Borrowing from Calvin, Herman Bavinck wrote regarding the Reformed doctrine of common grace: "The spirit of God makes its home and works in all the creation."[515] The church would do well to give intentional thought and application to the work of God in creation. How can the Spirit of God be found to be at work in particular places of physical dwelling, like neighborhoods, throughout the whole of God's creation?

Covenant relationship with God in Christ establishes Christian identity, and union with Christ is at the center of such identity. Christians also embrace as part of their core identity that they are exilic, a people on the move, displaced and dislocated in many

---

[513] Williams, 60.

[514] Wittmer, 188-89.

[515] Bavinck, 51.

ways. Christians do so not because of an "other-worldly" spirituality, but because the fullness of the times is not yet realized. This is the eschatological paradox of present hope and future reality that is the title of the first literature area. This is important because our desire to develop belonging and discover roots, to value places of habitation, should in no way be minimized as we acknowledge the place of our exilic identity as Christ followers. This is the dialectic and paradox discussed in the literature review. As the Jesuits who descended from Ignatius Loyola envisioned, "pilgrimage" was first and foremost grounded in the idea that the whole inhabited world, the *oikumene,* was the house of God and his people.[516] The Jesuits did not see pilgrimage as a result of an "other-worldly spirituality."

Perhaps evangelical Protestants, who share a heritage in the sixteenth-century Reformation, can receive in humility the critique of Catholic writer John Inge who said, "in refusing to identify God with the particular, the Reformed tradition . . . fueled the rise of a secular conviction that God is not just absent, but non-existent"[517] and the observation that Sheldrake made regarding the Reformation tradition, that it has an "ambivalence towards place as a revelation of the sacred."[518] Perhaps Protestants, first and foremost as God's people, can once again discover a proper dialectic between "an ethical approach to place" (Protestant tradition) and "a sacramental sensibility in which the particularities of place may point beyond themselves to the mystery of God" (Catholic tradition).[519] Speaking as a Reformed evangelical Protestant, I believe we can

---

[516] Sheldrake, 118.

[517] Inge, 119.

[518] Sheldrake, 61.

[519] Ibid., 63.

do better in giving attention to the role of the context of physical places in the redemptive purposes of God. A renewed attention to place can root us as exiles and pilgrims in a story that is attentive to the works of God's spirit in particular times and locales. This renewed attention for the church can give transplants the gift of a greater sense of belonging by reminding them that God is at work in the particulars of creation, even those places that are not always easy to inhabit.

Those things being said, I believe Inge's critique pushes toward the extreme. While the Protestant Reformation did have some excessive responses to idolatry and the fear of superstition in its early stages, it eventually embraced the place of the natural and material world in God's economy of salvation. Kuyper sought to embrace the material nature of the world as well as the core Christian identity of pilgrim and exile:

> (seeing Christ redeeming the material world) placed the believer *before the face of God,* not only in His church, but also in his personal, family, social and political life. The majesty of God and the authority of God press upon the Calvinist in the whole of his human existence. He is a pilgrim, not in the sense that he is marching through a world with which he has no concern, but in the sense that at every step of the long way he must remember his responsibility to that God so full of majesty, who awaits him at his journey's end.[520]

Kuyper implied that grace came to redeem nature, rather than to dispose of it. In similar fashion, Bavinck referred to the Protestant Reformation as a "Reformation of the natural."[521] Inge's critique is excessive primarily because it lacks nuance. Lane wrote of some of this nuance when he described the Puritans of New England who were children of the Protestant Reformation. Lane wrote, "The idea hinges on yet another essential

---

[520] Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism*, 65.

[521] Bavinck, 63.

paradox that human existence is an ever-renewed tension between exile and home. There is always the desire of the settled to be unsettled and the unsettled to be settled."[522] He said, the Puritans came to the new world with the firm conviction they were God's pilgrim people and that New England was God's chosen place.[523] As Lane explained:

> Puritans found themselves caught between being centered and being scattered, placed and uprooted, frightened and enchanted by the same beauteous and rugged space in which they dwelt. Such is the subtle and convoluted hermeneutic that Puritans brought to the landscape of New England.[524]

The Puritans embraced a hermeneutic that was both centered and scattered as they engaged their New England landscape.

In addition to God calling people to himself, he also calls them to the places they reside. For those who serve in local church settings, God's call involves the physical location where the church facility is located as well as the primary places of physical residence the individual members inhabit. Vocational ministers are to help members of their communities determine, "what is my call to the primary places where I am located?"

Mission in a Mutuality of Belonging

Place, when understood in light of God's redemptive purposes for the world, is a creaturely object of the Spirit's renewing work. The centrality of an exilic identity brings greater clarity to the role of mission and service in the lives of the research participants. As Smith-Christopher wrote, "To be a diaspora people is to be a people of mission."[525] Mission was a key motivator when the research participants were asked, whether in the

---

[522] Lane, 152.

[523] Ibid., 142.

[524] Ibid., 152.

[525] Smith-Christopher, 200.

context of church or neighborhood, how they sought to develop a sense of belonging to Vancouver. Achieving belonging in one form or another was integrally connected to having a sense of "togetherness in mission" for the research participants. A number of them described mission not merely in terms of service, but also in terms of sharing the gifts and opportunity for service together in a "mutuality of belonging." Somehow, serving and giving others the opportunity to serve seemed to be central to what it meant to be human. The ABCD literature helped clarify because at the center of its vision is the sharing of gifts and the presence of association in the context of a neighborly covenant of trust and hospitality.

How might the church be taught to think about the role of place, particularly a neighborhood, as the place of both exilic identity and meaningful mission? For some research participants, this was a shared mission with the local church which had a passion for the particular neighborhood in which it was situated; this was described as "the practice of parish."[526] Hjalmarson described the ancient practice of parish as the "bounded space where a local church served its community."[527] For others, it was an individual call to one's own physical neighborhood. At other times, the idea of neighborhood was spiritualized to describe other particular networks of influence and presence, places of work being the primary example that was given. Key to a transplanted vocational minister's sense of developing belonging to Vancouver was having a sense of mission in a mutuality of belonging.

---

[526] Hjalmarson, 122.

[527] Ibid.

A Located People in a Mobile City

In a place like Vancouver, vocational ministers must nuance their approach to how they prioritize gathering the community in the church locale and equipping individual members to serve in the places where they are located. The inevitable "mobility factor" arising from the economic climate of the city should cause those who lead in ministry situations to give careful thought to what defines faithfulness for each individual member of their church communities. Where have the doors opened as far as connection opportunity and possibility? Immediate neighborhood? Church connections and church neighborhood connections? Other networks and spheres of influence, such as one's place of occupation?

Nuance is required when helping individual members of church communities determine their primary places of investment; nonetheless, there is an instinct in the researcher to hold the line for the distinct role of physical places, i.e., actual and immediate neighborhoods, as the location of personal commitments and investment. I understand that my church audience and I primarily have evangelical and Protestant impulses that tend to spiritualize the promises of scripture regarding real estate. Therefore, I have the instinct to fight against our tradition's "ambivalence towards place as a revelation of the sacred."[528] In the evangelical and Protestant world, there is too much of a tendency to spiritualize the role of physical places and thus minimize their importance. If Reformed Protestants are going to give a broader definition to that which constitutes "neighborhood," the primary alternative given in this dissertation to be that of places of occupation, what if we add some follow-up questions? For example, if someone

[528] Sheldrake, 61.

who sees their primary place of calling and investment to be into their "work neighborhood" instead of their immediate neighborhood, what if we also asked: During a typical workday, where are the places you walk and who are the restaurant owners you engage over your lunch hour? Who are the people who maintain the building out of which you work, the sidewalks, and the parking attendants you greet as you drive in and out of the parking garage each day?

A healthy community understands itself to belong to not only the people of a place, but also to the place itself. Berry explains, "If we speak of *healthy* community, we cannot be speaking of a community that is merely human. We are talking about a neighborhood of humans in a place."[529] As a further challenge to those who spiritualize the idea of neighborhood (understanding this to be helpful and necessary at times in a mobile city like Vancouver), if we isolate our neighborhood to be merely our work neighborhood, how do we see the value of our work blessing the broader community of Vancouver? For example, if my neighbor who fixes auto-glass windows does not have some kind of relationship with me, how does the quality of his work connect in personal and meaningful ways in an ongoing manner? The ABCD writers describe the value of "a citizen economy, one based on gifts and local abundance."[530] Berry describes a "community economy" that is not built primarily on competition and scarcity, but on a robust human imagination that sees the value of neighborly kindness and affection.[531] A neighborhood carries the notion of proximity and a healthy neighborhood takes that

---

[529] Berry, *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*, 14.

[530] Block and McKnight, 97.

[531] Berry, *It All Turns on Affection: The Jefferson Lectures & Other Essays*, 14.

proximity, adds the sharing of gifts, the presence of association, and the giving of hospitality. Even when people think of what the very best and invigorating workplaces and church communities offer as far as helping an individual to develop a sense of belonging, time spent together doing things that are purposeful as well as geographical proximity are vital ingredients.

Another couple, whom my wife and I consider dear friends, have been in our lives for over twenty years. In fact, the husband is a theologian and author who has been quoted a number of times through this dissertation. Through one of his books on divine generosity, my friend enlarged my imagination to think carefully about the role of gift in the redemptive purposes of God. The foundation of our friendship began in 1995 when we first met as seminary classmates. Seminary was our work at that time. However, our relationship did not stop there. As couples, our families also attended the same worshipping community across town. However, our relationship did not stop there either. We also lived in the same apartment complex and spent nearly every Sunday afternoon together, following worship, having a meal together and enjoying the company of one another's presence. That combination of time spent together with purpose as well as geographical proximity were vital ingredients to the foundation of friendship and love that has carried us through many trials and tribulations.

To be lifted out of places of residence, i.e., neighborhoods, in the name of investing primarily in churches or workplaces potentially represents the loss of the broader context out of which God calls his people to good work and meaningful mission in the first place. Are not God's people to do good work for the sake of our neighbor and are not we to be a worshipping community for the sake of the nations? In a place like

Vancouver, I only have to travel two doors to the north and one to the south to discover seven nations represented in my neighborhood. What is the point of good work if not to further God's mission in a world comprised of neighborhoods? And what is the point of enjoying our redemption in Christ if we have little concern for the groaning of creation and the Spirit's groaning intercession for the whole world, inclusive of people and places?[532]

Heidegger wrote, to be a person literally means to be in a particular place.[533] Heidegger called a person a "Dasein," or "being-there."[534] In seeing the whole of God's restorative program for the world, how do Christian Daseins understand that we are a located people? What is more, even if we spend ten hour days at the office, do most of us not spend the majority of our waking and sleeping hours inhabiting the actual neighborhoods in which we live? Are we not primarily Daseins there? And does the church as a gathered community not have the obligation to offer hope, reconnection, and restoration to the physical neighborhood in which it comes together in worship? How a church works out its sense of commitment to these various spheres and networks of opportunity, whether a church neighborhood, an individual's neighborhood or other areas of meaningful connection is not an easy task. But the task calls Christians to intentional effort, listening prayer, and faithful stewardship. As we seek to work out these questions of faithfulness to the *missio Dei*, vocational ministers should keep in mind the central conviction that location matters.

---

[532] Romans 8:23-6.

[533] Heidegger, 26.

[534] Ibid.

The church needs to help its members think through faithfulness to a place, to help its members ask, "who is my neighbor?" Mentors, friends, professors, spiritual directors, and pastors must serve as guides to help a transplant process the difficulties of transitioning to life in a city that is highly mobile and experiences a fair amount of disconnection. Having a proper understanding of the role of physical places such as neighborhoods in the *missio Dei* as well as having guides to help transplants work through the difficult experience of dislocation and exile is vital.

How are churches exhorting their people to pursue mentors and confidants in life and ministry? Regarding the various struggles of transitioning to a new city, Mick recommended, "build [a] friendship with someone who's been there longer than you and has walked in your shoes to some degree, because they can probably help you process some of these things." In a place like Vancouver, how is the church providing a vision for local ministry in the parish of the church location as well as the individual neighborhoods of its members? Also, how is the church encouraging guidance and mentorship among its membership to help exiles and pilgrims develop a sense of belonging?

The Currency of Trust: Appreciation and Engagement

Finally, mission is fortified by trust. Trust is built by appreciation and engagement. How do transplants learn to love the natural beauty and ethos of a city like Vancouver and appreciate and enjoy the people? Fred said of his friend who taught him to love Vancouver that his friend was effusive about the place. Are we attentive, appreciative and engaged? Are we present with God among these people he has so loved and the place he has created in love? Sally described the beauty of a neighborhood prayer breakfast by quoting Dorothy Day, "It all happened while we sat there talking." How

much enjoyment do we find from Vancouver and its people? If we think of the physical locale of Vancouver as a creaturely servant of God pouring out her gifts, can we receive her gifts as she offers them abundantly through her cherry blossoms, plum trees, mountains, waterfronts, her walkability and ethos of collegiality? Can Christians appreciate what is good about those gifts? Can we appreciate and love such gifts? Can we enjoy the people of the place, regardless of whether they are fellow Christians with us at this point in the journey or not? Are they not fellow humans with us with the same basic, fundamental and universal need of belonging? Can we enjoy our neighbors and receive their gifts in a neighborly covenant of trust, sharing the "secular sacraments" of "time, food, and silence" together?[535] As people led by the Holy Spirit, should we not be the most attentive to those places where God is redeeming time, providing food and causing our hearts to burst forth with joy in the contemplation of his many mercies and majestic beauty? What is more, can we see this same majestic God as choosing to covenant with his people in love, entering our exile with us, and promising that at his appointed time, all things in heaven and on earth will once again be made new in Christ?

Can we enlarge the church's imagination to see community abundance all around us, even if the market ideology and consumer narrative that blinds, tells a different story? As Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight explained, "To believe in abundance is to believe that we have enough . . . Even in the wilderness of an uncertain future."[536] And in a neighborhood of covenant trust and appreciation, even the sorrows we carry can hold the potential to be a source of abundance since the "range and variety of sorrows we bear

[535] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, 61.

[536] Ibid., 9.

[give] fuel for community and connectedness."[537] As we ache for belonging and to be home once and for all, perhaps like my wife identifying with our Romanian neighbor, can we share together with the people of Vancouver our sorrows of dislocation and alienation, pointing them to the God who offers us his gifts of belonging? As Kapic wrote, "All of God's gifts to us in the gospel are gifts of belonging."[538] After all, the essence of our exilic hope is that suffering will be redeemed and faithfulness "held up as an act of witness to the nations."[539]

Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on how transplanted vocational ministers developed a sense of belonging to Vancouver. As with any study, there are limitations as to how extensive the focus can be. Therefore, pursuit of the following areas of study could be highly valuable. Some of the tension that arose in the research among these vocational ministers was how small group ministries in the church connect with mission. There was a sense among some of the vocational ministers, that they believed those who enjoyed the trust, intimacy and connection of a small group setting in a local church did not always want to open the group to potential newcomers and outsiders.

Incarnation and Proclamation in a Parish Model

It would be fascinating to learn more about how a church might conduct its public gatherings (mostly on Sundays), encourage small group ministry, and also provide welcome and gathering opportunities for those who do not yet call themselves Christian.

---

[537] Block and McKnight, 69.

[538] Kapic, 74.

[539] Beach, 89.

People gather around some sense of commonality that strengthens belonging. One research participant felt the commonality of faith in Christ provided the greatest sense of connection and commented that most of her relationships with those who do not know Christ tend to be superficial. But there are other areas of commonality for Christians with non-Christians on the basis of the doctrine of common grace. As one example, the researcher is a member of a Crossfit gym that is self-described as a welcoming community. The members of the gym gather around physical fitness, mutual encouragement, and cheerleading other members in their quest for physical wellness. There are certain rituals the community gathers around and prescribed language the community uses, the WOD (workout of the day) and the AMRAP (as many reps as possible) and the METCON (metabolic conditioning) as some examples. Time is spent together in an intense workout environment of mutual encouragement–each workout usually concludes with high fives and "good job!" There is a sense in which the community has its own set of secular sacraments all the while encouraging physical wellness and friendship among its members.

Common graces are seen through communities that observe these secular sacraments, and they are beautiful graces that embody the incarnational presence of God. In the case of a neighborhood covenant with these beautiful graces, that seeks to gather around the commonality of neighborliness and the secular sacraments of time, food, and silence, all good things; nonetheless, where might the Bible and prayer enter this kind of community life? How have practitioners of a parish model—emphasizing hospitality, the presence of association, and the sharing of gifts—brought the particulars of faith in Jesus Christ to bear on those rituals of gathering? Where do incarnation and proclamation come

together in a parish model, so that in a highly pluralistic and post-Christian, "politically correct," culture like Vancouver, people are able to receive the opportunity to enter relationship with Jesus Christ? This dissertation made the case for Christian identity beginning with being united to Christ in covenant love, to be known by the God who sees, that the larger story around the telos of the world is that God has come to restore all things in Jesus Christ. How have practitioners of the parish model connected the story of the God who knows, sees, and loves to the ABCD story of all members of a particular community having valuable gifts to offer?

Also, how have churches that have a desire to see meaningful ministry happen among neighbors implemented small group ministries and sought to keep the welcome of strangers to those groups a vital part of that ministry model? How did those models teach "strangers" that they were an integral part of a neighborly covenant, but also in need of Christ? How did those practitioners offer those who might currently be strangers to the Christian faith a sense of belonging and a place of meaningful contribution, even if faith in Christ was not yet present with them? I imagine some small groups in churches are deeply connected because of the commonality of faith in Christ, but somewhat closed to outsiders. On the other hand, other small groups that gather around a neighborly covenant in a place like Vancouver may find it difficult to bring up the name of Jesus given the potential offense it might cause members of that community that do not profess Christ.

Practitioners of Parish and Connection to Institutional Church

Regarding those vocational ministers who have chosen to work outside the bounds of more traditional forms of the institutional church, how do those individuals stay connected to the Christian memory and historical traditions and liturgies of the

church, while they seek to be present in their local communities? What fortifies strength and hope for such vocational ministers who have perhaps stepped away from more traditional means of Christian work and sought to be a faithful presence in the world for God? Where does the institutional form of church that one could argue has passed down through the generations through the apostolic witness, and the desire to connect, minister and belong to the neighborhoods of this world come together? Must they come together? What about the shape of local church communities and what defines their membership? One research participant who works to bring together the universal church in Vancouver together in unity and common vision, also commented that given the church's current situation in Vancouver as a scattered people, it was perhaps too much to ask Christians to commit to one church community as their primary place of connection and fellowship. If locality is defined primarily by neighborhood, this makes some sense as Christians may have fellowship with believers of other denominational and congregational stripes who live within geographical proximity. On the other hand, if locality is defined primarily by a sense of the gathered community that comes together in worship on a weekly basis the first day of the week, to be sent out again into the world, then more grappling with one's commitment to a particular local fellowship of covenanted believers must continue. There is a sense that some practitioners of the parish model have burned out on traditional church models where most the energies of the institution have tended towards being centripetal, essentially sustaining the institution. Yet with a desire to be missional and to be out in the world as those sent out, can we be flung so far out that we lose a meaningful connection with the church in its current institutional form as a primary and meaningful place of teaching, fellowship, discipleship, worship, and strengthening of disciples for the

sake of mission? These are musings that would be worth exploring further, learning how practitioners of local neighborhood engagement and those committed to the local church have worked out the inherent tensions in these questions.

History of Fragmentation of Work, Economy, and Community

It would be insightful for research in literature to trace the history and influences on the fragmentation of work, economy, and community. I imagine the conversations of the ABCD writers speaking of a neighborly covenant an and economy of exchanging local gifts were not so revolutionary in a pre-industrial age, but likely the common practices of an agrarian society. How did thinking in the west become compartmentalized so deeply regarding how people often see work deeply separated from the welfare of a flourishing neighborhood and community? Also, how did church communities in the west often become so far lifted up and out of the world so that at times their members have little interaction and friendship with those outside the Christian faith? What practitioners are in the field seeking to bring back together the value of work, community, and the sharing of gifts in "a market built on neighborliness, kinship, and common ownership. . . . cornerstones of the neighborly economy"?[540] What practitioners are interested in bringing together church, neighborhood, and vocation as a central vision for the church's participation in God's work in the world?

The Stewardship of Time and Investment

Finally, who has thought intentionally about the stewardship of time on these issues? As John McKnight has said regarding human limits, "We will always fail to be

[540] Block, Brueggemann, and McKnight, xxi.

God."[541] Recognizing the eschatological paradox of a human sense of place vacillating between a present hope and future reality, how do those who equip God's people teach faithful stewardship of these various areas of engagement, church, neighborhood, work, other networks and spheres of influence? Knowing that geographical proximity is not always easy to achieve in an expensive city like Vancouver and that sometimes mobility is a necessity (not a choice), how is belonging and connection fortified nonetheless?

What vocational ministers are affirming the individual sense of calling to the particular places and neighborhoods of influence of their church members without leaving the individuals members isolated in the field, vulnerable to the lies and dangers of the market ideology and a consumer vision of scarcity and individualism? Living out this alternative story of abundance without community support is hard. But what if the very best community to tell that story does not share the gift of geographical proximity? And if the people of God in a place like Vancouver are necessarily scattered throughout the city, how do they tell and re-tell the story of God's abundant mercy and grace through a typical week? How can they do so without becoming lifted out of the opportunities for connection and belonging that their immediate neighborhoods offer? How does commute time to the gathering of church life whether to the church facility or a church small group draw one away from meaningful engagement in one's immediate neighborhood? How has leadership of a local church community that has thought intentionally about parish worked through the challenges of living in a city like Vancouver? Should members of a church community always be present when the doors of the church are open? Or should they be released to invest primarily in their neighborhoods and places of influence? What

[541] Russell, *Asset-Based Community Development: Looking Back to Look Forward*.

is more, what about building relationships with people in other spheres of influence, such as work and school? Human capacities are limited, so what is faithful stewardship of time and investment in light of a fragmented world? Research that helps vocational ministers and the people of God navigate the challenges of knowing how most effectively to stay connected to a local church community, but also to be equipped for the mission of God in the world and in our neighborhoods, would be highly valuable. How does recognizing inherent limits press into the very important questions around faithful stewardship of time, attention, and investment? How might the progress of the kingdom of God move forward in places like Vancouver as a result of recognizing these inherent limits? As McKnight said, "one of the most helpful things I learned . . . is that progress depends on understanding limits."[542]

Conclusion

In this dissertation, the researcher sought to understand how transplanted vocational ministers developed a sense of belonging to the urban city of Vancouver, Canada. Vancouver was described as a lonely city due to the self-imposed isolation of many of its residents and a "Canadian reticence" towards engagement. In the Bible, exile was revealed to be a difficult, even dreadful, experience of dislocation and displacement due to human folly and rebellion. But exile also provided opportunities for personal growth for God's people as they bore witness to God's saving work among the nations. As trauma subsided, life for the exile tended to normalize and provide opportunities to participate in intentional ways with God's mission in the world. In this sense, exile was a "gift" and opportunity, even a core identity of God's people. The research participants

[542] Ibid.

spoke at length about this sense of mission being a significant part of developing belonging as transplants to Vancouver. They spoke of the role of the local church as well as their neighborhoods in giving them orientation to a sense of mission, and subsequently helping them develop a sense of belonging. Some of the research participants spoke of other networks such as places of work being a significant place of both mission as well as belonging. Others spoke of having mentors, friends, and guides to help them process the difficulty of transitioning to Vancouver as well as to help them make sense of God. One research participant referred to the difficulty of exile as a gift, since many others were in the same situation and because the hunger for connection was a basic and universal human need. This vocational minister saw the opportunity for connection and mutual belonging in the pain of dislocation.

When describing mission, the ABCD literature was helpful to give context for what a couple of our research participants termed as a "mutuality of belonging." Mission was described as developing an appreciation for the people and place of Vancouver, enjoying and receiving their gifts as well as giving good gifts in return. This was not always easy to do in an expensive and culturally diverse city like Vancouver where mobility is common, but for those willing to take some initiative, opportunities were present. Developing this mutuality of belonging was revealed to be a perennial pursuit, regardless of how long one had lived in Vancouver and seemed to be what the prophet Jeremiah was speaking of when he said to God's exilic people, "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare."[543]

[543] Jeremiah 29:7.

Bibliography

CBC News. "Poll Paints Vancouver as Less Than Friendly or Inclusive." Cbc.ca. June 18, 2012. Accessed March 26, 2014. http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/poll-paints-vancouver-as-less-than-friendly-or-inclusive-1.1172356.

City-Data, "Census Metropolitan Area of Vancouver, British Columbia." City-data.com. Accessed March 26, 2014. http://www.city-data.com/canada/Greater-Vancouver.html.

Coady International Institute. "About ABCD." Coady.stfx.ca. Accessed November 4, 2014. http://coady.stfx.ca/themes/abcd/.

Huffington Post. "Vancouver the Most Livable City in North America: Economist." Huffingtonpost.ca. August 28, 2013. Accessed March 26, 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/08/28/vancouver-most-livable-city-economist_n_3830039.html.

Statistics Canada. "Greater Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada." Statcan.gc.ca. Accessed March 26, 2014. http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/fogs-spg/Facts-cma-eng.cfm?LANG=Eng&GC=933.

Vancouver Foundation. "Connections and Engagement: A Survey of Metro Vancouver June 2012." Vancouverfoundation.ca. Accessed March 26, 2014. https://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/sites/default/files/documents/VanFdn-SurveyResults-Report.pdf.

Augustine of Hippo: Selected Writings. Edited by Mary T. Clark. New York: Paulist Press, 1984.

Calvin's Theology and Its Reception: Disputes, Developments, and New Possibilites. Edited by J. Todd Billings and I. John Hesselink. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012.

Allen, Leslie C. *Ezekiel 20-48*. Word Biblical Commentary. Edited by Glenn W. Barker and David A. Hubbard. Dallas: Word Books, 1990.

Appardurai, Arjun. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Augé, Marc. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. New York: Verso, 1997.

Bavinck, Herman. "Common Grace." Translated by Raymond C. Van Leeuwen. *Calvin Theological Journal* 24, no. 1 (April 1989): 35-65.

Beach, Lee. *The Church in Exile: Living in Hope After Christendom*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015.

Berger, Peter. *The Homeless Mind*. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.

Bergsma, John S. "The Persian Period as Pentitential Era: The 'Exegetical Logic' of Danel 9:1-27." In *Exile and Restoration Revisited: Essays on the Babylonian and Persian Periods in Memory of Peter R. Ackroyd*. Edited by Deirdre Fulton, Lester L. Grabbe and Gary N. Knoppers, 50-64. New York: T&T Clark, 2009.

Berry, Wendell. *The Gift of Good Land: Further Essays Cultural and Agricultural*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 1981.

Berry, Wendell. *Home Economics: Fourteen Essays*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 1987.

Berry, Wendell. *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1993.

Berry, Wendell. *Another Turn of the Crank*. Washington, DC: Counterpoint, 1995.

Berry, Wendell. *Jayber Crow*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2000.

Berry, Wendell. *Hannah Coulter: A Novel*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2004.

Berry, Wendell. *That Distant Land*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2004.

Berry, Wendell. *It All Turns on Affection: The Jefferson Lectures & Other Essays*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2012.

Billings, J. Todd. *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011.

Blenkinsopp, Joseph. "Second Isaiah–Prophet of Universalism." *JSOT*, no. 41 (1988): 83-103.

Blenkinsopp, Joseph. *Ezekiel*. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Edited by James L. Mays. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990.

Block, Daniel I. *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Edited by R.K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998.

Block, Peter. *Community: The Structure of Belonging*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2008.

Block, Peter, Walter Brueggemann, and John McKnight. *An Other Kingdom: Departing the Consumer Culture*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2016.

Block, Peter and John McKnight. *The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods*. Oakland: Berrett-Koehler, 2010.

Bouma-Prediger, Steven and Brian J. Walsh. *Beyond Homelessness: Christian Faith in a Culture of Displacement*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008.

Brown, Brené. *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead*. New York: Gotham Books, 2012.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Cadence of Home: Preaching Among Exiles*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997.

Brueggemann, Walter. *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith*. Second ed. Overtures of Biblical Theology. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002.

Buchanan, James. *The Doctrine of Justification*. Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1867. Reprint, 1991.

Buechner, Frederick. *The Longing for Home*. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996.

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Edited by J.T. McNeil and F.L. Battles. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1559.

Carr, Nicholas. *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011.

Craigie, Peter C. *Ezekiel*. The Daily Study Bible Series. Edited by John C. L. Gibson. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983.

Davies, W.D. *The Gospel and the Land: Early Christianity and Jewish Territorial Doctrine*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.

Davis, Ellen F. “Office Hours with Ellen Davis on Christians and Creation.” Youtube.com. April 9, 2010. Accessed March 26, 2014. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g54FweREl-Y.

Davis, Ellen F. *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*. Reprint ed. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Day, Dorothy. *The Long Loneliness: The Autobiography of the Legendary Catholic Social Activist.* New York: Harper, 1952.

Erickson, F. *Qualitative Methods in Research on Teaching*. Edited by M.C. Wittrock. 3rd ed. Handbook of Research on Teaching. Old Tappan, NJ: Macmillan, 1986.

Erickson, Millard J. *Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994.

Eswine, Zack. *Sensing Jesus: Life and Ministry as a Human Being*. Wheaton, Il: Crossway, 2013.

Evans, Craig. "Aspects of Exile and Restoration in the Proclamation of Jesus." In *Restoration: Old Testament, Jewish and Christian Perspectives*. Edited by James M. Scott. Boston: Brill, 2001.

Forster, E.M. *Howard's End*. Rev. ed. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 2002.

Frazee, Randy. *Making Room for Life: Trading Chaotic Lifestyles for Connected Relationships*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003.

Freedman, David N. "Son of Man, Can These Bones Live?" *Interpretation* 29 (1975): 171-86.

Frost, Michael. *Incarnate: The Body of Christ in an Age of Disengagement*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014.

Garber, Steven. *The Fabric of Faithfulness: Weaving Together Belief and Behavior During the University Years.* Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1996.

Garber, Steven. *Visions of Vocation: Common Grace for the Common Good*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014.

Gilbert, Claude. "Studying Disaster: Changes in the Main Conceptual Tools." In *What Is Disaster: Perspectives on the Question*. Edited by E. L. Quarantelli. London: Routledge, 1998.

Greenberg, Moshe. *Ezekiel 21-37*. The Anchor Bible. Edited by William Foxwell Albright and David N. Freedman. New York: Doubleday, 1997.

Habrick-Stowe, Charles E. *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982.

Hall, Douglas John. *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1986.

Hames, Elizabeth. "Vancouver Ranked Most-Livable City in North America." Metronews.ca. February 29, 2014. Accessed March 26, 2014. http://www.metronews.ca/news/vancouver/2014/02/19/vancouver-ranked-most-livable-city-in-north-america.html.

Heidegger, Martin. *The Question of Being.* New York: Twayne Publishers, 1958.

Henderson, Jim, Todd Hunter, and Craig Spinks. *The Outsider Interviews: A New Generation Speaks Out on Christianity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010.

Hjalmarson, Leonard. *No Home Like Place: A Christian Theology of Place*. Portland: Urban Loft Publishers, 2014.

Inge, John. *A Christian Theology of Place*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003.

Jigoulov, Vadim. "Administration of Achaemenid Phoenicia: A Case for Managed Autonomy." In *Exile and Restoration Revisited: Essays on the Babylonian and Persian Periods in Memory of Peter R. Ackroyd*. Edited by Deirdre Fulton, Lester L. Grabbe and Gary N. Knoppers, 138-51. New York: T&T Clark, 2009.

Jones, Steven L. "Pastors Thriving in Marriage and Ministry: Pursuing Health in Marriage While Leading through Church Conflict." Covenant Theological Seminary, 2013.

Kapic, Kelly M. *God So Loved, He Gave: Entering the Movement of Divine Generosity*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.

Kemmis, Daniel. *Community and the Politics of Place*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990.

Kingsolver, Barbara. *Animal Dreams*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1990. Reprint, 2013.

Kuyper, Abraham. *Lectures on Calvinism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1931. Reprint, 2002.

Kuyper, Abraham. "Souvereiniteit in Eigen Kring." In *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*. Edited and translated by James D. Bratt. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998.

Lane, Belden C. *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative of American Spirituality*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988. Reprint, 2001.

Laniak, Tim. "Esther's Vokcentrism and the Reframing of Post-Exilic Judaism." In *The Book of Esther in Modern Research*. Edited by Sidnie White Crawford and Leonard J. Greenspoon. London: T & T Clark, 2003.

Leenhardt, Franz. *Two Biblical Faiths: Protestant and Catholic*. London: SCM Press, 1964.

Marty, Martin E. *Pilgrims in Their Own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America*. Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1984.

McKnight, John. *The Careless Society: Community and Its Counterfeits*. New York: Basic Books, 1995.

Merriam, Sharan B. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009.

Mertyl, Steve. "Vancouver Foundation Study Finds Lotusland a Lonely, Isolated Place." Ca.news.yahoo.com. June 19, 2012. Accessed March 26, 2014. http://ca.news.yahoo.com/blogs/dailybrew/vancouver-foundation-finds-lotusland-lonely-isolated-place-210758040.html.

Middlemas, J.A. "Going Beyond the Myth of the Empty Land: A Reassessment of the Early Persian Period." In *Exile and Restoration Revisited: Essays on the Babylonian and Persian Periods in Memory of Peter R. Ackroyd*. Edited by Deirdre Fulton, Lester L. Grabbe and Gary N. Knoppers, 174-94. New York: T&T Clark, 2009.

Miller, Jerome G. *Last One Over the Wall: The Massachusetts Experiment in Closing Reform Schools*. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1991. Reprint, 1998.

Moltmann, Jürgen. *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985.

Moltmann, Jürgen. *Shekinah: The Home of the Homeless God*. In *The Longing for Home.* Edited by Leroy S. Rouner. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996.

Mulholland, M. Robert. "Spiritual Formation in Christ and Mission with Christ." *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 6, no. 1 (2013): 11-17.

Murray, John. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1955. Reprint, 1993.

Newbigin, Lesslie. *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989.

Northcott, Michael. "A Place of Our Own." In *God in the City: Essays and Reflections from the Archbishop of Canterbury's Urban Theology Group*. Edited by Peter Sedgwick. London: Mobray, 1995.

O'Donovan, Oliver. "The Loss of a Sense of Place." *Irish Theological Quarterly* (1989): 39-58.

O'Rourke Boyle, Marjorie. *Divine Domesticity: Augustine of Thagaste to Teresa of Avila*. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1997.

Packer, J.I. *Knowing God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1973.

Pathak, Jay and Dave Runyon. *The Art of Neighboring: Building Genuine Relationships Right Outside Your Door.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012.

Polkinghorne, John. *Serious Talk, Science and Religion in Dialogue*. Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995.

Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. Simon & Schuster: New York, 2000.

Russell, Cormac. *Asset-Based Community Development: Looking Back to Look Forward*: Cormac Russell, 2015. Kindle.

Russell, Cormac. "Looking Back to Look Forward: The Intellectual Heritage of Asset-Based Community Development." Nurturedevelopment.org. June 19, 2015. Accessed October 25, 2016. http://www.nurturedevelopment.org/blog/looking-back-to-look-forward-the-intellectual-heritage-of-asset-based-community-development-cormac-russell-new-book/.

Said, Edward. "The Mind of Winter: Reflections on Life in Exile." *Harpers*, September, 1984: 49-54.

Said, Edward. *Reflections on Exile: And Other Literary and Cultural Essays*. London: Granata Books, 2001.

Samuel, Vinay. "Strangers and Exiles in the Bible." *Transformation,* April-June 1995: 28-9.

Schmemann, Alexander. *For the Life of the World*. Rev. ed. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladmir's Seminary Press, 1973.

Schreiner, Susan E. *The Theater of His Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin*. Vol. 3. Studies in Historical Theology. Durham, NC: The Labyrinth Press, 1991.

Sheldrake, Philip. *Living Between Worlds: Place and Journey in Celtic Spirituality*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1995.

Sheldrake, Philip *Spaces for the Sacred: Place, Memory, and Identity*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

Smith-Christopher, Daniel L. *A Biblical Theology of Exile*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002.

Sparks, Paul, Tim Soerens, and Dwight J. Friesen. *The New Parish: How Neighborhood Churches Are Transforming Mission, Discipleship and Community*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014.

Suleiman, Susan Robin. *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances*. Edited by Susan Robin Suleiman. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996.

Tabori, Paul. *The Anatomy of Exile: A Semantic and Historical Study*. London: Harrap, 1972.

Torrance, Thomas F. *Space, Time and Incarnation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Traherne, Thomas. *Centuries of Meditation*. New York: Cosimo Books, 1908. Reprint, 2009.

Turner, Denys. "The Darkness of God and the Light of Christ: Negative Theology and Eucharistic Presence." *Modern Theology* 15, no. 2 (April 1999): 143-58.

Um, Stephen T. *Why Cities Matter: To God, the Culture, and the Church*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2013.

Wallace, Ronald S. *Calvin's Doctrine of the Christian Life*. Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1959.

Weil, Simone. *The Need for Roots*. London: Routledge, 1952.

Wiesel, Elie. *Longing for Home*. In *The Longing for Home.* Edited by Leroy S. Rouner. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996.

Williams, Michael D. *Far as the Curse Is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005.

Wilson, Jonathan R. *God's Good World: Reclaiming the Doctrine of Creation*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.

Wittmer, Michael E. *Heaven Is a Place on Earth: Why Everything You Do Matters to God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004.

Wright, Christopher J.H. *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.