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Diversity for the Rest of Us

Pursuing the Imperative Beauty and Benefits of Koinonia in Christ Between Mono-Ethnic Anglo- and African-American Churches

By
Craig Doctor

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

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Dr. Thurman Williams, Faculty Advisor

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Abstract

Race relations in America have greatly improved since 1960. Despite that fact, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1960 poignant lament over the segregated state of the church in America remains largely true of the church today. Ironically, the vast majority of pastors recently surveyed believe every church should pursue diversity. Viewing these unrealized convictions and aims against the broader cultural and church backdrops reveal the formidableness of the challenge pastors face in this essential pursuit.

The literature review provided a broader foundation for this qualitative research on this crucial endeavor. It showed that the present reality of believers' oneness in Christ is the foundational indicative behind the church's imperative pursuit of koinonia—the church's lived-out expression of her present unity in Christ. The accompanying study on the biblical use and meaning of koinonia depicted what that harmonious, winsomely beautiful life together in Christ looks like. It was shown to be characterized by and expressed through believers' deep familial *fellowship*, heartfelt *sharing* in needs, and *willing contributions* to meet those needs.

In light of the chronic segregated state of the church—alongside the compelling biblical impetuses toward diversity, pastors' related convictions and aims, and the formidable challenges they face along the way—the purpose of this study was to explore how pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity—either as a preliminary step in the process of becoming more diverse, or even while expecting to remain mono-ethnic (in situations where a church's mono-ethnicity accurately reflects its context). Four main questions directed this qualitative research:

1) What biblical impetuses compel pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?, 2) What challenges do they face along the way?, 3) How do they work through these challenges?, and 4) What growth in relationship with God and Christ's likeness do they observe as a result (growth in themselves or in their congregants)? The study utilized a qualitative design using semi-structured interviews with six male Anglo- and African-American pastors serving in a variety of denominations and contexts. The aim was to provide a broader spectrum of perspectives and insights. The interview data was continually analyzed using the constant comparative method.

The themes that surfaced during the pastor interviews were identified, organized, and presented in accord with the research questions that directed this study. Specifically, the themes that emerged under *Biblical Impetuses* were 1) Our Oneness in Christ, 2) The Great Commission, and 3) The Second Great Commandment. Those under *Identifying the Challenges* were 1) Fear, 2) Anger, 3) Distrust, 4) Guilt and Shame, and 5) Surprise. Under *Working Through the Challenges*: 1) Prayer, 2) The Gospel, 3) Friendship, 4) Acknowledgement, 5) Education, 6) Joint-Congregation Events and Ministries, and 7) Black Leadership. And then under *Growth Through the Challenges*: 1) The Sense of Our Oneness in Christ, 2) Patience, 3) Humility, Repentance and Prayer, and 4) Obedience.

The study revealed that this essential pursuit hinges around 1) prayer, 2) relationships (genuine, contagious friendships that begin with the pastors and flow down into the congregations from there), 3) bold, sensitive pastoral leadership, 4) education on cultures and where our present life together lies within God's larger redemptive story, and 4) the importance of seeing through one another's eyes in the midst of the story.

Contents

Illustrations

Tables

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I am also grateful for the six pastors who generously gave of their time and openly shared their hearts, life-experiences, and years of experience with me. My heart's desire was to steward well their stories and wisdom they graciously entrusted to me—and I do hope that proves to be the case.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

> I think it is one of the tragedies of our nation, one of the shameful tragedies, that eleven o'clock on Sunday morning is one the most segregated hours, if not the most segregated hours, in Christian America.[1]

According to current research on church demographics, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s poignant statement on the condition of the Church in 1960 remains largely true of the Church in America today; "eleven o'clock on Sunday morning is one the most segregated hours, if not the most segregated hours, in Christian America."

As evidence of that, Bob Smietana reports in LifeWay Research's January 17, 2014 article, "Research: Racial Diversity at Church More Dream Than Reality," that of the more than 1,000 Protestant pastors interviewed, "Most (86 percent) say their congregation is predominately one racial or ethnic group."[2] Further evidence is provided in the Pew Research Center's (PRC) May 11, 2015 report, "Religious Landscapes Study." As part of this study, the PRC sought to identify membership within each major religious tradition by ethnicity. The results are based on interviews conducted in 2014

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[1] Lawrence E. Spivak, "Meet the Press," *Interview with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Washington, D.C.: National Broadcasting Company, April 17, 1960), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1q881g1L_d8.

[2] Bob Smietana, "Research: Racial Diversity at Church More Dream Than Reality," *LifeWay Research* (blog), January 17, 2014, 2, http://lifewayresearch.com/2014/01/17/research-racial-diversity-at-church-more-dream-than-reality/.

with over 35,000 Americans across all 50 states. Results pertinent to this research paper are depicted in the table below.[3]

Table 1. Survey Results

Religious Tradition	White	Black
Evangelical Protestant	76%	6%
Historically Black Protestant	2%	94%
Mainline Protestant	86%	3%

The striking disparities in these findings tellingly portray the current, polarized representation of Anglo and African Americans within each major expression of American Protestantism. This marked evidence of the segregated nature of the American Church today effectively punctuates the present-day aptness of Dr. King's statement made almost sixty years ago; "eleven o'clock on Sunday morning is one the most segregated hours, if not the most segregated hours, in Christian America."

> I definitely think the Christian Church should be integrated. And any church that stands against integration and that has a segregated body, is standing against the Spirit and the teachings of Jesus Christ, and it fails to be a true witness. But this is something that the Church will have to do itself. I don't think church integration will come through legal processes. I might say that my church is not a segregating church. It's segregated but not segregating. It would welcome white members.[4]

Dr. King's (likewise apt) adjoining call for the integration of the Church is also supported by LifeWay Research's aforementioned report. Of the same 1,000-plus

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[3] PRC, "Religious Landscape Study," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), May 11, 2015, http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/.

[4] Spivak, "Meet the Press."

Protestant pastors interviewed, Smietana reports that "More than eight in ten (85 percent) say every church should strive for racial diversity."[5] Yet, interestingly, while that desire has not translated into diversity within the church in America, race relations within the broader culture have clearly improved since 1960. Evidence of that prevailing sentiment across ethnicities is presented in LifeWay Research's December 16, 2014 report, "Research: Americans Agree U.S. Has Come Far In Race Relations, But Long Way To Go." In this study, 1,000 random Americans and 1,000 Protestant pastors were surveyed in an effort to glean the present-day opinions on diversity and race relations. In presenting the results, author Smietana begins the article by echoing the report's title and so punctuating its message, "Race relations in America are better than they used to be … But there's still a long way to go."[6]

So here we are today, Protestant pastors who, unlike Dr. King, are serving in a broader culture in which race relations between Anglo and African Americans are comparatively integrated and congenial. Yet, like Dr. King, the vast majority of us still find ourselves shepherding churches that are predominately segregated. Similarly, like Dr. King, the vast majority of us today believe that "every church should strive for racial diversity." But instead of leading the charge and outpacing the culture in this work, the church in America has not even kept pace with it. Here again, Dr. King's words continue to ring true, "this is something that the Church will have to do itself. I don't think church integration will come through legal processes." The evidence clearly supports Dr. King's

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[5] Smietana, "Research," January 17, 2014, 2.

[6] Bob Smietana, "Research: Americans Agree U.S. Has Come Far In Race Relations, But Long Way To Go," LifeWay NewsRoom, December 16, 2014, http://blog.lifeway.com/newsroom/2014/12/16/research-americans-agree-u-s-has-come-far-in-race-relations-but-long-way-to-go/.

longstanding hypothesis. The integration of the Church is not something legal changes have or can facilitate; the Church will have to do that. But thus far, the church in America, for the most part, has not done that. Consequently, if the broader culture has "still a long way to go," the Church has a yet further one.

In this we recognize that, although we live in a country billed as a "mosaic" of different cultures and so celebratory of its diversity in unity, there is a longstanding, deep, and widespread division between Anglo and African Americans that is unique—relative to other aspects of its ethnic diversity. And, as demonstrated earlier, it is a rift that is particularly evident in the church in America. Acknowledging that induces us to reflect afresh on the fundamental underlying questions: 1) What lies behind this unique, grievous divide—particularly, as it pertains to the church in America?, 2) Why is the integration of Anglo- and African-American believers so vital in the life of the Church—that is, what about "the Spirit and the teachings of Jesus Christ" compel us toward a lived out diversity-in-unity in the Church today?, and 3) What could this pursuit look like for the majority of us serving in churches that, like Dr. King's church in 1960, are "segregated but not segregating"—churches that are mono-ethnic but "would welcome white members [or black members, as the case may be]"? More specifically, what could it look like for pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- or African-American churches to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity—either as a preliminary step in the process of becoming more diverse, or even while expecting to remain mono-ethnic (in cases where a church's mono-ethnicity accurately reflects its context)?

The Grievous Anglo- and African-American Divide

The first step in this essential endeavor is to reflect afresh on what lies behind this grievous divide—the past and present drivers behind the deep division we face in the American church today. While Anglo and African Americans have certainly sinned against one another and have contributed to the present division, history reveals that this is predominately born of the heart-attitudes and actions of Anglo Americans against African Americans. To see the longstanding nature and extent of this, we must venture all the way back to this country's founding, to the very root of this unique divide. It is a root John Piper depicts well when he writes, "The black experience in America is unique. Among other reasons for this uniqueness, the main one is that African Americans are the only people group in our land who suffered centuries of race-based slavery at the hands of white masters. Adding to the weight of that experience is the fact that during most of that time slavery was accompanied by, and often justified by, public conceptions of black inferiority."[7] The brutal, dehumanizing institution of chattel slavery had a long-history in America, being legal from its founding in 1776 up until January 1, 1863, with the issuance of President Lincoln's Executive Order—the *Emancipation Proclamation*. But despite that order and the eventual freeing of all slaves in 1865, segregation across Anglo- and African-American lines remained legal—and through the Jim Crow Laws, was actually mandated in public facilities in the former Confederate States until 1965. But even since that time, movement toward integration and a true sense of equality has been slow, as deep-seated race-based prejudices and practices persist. Piper observes,

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[7] John Piper, *Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 59–60.

"Almost fifty years since the civil rights movement, the racial situation in America is not as improved as many had hoped it would be—and some would even say it is worse."[8]

These racially divisive forces have been, and are, at work not only in the broader culture, but also within the church. This division began as white slave owners twisted their professed Christian faith in order to justify and support their anti-Christian practice of chattel slavery. But despite their perversion of the gospel, the true light of the gospel shone through, a light which many slaves embraced as their own. On these diametrically opposed beliefs, Frederick Douglass writes:

> What I have said against religion, I mean strictly to apply to the *slaveholding religion* of this land, and with no possible reference to Christianity proper; for, between the Christianity of this land, and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest possible difference—so wide, that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked. To be the friend of the one, is of necessity to be the enemy of the other. I love the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ: I therefore hate the corrupt, slaveholding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of this land. Indeed, I can see no reason, but the most deceitful one, for calling the religion of this land Christianity. I look upon it as the grossest of all libels.[9]

In view of African-American slaves' growth in faith in the midst of systemic oppression, Carl Ellis insightfully observes that "since the African-American struggle has been against ethical wrongdoing, the theology of the African-American church has been essentially ethical."[10] He adds, "Since the major theme that runs throughout our history is

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[8] Piper, 61.

[9] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, and American Slave* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988), 155–56.

[10] Carl F. Ellis Jr., *Free At Last? The Gospel in the African-American Experience*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 48.

the quest for true freedom and human dignity, the early days of this quest were a struggle to be consistent to God's image despite the forces of dehumanization."[11]

But these anti-Christian beliefs, heart-attitudes, and practices were not limited to the days of chattel slavery. Even after its abolition, African-American believers continued to experience deep wounding, notably by way of abandonment—even at the hands of Christ-centered, gospel-believing Anglo Americans. It is this experience of abandonment, likely coupled with the African-American church's emphasis on ethics, that led to the firm establishment of the segregated African-American church. Ellis writes:

> Between 1877 and 1930 the White Bible-believing churches developed a double-isolation from the Black community: They capitulated to White racism, and they adopted a socially impotent gospel. The rift was deep, because social ethics and the quest for freedom and dignity lay at the heart of historic Black theology. The social retreat of White Bible-believing Christianity made it resemble White Christianity-ism … In spite of the abandonment of the White Christians, the Black church had the theological dynamic that had been brewing throughout the days of slavery. By the time of the Emancipation we had seen one of the most powerful examples of the spread of the gospel since the days of Paul … This explosive growth of the African-American church between 1860 and 1910 … has remained, thus far, unparalleled in American history.[12]

It was Anglo-American believers' abandonment of their African-American brothers and sisters that led to the establishment of the segregated African-American church.

At present, some Anglo Americans might argue that all this is ancient history—that those divisive wounds are part of our painful, yet distant past. Therefore, these should have no bearing on life together today. But, as history shows, our African-American brothers' and sisters' long-standing experience of state-sanctioned oppression and abandonment is not restricted to the distant past—it is something that many of those

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[11] Ellis Jr., 48.

[12] Ellis Jr., 56–57.

with us today experienced firsthand during the years of Jim Crow Laws and the Civil Rights Movement. On the latter, Dr. King speaks to the experience of state-sanctioned violence against African American demonstrators in Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. Note the emphasis he places on the deeply wounding, divisive effect of Anglo Americans' abandonment of African Americans in the midst of that oppression and abuse. He writes, "Certainly Birmingham had its decent white citizens who privately deplored the maltreatment of Negroes. But they remained publicly silent. It was a silence born of fear—fear of social, political and economic reprisals. The ultimate tragedy of Birmingham was not the brutality of the bad people, but the silence of the good people."[13] Some of our African-American brothers and sisters with us today personally experienced that brutality. And as Dr. King emphasized, while the physical abuse inflicted on African Americans by Anglo Americans cut deep wounds, what cut deeper still was their experience of abandonment by "good [white] people"—including Anglo-American believers' abandonment of their African-American brothers and sisters.

Sadly, that story and pattern of prejudice and abandonment doesn't end there. It continues yet today, as those longstanding prejudiced mindsets and heart-attitudes have been plowed deeply into the soil of our hearts, minds, and culture—as African-American brothers and sisters continue to experience painful racism today and yet feel like they are still standing alone, abandoned by their Anglo-American brothers and sisters in the midst of an Anglo-American defined and biased culture. On that point, Anglo Americans must recognize that our country is not, in practice, the celebrated mosaic of ethnic diversity-in-unity that it's billed to be. The culture in America is Anglo-American. Piper illustrates

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[13] Martin Luther King Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York, NY: Signet Classics, 2000), 48.

that point when he writes, "When you are the majority ethnicity, nothing you do is ethnic. It's just the way it's done. When you are a minority, everything you do has color."[14] Ellis adds to that an essential African-American perspective. He writes, "When people grow up in a particular cultural context, they fail to see the cultural biases they have inherited. They think of their own value system as neutral, the standard for all people. But black leaders of the sixties showed us the folly of this. They pointed out that the White American system of values proclaimed that Black was not beautiful, that the system perpetuated the daily degradation of African Americans. The system was not neutral when it came to us."[15]

The researcher's aim is not to paint a one-sided picture or to heap shame on Anglo-American believers. Rather, the intent is to honestly face the reality that the deep rift along Anglo- and African-American lines in the church today is due principally to Anglo-American believers'—past and present—divisive actions and inactions toward African-American brothers and sisters. Therefore, Anglo- and African-American believers are coming at this challenging pursuit of diversity in unity—of koinonia in the church in America—from two entirely different perspectives, from two entirely different experiences of our shared history and within our shared context today, and from two very different senses of emotional distance, cultural risk, and potential personal loss.

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[14] Piper, *Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian*, 67.

[15] Ellis Jr., *Free At Last? The Gospel in the African-American Experience*, 19.

Biblical Impetuses for the Integrated Church

In the previous section, we gained a better sense for the deep past and present wounds that have grievously divided Anglo- and African-American believers, as well as for some weighty hindrances to moving toward one another today. But, as believers, we also know that we have within us the infinitely more powerful healing and unifying force of Christ. That is, in Christ, we have all been given newness of life in Him and are now intimately, spiritually interconnected and united as one in Him. But again, while this is our present spiritual reality, in the midst of the longstanding wounds and pain, we are in practice, grievously divided. It is a divide so cavernous that it will take the compelling, healing, and relationship restoring power of Christ to enable us to pursue and experience the unity that is ours in Him today. Scripture tells us that our unity in Christ is so fundamental to our common identity in Him that actively pursuing and abiding in that unity is a biblical imperative (see Colossians 3:13-14; John 17:23; Ephesians 4:3; Ephesians 2:14; Galatians 3:26-28; 1 Corinthians 12). But, in order to better understand the compelling biblical force behind that imperative, we need first to see it in light of the overarching biblical narrative—of God's grand redemptive story that spans the whole of human history. That story given us in Scripture begins with God's creation and culminates with the presenting of His new creation. In between, author Christopher Wright tells us we find "the mission of God … The story of how God in his sovereign love has purposed to bring the sinful world of his fallen creation to the redeemed world of his new creation."[16] Wright adds that it is His mission that "spans the gap between the

[16] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 46.

curse on the earth of Genesis 3 and the end of the curse in the new creation of Revelation 22 … [That] brings humanity from being a cacophony of nations divided and scattered in rebellion against God in Genesis 11 to being a choir of nations united and gathered in worship of God in Revelation 7."[17]

It is a story of God's ongoing covenantal, redemptive work through Abraham, through whom "all the peoples of the earth will be blessed" (see Genesis 12:3), through whose seed God would not only absolve us of sin (see Genesis 3), but also reverse the divisive effects of it—the scattering of the nations (see Genesis 11). Christ is that seed (see Galatians 3:16). And in Christ, we are Abraham's offspring (see Galatians 3:29). As such, we now, not only are "heirs to the promise," but also participate in Abraham's calling to be a blessing to and unite people from all nations in the Lord (see Genesis 12)—to participate with the Lord in His work to reconcile others to Himself and to reconcile (to rectify the division of) the nations in Him.

As members of His family and participants in this ongoing drama, what is our role in it today (specifically, as it pertains to racial division)? In Christ, the story of His people is now our story. Whether Jew or Gentile, Anglo or African American—as children adopted into His one collective family—His story is now our story. And as one family in Him, we are now active participants in this familial epic—His ongoing redemptive narrative and mission—working together to bear witness to the nations (to nullify the effects of Genesis 3) and to remove the barriers between the nations in Christ (to reverse the effects of Genesis 11). With that in view, we—the united body of Christ—must earnestly, doggedly strive to rectify the causes of division between us and increasingly

[17] Wright, 46.

live out—as an alluring signpost to the world around us—the present reality and beauty of our unity in Christ. While presently a far-from-perfect reality, it yet points to the full, perfect, and sure realization of that in the future (see Revelation 5, 7).

The image of our future perfected beauty of diversity-in-unity in Christ enables us to even more readily recognize the deep brokenness and grave divisions in our Church family today. And, as we lean into this brokenness and division with the power of His love and grace, we also recognize the importance of specifically naming the divisive hurts, as well as their historical and present causes. Only then can we effectively work together to apply the healing, relationship restoring, and unifying power of Christ. Doing so will yield the sweet fruit of deep healing needed between Anglo- and African-American brothers and sisters, and a fuller inner experience and outward witness of the shared unity, life, love, peace, and joy that are ours in Christ (see John 17:23).

But just as great breadth and depth of blessing flows from the pursuit and realization of koinonia between Anglo- and African-American believers, there is also great breadth and depth of cost in not doing so. Those weighty costs include: 1) grieving the Holy Spirit by allowing deep, race-based wounding and division in the body of Christ to remain untended, fractured, and festering (see Ephesians 4:25-32), 2) hindering our own relationships with the Lord; for we cannot claim to be in loving relationship with God and yet be in bitter discord with our brothers and sisters (see 1 John 4:20-21), 3) hindering our growth in Christ's likeness by allowing His spiritually united body to remain emotionally, relationally, and functionally disconnected (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-26; Ephesians 4:11-16), 4) hindering our growth in Christ's likeness by robbing members of the deeply formative growth that comes from having to let go of one's own personal

and cultural preferences in deference to others' (Philippians 2:1-5), 5) denying congregants the fuller experience of joy in the Lord that comes with engaging in personal relationships, joint-labors, and worship with a broad diversity of believers (Revelation 7:9-12), and 6) as Dr. King argues in his 1960 "Meet the Press" interview, the segregated Church "fails to be a true witness" to Christ (see John 17:23).

Pursuit of Koinonia Between Mono-Ethnic Churches

In view of the deeply painful history, life-experiences, and actions and inactions that have divided Anglo- and African-American believers, the biblical imperative to pursue koinonia between them presents both a tremendous challenge and a glorious opportunity for pastors. But, it presents a particularly difficult challenge for pastors of mono-ethnic churches—given the inherent limitations in being separated. As in all relationships, members of the body cannot grow in healthy relationship unless they are in regular contact with one another. But in the pursuit of koinonia between Anglo- and African-American brothers and sisters, this will require more than merely getting these together on a regular basis. Pastors will quickly find that the painful, divisive effects of racism present a formidable barrier to relationship, as past and present experiences of racism have created a cavernous emotional gap and relational rift between Anglo and African Americans. And there is little hope of spanning that—of closing that emotional distance—until its causes are specifically, candidly named and acknowledged, and the actions themselves and their effects are honestly, humbly, graciously, and earnestly worked through at the outset. This will require providing regular opportunities to sit down together and personally talk through real-life experiences and hurts behind this divide. Fostering the koinonia the Lord desires between His sons and daughters will

require honesty, humility, patience, grace, listening well, and seeking to see through one another's eyes—through the lens of one another's personal life stories and experiences. If we don't do that, we won't be able to effectively move toward one another; we won't feel heartily, empathetically compelled to rectify the deep wounds and areas of division and their causes; and, consequently, we won't be able to more fully nurture, experience, and model well the unity that is ours in Christ.

The divisive sin of racism in America is not an Anglo-American story. It is not an African-American story. It is our collective story. While Anglo and African Americans have had very different experiences within that, it is our story. And in order for healing to take place and koinonia to be experienced, that jointly-owned cultural story must be brought together (overlapped in Venn-diagram fashion) with our likewise jointly-owned gospel story in Christ, and jointly viewed through its redemptive, healing, relationship restoring, and unifying lens.

Being where we are in the story, we are still a broken and sinful people. And no doubt, our best-intended efforts as pastors of mono-ethnic congregations to address the pervasive issue and effects of racism won't be perfect. They will most certainly come with bone-jarring bumps along the way. That said, pastors and congregations will be required to stick their necks out a bit, take some risks, be willing to open up and make themselves vulnerable, so as to lovingly, humbly, patiently, and graciously move toward each other—even in the midst and wake of the inevitable missteps along the way. If we aren't willing to do that, we will remain essentially, albeit cordially, grievously divided.

In the Church, cordiality and the absence of open hostility between Anglo and African Americans is not our aim. Our primary aim is to grow in "relationship with God

and conformity to him."[18] Growing in love and relationship with God also requires that we grow in love and relationship with each other (see 1 John 3:11-15; 4:20-21). Likewise, growing in Christ's likeness requires that we actively engage in removing that which causes division between us, as members of His united body. This pursuit and realization of koinonia (the Church's lived-out expression of our unity in Christ) provides the means for members of His body to heal, grow, and experience close connection with one another; to experience afresh the joy of God's redemptive story; to realign ourselves with His redemptive aims, as a collective family; to re-orient ourselves to where we are in the story and the role we play in it—individually and collectively; and, most importantly, to grow in deeper relationship with and greater likeness of our Lord.

In the wake of the recent racially-charged tragedies, the Church has a tremendous opportunity to face and work through the highly-divisive issue of racism together, to help heal broken hearts and relationships, to love each other well as a family, to model well the Lord's division-removing aim for His Church, and to display to a watching world the alluring beauty of Christ through our unity in Him. Moving forward in a pursuit of this nature and scope can feel daunting and scary, particularly at the outset. But as in all things redemptive, this is God's work. So, abiding in Him and the truth of His Word, we must prayerfully, lovingly, boldly move forward in participating with Him in this work—and trust Him with the results, that only He can accomplish in and through us.

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[18] Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work: The Theory and Practice of Biblical Application* (Phillipsburg, N.J: Presbyterian & Reformed Pub Co, 2001), 14.

Problem and Purpose Statements

Much has been written about the importance and benefits of pursuing koinonia in Christ between Anglo- and African-American believers through realizing ethnic diversity within a congregation. It follows then that realizing ethnic diversity within a congregation is considered ideal by many. However, currently, the majority of churches are mono-ethnic. Although the majority case, little has been written on how mono-ethnic, Anglo- and African-American congregations can engage in the biblical imperative to pursue and experience the beauty and benefits of koinonia in Christ with one another—either as a preliminary step in the process of becoming more diverse, or while expecting to remain mono-ethnic (when a church's mono-ethnicity accurately reflects its context).

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity. Four main areas that are central to this endeavor have been identified: biblical impetuses, identification of challenges, remediation of challenges, and growth in relationship with God and Christ's likeness through the challenges. To that end, the following research questions guided the qualitative research.

Research Questions

1. What biblical impetuses compel pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?
2. What challenges do pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches face in their efforts to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?

3. How do pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches work through these challenges in their efforts to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?
4. What growth in relationship with God and Christ's likeness do pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches observe as a result of leading their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?
    a. Growth in themselves.
    b. Growth in their congregants.

Significance of the Study

This study has significance for all Anglo- or African-American church members. But it has particular significance for pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- or African-American congregations who have embraced the biblical imperative to lead their congregants to pursue the beauty, blessings, and benefits of koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity.

First, this study has significance for pastors serving in a mono-ethnic Anglo- or African-American church in which its mono-ethnicity does not reflect its context and they see the pursuit of koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity as a preliminary step in the process of becoming more diverse.

Second, this study has significance for pastors serving in a mono-ethnic Anglo- or African-American church in which its mono-ethnicity does reflect its context and so expect to remain mono-ethnic. But at the same time, they recognize the vital importance

of pursuing koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity and want to learn more about how other pastors are doing that.

Definition of Terms

In the context of this study, the below terms are defined as follows:

Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) — "The EPC is both evangelical and Presbyterian. We are evangelical in our zeal for the gospel, as well as evangelism, missions, and living obediently as followers of Jesus. At the same time, we are rooted deeply in the Protestant Reformation and especially the theological and pastoral work of John Calvin. We embrace the Westminster Confession of Faith as our doctrinal standard, and the rule of spiritually mature elders linked together regionally as the best way to guide local congregations. When the EPC started in 1981, we determined that we would not disagree on the basic essentials of the Christian faith, but on anything that was not essential—such as the issue of ordaining women as officers or practicing charismatic gifts—we would give each other liberty ... The EPC consists of more than 600 churches with approximately 145,000 members. We have a world missions program with a priority on sending missionaries to unreached people groups. We are eager to plant churches across the United States and especially in urban communities and college towns. Our desire is that every one of our congregations will be an outpost of the Kingdom, with every member viewing himself or herself as a missionary on a mission. OUR MISSION The EPC exists to carry out the Great Commission of Jesus as a denomination of Presbyterian, Reformed, Evangelical, and Missional congregations. OUR VISION To the glory of God, the EPC family aspires to embody and proclaim Jesus' love as a global

movement of congregations engaged together in God's mission through transformation, multiplication, and effective biblical leadership."[19]

Jim Crow Laws — "The Jim Crow Laws were laws that supported the segregation of blacks and whites in southern American states, having been referred to as early as the 1890s. These laws protected and supported discrimination in such issues as bank practices, school segregation, and housing segregation, in which certain neighborhoods were designated as either 'white' or 'black' neighborhoods. Examples of Jim Crow Laws in action include the physical segregation of public schools, public parks and beaches, and public transportation. It was also during this time that drinking fountains, restrooms, and restaurants were segregated, requiring 'blacks' to use separate facilities."[20]

Koinonia — "is sharing a common life with other believers—a life that, as John says, we share with God the Father and God the Son. It is a relationship, not an activity."[21] The Greek New Testament's use of *koinonia* depicts what that shared life in Christ should look like. The Louw-Nida Greek Lexicon categorizes these uses under three areas: "fellowship … share … [and] willing contribution."[22] Therefore, it is not something characterized by mere cordiality or simply getting along. Rather, it is characterized by the deepest level of personal relationship and unity of being as fellow

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[19] EPC, "Evangelical Presbyterian Church," About the EPC, accessed April 11, 2019, https://epc.org/about/.

[20] Content Team, *Legal Dictionary*, 2016, https://legaldictionary.net/jim-crow-laws/.

[21] Jerry Bridges, *True Community* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 10.

[22] Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 1st ed., vol. 2, Indices (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1988), 144.

members of Christ's body—a relationship of mutual identity, love, trust, care, concern, joy, fellowship, service, mission, and life together.

Missionary Baptist Church (MBC) — "Missionary Baptists are a group of Baptists that grew out of the missionary / anti-missionary controversy that divided Baptists in the United States in the early part of the 19th century, with Missionary Baptists following the pro-missions movement position. Those who opposed the innovations became known as anti-missions or Primitive Baptists. Since arising in the 19th century, the influence of Primitive Baptists waned as 'Missionary Baptists became the mainstream.' Missionary Baptist is also a term used by adherents of many African American Baptist churches and Landmark Baptist churches belonging to the American Baptist Association, the Baptist Missionary Association and the Interstate and Foreign Landmark Missionary Baptist Association."[23]

Mono-ethnic church — "at least 90 percent of attendees are from one ethnic group."[24]

Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) — "The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) was formed in 1973 to be a denomination that is 'Faithful to the Scriptures, True to the Reformed Faith, and Obedient to the Great Commission.' The PCA is an evangelical denomination in that we proclaim the gospel of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ … We desire all people to trust in the saving work of Jesus and enjoy eternal life in him. The PCA is a reformed denomination in that we believe in the biblical truth

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[23] "Missionary Baptists," Wikipedia, accessed April 11, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Missionary_Baptists.

[24] Naomi Schaefer Riley, "Do We Need to Integrate Our Churches?," *New York Post* (blog), February 24, 2015, 2, https://nypost.com/2015/02/23/do-we-need-to-integrate-our-churches/.

proclaimed during the Protestant Reformation. The Word of God, rather than tradition, is the only guide for the Church. God alone saves through his immeasurable mercy and according to his sovereign plan. We believe the system of doctrine taught in the Bible is summarized well in the Westminster Confession of Faith … The PCA is a Presbyterian denomination in that we have a representative form of church government. A local church is governed by a 'Session' comprised of elders (i.e., 'presbyters') elected by the members of the congregation. Pastors and representatives of local churches in a region form a 'Presbytery.' Representatives of Presbyteries and local churches meet annually at a 'General Assembly.'"[25]

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) — "The Southern Baptist Convention was formed with a Gospel vision. Its founding charter identifies its singular focus: . . . for the purpose of eliciting, combining, and directing the energies of the Baptist denomination of Christians, for the propagation of the Gospel. The … (SBC) has grown to be a network of more than fifty thousand cooperating churches and church-type missions banded together to make an impact for God's Kingdom … No two Southern Baptist churches are alike; but there are certain commonalities that bind Southern Baptists together, regardless of race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, language, size, or locale ... Southern Baptists are as varied and diverse as the cities, towns, neighborhoods, and rural communities where they live. Each Southern Baptist church is autonomous and unique; only when viewed together can one grasp the diversity that is the Southern Baptist Convention."[26]

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[25] PCA, "Presbyterian Church in America," About the PCA, accessed April 11, 2019, https://pcanet.org/about-the-pca/.

[26] SBC, "Southern Baptist Convention," About Us, accessed April 11, 2019, http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity. The literature review provides a broader foundation for this qualitative research through exploring three main areas of focus. The first area is comprised of two sub-sections. The first of which is a theological study on our unity—our oneness in Christ. This foundational starting point then serves as the compelling indicative behind the consequent study within this first area of focus, the Church's imperative pursuit of koinonia—more specifically, a study on the biblical use and meaning of koinonia, with particular interest in how these pertain to the present reality of our oneness in Christ across Anglo- and African-American lines. The second main area of focus delves into literature concerning civic leaders' depictions of idyllic, healthy, sustainable community and their perceptions of the present state of community. The third and final main area focuses then on civic leaders' proposed means and efforts to move from the present to the ideal state—means to build healthy, sustainable community—notably, in the context of ethnic diversity.

Theological and Biblical Frameworks for Biblical Impetuses

Theology of Oneness in Christ

> As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.
> —John 17:18-23

The above passage is an excerpt from what has been historically regarded as Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer." Jesus offers this toward the end of His earthly ministry—between His final Passover meal with His closest followers and His subsequent arrest—and so it reveals to us the weightiest of His concerns. Covenant Theological Seminary professor Robert W. Yarbrough speaks to this when he describes this prayer as:

> the climax of Jesus' final discourse (chaps. 13-17). It is the seal of all He has said. It is the capstone of a presentation designed to steady the shaky disciples and ensure that their imminent scattering (16:32) will be only temporary. Jesus' final instruction to the eleven in chapters 13-17 primes them to expect what lies ahead, but Jesus' prayer empowers them to survive and rise above it.[27]

In step with Yarbrough's insights, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Andreas Köstenberger broadens the discussion by bringing into view all future disciples. At the same time, he narrows our focus as he draws particular attention to Jesus' concern for His disciples' unity. He observes:

> [Jesus'] vision transcends the present, reaching beyond his immediate followers to those who will believe through their message. … [His] concern for his followers' unity is his greatest burden as his earthly ministry draws to a close, and it

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[27] Robert W. Yarbrough, *John: With a New Preface and Bibliography* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2011), 169.

> pervades this entire section. Their unity, in turn, is to be rooted in Jesus' own unity with the Father.[28]

Wales Evangelical School of Theology professor Michael Reeves agrees with the central importance of unity. But at the same time, stresses that unity does not mean sameness. Rather, this unity maintains and honors the distinctives of its diverse component parts—as sameness is neither the ideal nor the aim:

> At the heart of Jesus' high priestly prayer to his Father for believers is the request "that they may be one as we are one."[29]
> As the Father is absolutely one with his Son, and yet not his Son, so Jesus prays that believers might be one, but not that they all be the same.[30]

Each of these authors observes that one of Jesus' primary concerns is for His followers' unity, their oneness in Him. These authors also recognize that the foundational unity on which Jesus' followers' oneness in Him is grounded and patterned after is Jesus' own oneness with the Father—a oneness in which there remains personal distinction and yet harmonious unity in being. Therefore, in order to understand more fully our oneness in Jesus, we must first better understand Jesus' oneness with the Father. So, what does Jesus' oneness (as the Christ—the eternal Son—now fully God and fully man) with the Father look like?

Christ's Oneness with the Father

The authors researched on this topic discuss Christ's oneness with the Father in terms that can be grouped under the following categories: 1) oneness in being, 2) oneness

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[28] Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 497.

[29] Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 103.

[30] Reeves, 104.

in purpose, and 3) oneness in mutual glorification. These categories then provide the framework for the following pursuit to better understand what that oneness entails.

Oneness in Being

Theologian Herman Bavinck provides an essential, foundational understanding of the Father and Son's oneness in being when he describes the inseparable, yet distinct nature of the three persons of the Godhead. He writes:

> The divine nature … exists *in* the divine persons and is totally and quantitatively the same in each person. The persons, though distinct, are not separate … They all share in the same divine nature and perfections. It is one and the same divine nature that exists in each person individually and in all of them collectively. Consequently, there is in God but one eternal, omnipotent being, having one mind, one will, and one power … Whatever distinctions may exist in the divine being, they may not and cannot diminish the unity of the divine nature. For in God that unity … is perfect and absolute.[31]

Theologian and former Westminster Theological Seminary professor John Frame supports Bavinck's understanding and builds on that as he writes, "Scripture presents a delicate balance between the distinctiveness of the persons and their mutual involvement"[32]—a mutual involvement that is predicated on the "mutual indwelling of the persons."[33] Here Frame not only affirms Bavinck's ontological argument, but also begins to address the inter-relational dynamics between the distinct, yet inseparable, persons of the Godhead. Delving further into their mutual involvement—their joint works by which they are manifested—theologian Louis Berkhof writes:

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[31] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, vol. 2, God and Creation (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 300.

[32] John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013), 479.

[33] Frame, 479.

> These are never works of one person exclusively, but always works of the Divine Being as a whole. At the same time it is true that in the economical order of God's works, some of the *opera ad extra* [external work] are ascribed more particularly to one person, and some more especially to another. Though they are all works of the three persons jointly.[34]

Oneness in Purpose

A brief recap of Bavinck, Frame, and Berkhof's above main points makes evident the reality of Christ's oneness in purpose with the Father: "Scripture presents a delicate balance between the distinctiveness of the persons and their mutual involvement"; "These are never works of one person exclusively, but always works of the Divine Being as a whole"; and, "There is in God but one eternal, omnipotent being, having one mind, one will, and one power." In accord with these truths, Christ can be said *to be one in purpose* with the Father—a oneness in purpose that flows out of Christ's oneness of being with the Father. Authors of an authoritative Greek lexicon, Walter Bauer, Frederick William Danker, W.F. Arndt, and F.W. Gingrich (collectively, BDAG), support that through their description of Jesus' use of *consecrate* in John 17:19, "And for their sake I ***consecrate*** [**ἁγιάζω**] myself." Here *consecrate* means to "include a pers[on] in the inner circle of what is holy … *consecrate, sanctify … I dedicate myself for them as an offering* **J 17:19a**."[35] In agreement, yet more accessibly, Yarbrough writes, "'Sanctify' means to separate from evil and dedicate to God and His perfect will."[36] On this, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School professor D.A.Carson further elaborates:

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[34] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (1958; repr., Versa Press, Inc., Peoria, IL: Banner of Truth, 2005), 89.

[35] BDAG, s.v. "ἁγιάζω"

[36] Yarbrough, *John*, 174.

> As strange as *I sanctify myself* is, at one level it is nothing more than Jesus' determination to co-operate with the Father's sanctification of him … Jesus is as determined to set himself apart for his Father's exclusive service as the Father is to set him apart … but the purpose of this dedication is that his followers may dedicate themselves to the same saving reign, the same mission to the world.[37]

Carson follows by providing some detail on what their oneness in purpose looks like in the context of their mutual engagement. In the process, he identifies the divine purpose itself— "the redemption and preservation of those the Father has given him." He writes:

> It is analogous to the oneness Jesus enjoys with his Father, here fleshed out in the words *just as you are in me and I am in you*. The Father is actually in the Son, so much so that we can be told that it is the Father who is performing the Son's works (14:10); yet the Son is in the Father, not only in dependence upon and obedience to him, but his agent in creation (1:2-3) and his wholly concurring Son in the redemption and preservation of those the Father has given him (e.g., 6:37-40; 17:6; 19).[38]

Oneness in Mutual Glorification

Scripture reveals to us that Jesus glorified the Father through accomplishing the works the Father gave Him to do (see John 17:4). But that glorification within the Godhead is not limited to that. Rather, it is mutual. Frame depicts for us the mutual glorification within the Trinity and then points to key verses in support of that. He writes:

> There is no conflict in the Trinity. The three persons are perfectly agreed on what they should do and how their plan should be executed. They support one another, assist one another, promote one another's purposes. This intra-Trinitarian 'deference,' this 'disposability' of each to the others, may be called *mutual glorification*. In the gospel of John, the Father glorifies the Son (John 8:50, 54; 12:23; 17:1) and the Son the Father (7:18; 17:4). The Spirit glorifies the Son … who in turn glorifies the Father.[39]

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[37] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (1991; repr., Leicester, England: Eerdmans, 2016), 567.

[38] Carson, 568.

[39] Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 480.

The above cited verses depict well the other-oriented nature of this mutual-glorification and what that looks like in practice—again, perhaps more notably, in John 17:4:

- "Yet I [Jesus] do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge."—John 8:50
- "Jesus answered, 'If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.'"—John 8:54
- "And Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.'"—John 12:23
- "When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, 'Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.'"—John 17:1
- "The one who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood."—John 7:18
- "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do."—John 17:4

In this area of discussion, Frame concludes by recognizing the mind-boggling reality that "the mutual deference of the Trinity is a major theme in the gospel … [but also] Jesus is disposable [accessible, readily available] to believers as well (John 6:49-51, 55-56; 10:7-9; etc.)"[40]:

- "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."—John 6:49-51
- "For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him."—John 6:55-56
- "So Jesus again said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.'"—John 10:7-9

[40] Frame, 481.

Our Oneness in Christ

As we move into our discussion on how Christ's oneness with the Father is to be reflected in our oneness in Christ, Frame tells us that "certainly there are senses in which believers can never be one as the Trinity is one, and yet Jesus calls us into the oneness of the Father and Son."[41] Since our oneness in Christ is rooted in and patterned after the oneness within the Trinity, the following discussion will be framed using the same categories under "Christ's Oneness with the Father": 1) oneness in being, 2) oneness in purpose, and 3) oneness in mutual glorification.

Oneness in Being

At the outset, we must bring back to mind what Christ's oneness in being with the Father looks like—the ideal after which our oneness in being in Christ is to be patterned. Recall Bavinck's description, "The persons, though distinct, are not separate … They all share in the same divine nature and perfections."[42] On this Frame warns that "clearly, Jesus does not intend to erase the distinction between the Creator and the creature."[43] We are not God or like Him in essential respects—we are not divine or perfect. Furthermore, regarding corporate unity, where the Godhead "is one indivisible substance,"[44] as a body of believers in Christ, we are not. Yet at the same time, we must not lose sight of Frame's earlier observation that "Jesus calls us into the oneness of the Father and Son," or of Burge's recognition that "Jesus says that the oneness we experience with him should lead

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[41] Frame, 481.

[42] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2, God and Creation:300.

[43] Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 481.

[44] Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 87.

to a oneness we experience with one another."[45] Putting some details on these broader-brush depictions, Reeves paints a more detailed picture of what that should look like for believers today, as well as, what that will look like in the future:

> So it is not just that the Father, Son and Spirit call us into fellowship with themselves; they share their heavenly harmony that there might be harmony on earth, that people of different genders, languages, hobbies and gifts might be one in peace and love; and that one day, with one heart and one voice, we might cry: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb' (Rev 7:10). And that is what the family of God—by its very existence—makes known to the world; that the God of harmony is the hope for world peace; that he can and will unite enemies, rivals and strangers into one loving family under his fatherly care.[46]

Pastor and theologian James Montgomery Boice not only echoes Reeves, but also then broadly identifies: 1) what lay at the root of the prevailing division in the church, and 2) fundamental challenges faced in the pursuit of oneness of being in Christ. He writes:

> We are to be like the Lord Jesus Christ in our unity. In fact, this is precisely the way in which Jesus introduces the subject in the next verses of the prayer, for he goes on to pray, 'that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me' (v. 21). The world is fractured in a million ways. It is the logical outcome of the work of Satan, one of whose most revealing names is the disrupter (*diabolos*). If Christians would win the world, they must show a genuine unity that is in itself desirable and winsome and that at the same time points to the unity within the Godhead, which is its source.[47]

In his concluding lines, Boice hits on the missional aim behind our unity in Christ, that it would point "to the unity within the Godhead, which is its source." The missional aim of our unity in Christ leads us right into the next section, our "oneness in purpose" in Christ.

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[45] Gary M. Burge, *John*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 479.

[46] Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity*, 104.

[47] James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: Peace in Storm* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 1325.

Oneness in Purpose

Again, we look to Bavinck to bring back to mind the ideal—what Christ's oneness in purpose with the Father looks like; "there is in God but one eternal, omnipotent being, having one mind, one will, and one power."[48] Building on that, we turn also to Frame's earlier argument that the resulting "mutual involvement" of the persons of the Trinity is predicated on the "mutual indwelling of the persons." Given these patterns, then also there should be a mutual involvement of believers in Christ, predicated on their mutual indwelling in Him—a oneness in purpose through our oneness of being in Christ. A point that Carson emphasizes when he writes:

> What Jesus prays for these believers-to-be is *that all of them may be one* … The Father and the Son are distinguishable … yet they are one. Similarly, the believers, still distinct, are to be one in purpose, in love, in action undertaken with and for one another, in joint submission to the revelation received.[49]

In support of Carson's argument that believers should be united "in joint submission to the revelation received"—that is, in submission to God's will and purposes for which He sends believers into the world—Boice writes:

> Jesus compares the disciples to himself both in the area of his having been sent into the world by the Father and of his being sanctified or set apart totally to the work. He says, "As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that *they too* may be truly sanctified." In other words, we are to be in our mission as Jesus was in his mission. We are to be like the One whom we are presenting.[50]

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[48] Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 2, God and Creation:300.

[49] Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 568.

[50] Boice, *The Gospel of John*, 1323.

Köstenberger supports Boice's statement, but further emphasizes the aim of believers' corporate unity of being and purpose in Christ; namely, "that the world may believe that [the Father] sent [the Son]." He writes:

> Jesus' vision of a unified community … encompasses present as well as future believers … Just as the Father is active in and through the Son … so also the Son is to be active in and through believers … The desired result is this: "that the world may believe that you have sent me." Similar to the display of authentic love among believers, the display of their genuine unity ought to provide a compelling witness to the truth of the gospel.[51]

Carson captures well the captivating beauty of diverse members of Christ's body being united together more fully in love—an intoxicating beauty that believers get to delight in themselves and an alluring beauty in the eyes of an otherwise divided and wanting world.

> The purpose … is *to let the world know that you sent me*, to which is now added the further goal, *that you ... have loved them even as you have loved me*. The thought is breathtakingly extravagant. The unity of the disciples, as it approaches the perfection that is its goal … serves not only to convince many in the world that Christ is indeed the supreme locus of divine revelation as Christians claim (*that you sent me*), but that Christians themselves have been caught up into the love of the Father for the Son, secure and content and fulfilled because loved by the Almighty himself (*cf.* Eph. 3:17b-19), with the very same love he reserves for his Son. It is hard to imagine a more compelling evangelistic appeal.[52]

Yarbrough concisely concludes this section by tying together and stressing the missional importance of: 1) the Son's unity of being and purpose with the Father, 2) the diverse community of believers' concurrent unity of being and purpose in Christ, and 3) the missional aim and essential importance of that "unity and love." He writes:

> So the world may believe (17 20-23). Jesus concluded His prayer with a sweeping glance across the centuries of church history to come. He prayed for Christians of all ages who have believed in the testimony … of His first disciples (v. 20). Specifically, He prayed for their unity (v. 21). As Father and Son are united in

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[51] Köstenberger, *John*, 498.

[52] Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 569.

> person and purpose, there should be a melding of personalities, livelihoods, and goals among believers for the cause of Christ and His kingdom. This unity is crucial for "the world" to come to faith in Jesus. For the gospel gains or loses credibility in the eyes of unbelievers to the extent that Jesus' followers show forth God's own unity and love.[53]

Oneness in Mutual Glorification

Carson and Yarbrough effectively highlighted how centrally important abiding in and demonstrating "God's own unity and love" is to believers' collective life and joint Christ-revealing mission to the world. So, what does abiding in and demonstrating that unity and love in Christ look like? To answer that, we need to recall what that looks like within the Trinity—and more specifically, between Christ and the Father. Referring back to Frame's earlier depiction, he writes:

> There is no conflict in the Trinity. The three persons are perfectly agreed on what they should do and how their plan should be executed. They support one another, assist one another, promote one another's purposes. This intra-Trinitarian "deference," this "disposability" of each to the others, may be called *mutual glorification*. In the gospel of John, the Father glorifies the Son (John 8:50, 54; 12:23; 17:1) and the Son the Father (7:18; 17:4).[54]

Further clarifying, he adds:

> Certainly there are senses in which believers can never be one as the Trinity is one, and yet Jesus calls us into the oneness of the Father and Son … But the concept of mutual glorification suggests an important way in which Christians can be like the members of the Trinity: we, too, are called to defer to one another in this way, to glorify one another, to be disposable [accessible, readily available] to one another's purposes, that is, to love one another as God loved us.[55]

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[53] Yarbrough, *John*, 175.

[54] Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 480.

[55] Frame, 481.

Frame well recognizes that "there are senses in which believers can never be one as the Trinity is one." For instance, there will neither be an absence of conflict nor perfect agreement within the body of Christ in the present age. However, in Christ, believers can indeed emulate Christ's oneness with the Father by supporting, assisting, and promoting one another. And believers can also glorify one another—in the sense of deferring and being disposable (accessible, readily available) to one another, and building one another up in the body. And most importantly, we can glorify the Son (in whom we are united)—who in turn glorifies the Father—by abiding in and showing forth our unity and love in Christ. In doing so, we reveal Him, as well as, the unity and love within the Godhead, to the world around us.

Biblical Use and Meaning of Koinonia

> Just after telling us that we belong to one another, Paul applies this truth in some very practical admonitions. "Be devoted to one another … honor one another … share with God's people who are in need … rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:10, 13, 15). This is experiential fellowship, the biblical practice of koinonia. But it can only occur when the members of the Body recognize that they are in objective fellowship—that they do share a common life in Christ with one another.[56]

Author Jerry Bridges describes the essential connection between believers having been united together as members of Christ's body and the koinonia they should experience through their shared life in Christ. Put another way, Bridges is saying that our having been engrafted into Christ together—as fellow members of His body—is the indicative that drives the imperative that believers are actively to engage in that present

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[56] Jerry Bridges, *True Fellowship: The Biblical Practice of Koinonia*, 2nd ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1986), 65–66.

reality, by actively putting koinonia into practice. The Greek New Testament's use of *koinonia* depicts what that shared life in Christ should look like. In their Greek Lexicon, Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida categorize these uses under "fellowship … share … [and] willing contribution."[57] Further describing these categories, Louw and Nida tell us: 1) *fellowship* means "an association, fellowship … 'in order that you may fellowship with us [the Father and Son]' 1 Jn 1:3."[58], 2) *share* means "to share one's possessions, with the implication of some kind of joint participation and mutual interest. … 2 Cor 8:4."[59], and 3) *willing contribution* means "that which is readily shared—'willing gift, ready contribution.' … Ro 15:26."[60] These categories provide the framework for the following pursuit to better understand the biblical use of koinonia, especially as these pertain to the present reality of our oneness in Christ across Anglo- and African-American lines.

Koinonia as *Fellowship*

> That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have *fellowship* with us; and indeed our *fellowship* is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.—1 John 1:3

Authors of an authoritative Greek lexicon, Walter Bauer, Frederick William Danker, W.F. Arndt, and F.W. Gingrich (collectively, BDAG) agree with Louw and Nida's earlier description of this use of koinonia. But they expand on that, describing it as

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[57] Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 2, Indices:144.

[58] Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament- Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, Introduction and Domains (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1989), 446.

[59] Louw and Nida, 1, Introduction and Domains:569.

[60] Louw and Nida, 1, Introduction and Domains:569.

a "close association involving mutual interests and sharing ... *communion, fellowship, close relationship … fellowship w[ith] someone* … w[ith] God **1J 1:3b**."[61] On the use of koinonia as *fellowship* in 1 John 1:3, Yarbrough affirms, but then expounds on, these more technical definitions. He writes, "A fifth and final point of the opening verses in John's epistle is that what he reports is intended to nurture fellowship."[62] He adds, "This is not just any fellowship at all, but that fellowship shared peculiarly by those who know God the Father in his Son Jesus Christ … John writes, then, to promote unity and harmony … both with God and with each other."[63] Bible commentator Colin Kruse agrees with Yarbrough, as he emphasizes the need for believers to intentionally pursue and further nurture that fellowship that is already theirs in Christ. He writes, "The author's [John's] purpose is to ensure that the readers persist in the fellowship they have with him."[64] He adds, "To encourage his readers to persist in their fellowship with him and his (good) work, the author reminds them that our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. Christian fellowship is primarily a fellowship with God the Father through Jesus Christ his Son."[65] New Testament scholar Gary Burge agrees but then follows by further depicting this multi-dimensional fellowship. He writes, "Christian community is partnership in experience … But Christian community is not merely horizontal … Christian fellowship is triangular: my life in fellowship with Christ, your

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[61] BDAG, s.v. "κοινωνία"

[62] Robert W. Yarbrough, *1, 2, and 3 John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 40.

[63] Yarbrough, 41.

[64] Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 57.

[65] Kruse, 58.

life in fellowship with Christ, and my life in fellowship with yours. The mystical union I enjoy with Christ becomes the substance that binds the church together."[66]

The church is intimately bound together in Christ. That is our present reality. But, as pastor and author John Stott observes, the church falls gravely short of that in practice. There are divisions in the body—notably, along Anglo- and African-American lines—that not only grieve the Lord, but also hinder Christians in their mission for which Christ sent them into the world. He writes:

> What is offensive to Christ is offensive also, though in a different way, to the world. It hinders the world from believing in Jesus. God intends his people to be a visual model of the gospel, to demonstrate before people's eyes the good news of reconciliation. But what is the good of gospel campaigns if they do not produce gospel churches? It is simply impossible, with any shred of Christian integrity, to go on proclaiming that Jesus by his cross has abolished the old divisions and created a single new humanity of love, while at the same time we are contradicting our message by tolerating racial or social or other barriers within our church fellowship … I wonder if anything is more urgent today, for the honour of Christ and for the spread of the gospel, than that the church should be, and should be seen to be, what by God's purpose and Christ's achievement it already is—a single new humanity, a model of human community, a family of reconciled brothers and sisters who love their Father and love each other, the evident dwelling place of God by his Spirit.[67]

In John 13:34b-35, our Lord depicts what a Christ-honoring, Christ-pointing community of believers looks like when He tells His disciples: "Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." The next two categories of koinonia usage—*share* and *willing contribution*—depict what that other-oriented, Christ-honoring, Christ-pointing love looks like in practice. In light of the above, in one sense, putting koinonia into

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[66] Gary M. Burge, *The Letters of John*, 1st ed., The NIV Application Commentary: From Biblical Text to Contemporary Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 55.

[67] John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (Leicester, England: IVP Academic, 1984), 111–12.

practice is simply an overflow of the love we ourselves have received from God, through our unity in Him. However, in the midst of our individual and corporate brokenness, putting this into practice requires love-born intentionality.

Koinonia as *Share*

> We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of *taking part* in the relief of the saints—and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us.— 2 Cor. 8:1-5

Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich echo Louw and Nida's description of koinonia as *share*, as they describe the use of koinonia in this passage as a "*participation, sharing … taking part in the relief of God's people* **2 Cor 8:4**."[68] Theologian Murray Harris takes hold of the active sense of this use of koinonia, *taking part*, as he emphasizes the need to actively engage in the life and needs of fellow believers. He writes, "In Paul's letters koinonia always implies an active sharing rather than a passive partnership; the Macedonians were craving the privilege of active involvement in the collection, not only by contributing money, but also, as v. 5 indicates, by making personnel available as needed."[69] Accentuating the Macedonians' heartfelt desire to wholly engage, Harris observes that "their lavish giving was not restricted to financial relief but included the giving of their very selves."[70] Concordia Seminary professor Mark Seifrid affirms this

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[68] BDAG, s.v. "κοινωνία"

[69] Murray J. Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Paternoster & Wm B Eerdmans, 2005), 566.

[70] Harris, 567–68.

desire as he concisely argues, "Giving, if it is true giving, is a giving of oneself, just as true reception of a gift is the reception of the giver."[71] Summarizing some key points in this practice of koinonia, as *sharing*, Harris asserts that "three important principles emerge from v. 5. First, self-surrender to Christ takes precedence over availability and loyalty to any of his servants. Second, dedication to Christ involves dedication to his servants, so that dedication to them is in reality service to Christ. Third, the giving of one's self should precede and accompany the giving of one's possessions."[72]

Turning our attention to the impetus behind the Macedonians' zeal for active, holistic sharing, New Testament professor Scott J. Hafemann observes that "for Paul, the basis for giving to others is not what *they* have done or will do for us, but what *God* has already done for us in Christ."[73] Seifrid agrees, "The grace of God given produces the grace of giving in its recipients, without in any way diminishing its unconditional priority … *Koinonia* expresses the human experience of 'fellowship' or 'participation' with others within the grace of God, and thus within all true giving and receiving."[74] Pastor and theologian Paul Barnett explores this further as he connects the Macedonians' great zeal to give of themselves with their commensurately great dedication to the Lord; "[The Macedonian's] surprising generosity is a direct result of their dedication of themselves to the Lord."[75] Colin Kruse supports that understanding, but then also highlights another

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[71] Mark A. Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 324–25.

[72] Harris, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 569.

[73] Scott J. Hafemann, *2 Corinthians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 342.

[74] Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 323.

[75] Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 399.

critical connection—the connection between these believers' aim to serve the Lord and their recognition that they serve Him when they serve His body. He writes, "*sharing (koinonia)* indicates that their involvement was seen as participation in a larger entity (i.e. an 'ecumenical' act of compassion) … They saw their participation in the collection as an opportunity to express their devotion to the Lord."[76] In light of these critical connections, New Testament scholar David Garland makes the essential observation that the loving care these believers demonstrated was not limited to their local church body, but rather extended beyond their geographic location and across ethnic lines. He writes, "As the Philippians had formed a partnership with Paul in his mission work beyond Philippi … all the Macedonian churches want to form a partnership with other Christians in Judea."[77] With that in view, Jerry Bridges depicts well what this open sensitivity, deep concern, and active care for one another across the broader church should look like. As he does so, he notably emphasizes the importance of that in the context of others' wounds and hurts within the body. He writes:

> Why does the whole body hurt when only one part is injured? It is because all the parts of the body make up one individual whole. And when one part hurts, no matter what the reason, the restorative powers of the entire body are brought to bear on that hurting member. Rather than attacking that suffering part or ignoring the problem, the rest of the body demonstrates concern for the part that hurts. This is the way the body of Christ should function.[78]

The biblical depiction of what koinonia, as *share*, should look like—including its life of unity, sensitivity to the hurts and wounds of others, and subsequent loving

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[76] Colin G. Kruse, *2 Corinthians*, 2nd rev. ed. (Nottingham, England: IVP Academic, 2015), 200.

[77] David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, 1st ed. (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 1999), 369.

[78] Bridges, *True Community*, 52.

attention, healing, and restorative care—is in grave contrast to the present-day active and passive disassociation and disregard for the relational wounds and distance between mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American congregations in America today. This disregard is certainly evident in both. However, it's essential to recognize that Anglo Americans' longstanding wounding of African Americans is what lies behind and presently looms over that. It's a wounding rooted in chattel slavery, continued through Jim Crow Laws in the south, and expressed today through the widespread, culturally-entrenched expressions of their ill-effects. It's a wounding that is not only deep and longstanding, but also ongoing. However, Anglo-American believers have largely left their African-American brothers' and sisters' wounds unattended, festering, and continually aggravated—sometimes out of willful disregard but, in many cases, simply out of naiveté. That said, as Anglo- and African-American brothers and sisters embark together on the long road of healing and restoration, they must be careful not to pursue such a road out of a sense of duty or begrudgingly out of some sense of spiritual obligation, but rather out of a heartfelt expression of the familial unity, mutual love, and joint concern that is theirs in Christ. We see this presented in Hafemann's recognition that the Macedonians' generosity was evidence of their individual and corporate identity and love in Christ. He writes, "Paul is not advocating an abstract, moral duty, but a theology. His goal in stirring up the Corinthians to give is to verify the genuine nature of their love as Christians."[79] We will see the expression of koinonia as being evidence of identity, unity, and love in Christ also emerge under its next use, *willing contribution*.

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[79] Hafemann, *The NIV Application Commentary*, 345.

Koinonia as *Willing Contribution*

> At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some *contribution* for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.—Romans 15:25-26

Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich support Louw and Nida's description of this use of koinonia as *willing contribution*. But they also recognize an additional element of *contribution*, that is, *contribution* being a "proof of brotherly unity"; that it refers to a "*sign of fellowship, proof of brotherly unity,* even *gift, contribution* … **Ro 15:26**."[80] Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Thomas R. Schreiner does not overtly associate the use of *contribution* in this Romans passage to being evidence of their "brotherly unity." But he appears to imply that when he writes, "The gift for the Jerusalem saints is not only a ministry, for the term 'fellowship' indicates solidarity and partnership ... By giving to those who were in need in Jerusalem the Gentiles demonstrated their partnership with them in the gospel."[81] New Testament scholar Douglass Moo makes a similar connection when he writes, "By speaking of the collection as a 'ministry,' Paul points to the fact that it was a means by which Gentile Christians could express in a very practical way their love and concern for the less well-off brothers and sisters."[82] Further elaborating on that, he adds, "Paul suggests something of the significance of this contribution by calling it a *koinonia*, literally, a 'fellowship.' Here the word clearly means 'that which is readily shared,' 'contribution,' but there is certainly an allusion to the word's common use in Paul to denote the loving intimacy of the Christian

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[80] BDAG, s.v. "κοινωνία"

[81] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 777.

[82] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 902.

community."[83] New Testament scholar James Dunn stresses that these contributing churches' expression of fellowship in Christ went beyond their local church. And that the contribution not only extended across geographic and ethnic lines, it was also characterized by the same loving concern actively expressed toward those within their own local church. He writes, "Paul emphasizes twice that this is a free-will offering from the gentile church … it is an act of fellowship (vv 26-27) … it was an act of fellowship arising out of their common experience of grace given in terms of need not merit, the same level of mutual concern and interdependence which characterized the body of Christ at the local level."[84]

If the presence of koinonia, as expressed through *willing contribution*, is evidence of "brotherly unity," then it seems to follow that the lack of that is evidence of the absence of "brotherly unity." In his book, *From Every People and Nation—A Biblical Theology of Race*, Ouachita Baptist University professor J. Daniel Hays captures how widespread and formidable the present racial divide is—how absent the evidence of "brotherly unity" is in the church across Anglo- and African-American lines. He writes, "The Black-White race issue is … gigantic in the American Church." Further critiquing the state of the American church in light of biblical mandates for unity, Hays writes:

> The New Testament proclaims that in Christ believers form a new humanity. The old barrier of hostility and division between ethnic groups has been demolished by the Cross, and now all peoples of all groups are to be one in Christ. Our primary identity as humans is to be based on our union with Christ … Christians of other races are not just equal to us; they are joined to us … While there may be practical and sociological reasons for creating and maintaining Churches that are

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[83] Moo, 903.

[84] James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, vol. 38B, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 882.

> ethnic specific … this division into ethnically based worshipping communities is contrary to the imperatives of Paul … The continued maintenance of racially divided Churches in the United States points only to the fact that a large majority of Christians in that country are probably identifying themselves more with their racial background, with all its cultural baggage, than they do with Christ and the gospel.[85]

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Summary of the Theological and Biblical Frameworks

God's oneness in Himself is a timeless reality. Our oneness in Him—which is rooted in and a reflection of His oneness—is our present reality in Christ. And Koinonia is the Church's lived-out expression of that present reality. That is, our unity and oneness in Christ serves as the driving indicative behind the Church's imperative pursuit of the koinonia that is now ours in Christ—the deep familial *fellowship*, heartfelt *sharing* in the needs, and *willing contributions* to meet those needs. In light of the depth of the present division in the American church along Anglo- and African-American lines, pursuing koinonia will require Spirit-empowered love, honesty, grace, seeking and extending of forgiveness, love-born intentionality, as well as intentionally allowing the love and grace we've received from God to overflow toward one another. Pursuing and realizing this koinonia will bring delight to our Lord, to the Church, and to a watching world the Church has been sent into to reach.

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[85] J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Leicester, England: IVP Academic, 2003), 204–5.

Civic Leaders' Depictions of Idyllic Healthy, Sustainable Community, and Perceptions on the Present State of Community

> I have always been touched by the term *beloved community*. This is often expressed in a spiritual context, but it also is possible in the secular aspects of our everyday life.[86]

Author Peter Block echoes Martin Luther King Jr.'s earnest desire for "the creation of the beloved community."[87] That desire for idyllic healthy, sustainable community then serves as the launching point for Block's broadly encompassing research and work to facilitate the transformation of unhealthy, disconnected communities into healthy, nurturing ones—"to transform the isolation and self-interest within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole."[88] Block distilled and captured his findings through his descriptions of 1) idyllic healthy, sustainable community, 2) the present state of community, and 3) means of moving from the present to the ideal state. The other authors contributing to this discussion presented their findings and thoughts in a similar manner. Therefore, these three categories serve as the guideposts for the following discussion and comparison of views. While the various authors' depictions of both the idyllic and the present state of community are similar, their proposed means of pursuing idyllic community vary significantly. Recognizing that, this section will then focus on the areas of similarity (i.e. their depictions of idyllic and present state of

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[86] Peter Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2009), xii.

[87] Martin Luther King Jr., "The Role of the Church in Facing the Nation's Chief Moral Dilemma" (April 25, 1957), Online King Records Access, Stanford University, http://okra.stanford.edu/transcription/document_images/Vol04Scans/184_1957_The%20Role%20of%20the%20Church.pdf.

[88] Block, *Community*, 1.

community). By clearly depicting these, the researcher seeks to lay the essential groundwork for the subsequent discussion: civic leaders' varying means of moving from the observed present state of community to the depicted ideal—of building healthy, sustainable community, notably, in the context of ethnic diversity.

Community: *Idyllic*

In his depiction of idyllic community, Block argues that exists when all members experience a true sense of *belonging*—which he further defines as having an abiding sense of *membership* and of *ownership and accountability*. In addition, he observes that experiencing a fundamental shift in worldview (from being self- to community-oriented) plays an important role in realizing that sense of *belonging*.

On the first aspect of *belonging*, that is, *membership*, Block describes that as "the experience of being at home in the broadest sense of the phrase … The opposite of belonging is to feel isolated and always (all ways) on the margin, an outsider. To belong is to know … that I am among friends."[89] On the second aspect of *belonging*, namely, through a sense of *ownership and accountability*, he describes that in terms of the effects of feeling ownership; "To belong to a community is to act as a creator and co-owner of that community. What I consider mine I will build and nurture."[90] Again, Block argues that in order for all this to occur, members of the community must experience a shift in worldview—a fundamental community-oriented shift in "the mental models we bring to our collective efforts … a new context that gives greater impact to the ways we work to

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[89] Block, *Community*, xii.

[90] Block, xii.

make our communities better. [Where] context is the set of beliefs, at times ones that we are unaware of, that dictate how we think, how we frame the world, what we pay attention to, and consequently how we behave. It is sometimes called a *worldview*."[91]

British writer and environmental and political activist, George Monbiot, supports Block's assessment of the essential importance of *belonging*. He likewise views this as a fundamental need in our lives—as something that helps "us to make sense of our lives and define our identities."[92] But where Block sees the experience of belonging as an identifying core-characteristic of a healthy community, Monbiot first affirms that but then focuses primarily on mankind's basic need for belonging as the driving impetus to affect healthy, sustainable community—a change to be affected primarily through revised political efforts. This will be explored further in the adjoining discussion on pursuing ideal community. At this point, we need first to visualize the idyllic world that Monbiot's ideal political principles, philosophy, and narrative seek to affect. He writes:

1. We want to live in a place guided by empathy, respect, justice, generosity, courage, fun and love.
2. We want to live in a place governed by judgements that are honestly made, supported by evidence, accountable and transparent.
3. We want to live in a place in which everyone's needs are met, without harming the living world or the prosperity of future generations.
4. We want to live in a place in which the fruits of the work we do and the resources we use are fairly and widely distributed, in which shared prosperity is a general project, and the purpose of economic life is to enable universal well-being.
5. We want to live in a place in which all people have equal rights, in practice as well as in theory.
6. We want to live in a place in which all people can feel secure, confident, safe and cared for.

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[91] Block, 29.

[92] George Monbiot, *Out of the Wreckage: A New Politics for an Age of Crisis* (Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2017), 71.

7. We want to live in a place in which, regardless of where they were born, everyone has a neighborhood of which they feel proud, where they can freely participate in the life of the community.
8. We want to live in a place which, proudly and consistently, supports people in need of help, including those fleeing danger and persecution abroad.
9. We want to live in a place in which a thriving natural world provides a refuge both for rich and abundant wildlife and for people seeking relief from the clamour of daily life.
10. We want to live in a place whose political system is fair and fully representative, in which everyone has a voice and every vote counts, and whose outcomes can neither be bought nor otherwise engineered.
11. We want to live in a place in which decisions are taken at the most appropriate level, to enhance democratic participation and connection.
12. We want to live in a place in which everyone has access to information needed to make meaningful democratic choices, and in which political debate is honest and accessible and inclusive.
13. We want to live in a place in which education is a joyful process, encouraging children of all abilities to engage with enthusiasm, and adults to continue learning throughout their lives.
14. We want to live in a place in which good housing, fast and effective healthcare and a healthy, sufficient diet are available to everyone.
15. We want to live in a place that helps to build a safe, prosperous and resilient community of nations.
16. We want to live in a place that is open to new ideas and information, and that values creativity, research and discovery.[93]

In their research on community in America, authors Robert Putnam and Lewis Feldstein conceptually affirm Block and Monbiot's embracing of a personal sense of belonging as being a central characteristic of idyllic community. However, they don't utilize the word *belonging*, per se, in their depiction of that. Rather, they describe it in terms of *social capital*—that is, "making connections among people, establishing bonds of trust and understanding, building community … developing networks or relationships that weave individuals into groups and communities."[94] But where Block's and

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[93] Monbiot, 10–12.

[94] Robert D. Putnam and Lewis M. Feldstein, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2004), 1.

Monbiot's depictions of idyllic community are fairly specific, Putnam and Feldstein's are more broadly descriptive. The reason is that they believe *social capital* can take a wide variety of forms. That said, they do observe one notable point of specificity and distinction. That is, some social networks tend toward *bonding social capital*, and others toward *bridging social capital*. Expounding on that, they write, "Some networks link people who are similar in crucial respects and tend to be inward-looking—*bonding social capital*. Others encompass different types of people and tend to be outward-looking—*bridging social capital*. Both have their uses."[95] Delving further into the more inward-looking *bonding social capital*, they recognize its benefits and challenges. The primary benefits being the high level of personal care and mutual concern that are found there. Conversely, on its inherent challenges, they write, "On the other hand, a society that has *only* bonding social capital will look like Belfast or Bosnia—segregated into mutually hostile camps. So a pluralistic democracy requires a lot of bridging social capital, not just the bonding variety."[96] Alongside recognizing the importance of forming *bridging social capital*, they recognize the difficulty of doing that in diverse contexts—a difficulty that is captured in the adage, "birds of a feather flock together. So the kind of social capital that is most essential for healthy public life in an increasingly diverse society like ours is precisely the kind that is hardest to build."[97]

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[95] Putnam and Feldstein, 2.

[96] Putnam and Feldstein, 2–3.

[97] Putnam and Feldstein, 3.

Just as there are significant areas of overlap in these authors' depictions of idyllic healthy, sustainable community, there are also significant similarities in their perceptions of the present state of community. Such similarities lead us into the next section.

Community: *Present Condition*

In view of Block's definition of idyllic community—where members feel a deep sense of *belonging* through personal experiences of *membership*, and *ownership and accountability*—he depicts the present, general condition of community as fundamentally lacking these defining characteristics. He writes, "The need to create a structure of belonging grows out of the isolated nature of our lives, our institutions, and our communities. The absence of belonging is so widespread that we might say we are living in an age of isolation."[98]

Where Block characterizes present-day community as being in a state of *isolation*, Monbiot similarly describes it as being in a state of *alienation*, a present condition for which Monbiot feels politics has played a central role. He writes, "When politics, bereft of relevant stories, cannot connect with the lives of those it claims to represent, it contributes to the dominant condition of our age: alienation."[99] Again in step with Block's use of *isolation*, Monbiot adds, "Alienation means many things. Among them are people's loss of control over the work they do; their loss of connection with community and society; their loss of trust in political institutions and in the future; their loss of a sense of meaning and of power over their own lives; and a convergence of these fissures

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[98] Block, *Community*, 1.

[99] Monbiot, *Out of the Wreckage*, 54.

into psychic rupture."[100] Further depicting how this alienation is perpetuated—and possibly escalated—through politics, he writes, "In the political sphere, alienation leads to disengagement, and disengagement opens the way to demagogues."[101] The Oxford dictionary defines "demagogue" as "a political leader who seeks support by appealing to the desires and prejudices of ordinary people rather than by using rational argument."[102] If alienation is, in practice, expressed in the political sphere through the election of leaders who appeal to people's "prejudices," then prejudice-born alienation at the individual level will give rise to further prejudice and alienation from the top down.

Robert Putnam broadly echoes Block and Monbiot's sobering critique of the state of community. But where Block and Monbiot speak of it in terms of *isolation* and *alienation*, Putnam describes the present state of community in terms of having experienced a fundamental decline in *social capital*; a "conceptual cousin [to] 'community."[103] Expounding on that, he argues that our culture has experienced a wholesale decline in community engagement, including political, civic, religious, workplace, and informal connections (among others). Summarizing his findings—and emphasizing the isolated, alienated state of community—he writes, "In short, Americans

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[100] Monbiot, 54.

[101] Monbiot, 54.

[102] Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "demagogue," accessed April 11, 2019, https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/demagogue

[103] Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2000), 21.

have been dropping out in droves, not merely from political life, but from organized community life more generally."[104]

Each author speaks to the holistic nature of this fragmentation: the isolation, alienation, and disengagement currently evident in all areas of community. But while like-minded on that, they hold varying opinions on the degree to which the homogenous, isolating nature of the broader culture affects specific areas of community. For instance, Block writes:

> Our isolation occurs because western culture, our individualistic narrative, the inward attention of our institutions and our professions and the messages from our media all fragment us. We are broken into pieces. One aspect of our fragmentation is the gaps between sectors of our cities and neighborhoods; businesses, schools, social service organizations, churches, government operate mostly in their own worlds. Each piece is working hard on its own purpose, but parallel effort added together does not make a community.[105]

Further exploring what that looks like in daily life, Block exposes the present illusion of community in the midst of our isolation. He does so by portraying the marked increase in the speed and access of information and the development of the global marketplace to distinguish between these daily, isolated points of contact from the deeply connected community we long for. He writes:

> Ironically, we talk today of how small our world has become, with the shrinking effect of globalization, instant sharing of information, quick technology, workplaces that operate around the globe. Yet these do not necessarily create a sense of belonging. They provide connection … But all this does not create the connection from which we can become grounded and experience the sense of safety that arises from a place where we are emotionally, spiritually, and psychologically a member.[106]

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[104] Putnam, 64.

[105] Block, *Community*, 2.

[106] Block, 1–2.

Like Block, Putnam also emphasizes the decline in community in the workplace:

> Most of us nowadays are employed, and most of the time most us work with other people. In that fundamental sense, the workplace is a natural site for connecting with others. However, the balance of evidence speaks against the hopeful hypothesis that American social capital has not disappeared but simply moved into the workplace. Americans at the beginning of the twenty-first century are demonstrably less likely than our parents were to join with our co-workers in formal associations.[107]

And again, like Block, Putnam recognizes the broader cultural reality of our disconnectedness, as he notes downward trends in informal social connections as well:

> Evidence also suggests that across a very wide range of activities, the last several decades have witnessed a striking diminution of regular contacts with our friends and neighbors. We spend less time in conversation over meals, we exchange visits less often, we engage less often in leisure activities that encourage casual social interaction … We know our neighbors less well, and we see old friends less often.[108]

But where Block points to the broader culture as the primary driver behind our fragmentation, Putnam instead directs our attention to drivers within the community. Notably, he draws particular attention to organized religion's prominent role in a community's health. He writes, "Faith communities in which people worship together are arguably the single most important repository of social capital in America."[109] Exploring this further, and specifically in the context of the African-American community, he adds:

> Faith-based organizations are particularly central to social capital and civic engagement in the African American community. The church is the oldest and most resilient social institution in black America, not least because it was traditionally the only black-controlled institution of a historically oppressed people. African Americans in all social strata are more religiously observant than

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[107] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 92.

[108] Putnam, 115.

[109] Putnam, 66.

> other Americans. The black religious tradition distinctively encourages mixing religion and community affairs and invigorates civic activism.[110]

On the centrality of the African-American church in the African-American culture, pastor and Reformed Theological Seminary professor Carl Ellis agrees. He writes:

> Thus far the historic African-American church has produced the only unified soul dynamic in the African-American culture. In fact, history shows us that no Black movement has survived for long apart from the Black theological dynamic … And no African-American cultural identity has been possible without it.[111]

But despite its historical importance, because of the longstanding damage caused by racist Anglo Americans' perversion of Christianity, the African-American church was, and still is, rejected by many African Americans as the white man's religion. That is a perspective Ta-Nehisi Coates provides us in his book, *Between the World and Me*:

> I could not retreat, as did so many, into the church and its mysteries. My parents rejected all dogmas. We spurned the holidays marketed by the people who wanted to be white. We could not stand for their anthems. We would not kneel before their God. And so I had no sense that any just God was on my side … My understanding of the world was physical, and its moral arc bent toward chaos then concluded in a box.[112]

Coates later mentions his father's leadership role in the Black Panther Party, which, as we'll soon see, may have had some bearing on Coates' family's rejection of Christianity and the church:

> Dad had been a local captain in the Black Panthers Party … I compared the Panthers to the heroes given to me by the schools [the peaceful freedom marchers], men and women who struck me as ridiculous and contrary to everything [the violent world] I knew.[113]

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[110] Putnam, 68.

[111] Ellis Jr., *Free At Last? The Gospel in the African-American Experience*, 127.

[112] Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me* (New York, NY: Spiegel & Grau, 2015), 28.

[113] Coates, 30–32.

Contrary to that misperception of Christianity, Carl Ellis rightly portrays it as the faith that finds its home in all cultural contexts and expressions of worship. As he does so, he also observes how militant African-American leaders in the past and present have mistakenly viewed and billed Christianity as being the white man's religion. He writes:

> Given that biblical Christianity intends us to worship God in our culture, we see that the African-American theological dynamic is a legitimate expression of the biblical message. It fully qualifies as African-American, having historical and cultural continuity in the Black experience. This satisfies our need to be African-American. Yet it does not have merely ethnic origins; it is rooted in the universal Word of God. This satisfies our need to transcend Blackness. One thing is clear; the theological dynamic does not qualify as the White man's religion. It is a shame that the militant figures of the sixties failed to make this obvious distinction.[114]

> Many still assume that Christianity is for Whites and Islam is for Blacks … Among today's militants, however, there is another rising tide of Islamic orientation. Christianity is once again dubbed 'the White man's religion.'[115]

Stepping back and again reflecting more broadly on American church trends and related influences, Putnam notes marked declines in both church membership and attendance over the last several decades, and then points to a generational driver behind that:

> The decline in religious participation, like many of the changes in political and community involvement, is attributable largely to generational differences … The slow but inexorable replacement of one generation by the next has gradually but inevitably lowered our national involvement in religious activities.[116]

Given churches' historical and present importance in the life of healthy, sustainable community, Putnam's concluding summary on religious participation provides helpful

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[114] Ellis Jr., *Free At Last? The Gospel in the African-American Experience*, 152.

[115] Ellis Jr., 141.

[116] Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 72.

insights into correlations between recent trends in the church and the current declined state of community in America. He writes:

> First, religion is today, as it has traditionally been, a central fount of American community life and health … Second, the broad oscillations in religious participation during the twentieth century mirror trends in secular civic life … As in politics and society generally, this disengagement appears tied to general succession. For the most part younger generations … are less involved both in religious and in secular social activities than were their predecessors at the same age … In short, as the twenty-first century opens, Americans are going to church less often than we did three or four decades ago, and the churches we go to are less engaged with the wider community. Trends in religious life reinforce rather than counterbalance the ominous plunge in social connectedness.[117]

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Summary of Civic Leaders' Depictions of Idyllic, Healthy, Sustainable Community and Their Perceptions on the Present State of Community

These authors have depicted similar visions of idyllic, healthy, sustainable community, describing that in terms of 1) experiencing a sense of *belonging* through a sense of *membership*, and *ownership and accountability*, 2) honesty, fairness, trust, mutual-care and concern, and equal-opportunity, and 3) personal connection, bonds of trust and understanding, and networks of community building relationships. They have also depicted similar pictures of the state of community today—not in terms of the personally "at home" sense of belonging and the mutually concerned and engaged ideal, but rather the polar opposite: isolated, alienated, and disengaged. But despite these areas of similarity, the authors' proposed means to affect ideal community have fundamental differences. These differences reveal the multiple layers and multi-faceted complexity of

[117] Putnam, 79.

communities and of efforts to develop healthy, sustainable ones. On top of these base challenges, Block provides insights into our culture's formative narrative that makes the counter-cultural path ahead that much more difficult. He writes:

> Our communities are separated into silos; they are a collection of institutions and programs operating near one another but not overlapping or touching. This is important to understand because it is this dividedness that makes it so difficult to create a more positive or alternative future—especially in a culture that is much more interested in individuality and independence than in interdependence. The work is to overcome this fragmentation.[118]

That leads us right into the next section: a discussion on civic leaders' varied proposed means to overcome that fragmentation—to build healthy, sustainable community, notably, within a diverse and deeply divided context.

Civic Leaders' Efforts to Build Healthy, Sustainable Community, Notably in the Context of Ethnic Diversity

In the *Encyclopedia of Leadership*, Victoria Lee Erickson defines community development as "the process by which groups of people define themselves as belonging to each other, create a set of shared, formal commitments, and through an informal, emotional sense of belonging, work to enhance their collective lives."[119] In her definition, Erickson affirms the general consensus expressed by the previous authors that developing a sense of "belonging to each other" is a core aspect of community development. And, recognizing the longer-term nature of developing that sense of belonging, she also emphasizes that this is not something that happens overnight. Rather, it is a process—it is

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[118] Block, *Community*, 2.

[119] Victoria Lee Erickson, "Community Development," in *Encyclopedia of Leadership,* ed. James MacGregor Burns, Georgia Jones Sorenson, and George R. Goethals (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, Inc., 2004), eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), 1:228.

something that is intentionally developed over a longer period of time. That said, the definition she provides is fine. It appears accurate and necessarily broad enough to accommodate the wide-range of possible applications. But, because it is necessarily broad, it also brings with it a sense of academic and situational detachment.

Taking the opposite tack, drawing us away from the academic and into the situational messiness of real life—away from positions of comfort and into honestly facing and engaging areas of great pain, division, and systemic brokenness in our communities—Block writes:

> Wherever we live, we are never more than a short ride from neighborhoods that are wounded with disinvested buildings and populated by those who live on the margin. To not see the struggle of those on the margin, to think this is the best of all possible worlds or that we are doing fine, especially if our particular street or neighborhood is safe and prosperous, is to live with blinders on. We choose to live with blinders for good reason. There is great attraction to the suburban, upscale rural life or to residing in 'hot' places … These prosperous places, though, are only the partial story … We know we have a shrinking middle class, a growing separation between the well off and the underclass. You cannot look closely at even the great cities in the world without seeing serious underemployment, poverty, homelessness, neighborhoods with empty buildings, deteriorating environment, youth hanging out on street corners day and night, and concerns for public safety. We know about dropout rates and deplorable conditions of our urban schools and the difficulty of achieving affordable health care for all. The list goes on.[120]

Block's sincere efforts to paint a more in-the-trenches picture of the depth of brokenness and dire condition of many American communities, notably within the inner city, are helpful. Yet, even this depiction comes with a sense of detachment, because it is the perspective of someone on the outside looking in. It is the perspective of someone who otherwise lives in a position of comfort and, albeit admirably, intentionally ventures into areas of great pain and systemic brokenness with an eye to help. That said, it would be

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[120] Block, *Community*, 6–7.

more helpful to glean the perspective of someone who lived in such an environment—who experienced first-hand not only deep racial division and wounding, but also the grave effects of profound economic and social decay. Coates effectively provides us this perspective through his first-hand depictions of life as a young African-American growing up in West Baltimore:

> How do I live free in this black body? It is a profound question because America understands itself as God's handiwork, but the black body is the clearest evidence that America is the work of men.[121]

> And I am afraid … When I was [younger] the only people I knew were black, and all of them were powerfully, adamantly, dangerously afraid … The fear was there in the extravagant boys of my neighborhood … The fear lived on in their practiced bop, their slouching denim, their big T-shirts, the calculated angle of their baseball caps, a catalog of behaviors and garments enlisted to inspire the belief that these boys were in firm possession of everything they desired … I heard the fear in the first music I ever knew, the music that pumped from boom boxes full of grand boast and bluster. The boys … loved this music because it told them, against all evidence and odds, that they were masters of their own lives, their own streets, and their own bodies.[122]

> I remember being amazed that death could so easily rise up from the nothing of a boyish afternoon, billow up like fog. I knew that West Baltimore, where I lived; that the north side of Philadelphia, where my cousins lived; that the South Side of Chicago, where my friends and father lived, comprised a world apart. Somewhere out there beyond the firmament, past the asteroid belt, there were other worlds where children did not regularly fear for their bodies. I knew this because there was a large television resting in my living room. In the evenings I would sit before this television bearing witness to the dispatches from this other world. There were little white boys with complete collections of football cards, and their only want was a popular girlfriend and their only worry was poison oak. That other world was suburban and endless, organized around pot roasts, blueberry pies, fireworks, ice cream sundaes, immaculate bathrooms, and small toy trucks that were loosed in wooded backyards with streams and glens … I knew my portion of the American galaxy, where bodies were enslaved by a tenacious gravity, was black and that the other, liberated portion was not.[123]

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[121] Coates, *Between the World and Me*, 12.

[122] Coates, 14–15.

[123] Coates, 20–21.

> When our elders presented school to us, they did not present it as a place of higher learning but as a means of escape from death and penal warehousing. Fully 60 percent of all young black men who drop out of high school will go to jail … Schools did not reveal truths, they concealed them … We could not get out.[124]

Coates' eloquent portrayals effectively draw those of us unfamiliar with this portion of our galaxy into an entirely different world and life experience. In doing so, he not only illustrates the heart-pulling gravity of the situation, but also the generational, systemic, and formidably complex nature of this brokenness. In effectively illustrating that, Coates also gives us a better sense for the weightiness, challenging complexity, and longer-term nature of the work required to rectify it. So, with that somewhat clearer view now in place, what follows is a comparison of the contributing civic leaders' proposals to effectively engage this longstanding, deep, and complex brokenness, and to affect the rectifying changes needed to build healthy, sustainable community—to pursue ideal community—notably, within a grievously broken, divided, and diverse context.

The authors' proposed means range from affecting change from the bottom-up (by focusing on individual, personal relationships), all the way up to affecting change from the top-down (by focusing primarily on formative political actions), and combinations thereof.

Community: *Pursuing the Ideal from the Bottom-Up*

In their book, *Better Together*, Putnam and Feldstein survey how "Americans in many diverse corners of our society are making progress on the perennial challenge of re-

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[124] Coates, 26–27.

creating new forms of community."[125] Their approach was to move away from exploring general theory, to seeking boots-on-the-ground, real-life experiences in this endeavor. In step with that, their approach is to create social-capital (community) from the bottom-up through individual conversations and storytelling. In their research, these authors recognized the value of capturing the diversity and complexity of individuals and places in these community building efforts; "The rich mixture of events, values, feelings, and ideas that stories communicate has long made storytelling an important mechanism of social connection. Stories help us relate to one another."[126]

Reflecting on their findings, Putnam and Feldstein found some common themes and lessons-to-be-learned emerge. The first is that "creating robust social capital takes time and effort. For the most part, it develops through extensive and time-consuming face-to-face conversation between two individuals or among small groups of people."[127] Further emphasizing their affirmation of a personal-relationship driven, bottom-up approach, they write, "It takes person-to-person contact over time to build the trust and mutual understanding that characterize the relationships that are the basis of social capital. So we see no way that social capital can be created instantaneously or en masse."[128] A second and related theme also emerged from their research:

> That social capital is necessarily a local phenomenon because it is defined by connections among people who know one another. Even when we talk about

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[125] Putnam and Feldstein, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*, 6.

[126] Putnam and Feldstein, 6.

[127] Putnam and Feldstein, 9.

[128] Putnam and Feldstein, 9.

> social capital in national or regional organizations … we are really talking about a network or accumulation of mainly local connections.[129]

In step with their desire, and each community's ability, to create social-capital in a diverse range of contexts, they affirm from their research that "social capital can be created by different people in different situations for different purposes."[130] Considering these themes of building healthy, sustainable community in diverse contexts, these authors highlight the particularly unifying power of storytelling—which, along with creating mutually welcoming and comfortable spaces, provide an effective path forward. Putnam and Feldstein write, "Protagonists of our cases have discovered an impressive array of strategies for finding unifying themes in the presence of diversity. Storytelling itself turns out to be an unusually effective technique in this regard, as does the creation of common spaces, both physical and virtual."[131] In light of the researchers aim (for believers to pursue and experience koinonia across Anglo- and African-American lines), these authors interestingly note that:

> The endeavors we have studied also suggest that social capital is usually developed in pursuit of a particular goal or set of goals and not for its own sake. For the most part, the people and groups we describe here seek better schools, neighborhood improvement … or some other particular good, with social capital as a means to those ends and an important fringe benefit but not in itself their main aim.[132]

Building on that, they also observed in their research that additional, expansive benefits flow upward and outward from creating social capital at the individual level. More

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[129] Putnam and Feldstein, 9.

[130] Putnam and Feldstein, 7–8.

[131] Putnam and Feldstein, 10.

[132] Putnam and Feldstein, 10.

specifically, they observed that "practitioners have increasingly recognized the essential contribution of social capital to the economic and social health of countries, regions, cities, and towns, to the success of organizations, and to individual accomplishment and well-being."[133]

Community: *Pursuing the Ideal from the Bottom-Up and at the Community Level*

Block affirms Putnam and Feldstein on the importance of personal conversations and storytelling in the process of building community. And, like Putnam and Feldstein's aim to create *social capital* (community), Block also aims to develop the *social fabric* of a community—which he describes as being "formed from an expanding shared sense of belonging."[134] Delving further into the formation of social fabric and the central role that intentional, ground-level, personal conversations play in that, he writes:

> Social fabric is created one room at a time. It is formed from small steps that ask, "Who do we want in the room?" and "What is the new conversation that we want to occur?" In community building, we choose the people and the conversation that will produce the accountability to build relatedness, structure belonging, and move the action forward … The essence of creating an alternative future comes from citizen-to-citizen engagement that focuses at each step on the well-being of the whole.[135]

Building on the foundationally important roles that personal conversations, relationships, and engagement play in building ideal community, Block then also argues for the fundamental role that community itself plays in our well-being. He writes:

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[133] Putnam and Feldstein, 2.

[134] Block, *Community*, 9.

[135] Block, 11.

> Belonging can also be thought of as a longing to be. Being is our capacity to find our deeper purpose in all we do. It is the capacity to be present, and to discover our authenticity and whole selves. This is often thought of as an individual capacity, but it is also a community capacity. Community is the container within which our longing to be is fulfilled. Without the connectedness of community, we will continue to choose not to be.[136]

As noted in an earlier section, Block also asserts that experiencing a fundamental shift in worldview (from being self- to community-oriented) plays an important role in realizing that sense of *belonging*—that core, defining characteristic of ideal community. He writes, "The context [worldview] that restores community is one of possibility, generosity, and gifts, rather than one of problem solving, fear, and retribution. A new context [worldview] acknowledges that we have all the capacity, expertise, and resources that an alternative future requires."[137] On this, Coates' boots-on-the-ground testimony of life in the inner-city sheds light on how disparate Block's ideal and Coates' experiential worldviews are—and, at the same time, the extensive work required to close that extensive gap. Coates writes, "Fear ruled everything around me, and I knew, as all black people do, that this fear was connected to the Dream out there, to the unworried boys, to pie and pot roast, to the white fences and green lawns nightly beamed into our television sets."[138] He adds:

> I came to see the streets and the schools as arms of the same beast. One enjoyed the official power of the state while the other enjoyed its implicit sanction. But fear and violence were the weaponry of both. Fail in the streets and the crews would catch you slipping and take your body. Fail in the schools and you would be suspended and sent back to those same streets, where they would take your body. And I began to see these two arms in relation—those who failed in the

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[136] Block, xii.

[137] Block, 29.

[138] Coates, *Between the World and Me*, 29.

> schools justified their destruction in the streets. The society could then say, 'He should have stayed in school,' and then wash its hands of him.[139]

Block acknowledges this disparity. And in the process, he shifts the perspective on this brokenness from those in the inner city to those comfortably outside of that. He writes:

> Our current context is a long way from one of gifts, generosity, and accountability. The dominant context [worldview] we now hold is one of deficiencies, interests, and entitlement. Out of this context grows the belief that the suffering of communities is a set of problems to be solved … We believe that defining, analyzing, and studying problems is the way to make a better world. It is the dominant mindset of western culture. This context—that life is a set of problems to be solved—may actually limit any chance of the future being different from the past … It is not that this (or any other) context is wrong; it just does not have the power to bring something new into the world. To shift to some other context, we need to detach ourselves from the discussion of problems. One way to achieve this detachment is to see that what we now call problems are simply symptoms of something deeper.[140]

Summarizing his arguments and strategy for building healthy, sustainable community—notably in a diverse context—Block argues that:

> Communities are human systems given form by conversations that build relatedness. The conversations that build relatedness most often occur through associational life, where citizens show up by choice, and rarely in the context of system life, where citizens show up out of obligation. The small group is the unit of transformation and the container for the experience of belonging. Conversations that focus on stories about the past become a limitation to community; ones that are teaching parables and focus on the future restore community.[141]

In presenting his "Principles of a strategy for community transformation,"[142] he lists the following change-affecting guideposts and mechanisms:

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[139] Coates, 33.

[140] Block, *Community*, 32–33.

[141] Block, 29.

[142] Block, 30–31.

> The essential work is to build social fabric, both for its own sake and to enable chosen accountability among citizens … Strong associational life is essential and central … Citizens who use their power to convene other citizens are what create an alternative future … The small group is the unit of transformation … All transformation is linguistic, which means that we can think of community as essentially a conversation.[143]

Building on that, he concludes:

> The overarching intent of these principles is to create communities that operate out of a new context [worldview]. Transformation can be thought of as a fundamental shift in context [worldview], whether the shift is about my own life, my institution, or our community. Context clearly occurs as individual mindsets, but it also exists as a form of collective worldview. Communities carry a context through the frequently repeated beliefs that citizens hold about the place where they live. The media is one carrier, but it is not the creator. If transformation is linguistic, then community building requires that we engage in a new conversation, one that we have not had before, one that can create an experience of aliveness and belonging. It is the act of engaging citizens in a new conversation that allows us to act in concert with and actually creates the condition for a new context [worldview]. I am using the word *conversation* in a broad sense—namely, all the ways that we listen, speak, and communicate meaning to each other. So, in addition to speaking and listening, this meaning of *conversation* includes the architecture of our buildings and public spaces, the way we inhabit and arrange a room when we come together, and the space we give to the arts.[144]

Community: *Pursuing the Ideal from the Top-Down and Bottom-Up*

In the previous section, Putnam and Feldstein argue for a relationally-driven, bottom-up approach that will in turn have a revitalizing effect all the way to the top.[145] Block supports that aspect of their argument when he writes, "[This book] is also based on the belief that in some way the vitality and connectedness of our communities will determine the strength of our democracy."[146] Filling that out further, he writes, "The

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[143] Block, 30–31.

[144] Block, 31–32.

[145] Putnam and Feldstein, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*, 2.

[146] Block, xi.

social fabric of community is formed from an expanding shared sense of belonging. It is shaped by the idea that only when we are connected and care for the well-being of the whole that a civil and democratic society is created."[147]

In agreement, Monbiot recognizes that building healthy, sustainable community does indeed require a bottom-up approach. But he also argues that must be coupled with a predominant politically-driven top-down approach. Again, like Block, Monbiot sees a sense of belonging as an ideal aim, but even more so he sees mankind's basic need for belonging as the driving impetus to affect healthy community from the top-down through renewed political systems. He writes:

> If alienation is the point on which our crises converge, belonging is the means by which we can address them … From infancy, we have a powerful need … to be owned by a family and a society, to own a place within them that allows us to reciprocate, and to feel at ease with that place. It is this need for belonging that an effective politics recognizes and recruits. Those who sought to change the world in the past were keenly aware of this.[148]

So, Monbiot embraces a simultaneous top down and bottom-up approach—as one unified effort to rectify the prevailing division in society and nurture the development and experience of healthy community. But, in expounding on that, he emphasizes the relative importance he places on the politically-driven, top-down means to affect change. He writes, "It is clear to me that we need both: state provision and the revival of community. In fact, it is hard to see how we can sustain the former … without the latter … This common purpose needs to be deeper and wider than the kind that political activism alone

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[147] Block, 9.

[148] Monbiot, *Out of the Wreckage*, 71–72.

can deliver."[149] Monbiot's two-fronted, flanking approach appears to account for and address the two arms of Coates' monster—the streets and state-empowered schools.[150] That is, it appears to account for the expressed need to simultaneously address the wholesale brokenness Coates experienced in the inner city—a profound brokenness that was manifested from the bottom-up in the streets, and also propagated from the top-down through the state-empowered schools.

Community: *The Accessible Essentials in the Pursuit of the Ideal*

The challenges civic leaders face in building healthy, sustainable community in a broken, complex, and diverse context are clearly formidable, if not arrestingly foreboding. In light of that, the contributing authors sought to boil down their approach into more accessible processes and key essentials. For instance, Block asserts that:

> The challenge is to think broadly enough to have a theory and methodology that have the power to make a difference, and yet be simple and clear enough to be accessible to anyone who wants to make that difference. We need ideas from a variety of places and disciplines to deal with the complexity of community. Then, acting as if these ideas are true, we must translate them into embarrassingly simple and concrete acts.[151]

Delving further into process specifics, he adds:

> The key to creating and transforming community, then, is to see the power in the small but important elements of being with others.[152]

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[149] Monbiot, 76.

[150] Coates, *Between the World and Me*, 33.

[151] Block, *Community*, 4.

[152] Block, 10.

> The essential challenge is to transform the isolation and self-interest within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole. The key is to identify how this transformation occurs. We start by shifting our attention from the problems of community to the possibility of community.[153]

In Block's closing remark, we find an important point of distinction between his adamant advice to not focus on the problems themselves, but rather to move beyond those and focus on the possibilities of a better future together. On this point, Monbiot radically differs with Block, as he offers the opposite advice. He writes:

> You cannot take away someone's story without giving then a new one. It is not enough to challenge an old narrative, however outdated and discredited it may be. Change happens only when you replace it with another … a story that learns from the past, places us in the present and guides the future.[154]

He adds:

> The narrative we build, informed by our values and principles, has to be simple and intelligible. If it is to transform our politics, it should appeal to as many people as possible, crossing traditional party lines. It should resonate with deep needs and desires. It should explain the mess we are in and the means by which we might escape it. And, because there is nothing to be gained from spreading falsehoods, it must be firmly grounded in reality.[155]

In light of the researchers' restorative aims between Anglo- and African-American brothers and sisters, this point of distinction will likely prove essential—particularly in light of the longstanding divisive wounds and other devastating effects of racism. That said, a potentially pivotal question remains before us. At the outset, should mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American brothers and sisters follow Block's advice and not talk about the past and present divisive wounding and resulting problems, but instead move

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[153] Block, 1.

[154] Monbiot, *Out of the Wreckage*, 1.

[155] Monbiot, 13.

right into imagining a better future together? Or should they follow Monbiot's advice to first delve deeply into honestly identifying the painful, divisive causes behind "the mess we are in"—focusing their energies first-and-foremost on naming and working through these things together? Answers to these questions will likely emerge during the pastor interviews captured in chapter 4.

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Summary of Civic Leaders' Efforts to Build Healthy, Sustainable Community in the Context of Diversity

> I am distressed and anguished. It has become impossible for me to ignore the fact that the world we are creating does not come close to fulfilling its promise … If it is true that we are creating this world, then each of us has the power to heal its woundedness. This is not about guilt, it is about accountability. Citizens, in their capacity to come together and choose to be accountable, are our best shot at making a difference.[156]

In light of the deeply wounded, broken, and divided condition of community in America today, the contributing authors presented their proposed means to pursue idyllic, healthy, sustainable community—which they characterize as: 1) experiencing a sense of *belonging*, through a sense of *membership*, and *ownership and accountability*, 2) honesty, fairness, trust, mutual-care and concern, and equal-opportunity, and 3) personal connection, bonds of trust and understanding, and networks of community building relationships. But while these authors' depictions of idyllic community, as well as of the present state of community, are similar, their proposed means to pursue ideal community have fundamental differences. These differences reveal the multiple layers and multi-

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[156] Block, *Community*, xi.

faceted complexity of community, and then also of efforts to develop healthy, sustainable ones—notably, within a diverse context.

For instance, Putnam & Feldstein argue for creating social-capital (community) from the bottom-up, through individual conversations and storytelling. They depict the creation of social-capital as a process—one that "develops through extensive and time-consuming face-to-face conversation between two individuals or among small groups of people"[157] and "is necessarily a local phenomenon because it is defined by connections among people who know one another."[158] In step with that, these authors highlight the particularly unifying power of storytelling; a power which, along with creating mutually welcoming and comfortable spaces, provides an effective path forward. And, consistent with a bottom-up flow, these authors recognize that creating social capital at the individual level generates expansive benefits that flow upward and outward—economic and social health benefits that are experienced not only at the individual level but also the organizational, city, regional, and national levels.

We saw that Block also embraces a bottom-up approach but couples that with engagement at the community-level as well. More specifically, like Putnam and Feldstein, Block emphasizes the importance of personal conversations and storytelling in the process of building community. But he adds to that the fundamental role that community itself plays in our well-being—a process in which "belonging can also be thought of as a longing to be. [Where] being is our capacity to find our deeper purpose in all we do. It is the capacity to be present, and to discover our authenticity and whole

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[157] Putnam and Feldstein, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*, 9.

[158] Putnam and Feldstein, 9.

selves. This is often thought of as an individual capacity, but it is also a community capacity."[159] Alongside this, Block also asserted that experiencing a fundamental shift in worldview (from being self- to community-oriented) plays an important role in realizing that sense of *belonging*—that core, defining characteristic of ideal community.

We found that Monbiot likewise agrees with Putnam and Feldstein and Block on the importance of a bottom-up approach to building healthy, sustainable community. But unlike these other authors, he also proposes a concurrent top-down, politically-driven approach—the latter of which he views as the primary means for affecting healthy change. More specifically, Monbiot agrees that experiencing a personal sense of belonging is an essential component of healthy community. Even more he sees mankind's basic need for belonging as the driving impetus to affect healthy community from the top-down through renewed political systems. That said, Monbiot embraces a simultaneous top-down and bottom-up approach—as one unified effort to rectify the prevailing wounds and division in society and to nurture the development of healthy community. He writes, "It is clear to me that we need both: state provision and the revival of community. In fact, it is hard to see how we can sustain the former … without the latter."[160]

Summary of Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants

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[159] Block, *Community*, xii.

[160] Monbiot, *Out of the Wreckage*, 76.

of churches of the other ethnicity. The literature review provided a broader foundation for this qualitative research through exploring three main areas of focus. The first area was comprised of two sub-sections. The first of which was a theological study on our unity—our oneness in Christ. This foundational starting point then served as the compelling indicative behind the consequent study within that first area of focus, the Church's imperative pursuit of koinonia: more specifically, a study on the biblical use and meaning of koinonia—with particular interest in how these pertain to the present reality of our oneness in Christ across Anglo- and African-American lines. The second main area of focus delved into literature concerning civic leaders' depictions of idyllic, healthy, sustainable community and their perceptions of the present state of community. The third and final main area focused then on civic leaders' proposed means to move from the present to the ideal state—means and efforts to build healthy, sustainable community—notably, in the context of ethnic diversity.

The adjoining chapter describes the methodology used to conduct research on how pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity. More specifically, chapter 3 presents the methodology for that part of the study: the design, participant sample selection, data collection, data analysis, researcher position, and study limitations.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity. The assumption of this study was that pastors have learned important principles essential to this endeavor through their own experiences in this pursuit. In order to address this purpose, the research identifies four main areas of focus that are central to this endeavor. These include the biblical impetuses behind this pursuit, the identification of challenges faced along the way, efforts to remediate these challenges, and descriptions of growth in relationship with God and Christ's likeness that resulted. To examine these areas more closely, the following questions served as the intended focus of the qualitative research:

1. What biblical impetuses compel pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?
2. What challenges do pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches face in their efforts to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?
3. How do pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches work through these challenges in their efforts to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?

4. What growth in relationship with God and Christ's likeness do pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches observe as a result of leading their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?
    a. Growth in themselves.
    b. Growth in their congregants.

Design of the Study

In her book *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, Sharan B. Merriam defines a general qualitative study as a research effort to understand "*the meaning people have constructed*; that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world."[161] Merriam then identifies four key characteristics of qualitative research: "the focus is on process, understanding, and meaning [from the participants' perspectives]; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive [i.e. concepts and theories are derived from the data gathered]; and the product is richly descriptive [i.e. words and pictures are used predominately to communicate the findings, in lieu of numbers]."[162]

This study employed a general qualitative research design and conducted semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data gathering. In semi-structured interviews, "most of the interview is guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time.

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[161] Sharan B. Merriam and Elizabeth J. Tisdell, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2015), 15.

[162] Merriam and Tisdell, 15.

This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic."[163] Therefore, this qualitative method provided for the discovery of the most comprehensive and descriptive data from pastors' experiences in leading their mono-ethnic, Anglo- or African-American churches to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity.

Participant Sample Selection

This research required Anglo- or African-American pastors of mono-ethnic churches who have experienced the challenges and benefits of leading their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity. Therefore, the purposeful study sample consisted of a selection of participants who: 1) are an Anglo- or African-American pastor of a mono-ethnic church, 2) led their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity, 3) identified challenges along the way, 4) helped their congregants work through those challenges, and 5) observed growth in relationship with God and Christ's likeness as a result.[164]

The researcher identified prospective participants from his network of relationships. Participants were purposefully chosen to provide a representation of Anglo- and African-American pastors serving in a variety of denominational contexts—with the aim of providing a broader spectrum of perspectives and insights for the study. The final study was conducted through personal interviews with six pastors serving in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC), Missionary Baptist Church (MBC), Presbyterian

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[163] Merriam and Tisdell, 110–11.

[164] Merriam and Tisdell, 96.

Church in America (PCA), or Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). They were all invited to participate via an introductory email, followed by a personal phone call, visit, or email. In response to the initial invitation, participants self-reported that they met the study criteria. All those who did so and expressed interest were given a "Research Participant Consent Form" to participate.

Each participant was asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire before the interview in order to provide other information of potential interest in this study. In addition, each participant signed the "Research Participant Consent Form" to respect and protect the human rights of the participants.

Data Collection

This study utilized semi-structured interviews for primary data gathering. The interviewer used open-ended questions in order to yield more detailed and descriptive data. The open-ended nature of the interview questions also facilitated the opportunity to explore more complex issues more thoroughly. Ultimately, these methods enabled this study to look for common themes, patterns, concerns, and contrasting views across the variation of participants.[165] They also helped to identify aspects that were common to both Anglo and African Americans, and those that were more unique to one ethnicity.

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. Coding

[165] Merriam and Tisdell, 120–21.

and categorizing the data while continuing the process of interviewing also allowed for the emergence of new sources of data.[166]

Six male pastors were interviewed for one hour each. Prior to the interview, the pastors received information containing the areas of discussion. In order to accommodate participant schedules, some interviews were conducted via video calls. The researcher audio taped the interviews with a digital recorder. By conducting (on average) two interviews per week, the researcher completed the data gathering over the course of three weeks. After each interview, field notes with descriptive and reflective observations were written.

Data Analysis

As soon as possible and always within one week of each meeting, the researcher personally transcribed each interview by playing back the digital recording and typing out each transcript on a computer. 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.[167] When the interviews and observation notes were fully transcribed into computer files, they were coded and analyzed using the constant comparative method.[168] The analysis focused on discovering and identifying: 1) common themes and patterns across the

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[166] Merriam and Tisdell, 178–79.

[167] Merriam and Tisdell, 208.

[168] Merriam and Tisdell, 201–2.

variation of participants, and 2) congruence or discrepancy between their experiences and observations.

The interview protocol contained the following questions:

1. Tell me about a time when you intentionally pursued fellowship with a congregation of the other ethnicity.
2. What biblical/theological principles motivated your efforts to lead (*church*) to pursue healthy fellowship with (*Anglo/ African*)-American believers?
3. What challenges did you anticipate facing in the process?
4. What challenges did you actually face?
5. What are some ways that you were able to work through these challenges?
    a. What did some specific situations or conversations look like?
6. What are some of the ways you observed growth in relationship with God and Christ's likeness as a result of leading (*church*) in this pursuit?
    a. Growth in yourself?
    b. Growth in your congregants?
7. If you could paint the ideal picture for (*church*) and its fellowship with (*Anglo/ African*)-American believers, what would that look like?
    a. What Scripture passages underpin that?
    b. What theology underpins that?

Researcher Position

In qualitative research, Merriam emphasizes that "the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis."[169] Accordingly, she recognizes that "the human instrument has shortcomings and biases that can have an impact on the study."[170] As an Anglo-American pastor in the PCA who has been actively engaged in the pursuit of koinonia between mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American congregations, the researcher has biases related to aims and desired outcomes, including: 1) desiring to raise awareness of the imperative importance, challenges, benefits, and beauty of pursuing koinonia between mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American congregations, and 2) viewing the realization of diversity within each congregation as the ideal. At the same time, even in pursuit of those aims and desired outcomes, the researcher has biases and limitations that are inherent to being an Anglo American—a perspective that limits the ability to see the world from an African American's perspective and that could potentially impact the presentation of material coming from African-American sources that are painful, hurtful, and maybe even angering to read or hear.

The researcher will need to guard against these biases—against projecting personal life experiences and opinions onto the data.[171] Otherwise, the researcher runs the risk of 1) interpreting the experiences of others in their particular contexts through the lens of the researcher's experiences and context, 2) softening the candor of hard to hear

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[169] Merriam and Tisdell, 16.

[170] Merriam and Tisdell, 16.

[171] Merriam and Tisdell, 208.

life-experiences and voices that need to be heard, or 3) minimizing opposing voices and opinions.

Study Limitations

As stated in the previous section, participants interviewed for this study were limited to male pastors serving in mono-ethnic Anglo- or African-American churches. Therefore, insights from female pastors or male pastors serving in ethnically-diverse churches were not gleaned. Some of the study's findings may also be generalized to the pursuit of koinonia between mono-ethnic churches of other ethnicities, between Anglo- and African-American members within diverse, North American church contexts, or even to other types of racial and social division in the world. Readers who desire to generalize some of the particular aspects of these conclusions on this pursuit of koinonia between Anglo- and African-American members of mono-ethnic churches should test those aspects in their particular context. As with all qualitative studies, readers bear the responsibility to determine what can be appropriately applied to their context.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study is to explore how pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity. This study focused on the related experiences and insights gleaned from six male pastors serving mono-ethnic Anglo- or African-American congregations in the EPC, MBC, PCA, or SBC; who led their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity; identified challenges along the way; helped their congregants work through those challenges; and observed growth in relationship with God and Christ's likeness as a result. In an effort to explore their best practices and insights, the following research questions were used:

1. What biblical impetuses compel pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?
2. What challenges do pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches face in their efforts to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?
3. How do pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches work through these challenges in their efforts to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?

4. What growth in relationship with God and Christ's likeness do pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches observe as a result of leading their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?
    a. Growth in themselves.
    b. Growth in their congregants.

The findings from these interviews are presented below—organized by the above research questions that served to direct this study. The pastors' names have been changed to protect their identity.

Biblical Impetuses

The first research question sought answers to "what biblical impetuses compel pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?" During those interviews, three fundamental areas of biblical impetus surfaced: 1) Our Oneness in Christ, 2) The Great Commission, and 3) The Second Great Commandment.

Our Oneness in Christ

Each of the pastors spoke of our unity, our oneness in Christ as being a fundamental biblical impetus. Reflecting on how that present reality drove his efforts to nurture its practice, Pastor Chris said, "Another way of looking at us coming together was Jesus was the common denominator." With increasing zeal, he attested, "There was no cloudy or gray area. And because of our association, our affiliation with Jesus, we're brothers and sisters in Christ. Period! Amen!" With equal resolve and fervor, Pastor Art

similarly argued that a primary impetus for him is “the fact that the Bible is clear that Jesus has called us to be one Church.” He continued, “Everything has to lead from that place, ‘who we are.’ It can’t start from who we are ethnically, that’s what the world does. For us it has to start with who we are. We are one! We’re not trying to be one, we are one!” Reflecting then on the scourge of racism and its deeply divisive effects on the church today, he lamented the segregated state of the church in America and grieved that “that division is happening in a context where we’re not living up to who we really are.” He added:

> Our division is flying in the face of what is ontologically true about us as a people of God. We are one new man in Christ. And so, it’s thoroughly unbiblical that we would segregate ourselves based on race, how we think worship should look, and all other things that we separate ourselves because of.

In support of this, he referenced 1 Peter 2, asserting that the goal of Christianity is to create one new race, one new man. Further developing that argument, he turned to Ephesians 2 and stressed that Jesus died to break down the wall of separation, "the dividing wall of hostility,” between Jew and Gentile. Viewing that in light of the present racial division in the Church, he likewise stressed that in Christ Jesus, the wall of separation, “the dividing wall of hostility,” between Anglo- and African-American believers has also been broken down—in the midst of our own hurts, our own tragedies, our own divisions.

Also compelled by our oneness in Christ, Pastor Frank pointed to Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer in John 17—where he observed that there we “see Jesus longing for unity in the body of Christ.”

The Great Commission

Several pastors also spoke of the Great Commission as being a fundamental biblical impetus. Here the Lord Jesus commands His people in Matthew 28:19-20a to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Focusing on the "all nations" portion of the Great Commission, Pastor Frank delved into the Greek, πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. There he observed that believers are to make disciples of "all the ethnicities, or all the people groups. So, the Great Commission is multi-ethnic. That's how Jesus articulated it." Exploring what that looks like in a local church context, he challenged:

> I don't want to lose sight of that in terms of foreign missions and so on. But, if people are coming in your door for worship, looking for a home church, and they don't ever come back, you have to ask, is this a place for all people or is it a place just for certain kinds of people, who are well-educated, or the white well-educated, middle-class? It seems to me that God is no respecter of persons.

Filling that out further, he concurred with and summarized Charles Hodge's related statements:

> He [Hodge] just felt that we do stuff that we like, and we're not willing to make changes in music or worship-styles or how we express things. We use $10 words when we could be much clearer with less. And then he basically pointed to Jesus and said, that was the kind of ministry Jesus had.

Bringing that back into the realm of his own church context, he said, "Well, that's what we're asking. We're not asking for anything out-of-the-ordinary. We're just asking to be biblical people. I just think that we're often not very willing to do some self-examination."

Pastor Evan likewise focused on the "all nations" portion of the Great Commission. In light of his own deeply painful experiences with racism, he spoke of the

healing, unifying power of the Lord in his heart that compelled Him toward racial inclusivity:

> Having grown up in the Jim Crow south, that's my history in terms of my personal journey. I remember signs in my small town that I lived in and grew up in, where there were signs that say "white" and "colored." Different water fountains. And I remember as if it happened yesterday, my first real encounter with racism. At that point in my life when I was introduced to this evil—this specter that judged me and condemned me because of the color of my skin. And yet, despite that, when God called me to ministry, He placed in my spirit an openness to reach out and to engage and to interact with others, particularly those who didn't look like me. I've always felt that the Great Commission inherently is inclusive.

Then speaking to what jointly engaging in the Great Commission looks like in the church today, he said, "In this area, in terms of racial reconciliation, there is woundedness. You know, you can't dismiss that. And you shouldn't be able to dismiss it when you've experienced it as well. But you're always trying to move people from bitter to better. And that's the gospel. That's the gospel." Relatedly, he added, "In terms of how we look at people, how we look at ministry. Just as God is no respecter of persons, neither can we be." Bringing the reality of the present hurts and division together with the reality of our unity in Christ and our joint-call to bear witness to Him as a unified Church, Pastor Evan said, "Some people still have prejudices on both sides. I mean there's black racism, there's white racism. But I just feel like the church, we are a chosen generation, we are a royal priesthood, we are a holy nation, we've been called forth out of darkness to show forth His marvelous light." To that unified, joint-gospel witnessing end, he concluded, "As pastors and leaders of our churches, I feel it's incumbent on us to do what we can."

Pastor Brad echoed Pastor Evan's focus on our unity in Christ and the Great Commission witness that flows from our life and ministry together. Recalling his own journey, he said:

> I had begun to develop the conviction that a passive acceptance of a mono-ethnic church was disobedience and contrary to the gospel. And if Paul defines the mystery of the gospel as being co-heirs and fellow-members and sharers in the promises of Christ, then it's a gospel apologetic that churches demonstrate objectively the reconciliation that we are preaching between God and people. If there's no objective demonstration of reconciliation across ethnic boundaries—as well as all the others, socio-economic, and so forth, but especially across ethnic boundaries—if there's no objective demonstration of that then the gospel we preach is anemic.

As part of his own journey, he added, "I learned that you have to reach your neighbor." He saw in Acts that "God's mission was to demonstrate the reconciling power of the gospel by reconciling Jew and Gentile." He also saw that theme of multi-ethnic unity present in Ephesians, as well as in the end-times depictions of the Church in Revelation. There he said we see "a lot of every tribe, tongue, people, and nations"—a diverse body of believers gathered together in worship as one. Accordingly, he concluded with a helpful observation and related leadership challenge, "Seeing the New Testament pattern of proactively going after the different races caused me to ask, in what ways do we need to be proactive?"

The Second Great Commandment

Each of the pastors identified a prevailing love for others—particularly our brothers and sisters in Christ—as being a fundamental biblical impetus for this work. Some spoke to this more conceptually, others more directly. This impetus was based on Matthew 22:37-39. There the Lord Jesus says, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Pastor Chris spoke to abiding by this commandment in more conceptual terms—of embracing and living out the selfless, prevailing love for others kind of life depicted in the idyllic, Acts 2 Church. He said:

> You get a picture of it, of the first-century [Church], and I like to label [this church] as a first-century church in the twenty-first century. So, they've given us the model of how a church ought to act and be. To live out the true teachings of Jesus and the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And, so, it's a process. But that's the goal. God has given you the vision. Now you are living it out, the vision. And God will in the fullness of time cause it come into fruition.

He stated that when churches embrace and live out the vision of the biblically idyllic church, that will be expressed in loving others well through attending to all aspects of their needs, and thereby nurture the development of koinonia. He asserts, "When you can meet people's need physically, spiritually, and emotionally—and really strive towards that real koinonia, that fellowship—adopt a model of the first-century church. Make it in the twenty-first century. I mean, you're not doing nothing new here."

Pastor Frank spoke to this more directly. Getting straight to the point, he said, "Loving your neighbor as yourself. I mean, racial reconciliation is just about being obedient to the Second Great Commandment." Developing that further, he said:

> We only have two [Great Commandments]. And both Paul and Jesus say they represent the entire Old Testament. The Law and the Prophets are contained in those two commandments. So, reconciliation in a marriage, reconciliation in a prayer group—when there's tension between two people over whatever—we should be about love. Love always seeks to reconcile people. That's what God's love is like. So, it's not politically motivated. Reconciliation is not a political thing. If the world wants to do their form of it, that's fine. More power to them. But that's not what motivates us.

Further emphasizing the power of love to both motivate efforts toward and affect reconciliation, he concludes, "this is always what motivated me. It's really an issue of love. In the Old Testament, one of the Hebrew words for love is aháv [אהב]. And one of

the meanings is 'striving to overcome distance.'" Here Pastor Frank provided a beautiful depiction of the power of love to "overcome distance," to close the grievous emotional, relational, and physical gap between Anglo- and African-American believers in the Church today.

Identifying the Challenges

The second research question sought answers to "what challenges have pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches faced in their efforts to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?" Pastor Chris provided a helpful segue into this part of the discussion when he said, "because of our history and because of our culture, and because of the racism that's ingrained and instituted into the very fiber of our society, we always have to continually be working towards" experiencing our unity in Christ—who is our one true foundation that supersedes everything. Emphasizing the depth of pain caused by racism, he tellingly said that there's "not only a lot of pain, but a lot of hurt. And there's no hurt like a church hurt." With that, he insightfully identified the particularly deep hurts that brothers and sisters in Christ can inflict upon one another. But notably here, the particularly deep hurts Anglo members of the Church family have historically inflicted and, in some ways, continue to inflict on African-American brothers and sisters. In these observations, Pastor Chris identified both racism itself and the deep hurts of racism as the two main drivers behind this division, as well as the two main challenges to this essential, ongoing pursuit of koinonia between them. Summarizing where the church in America is in that process, he added, "We've come a long way, but we've got a long way to go."

Like Pastor Chris, Pastor Art also pointed to both racism and its deep hurts as the core drivers behind the present division in the church in America, as well as the primary challenges to coming together. He said:

> The hurt of the American church, the hurt of America, the scourge of America, is slavery and racism. Historic racism and institutionalized racism that is still going on today. And the past, the church's complicity in racism, in slavery, in Jim Crow. Those divisions, those realities that have existed in the American church are literally anti the gospel. They are the opposite of what the gospel tells us is true. We're divided, the church is divided, we're segregated.

Connecting past and present wounding, Pastor Art added:

> Although the past and present all overlap. It was mostly about the pain of the past and present. That was most of what drove [the desire to remain separated]. I had a conversation one-on-one with one of our church leaders and he was literally like, "why do we need to do this? We don't need to be doing this. We need to leave them white folks alone."

The pastor interviews revealed that the primary challenges to moving toward one another is past and present racism and the deep wounds and hurts of that sin. But the interviews also revealed that these challenges are being expressed through five areas of core human emotion: 1) Fear, 2) Anger, 3) Distrust, 4) Guilt & Shame, and 5) Surprise. While these surfaced as common themes, the expressions within each area varied. Some were common to both Anglo- and African-American believers. Others were specific to one or the other.

Fear

Categorically, the pastor interviews revealed that the expression of fear was observed in both Anglo- and African-American believers. However, the particular manifestations of fear varied between the two.

Fear of Losing the Worship or Music Style

The fear of losing one's cultural expression of worship or music style was a commonly voiced concern. But, during the interviews, this was observed more by the Anglo pastors. However, that may have been due to their church circumstances. That is, each of the Anglo-American pastors had been engaged in marked efforts to pursue diversity within their church contexts, and so the challenges associated with making the required changes to worship and music style were a felt reality. Pastor Art identifies that possible point of distinction when spoke about this from the perspective of his African-American church context:

> There wasn't a real concern about losing worship style because we're not merging churches. They knew that the [partner church] was a white Presbyterian church. The music was going to be white Presbyterian. We have a number of folks who perform for the symphony orchestra and sing in choirs. So, there's not just a tolerance but an appreciation for European approaches to music. So, I don't think that was a big thing. There may have been a little of that, but not too much. Now if we were talking about merging churches, then yes, that would be a thing.

Conversely, the Anglo pastors identified this fear as a significant concern among their congregants. Some of these fears stemmed from the sin of present-day racism, from the sinful belief in the supremacy of things white. For instance, Pastor Brad observed that "There's a fear that we're going to lose the 'quality' of our music and worship. So, the implicit racism is white, western European classical music is quality and anything else is beneath us." Other manifestations of this fear stemmed from the sin of selfishness and the reluctance to let go of personal preference in order to be inclusive. Pastor Frank spoke of his experiences with this; "The other thing that was a problem, was difficult, was music. People just had this affection for the music they liked and loved. And I get that. But, what price are we willing to pay to be obedient to Christ?"

Fear of Losing a Cultural Haven

This particular fear was also observed as common to both Anglo- and African-American believers, but this surfaced primarily during the African-American pastor interviews. Having said that, it's important to note that this surfaced during the Anglo-American pastor interviews as well, but more so under the next, highly related category, "Fear of Losing Control and Comfort."

In light of the deep wounds of racism, Pastor Evan provided key insights into what the African-American church has meant historically for our African-American brothers and sisters:

> You know one of the biggest challenges is because there is in our community, and in our spiritual communities, there is woundedness. What the African-American church has meant to our community is that for many years it was an asylum, a sanctuary. I'm not just talking about a holy sanctuary, but a relational sanctuary. Years ago, particularly in the throes of Jim Crow south, it was the only place you could go where you could feel as if you were somebody. I mean, a guy who might have been a street sweeper the rest of the week, could put on a suit and be an officer, a deacon in the church on Sunday morning, and have a sense of self-respect about that. So, the church was a house of hope. It was a house of healing.

In accord with that historical backdrop, Pastor Art observed that the fear of losing that African-American cultural haven is very much a present reality. Therefore, going into intentional efforts to pursue relationship with Anglo brothers and sisters, he "knew there were going to be people in our church who did not feel that this is something we needed to be doing." He noted that this was particularly challenging for his congregants because they lived and worked in predominately white areas; "They interact in white America all week long." And so, the church is "the one safe place that they have. This is the one place where they go that is not white run, that is not white culture. They live their entire lives in white culture in America in their jobs and in their schools. Whatever else

they do is white controlled. This is the one safe place they had." As an African-American, Pastor Art could empathize with that challenge. He said, "on one hand, as a black American, I definitely understand that wanting to go someplace that white folks aren't in charge or whites are not the predominate people there. This is the only place that these kids can go and these adults can go where they were not a minority." Further filling out the underlying sentiment expressed by some members, he recounted, "It was like, hey, we want to be cordial to white people but that's enough. Yah, we'll be friendly, we'll be peaceable. We can even come over, we can have a worship service, we can hold hands and sing kumbaya. And that's' enough!" In recognition of that, he described the challenge that was in front of him; "To really say, okay, let's dig in, we'll do life, let's really connect, I knew this was going to be a push." But while respecting his congregants' life experiences and also recognizing his own desire to preserve the cultural haven to some extent, he also recognized that biblically, that was not an option. He concluded, "If our mission is truly transcendent, if it's truly above and beyond the flesh, above what's visible, what we see in the kingdoms of this world, the divisions of this world, then that meant for us, as a historically black congregation in a white place, that meant that we had to reach across the aisle. We had to reach across the street or whatever to have white people in our space. That was the biggest challenge for us coming in."

Fear of Losing Control and Comfort

Closely related to the previous fear, "Fear of Losing a Cultural Haven," this particular expression of fear was observed more so by the Anglo pastors. For instance, Pastor Brad spoke to this directly when he identified the fear that "we're going to lose control" as a primary challenge. This fear was largely expressed in the wake of hiring

African-American pastors and choral director. And so, in that sense, it is closely related to the first listed fear, "Fear of Losing the Worship or Music Style." In this case, it was the fear of losing their Anglo expression of worship and music style that they held in high-esteem and, therefore, were most comfortable with.

Relatedly, during a conversation on being a disciple of Christ, Pastor Frank recognized that discipleship always comes at a cost, and that often the cost is our own preferences. Building on that, he attested to the fact that "we cannot obey the Great Commission unless we're willing to pay a big price for it. Jesus paid a big price for it and we will too. Or we should decide we're not that interested in obeying the Great Commission. Let's just be honest. But you can't have your cake and eat it too." Candidly speaking to related ills in his own church context, as well as in the broader Anglo-American church, he lamented:

> What we had been doing for years was assimilating African Americans. But we weren't really including them very much in the leadership and the shaping of the church's life. It was like, if you want to do things on our terms, we're delighted you're here. But we weren't that willing to talk about making significant changes to how we do things. In my mind it was ultimately a failure to love.

One African-American pastor also observed this expression of fear. When describing what the fear of losing comfort (or of being uncomfortable) had looked like in his African-American church context, he attributed in part to the growth of consumerism in our culture. He said, "If we're in a consumer culture then, okay, when it comes to worship, I want to come to a place where I'm enjoying worship, I'm enjoying that experience. I don't want to come to somewhere where I'm feeling uncomfortable." Building on that, he spoke to how increased wealth among African Americans has played into that as well. "So, even with African Americans where there's more wealth, things

have opened up, hey, I don't want to feel badly. If I go to a traditional, historical African American church, they're going to maybe talk about that stuff. I don't want to feel that way. I'm going to choose to go where it's comfortable." Here he described the allure of churches whose aim is to create a comfortable, non-challenging environment and worship experience so that people "keep coming."

Fear of Conflict and Losing Your Job

This final area of fear was observed by both Anglo- and African-American pastors. Reflecting on the sweetness of his friendship with an African-American pastor, Pastor Frank said, "I've learned a lot about myself and some of my own fears about how to couch all this stuff to the church. It's one thing that he and I have a friendship and understandings, but it's another thing to bring two communities of people together." As a necessary part of addressing his fears, he acknowledged that "what's going on today is part of the whole redemptive story." With that acknowledgement necessarily came the challenging questions, "What's our place in that? Do we want to be a part of that, or do we want to just go to a church where we like everybody and everything's fine?" In facing these challenging questions, he knew that "dealing with the historical parts is going to be painful, and your feelings are going to get hurt, and you're going to hear things that make you mad." And with that comes fear "of conflict," fear of "the wrong things."

Pastor Brad spoke about times he observed pastors not only experiencing conflict but also losing their jobs as a result of their efforts to lead their congregations toward racial reconciliation. In one instance, he recalled a friendship he had developed with an African-American pastor. And through that friendship their congregations were "cooperating to do things in the city, particularly toward the poor, and housing, and really

trying to bring the peace of God to our city." However, powerful leaders in his friend's church "felt like excessive cooperation with white people would jeopardize the influence that they worked hard to secure. And understandably didn't trust white people. And felt like we've been down this road before. And we're not going to do this again." So, his friend lost his job. Pastor Brad had also witnessed this on numerous occasions in Anglo-American churches. In one instance, the pastor desired to lead his congregation in the work of reconciliation with African-American brothers and sisters. As he began to express those desires, Pastor Brad said, "His elders didn't like that at all. And he started talking about reaching out to their local neighbors and they didn't like that either." So, that pastor was pushed out of the church.

Pastor Dave has also observed this reality. Accordingly, he spoke these general words of advice, "If they're [pastors] going to do it, they have to be very careful and methodical and take their time about doing it because they will alienate, even within their congregation, they will cause a lot of division and discomfort and trouble."

Pastor Evan also offered wise council from his many years of experience in leading a church, in general, and specifically in regard to this essential work of racial reconciliation. He said:

> I think a part of it is timing. When we really began to take those steps in that direction, it was almost as if God created, or brought those opportunities to us at that opportune time. Because, when you are transitioning into a role as senior pastor, you are the person who sets the compass, the vision, the mission. And you pull people along with that. There's a sensitivity you have to have to the timing of it.

Relatedly, he spoke of the importance of building relational capital, "pastoral capital," before trying to make weighty changes in a church's direction or introducing major initiatives. He said, "If I'm talking to a new pastor, I'm going to tell them, it's probably

going to be 5-6 years in that position you have, that role. You're going to have to earn the respect of your congregants." Speaking specifically to leading a church in the work of reconciliation, he added, "You can't do that kind of thing, that kind of ministry, from a position of weakness."

Anger

The expression of anger was observed by almost all pastors interviewed. However, it surfaced during the interviews predominantly in terms of the understandable anger expressed by our African-American brothers and sisters in response to the deep wounds of racism. Recalling his own experiences with racism, Pastor Evan described his senior year in high school as "Just horrific. It was terrible. So much prejudice. So much racism: blatant." Reflecting on the dysfunctional nature of racism itself and, consequently, the dysfunctional environment it creates, he said, "That cripples a lot of people of color." He added, "And I've encountered people, African Americans who are very bitter about it." Thinking about that in the context of the Church today, he said, "Some people, unfortunately, even some pastors in my denomination and others who are African American, they can't make that step toward reconciliation because they hold onto the bitterness."

Pastor Dave likewise recognized that "people are still hurt." But he also emphasized that the wounding is not something confined to the past. He said, "Racism has not gone away. I mean it has lessened. Things have changed dramatically." But in emphasizing its present reality, he recounted a recent painful incident that he himself experienced. In the midst of which he understandably said, "That got me so angry!" But

to that he added, “But God’s providence. Every white person I met after that was so nice and so wonderful.”

Pastor Brad also observed the formidable challenge this deep-seated anger can present when he described a recent effort by a third party to unite Anglo- and African-American congregations together for a collaborative class. He recalled, “The black churches she approached were unwilling to do it. Their basic point was we don’t know these people, we have been victims, why do we want to help them?”

Distrust

The theme of distrust emerged in almost all of the interviews. But while the theme was common among them, the particular expressions of that varied significantly.

Keep an Eye on the White Guys

African American’s distrust of Anglo Americans was spoken of in each of the pastor interviews. Pastor Art articulated this concern particularly well when he said, “For most black people, part of the subtext that you’re brought up with is that you don’t trust white people. You just don’t. And depending on your background, that can be more or less amplified.” Recalling his own childhood experiences, he said:

> I grew up in urban America. I grew up in an all-black neighborhood. If you saw a white guy walking around the streets, he was one of two things. He was either a Mormon on a bike or he was selling you something—probably trying to take advantage of you, trying to sell you something you don’t need. And so, for me, there was always this distrust.

In light of Anglos’ longstanding history of exploiting African-Americans, he spoke of how the resulting distrust has shaped not only African Americans’ base perceptions of Anglos, but also how they lean into their interactions with them:

> For many black Americans there is an inherent distrust. You interact with white people just enough to get ahead, to work and do your job, but that's it. But they can't really be trusted all the way. At some point they are going to deceive you or trick you or take advantage of you. That's just what white people do because that's what they did all the way back from the beginning.

Thinking about the members of his congregation, he said:

> When you talk about a church like [this one], you're talking about people who were alive and well before the death of Dr. Martin Luther King and during Jim Crow. So, this isn't abstract. I think most of America has a weird concept of how long ago this stuff was. The people that experienced this stuff are still alive. They're still here. So, with all that, that distrust for some was really hard to get over. But just to be clear about this, for most people at [this church], that was not the case.

Recapping this understandable and deeply-ingrained sense of distrust, Pastor Art said, "You know, you're a little bit more careful, you listen a little more carefully when you're dealing with white folks." He added, "I do think the general disposition was positive. But for many there was a sense of, *keep an eye on the white guys*."

You Want to Steal Our Sheep

Pastor Brad also experienced African-American believer's distrust of Anglo brothers and sisters, but in a very specific way. He experienced this in his efforts to make the church he was pastoring more inclusive. He said, "I learned from African-American pastors and friends that unless that's stated very carefully, it comes across as, we want to take the people out of your church." In describing his response to that concern, he provides a helpful takeaway for other Anglo pastors who engage with African-American congregations, with the aim of leading their own congregations to be more inclusive. He said, "I try to say very carefully, I'm not trying to say anything critical of your church, as if they need to go to a different church. We're looking for lost people. And so, we're not into sheep stealing." Pastor Brad then applied a healing balm to past wounds and present

distrust when he included in his reassuring message that "we're into repenting of the days when we blocked the doors to the church. And we're trying to do this for gospel reasons. But we are not trying to steal your people."

All-Aboard the Reconciliation Bandwagon

Pastor Frank also observed distrust. But this was expressed by other Anglo-American believers questioning the motives behind his reconciling, unifying efforts. He said, "There's a natural and understandable push-back if people in the church feel like that this is politically motivated. So, there's political correctness. And 'reconciliation' may be the bandwagon phrase." But, he added, "Love always seeks to reconcile people. That's what God's love is like. So, it's not politically motivated. Reconciliation is not a political thing. If the world wants to do their form of it, that's fine. More power to them. But that's not what motivates us." In this case, the distrust was born of suspicion that "the church is just following the world." Pastor Frank observed firsthand that "it's a big issue for some people." Reflecting further, he concluded, "Some of my regrets around that are that I didn't earlier make the biblical case for a multi-ethnic church."

Guilt & Shame

Two pastors in particular emphasized how Anglo-Americans' feelings of guilt and shame over racist actions—or inactions in the face of racism—can present a formidable challenge to pastors' reconciling, uniting efforts. Pastor Brad observed this during his efforts to bring in African-American pastors to preach on the theme of reconciliation in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King. He said, "I got a lot of blow back from it before it ever started. Not from a lot of people. Overwhelmingly, again, it was eagerly anticipated. But the few opponents were very vocal." One of the prevailing vocalized concerns was born

of guilt and shame; "Why are we bringing in these people to rub our noses in it, to punish us, to bring back the old days?" Recognizing Anglos' fragility on the topic of race, he recalled a colleague's insightful comments:

> As white people our racism muscles are entirely undeveloped. However, African Americans think about it all the time. So, they're very strong and persevering in dealing with racism. So, we are fragile. So, we deal with several encounters with racism over a week and we're totally exhausted. They deal with it every day all year long.

Recapping his experience, he concluded, "So, there's this fear that these preachers are going to come in and they're going to make me feel guilty. And so that has been part of the challenge too."

Pastor David also observed the challenge that guilt and shame poses to reconciling, unifying efforts. But his experience was voiced from the perspective of understanding "why sometimes there is not engagement." He recalled forums where people "try to have conversations," but "when the white people show up" some African Americans "want to punish them." He adds, "and that's not helpful. Why would I ever come back to another forum, if when I come there, there's going to be people jumping me for what my ancestors did, or maybe did years ago?" He concludes, "It's uncomfortable. And then there's some elements of shame."

Surprise

I Had No Idea!

Pastor Art said, "I knew from interacting with our white brothers, I knew there was going to be ignorance and offenses that was going to be said." He recognized that these were not malicious in nature. Rather, in his experience, Anglos have revealed "ignorant, ill-informed, naïve, and sometimes over-reductionistic thinking in regard to

race." But it hadn't been malicious. He said he "knew that was going to be a thing coming in. And it was." Effectively contrasting the two major challenges he faced in this work, he said he experienced "black folks who just didn't want to do it and white folks who were probably eager to do it but were just kind of ignorant to the experiences and feelings, and even how to interact around those things with black Americans."

Pastor Brad helpfully illustrated the reality of Anglos' lack of knowledge of African Americans' present-day experiences with racism and the effects of longstanding racism on their lives today. He did so by recalling Anglo church members' reaction to a distinguished older African American member's statement that "I still ask the clerk to put things in a bag for me when I leave the store. Because I can be accused of shoplifting if I don't leave the store with things in a bag." Recounting the Anglos' response, he said, "everyone was just flabbergasted." Recognizing Anglos' need to grow in their understanding of African Americans' present-day life experiences, he actively sought to foster those profound "revelations that come when you listen to someone's experience."

How Could You Not Know This?

Two of the African-American pastors were particularly helpful in depicting African Americans' sense of wonder over Anglos' lack of knowledge of African Americans' present-day life experiences with racism. Pastor Art was one. He said, "I think for black people, when they encounter that naivete, they are shocked at how can you not know this. You don't know that this is my experience. Why would you not know this?" Thinking about what lies behind that and the underlying assumptions, he added, "I think black people underestimate the distance many whites, particularly suburban whites, have from this. There is so much distance. And so, because they [African-Americans]

don't know the level of distance, they take the ignorance for malicious actions." But acknowledging the non-malicious reality of Anglos' ignorance to African Americans' daily life experiences and concerns, he said, "For many of our white brothers and sisters, they just don't know. That's not an excuse, that just is what it is. They say, 'Wow, I had no idea.'" Speaking further to the disparity between Anglo and African Americans' life experiences, he recalls, "I can't tell the number of things I have to think about, but when I tell those to my white friends, they are amazed and say 'wow, you have to think about that?' Yah, I think about that all the time, you don't think about that?"

Working Through the Challenges

The third research question sought answers to "how have pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches worked through these challenges in their efforts to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?" Pastor Chris leads us well into that part of the discussion when he said:

> We cannot emphasize enough the common denominator. And Jesus Christ has a way of breaking down all barriers. Not some, but all. Trust me, when the challenges present themselves, meet them head on, and then move on. You meet them head on, and then you move on. And they will come. But you meet them head on, and then you move on. And ultimately God will give you the victory, so that God can get the glory.

So, what does it look like for pastors to meet those challenges head on? What does it look like for pastors to help their mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American congregants work through these formidable challenges in pursuit of koinonia with one another? The primary means emphasized during the pastor interviews were: 1) Prayer, 2) the Gospel, 3) Friendship, 4) Acknowledgement, 5) Education, 6) Joint-Congregation Events and Ministries, and 7) Black Leadership.

Prayer

Emphasizing the spiritual nature of this work and opposition to it, Pastor Chris attested, "The Scriptures say that every time you desire to do good, evil is present." Applying that specifically to the context of this pursuit, he added, "And whenever you are attempting to do anything of this spiritual magnitude, Satan isn't going to stand by and let these things just happen and do nothing. It's a spiritual warfare anyway, and then when you try to knock down racial barriers when you're dealing with religion, and Christianity in America, that compounds the problem and situation."

Likewise recognizing the spiritual nature of this work, Pastor Frank emphasizes that God is the one accomplishing this work in and through us, and therefore, that prompts us to pray. He said, "I think this stuff teaches you to pray, because you're in over your head. You're not going to do this if you think you can go out there with some worldly wisdom and some great passion. If God doesn't work, it's not going to happen. It teaches us to pray and not lose heart."

Pastor Evan provided helpful insights into what leading with prayer looks like in this work of reconciliation. He said:

> My caution and counsel to young pastors is, be prayerful. One size doesn't fit all. What reconciliation looks like for [this congregation] might be different for another congregation. And you've got to be attuned to the heartbeat of your congregation in terms of the timing of this, because if you pull the trigger, if you engage in this too quickly, then, it will flop. So, just having the discernment, to know your congregation, but also, the discernment of knowing God's voice.

On discerning God's will, he said, "You have to spend that time with God and allow Him to impregnate you with that vision, with that perspective." Speaking to what that has looked like in his own life and ministry, he said:

> I intentionally get away at different points in the year, sometimes longer than others, just to get still. As we begin our planning cycle, at the end of the year, and anticipating the new year coming in the fall, I'll pull away for a week and just go somewhere and spend time with God, fast, pray, journal. Because I'm asking God, [this church] is Your church, not mine. What is it You want us to do? And once that vision becomes clear in my own spirit, then I begin to share it with our leaders, our key leaders. And then I pull other people into that discussion. And by the time we get to January and February, we're kind of locked-in, saying this is the thrust, this is the focus.

Pastor Evan further emphasized the importance of remaining truly open to the Lord's will, and the blessing of direction that comes from prayerfully seeking that. He said, "When you're open, when you're saying to Him—in terms of your own discipline and demeanor and direction—'not my will but Thy will be done,' He will place in your heart what He wants you to do in that situation." Reflecting further on what this has looked like for him, he said:

> The commonality, in terms of my pastoral leadership, is that there has to be what I call, prayerful intentionality. Prayerful intentionality. Intentionality alone is not enough. Except the Lord build the house—Psalm 127:1—except the Lord build the house, our labor is in vain. So, it has to be a prayed intentionality. And when God puts it in your spirit and you know it's from Him, then you are passionate when you share that with your leaders. And there's an infectiousness to that.

Pastor Evan concluded his thoughts on this by stressing the longer-term nature of this work. He observed, "It's a process. It's a process. Ministry is not microwavable. It's a crock-pot. And if it's microwavable, it's probably not nutritious."

The Gospel

Each of the pastors spoke of the essential role the redemptive biblical narrative has played in their efforts to help congregants work through the aforementioned challenges. Pastor David effectively illustrated the gospel's power in this work when he noted the marked difference in how African Americans react to racism—based on their exposure to and understanding of the gospel. He said, "I have a lot of people who, during

the worst of Jim Crow, are really hurt, even my own grandmother." Recalling her experiences with blatant racism and how the gospel shaped her heart attitude and response to that, he added, "But seeing the stuff that's even hard to contemplate, she never allowed any of my uncles or my mom to have hatred in their heart. Because she was a Christian." Describing how older members of his congregation lean into racism with that same grace-filled heart-attitude, he said, "They talk about forgiveness." To that he added, "But the younger ones who have no exposure to church or the gospel message, they're angry." He concluded, "What's the difference? Because these [older] folks have and understand the love of Christ. They understand forgiveness. It's been taught them, and over the years they've modeled and practiced it."

In the same light, recognizing the Lord's grace to him and how that has shaped his own response to the deeply hurtful, blatant racism he experienced, Pastor Evan said, "I'm just thankful and it's grace. So, this openness and this inclusivity I have is probably driven as much as anything by the grace that I experienced in my own life. I feel like I have to share it with other people." In light of the Lord's healing, unifying work through him, he spoke to how extending God's grace to others has opened doors for the power of the gospel to heal and unify across Anglo and African lines; "Grace to me is so much more opportunistic than bitterness." He concluded, "Recognizing in this area, in terms of racial reconciliation, there is woundedness. You know, you can't dismiss that. And you shouldn't be able to dismiss it when you've experienced it as well. But you're always trying to move people from bitter to better. And that's the gospel. That's the gospel."

Pastor Art also emphasized the gospel's powerful role in working through these challenges. In the process, he provided a specific example of what this has looked like in

his ministry. In describing that, he provides a helpful framework for other pastors engaged in this work as well. He recalled, "I had a conversation one-on-one with one of our church leaders and he was literally like, 'why do we need to do this? We don't need to be doing this. We need to leave them white folks alone.'" Pastor Art said this shocked him because the man "was a pretty mature Christian." He continued, "for this man, I responded to him with Scripture." Further depicting the painful background and his application of the redemptive, unifying narrative of the gospel to those hurts, he said:

> For African Americans who are dealing with the pain, the PTSD and the history of the black experience in America, I'm always sensitive to affirm those feelings and fears because they are real. But also, for Christians, I have to call you beyond that. If you're a black person in America, you can just sit in that anger. But, I'm going to have to challenge you and say that how do we not bury the anger but how do we work toward reconciliation, or conciliation, because we've never been reconciled in this country.

Continuing that challenge, he added:

> There is the need to transcend our ethnicity and our history in order to be the Church. It's not like we say it never happened but we have to the church. And that means for us, as the people of God, that we have to push through that anger, some of that discomfort and get to a place where we can live out what is true of us. Because we are one with them. If you're hating Christians, then according to 1 John you're not a Christian. And that's the whole point, we can't just say I don't want to be bothered with white Christians or Asian Christians or whatever Christians outside of our own national or political or social reasons would prefer they not be with us. We are one with them. That is true. That is objective. We are one with them. And we have to figure out how we're going to live in line with who we really are. Or we can just say that we are not really the people of God. Those are our only options. Either we live in line with what is true of being the people of God or we out ourselves as not being the people of God. Those are our two options according to 1 John.

Friendship

Each of the pastors spoke of the essential role that personal friendship has played in working through the challenges they faced. Several aspects of friendship surfaced during the interviews. But overwhelmingly, the most heavily emphasized was the

conviction that friendship must begin with the pastors. In accord with that, this part of the discussion likewise begins with the critical importance of genuine pastor friendships.

It's Not Bottom-Up, It's Really Top-Down

Pastor Brad spoke directly to the power of personal friendships to affect healthy change—first and foremost in the hearts and minds of the pastors. As a broader example, he experienced both within himself and his African-American pastor friends that "stereotypes get broken down when you become friends." Speaking specifically to the understandable distrust that African-Americans have of Anglos, he talked of how these genuine friendships have been central to rectifying that. Recalling evidence of that in one particular relationship, he delighted, "He started trusting me." As in any relationship, developing these friendships, that trust, takes time. Accordingly, he said, "I considered that we had built a friendship when we were sharing very personal trials and struggles with each other. And when we could actually talk about race with each other." Recounting what that process looked with one friend in particular, he spoke of a time when an African-American pastor friend was deeply discouraged. And in the midst of that Pastor Brad was able to come alongside and encourage him. Describing what followed, he said:

> He asked me what he could do for me. And I said I really don't need you to do anything for me, I just want to be your friend. And that was really moving to him. So that was the beginning of a very warm friendship and we did a number of things together in the city to bring about good.

Several pastors spoke of not only the essential importance of the friendship between pastors, but also their joint-commitment to the work of the reconciliation. On this Pastor Earl firmly held to the fact that "the church is a house of healing, it's a house of hope." Accordingly, he said, "My premise is, my position is, if this can't happen

among believers, empowered and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, it ain't going to happen nowhere. Regardless of our color, if it can't happen with us. And that's why I'm committed." With great resolve, he said, "So, we're going to continue to nurture that relationship. But it begins with the pastors. *It's not bottom-up, it's really top-down*. Distilling years of pastoral relationship experience into a gem of sage council, he said:

> It's not a detailed plan. It's dedicated persons. That's what it is. That's what I've been looking for to tell you. It's not a detailed plan, it's dedicated persons. And you can say, dedicated pastors. Because at the end of the day, this is not going to happen in our churches until it happens in us.

Rounding out that conviction, he recounted a related formative experience:

> I heard a great sermon when I was a [seminary] student. [A pastor] preached in chapel and he took a take on Exodus 4 where God tells Moses to go down to Israel, to Egypt, and tell Pharaoh to let my people go. In chapel he said, I'm going to preach today about let my preachers go. He says, because the people can't be free until the preachers are. He said, "God had to transform Moses' heart before He could transform the people." So, I'll always remember that sermon, "Let My Preachers Go."

Pastor Art whole-heartedly agreed that dedicated pastors are critical to this work; "It needs to start at the individual level in that it has to be the commitment of the senior lead pastors, the people who are in charge of steering those kinds of conversations." Describing one essential reason for this, he said, "Any conversation that happens between two congregations has to start with a friendship between the pastors, because they are going to have to model it." On the importance of pastors modeling these relationships for their congregations, Pastor Art insightfully described why he feels that is particularly important for Anglo-American pastors of Anglo-American congregations:

> Particularly for white brothers and sisters, there has to be a modeling of that kind of friendship and warmth. Because if you're talking about any one black person, who has had to stay in one house, they've had to interact with white culture to get somewhere. So, they know how to interact in a white world, they have to know how to be bi-cultural, bi-lingual in order to exist in a white world. White people

> never have to interact with anyone of any other culture in their world and they can be totally fine. So, there is a much higher likelihood that white people won't know how to interact with other cultures. There is a far greater likelihood of cultural ignorance for white people than for any minority group. Because every minority group has to interact in white culture and world to function. White people never have to make that jump, ever. Now, they can choose to, and many do, but you don't have to. You can be a perfectly fine, well-rounded white person and never have to interact with someone who is not of your own race.

Turning then to why pastoral modeling is important for African-American brothers and sisters, he said, "And for black people, who may interact with white people on a professional level or on a school board, but they may not have actually had relationships with white people, as people they can trust." He concluded, "So, both sides need that modeled well. And you need buy-in from the lead pastors. It's not going to work without the lead senior pastors. They have to be the ones saying this is what we're doing."

Also emphasizing the essential importance of each pastor's leadership in this work within their congregations, Pastor Chris emphatically said, "I need you to hear me on this, the pastor sets the tone and tenor. He's the one who sets the tone and tenor for the congregation. If it's going to work, if he's going to do it, then the pastor has to be out front leading it." Going on to emphasize the Church-wide importance of this reconciling work, he added, "As Martin Luther King said, you can't preach and be an example and witness of Jesus Christ, if you don't do this." With that biblical aim in view, he said for pastors that "then it not only becomes your job, but it becomes your passion. Because, Craig, heaven is going to look like this. Amen!"

Sinfully Exaggerated Differences

Several pastors emphasized that initially, Anglo and African Americans have exaggerated perceptions of their differences. Pastor Art spoke directly to how growing in our personal friendships, and specifically the understanding of our common ground, has

been helpful in working through the challenges. He said, "It has to start with friendship, with common ground." He added, "I've come to the conclusion that our differences are greatly exaggerated. I think they are massively, *sinfully exaggerated*. There is way more common ground than we acknowledge. As Christians we have a whole lot of common ground and that is Jesus. And so, I would say, start there with relationships—genuine relationships—genuine friendships." Exploring the progression of these genuine friendships and the resulting recognition of common ground, he spoke to their role in working through the divisive challenges:

> I think that what that will do is humanization. When I see you as a human, not a talking point, a political this, not as whatever, but I see you as a human being, then I can actually move to other levels of things. But I think the first level is friendship and common ground. And for Christians, we're talking about churches, that has to be Jesus. We have to have a mutual Lord and Savior who we love. Now from that relationship, we can talk about other things.

Pastor Chris also stressed the importance of recognizing the breadth of our common ground through personal relationship. But he spoke of this progression in terms of needing to first overcome each other's cultural barriers. Recounting his experiences with this, he said:

> The more familiar that we became with each other's cultures, the barriers came down. So, the challenges that we faced was overcoming each other's barriers. Once the barriers started coming down, you find out that you and I have a lot in common. We're going through the same kind of problems, have the same kind of situations, the same kind of everything. And we just come to find out that, in spite of our upbringing, we have a lot in common.

Growing Beyond Ignorant White Person and Patient Black Person

In the context of these developing, maturing relationships, Pastor Art described what he has observed regarding how these relationships grow in knowledge and understanding of each other, particularly in terms of each other's perspectives and life-

experiences. On the one hand, he said, "What I think that calls for is patience from my African American brothers. Because whites really don't know." He had recently helped an African-American brother work through a hurtful conversation with an Anglo brother, where the Anglo brother said something that the African-American brother had internalized "as racist." Describing how he helped this African-American brother work through this challenge, he said, "When he came to me with this, I said go and talk to your brother about it. And when he talked to his brother, the guy was like, oh my gosh, no, that's not what I meant. That is not what was intended." He added that "the white brother was very open to being taught. He had never been around black people. He had no idea that these things would be offensive. He just didn't know. He was very repentant and open to be taught." Bringing the two sides together, Pastor Art summarized, "So, for blacks it requires patience and for whites it's being open to be taught." But, he later emphasized that the relationship needs to grow beyond that. It needs to grow in their mutual understanding and trust. "*The relationship has to grow from ignorant white person and patient black person*."

Acknowledgement

Several pastors in particular spoke directly to mutual acknowledgement of the underlying sin and wounds of racism as being essential to working through the challenges. Pastor Art candidly captured that when he said:

> You don't get to roll up and say, "what problem?" It's one thing to be ignorant of the problem, but it's another to say there is no problem or that you need to get over it. You know you don't have the right to tell a whole community that they need to get over it, as a member of the offending people group. That's crazy. That's what we call "whitesplaining."

Helping Anglos understand how hurtful that is to African-American brothers and sisters and how that is received by them, he added, "That's where you cross the threshold from naivete to aggression. It's one thing for you to say I don't know. It's another for you to tell me that there is no problem and that you need to get over it. Now you're being hostile. Because there is a problem." Exploring that further, he continued:

> What is truth matters. And we have to start with truth. And I think at this point that things can be fairly objectively identified. And I feel like we have to agree on that—and that is low hanging fruit—that there has been oppression and pain for African Americans for the duration since their arrival in this country at the hands of white Americans, that have set up a system by white aristocracy to privilege white people to create this construct called "whiteness." That whole thing is a construct—to create this construct to subjugate African Americans. I understand that not every white person had a hand in building it, they derived privilege from its existence. And that has to be acknowledged. I feel that we have to start with that working body of facts. Even though the present generation hasn't been enslaved, there is a reality to the effects.

Emphasizing how key that acknowledgement is to being able to move forward in relationship and life and ministry together, he said, "We have to start there. And then we can go other places." Pastor Art then illustrated what related conversations can look like—both when those do and do not go well. In doing so, he also provided a helpful, practical takeaway for other pastors engaged in this work. First, he painted a picture of that conversation going well:

> I heard of white-privilege likened to a pole that they didn't even know was in their hands and their swinging it around. So, when I come to you as a black brother and tell you that you have this pole in your hand that you're waving around and you're hitting people in the head with it and hurting them. It's one thing to say, "Oh my gosh, I didn't know I had this pole in my hand." Even though you don't know that you have it, you'll need to be aware that you have it and be careful as you interact with others with it. It's a pole that you didn't ask for it, you were born in a particular country with a particular history that strapped a pole to your arm. So be careful with it and stop hurting others with it. And actually, maybe you can manage this pole in a way that you can actually help people with it. And the white guy says, "Oh okay." That's a picture of that conversation going well.

He then illustrated what the conversation can look like when it doesn't go well:

> "Hey man, you have this pole called white-privilege, I know you didn't ask for it, it may not be something that you are even aware of, but I'm telling you as a person on the outside that it's really there. And can you be careful with it? And maybe we can work together to see how you can use it for good things." If you respond by saying, "There is no pole," and you continue to swing it around and smack people with it, well then, ignorant or not, it becomes aggression. Ignorance is not an excuse for hurting people.

Further depicting what these conversations can look like in practice, he said, "I don't think it looks like, hey my name is [blank], let's talk about your views on slavery, Jim Crow, and white oppression or whatever. I don't know if there is a mechanical way. I'm just saying that if we are functionally going to do ministry, serve, and live together, we have to acknowledge that." In terms of the timing and mechanics of that conversation, he said, "What order and how that works, that's going to depend on the people. There is an infinite number of situations and relationships and human beings, that there is no one way to program that. But I do think we need to operate from that basis." Pastor Art likened this to the acknowledgement and repentance of sin. In doing so, he provided Anglos with a helpful construct to better understand the formidable barrier that the sin and hurts of racism are to our coming together, as well as the door-opening power that acknowledgement and repentance of these have for building relationships:

> It's like repentance. If I'm going to come to God, the starting place isn't, oh I'm saved. No, you don't get to be saved yet. You need to start from a place that something is broken. There's something wrong with me, there's something wrong with my relationship with God. And now, we can move on to understanding what Christ has done. But you don't get to move on to becoming a Christian without acknowledging that something is wrong. And, the same thing in relationship with African-American brothers and sisters, you don't get to just come on in and now we're going to be great commission Baptists together. No, whoa, whoa, whoa. You know something is wrong. Let's acknowledge that. Let's own that. Now I don't get to hold you guilty and captive forever. But we need to acknowledge that something is wrong. And then we need to talk about what it looks like to work

> together and all that needs to take shape. But we have to agree on that. We can't be operating on two different understandings, where I'm saying something is wrong and you're saying nothing is wrong.

Pastor Brad also emphasized the importance of acknowledging and repenting of the sin of racism. In support of that, he described instances where he observed the fruitfulness of that in the life of his congregation. In some cases, this was observed in terms of individuals acknowledging and repenting of their own sins. In other cases, it was observed in terms of repenting of the sins of their forefathers. Here he recalled "parishioners recognizing that we bear responsibility for our forefathers' sins." To that, he stated, "And we must repent of that." Filling that out a bit, he said, "Repenting of it is a redemptive act. Because it not only provides healing for the person who is repenting, it provides healing for the person of a different race to whom you are repenting." Illustrating the need and healing effect of this, he described a situation where a woman felt deeply compelled to repent of her grandfather's racist sins against a man she just met. Recounting her conversation with the man, Pastor Brad said the woman apologized to the man, saying, "I'm so sorry that WE sinned against you that way." Pastor Brad continued:

> Other African Americans standing around said, "You don't need to apologize, you didn't do that, your grandfather did that." She said, "Oh no, I must apologize. My grandfather's not here, I must apologize." The man she spoke to, said, "I forgive you." He never questioned her need to ask for forgiveness. He knew it was appropriate.

He concluded, "We ask for forgiveness for what our people have done. And that opens worlds of relationships."

Pastor Evan agreed that "there has to be an acknowledgment." He said, "Recognizing in this area, in terms of racial reconciliation, there is woundedness. You know, you can't dismiss that. And you shouldn't be able to dismiss it when you've

experienced it as well." In this gospel-empowered healing process, Pastor Evan recognized that "for white brothers and sisters, it can be a very uncomfortable subject." And in the midst of that discomfort, some Anglos can "go to, 'That was then and this is now.'" In light of that present reality, he countered, "But 'then is still now' for many of us." He continued:

> Racial profiling still takes place in law-enforcement agencies. Black men are still being shot and killed at a rate that is much higher by law-enforcement officers. There's still great economic disparity. And we have a president who has inflamed some of this stuff. That's still there now. And even that's a sensitive subject.

Effectively illustrating the present-day reality of that, he described how this strikes home in the context of his own family today:

> I had to have a conversation with my son around how to engage a white officer. You know, that's just something we have to do as black people. This is what you do if you're pulled over and this is what you don't do. I mean, that's reality for most black people.

Recognizing people's reluctance to move into uncomfortable spaces and conversations, he underscored the challenges that this poses to our moving toward one another. He observed that "people would just rather not be uncomfortable." As part of his efforts to help congregants work through this challenge, he said:

> But Thomas Long, the Princeton professor, said good preaching—and I think this is also good pastoring—he says, good preaching comforts the disturbed and disturbs the comfortable. And I think as pastors, whether African American or Anglo, we've got to find that balance, of comforting the disturbed and disturbing the comfortable. And it looks different for us than it does for you. What does that look like and how do we engage it. Pastors have to do it from a position where they have character, and the content is appropriate, and the compassion is there. And they've got to realize it's not a quick fix. But you can't ignore it. You can't say well, I'm just not going to deal with that.

Education

Most pastors emphasized education as being essential to helping congregants work through the challenges. The topics of education that surfaced during the interviews were comprehensive in terms of American history—of past and present racism and its effects—and how that should be addressed in light of biblical redemptive history. On this, Pastor Brad concisely tied pastors' educational efforts to their relational aims; "We're talking about how we can urge our people to be proactive in developing friendships." These pastors' educational, friendship developing, gospel-healing efforts were affected through large and small group discussions, group book studies, and Sunday school classes. While some topics were common to both Anglo and African Americans, others were more specific to one or the other.

Both-And's

Pastor Evan emphasized earlier that this reconciling, unifying work begins with the pastors and flows from there—from the top-down. In step with that, these pastors emphasized that not only does this work begin with pastors developing genuine friendships with each other across Anglo- and African-American lines, but also it entails pastors preparing their own congregations for this pursuit—a preparatory work that starts with church leadership. Pastor Evan made this point when he highlighted the need to invest time instilling the vision first and foremost within the church leadership team. He said, "I'm going to spend some time talking to my key leaders about the community, the culture that we're trying to build at [this church], and the values that are associated with that. Like compassion and commitment and cooperation in community." In his efforts to instill that vision of an inclusive culture, he described an effective word picture he uses

with church leadership. He said, “God has not just called us to be a thermometer that records the spiritual temperature, but to be a thermostat that influences it and impacts it. I said, what do you want to be, a thermometer or a thermostat? And so, we’re trying to be a thermostat, to be a transformative influence.”

In step with that, Pastor Dave also spoke of the need to prepare church leaders well in advance to healthily engage in an increasing diverse church context. He said, “And as they come in, that pastor also has to be preparing the session. The session needs to be ready.” Further describing the need to instill openness to change—even within the leadership team itself—he added, “If there are changes, okay, let’s have them join the leadership. God’s doing something. People need to be represented, and we don’t want to miss something.”

Several pastors spoke not only to the need to effectively instill that vision on the front end, but also the need to keep that in front of the church over time. For instance, from its inception, Pastor Frank’s congregation desired to become multi-ethnic, that was a fundamental part of its DNA. But as time went on, that did not come into being and that initial vision faded from view. Now many years later, he spoke to the resistance he experienced in recent, renewed efforts in that direction: “I assumed too much from the history that I knew of [this church’s] effort to be an integrated congregation. I assumed that we were still all on board for that. And when it began to require a cost, that’s when stuff hit the fan.” In the wake of that, he stressed the need to keep the inclusive vision in front of congregants—both its long-term and new members. Without which, the congregation will lose that vision. Relatedly, he observed:

> People choose churches for lots of different reasons. They may choose it because they like the preacher, or they may choose it because they like the [ministries of

> the church], or whatever. But they may not be on board with lots of other aspects of your life together. And you're assuming that because they're there that they are. But they're there for their own reasons. You assume that they're there and totally behind what's going on. But you're mistaken. People are there for lots of reasons that we're not even aware of.

Considering practical ways to keep the vision clearly in view, Pastor Frank thought congregation-wide conversations can be helpful because "then you get a feel for the whole community." At the same time, he acknowledged their shortcomings:

> The trouble with those is that a lot of people are not going to speak up. So, one option is to have elders visit prayer groups and have a couple of questions and give it to them a week ahead of time, about the elders' vision or the vision for the church. And then have people talk honestly about issues about race or issues about reconciliation. Do they think this is politically motivated?

Along with the need to continually reiterate and re-embrace the vision, these pastors also stressed the importance of educating congregants on history. More specifically, Pastor Frank said, "Somehow emphasize the importance of history. I'm talking about biblical history, but how does the American story fit in with the larger redemptive history." Lamenting the deficit in this area, he added, "I mean, I don't think we're doing much work there." Further casting this work in light of the ongoing redemptive, historical story, he said, "That's basically what we're talking about right? This—what's going on today—is part of the whole redemptive story." Therefore, he said, "I'd try to cultivate an interest in the bigger story and how we're related to that. That people realize that we're living out the story now folks. This is not just stuff that happened years ago. It's been handed down to us, and what are we going to do with it?" Accordingly, he challenged the church to ask, "What's our place in that? Do we want to be a part of that, or do we want to just go to a church where we like everybody and everything's fine?" He fully realized that "dealing with the historical part is going to be painful, and your feelings are going to get

hurt, and you're going to hear things that make you mad." But he also saw that a way to help congregants work through that is for pastors to instill "a strong interest in the biblical story and how the American story that we are now living out is related to that larger story." Pastor Dave also stressed the importance of education on history. But at the same time, he observed present-day challenges to that. He said, "The church world is not lending itself towards reconciliation because we're following the consumer culture. Kids today are so disconnected from history because history is not relevant to them. Our culture is always about the now and what's coming in order to sell products."

Along with educating congregants on history, the need to educate them on how to engage others of another ethnicity and to make necessary adjustments to worship-style was also stressed. For example, Pastor Dave spoke of instructing members to openly acknowledge and delight in the beauty of our God-given differences. He recounted hearing a congregant say, "Well, I don't see black, I don't see any color." To that he said, "That's preposterous. That's insulting to tell somebody you don't see any difference. God made all these differences. That's just completely ridiculous. It's just like if a bunch of guys are standing in a room and a woman walks in, and they say, we don't see gender. That's just ridiculous." In response he said that "a pastor should be intentional about teaching them ahead of time. Don't say, we don't see color. You're insulting them. That pastor should be helping the people to receive them well and treat them well." Pastor Frank also stressed the importance of recognizing and delighting in our differences. But as he did so, he lamented his congregation's struggle to affect that inclusive practice—notably in regards to music; "People just had this affection for the music they liked and

loved. And I get that. But, what price are we willing to pay to be obedient to Christ?"

Speaking to how education could have helped address that hindrance, he said:

> In hindsight, I wish that I had made a case for taking the best of both traditions. You had this whole history of white church history and this whole tradition of black church history. And we should have treated them equally. Respected both of them. They both have strengths and weaknesses. And I wish I had made a case for saying, look, our long-term vision is that we want to [be diverse] and it's hard. Hodge acknowledged in the article that we're not talking about dumbing-down worship, we're talking about stuff that's a lot harder to do than the stuff we're typically doing. Because we're having to try and deal with a wide audience. But, I think, if you basically said the best of both traditions, that means that you have to work hard, you're both going to have to give up. So, there's some hard work to be done there by the people who are leading worship. But I don't know how you can go wrong by saying or by working on trying to combine the best of both traditions. And respecting them equally, recognizing that they do have both strengths and weaknesses.

For pastors engaging in this work with the longer term aim of developing a diverse congregation, Pastor Frank offered a helpful analogy to use in music change discussions:

> If you imagine a small church in Bowling Green, Ohio, maybe on the outskirts of town. And you have basically an elderly population, older people in the church. Well, then somebody comes in and says we want to reach the university. How are we going to do that with a bunch of grey-haired people? Well, the only way to reach university is to have something substantial for the university students in the service. Even if they're not there. So that when they do show up, you're not scrambling to try and figure out how you're going to reach these people. You have to be intentional about it. If you're not intentional, it's not going to happen, because the natural thing is the homogeneous unit principle will always bear down on you. And so, I think you have to be willing to do stuff that maybe people aren't even ready for. Yes, you have to plan to care for the people you know at some point are going to come through the doors.

His experience told him that when pastors work to affect these changes, "that's what people think is kind of politically correct." He concluded with a helpful acknowledgement and exhortation; "I realize that a lot of that stuff is controversial, but you can't change unless you're willing to be controversial, because not everybody's going to fly with your plan."

More Anglo-American Specific

Several pastors offered helpful insights into educational needs and challenges that are more specific to Anglo Americans. Pastor Brad said, "Whatever opportunity you have to prepare people to listen more than they speak or to ask questions, that usually leads to lots of good insight. Because an African American is, like most of us, eager to tell his story. But he is not going to force it on you." Providing examples of the process and benefits of that, he spoke of monthly table discussions on books oriented toward promoting awareness of African Americans' life experiences and perspectives. He recalled that "the tables were intentionally mixed. And the African Americans would speak mostly and share their story and their experience and how they resonated with what was in the chapter. And that was really powerful." He also spoke of an annual Sunday school class that was aimed at breaking down racial barriers. In describing the class, he said it was "team-taught by white and black teachers" and it was "usually about equally mixed." He said it was comprised of "a series of exercises of primarily exposing to white people the pains that African Americans have endured—their history, stereotypes." Providing further details on one particularly helpful class session, he said:

> One of the early exercises they have is they separate whites and blacks and they ask them to write down anonymously the stereotypes they have of the other race. And then those are reproduced and then put around the room and discussed. And that's done very early on. And then the class is put back together. And what it does is to make people really aware, I have some stereotypes that need to be broken down. And I need to listen more than I need to speak.

Echoing the importance of these perspective-enlightening efforts, Pastor Dave affirmed, "Among whites, there needs to be a conversation, education first before there is any engagement. There has to be a kind of homework before people do this." Pastor Frank

also stressed the importance of that. But the area he stressed was the need for Anglos to grow in their understanding of history and African-American traditions. He argued:

> I think those of us who are white need to know our history better—both secular American history as well as church history. I think there's a lot we need to learn from African American Christians in terms of a theology of suffering. They have some things they can learn from us. But I don't know that we have the respect for their traditions that we have for our own. And I think, on the other side of the Jordan, when all is said and done, I think some of the Christian traditions that we thought were really hot stuff are not going to receive the Lord's commendation the way we think. And so, I think we need to have a healthier respect for the black church tradition.

Celebrating African-American church traditions and expressions of worship, he emphatically stated, "The black church tradition is just as valuable as the white church tradition. I don't think we have that sense in the Anglo." On Anglo congregations' reluctance to embrace the African-American tradition, he added, "We might be willing to take a song here. We're willing to hack at it a little piece at a time. But to sit back and say wow, this group of people have something to offer," that rarely happens. Encouraging pastors to do "the hard work of learning black culture," he said:

> We need to be willing to look at a lot of that and figure out how do we take the best of that tradition, the best of our tradition, and weave them together in a way that everybody's going to walk away feeling that one thing was really meaningful to them and one thing just drove them up the wall. If something drove them up the wall, that's a good sign that the music is maybe reaching somebody else.

He concluded, "So, it's even a matter of love for your brothers and sisters in the body right? I think pastors have to work at de-politicizing the whole notion of reconciliation."

More African American Specific

Two pastors offered helpful insights into educational needs and challenges that are more specific to African Americans. One of those was Pastor Dave. He observed that "as America has gotten more freedom, there are African Americans who don't want to

deal with that history. Now they're welcome in places that they weren't welcome before. And by not dealing with any of the issues is not helping the problem." In light of the long history of Anglos oppressing people of color in this country, Pastor Dave identified another African-American educational need:

> Prejudice and racism are not limited to any one group of people. It's a sin. And for some African Americans, they believe that it's impossible. And thanks to liberation theology and different types of stuff, they've made victimhood an idolatry. To where, because I'm a victim I'm morally better. It's not biblical. And so, it's incumbent upon African American pastors or pastors of color never to allow that to take place. Because the devil will allow that victimhood to become an idolatry to where people will say, well you know what, because we're an aggrieved minority, we're better than these people, morally. There are actions that pastors in both contexts have to do. They got to be fair, they got to be intentional, they got to show love, and they have to make the people ready.

Pastor Frank also identified an educational challenge—one that he observed across generational lines. In the midst of the protests after Michael Brown's death, he attended an event "for clergy or faith communities." At this event, younger African Americans shouted down the older leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. He recalled:

> Basically, the protesters were saying this is our protest. And they distanced themselves from the Civil Rights Movement. Personally, I think that was a terrible mistake and historically questionable. So, the older generation for whom Martin Luther King was a hero, a qualified and capable leader. I think they had seen the changes. They had lived through the changes. And there was a basic sense that, yah, we're not home yet, but it's a lot better than it used to be. Whereas the younger people, and it's somewhat more standard I guess for younger people to be a more rebellious or radical or whatever. But they didn't show much respect for the Civil Rights Movement that brought us here, or brought them there. So, to me, that was unfortunate. And it was a little frustrating for the older African Americans. Basically, because these younger people are standing on the shoulders of the people who had come before them.

Going back to the importance of education, he argued that "this is really true in the church. We need to know the history." He added, "It's not like everyone has to be an American historian, but I think history gives you a sensitivity to: What can we learn from

that? How can we do it better?" Speaking to the practical challenges that accompany these efforts, he said, "We're going to have our blind-spots. We acknowledge that from the get-go. We're not going to get it all right. But we need to be obedient to Christ to make disciples in this context, on this ground, in this historical moment." In order to do that well, he said we need to ask the question, "what's the history?"

Joint-Congregation Events and Ministries

Each of the pastors emphasized joint-congregational events and ministries as being essential in their efforts to help congregants work through the challenges and grow in personal relationships. It's also important to note that they all stressed how the various joint-congregational activities were born of their own personal, ongoing relationships with the other pastors. Pastor Brad recalled, "Out of that friendship, we probably had more boots-on-the-ground mission works together with that church than any other. We did a men's retreat a couple of times with their men and our men. We did a super bowl party together. We did a Martin Luther King Jr celebration together. We did a number of things together."

Reflecting on a close relationship he had with a local Anglo pastor, Pastor Chris said they "have collaborated, have partnered together, had seminars and workshops. He worshipped [at my church], I worshipped and preached at [his church], to continually break down these barriers, and then to be an example of the Spirit and the teaching of Jesus Christ. And to have the present-day embodiment, not just going through the motions. Yes, really, really working towards true, true fellowship."

Regarding introductory inter-congregational events, Pastor Dave said, "Some people are so cynical that they will pooh-pooh engagements, soft interactions. But you've

got to start somewhere. And then you can be intentional about rolling in a little bit more in-depth stuff. But you've got to start with people seeing each other as people first. We have to meet people where they are."

Speaking to the importance of taking advantage of these opportunities to build relationship and genuinely see each other, Pastor Evan said:

> I've developed this concept over the course of my pastoral journey that I call relational liquidity. It's like if you're opening an account with a deposit and all you do is make withdrawals, at some point that account is going to go in the red. So, I feel like as pastors, and as believers, we make this world a better place when we make those relational deposits. And I have just been very opportunistic in seizing those moments, personally and pastorally, to make those deposits. And engage people who do not look like me and be a part of building a bridge.

Thinking about that relationship building process and the beauty of truly seeing each other in the Lord, he recalled one of his favorite poems, "Meditations of the Heart," by Howard Thurman. He recited, "If I knew you and you knew me. And each of us could clearly see by the inner light Divine, I am sure we would differ less and pass our hands in friendliness. If I knew you and you knew me." Given the weightiness of the inherent challenges to nurturing these relationships, Pastor Evan also spoke of the need to be wise and discerning in the pace with which pastors lead congregants forward in that process. He said:

> When we started building our relationship with [a white church], I was very intentional. We were taking baby steps. Because you have to give people the chance to exhale, to kind of process it, and not force-feed them to the point that you're disregarding some very deep-seated things that they may have gone through. Because racism was ugly, it still is. And there are wounds.

Reflecting on the various church events, he said, "I think one of the most powerful things that we did was the table talk. And then the incentive that we gave in that setting for groups to continue that dialogue." Recalling those groups' engagement over time and

their varying abilities to work through the challenges, he added, "Some groups did that better than others. Some groups still interact. And some don't, because they weren't able to overcome that hurdle—the woundedness on one side and denial on the other, or the lack of sensitivity on the other." But despite the challenges, with stern resolve he concluded, "There has to be engagement. But there has to be sensitivity too. But apathy is not an option. It's just not an option."

Black Leadership

Most of the pastors stressed the importance of African-American leadership in the process of working through the challenges—particularly for Anglo congregations whose aim is to become diverse in its membership. Pastor Art insightfully identified a fundamental challenge to this when he recognized that "most white Christians" and "most white Christian leadership" would welcome African Americans into their congregations; "But the question becomes, for what? Do you want to actually empower me to lead the culture—actually inviting Christians of color in to strategically shape the culture of the white churches and institutions?" He added, "I think this is particularly important. I think white-Christian leaders need to sit under Black Christian leadership. I don't even think the conversation is real until white Christians do that." Broadly, he observed that, "Normally when people talk about racial reconciliation, they're talking about black folks coming into white spaces. But what I think needs to happen more often is white folks moving into black spaces and sitting under black leadership. Or second-best scenario, is that black people go into white organizations and actually shape and control the culture."

Reflecting on his local church context, Pastor Frank wholly affirmed the need and benefits of having African-American leadership. He asserted, "Having black leadership in

a city like this with so much distrust, it's almost essential, or probably is essential." He said that as they realized that, they made "efforts to hire African American pastors."

Pastor Brad also stressed the importance of hiring African-American pastors. But he then went on to stress the need for Anglo pastors to intentionally step aside to make room for them. He said, "This is the kind of thing that it's going to take to really, really catapult forward a majority culture church into multi-ethnicity. It's going to involve some sacrifice by white leaders who can make room," even at the senior pastor level.

Growth Through the Challenges

The final research question sought answers to "what growth in relationship with God and Christ's likeness have pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches observed as a result of leading their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity—either in themselves or in their congregants?" Pastor Chris provided a helpful segue into this final section when he said, "To live out the true teachings of Jesus and the Spirit of Jesus Christ, it's a process. But that's the goal. That's the goal. And in the process, you're growing. You can't help but to grow." Connecting the growth we experience through walking with Christ broadly to that we experience specifically in the pursuit of koinonia across Anglo- and African-American lines, he said:

> The whole purpose of this Christian journey is to grow, to grow in Christ and to mature. To learn how to walk, from crawling to walking and to eating the spiritual Word to maturity. And while we're talking about what we're talking about, this inter-racial and inter-relationship is just one component of Christian growth to maturity. It's a maturing process. Without a doubt. And I've witnessed it and I've seen it.

Each pastor spoke to growth they observed in these areas. But they all spoke to different areas or expressions of that growth: 1) Sense of Our Oneness in Christ (They Good. We Good. Why?), 2) Patience (Waiting on the Lord), 3) Humility and Repentance (Love is Not Schmaltzy), and 4) Obedience (A Spiritual Transaction).

Sense of Our Oneness in Christ (They good. We good. Why?)

Pastor Brad was one of the pastors that observed this area of growth. He observed, "One mark of growth would be someone's simple willingness to accept someone of a different race as a brother or sister in Christ." Pastor Art also observed this. Recounting conversations with brothers and sisters in his congregation, he said there were "people who initially asked 'why are we doing this?' Those folks who said, '*They good. We good. Why?*'" He went on to say that "a lot of those folks came to me later and said, 'you know, I was skeptical at first but I didn't know how much I needed this.'" Further filling this out, he said:

> I think we're all impoverished when we don't take advantage of the beauty of the church. This is what makes the church so awesome is that it is made up of every people, tribe, and nation. And so, each one of our cultures has some things that are God-glorifying and it has some things that are not God-honoring. And some aspects of our cultures exalt certain aspects of God. I feel like we're all impoverished when we stick to our own cultural corner. We're going to get those blind spots. We're going to get the good of our culture, but we're also going to get some of those other things. So, one of the biggest areas I found was people saying, "I needed this."

Further clarifying his point, he said, "l saw people grow as they recognized the need that this is what we need for the church, and personally, this is who we are. This is more truly who we are than being a black church. This is more truly who we are together."

Patience (Waiting on the Lord)

Pastor Brad recognized growth in himself, namely, growth in patience as he needed to *wait on the Lord* in the face of overt racism. He lamented, "But still, there are people here who are overt racists." Reflecting on initial racial reconciliation efforts and the "surprising attacks" he experienced by the handful of overt racists in his congregation, he said, "It has also been good for me. It hasn't been pleasant, but it's been good for me to be forced to wait for the Lord to build credibility for me."

Humility, Repentance and Prayer (Love is Not Schmaltzy)

Reflecting on the growth in this area that Pastor Frank observed in himself, he said, "I just think it makes you more dependent. It makes you realize how little you know about loving, period. Whether it's in your family, your marriage, because love is costly. And I think too often we want love to be schmaltzy and sweet, but it's painful. It cost Christ his life to redeem us. It's not going to cost the disciples greater than the Master." Building on that thought, he added, "And then praying, it teaches you to pray and I think it humbles you, or it should."

Reflecting on this area of growth in his congregants, Pastor Brad said:

> I think another fruit has been people, parishioners recognizing that we bear responsibility for our forefathers' sins. And we must repent of that. But also recognizing that repenting of it is a redemptive act. Because it not only provides healing for the person who is repenting, it provides healing for the person of a different race to whom you are repenting.

Describing the ongoing fruit and blessings of that growth, he added, "We ask for forgiveness for what our people have done. And so, that's growth. And that opens worlds of relationships."

Growth in Obedience (A Spiritual Transaction)

Pastor Evan spoke to this when he observed that "the spiritual transaction, the transformation that takes place, to me, has a lot to do with the blessings that come to us from obedience. Just being obedient and being faithful to what God has given you."

Summary of Findings

In this chapter, the themes that surfaced during the pastor interviews were identified, organized, and presented in accord with the research questions that directed this study. Specifically, the themes that emerged under *Biblical Impetuses* were: Our Oneness in Christ, The Great Commission, and The Second Great Commandment. Those under *Identifying the Challenges* were: Fear, Anger, Distrust, Guilt and Shame, and Surprise. Those under *Working Through the Challenges* were*:* Prayer, The Gospel, Friendship, Acknowledgement, Education, Joint-Congregation Events and Ministries, and Black Leadership. And then under *Growth Through the Challenges*: Sense of Our Oneness in Christ, Patience, Humility, Repentance and Prayer, and Obedience.

In the next and final chapter, these themes, along with those that emerged from the literature review in chapter 2 will be analyzed, and recommendations for practice and future research will be provided.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Recommendations

This dissertation opened with Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1960 poignant lament over the segregated state of the church in America. Present-day research revealed that—nearly sixty years later—little has changed on that front;[172] "eleven o'clock on Sunday morning is [still] one of the most segregated hours, if not the most segregated hours, in Christian America."[173] At the same time, current research showed that the prevailing opinion on race relations and diversity in America broadly has markedly improved.[174] Those findings make the segregated state of the church in America that much more unsettling. Where the church should have been leading the charge in this essential work, it has lagged well behind the secular world around us. Ironically, current research also revealed that of the over one-thousand Protestant pastors surveyed, "85 percent say every church should strive for diversity."[175] Viewing these pastors' unrealized convictions and aims toward diversity in the church against these broader cultural and church backdrops provide two illuminating insights. The first is the truth of Dr. King's claim that church integration will

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[172] PRC, "Religious Landscape Study."

[173] Spivak, "Meet the Press."

[174] Smietana, "Research," December 16, 2014.

[175] Smietana, 2.

not "come through legal processes."[176] Rather, "this is something that the Church will have to do itself."[177] The second insight is the daunting sense and formidableness of the challenges that pastors face in this essential pursuit.

In light of these aims and related challenges, the purpose of this study was to explore how pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity—either as a preliminary step in the process of becoming more diverse, or even while expecting to remain mono-ethnic (in situations where a church's mono-ethnicity accurately reflects its context). The following research questions served to direct this endeavor:

1. What biblical impetuses compel pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?
2. What challenges do pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches face in their efforts to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?
3. How do pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches work through these challenges in their efforts to lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?
4. What growth in relationship with God and Christ's likeness do pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches observe as a result of

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[176] Spivak, "Meet the Press."

[177] Spivak.

leading their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity?

a. Growth in themselves.

b. Growth in their congregants.

In order to provide a broader foundation for this qualitative research, literature in three main areas was reviewed: 1) the theology of oneness in Christ and the biblical use and meaning of koinonia, 2) civic leaders' depictions of idyllic community and the present state of community, and 3) civic leaders' proposed means to affect ideal community. Interviews were then conducted with six male pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- or African-American churches who led their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity, identified challenges along the way, helped their congregants work through those challenges, and observed growth in relationship with God and Christ's likeness as a result.

This chapter brings together the information gleaned from these areas of study. The purpose of which is to not only review and discuss these findings, but also provide recommendations for practice and further research.

Summary of the Study and Findings

The literature and interview findings are summarized below with an eye toward gleaning insights into best practices for the pursuit of koinonia between Anglo- and African-American brothers and sisters in Christ.

Summary of the Literature Review

The literature review provided a broader foundation for this qualitative research through exploring three main areas of focus—identified and summarized below.

Theological and Biblical Frameworks for Biblical Impetuses

The literature review began with a theological study on believers' oneness in Christ. Here believers' oneness in Christ was shown to be rooted in, patterned after, and a reflection of Christ's oneness with the Father—namely, oneness in being, oneness in purpose, and oneness in mutual glorification. It is a unity in which personal distinction remains, yet in harmonious oneness of being. In this we see that oneness does not mean sameness. This unity maintains and honors the distinctives of its diverse component parts—as sameness is neither the ideal nor the aim. Being patterned after Christ's unity with the Father, the diverse body of believers is then one with Christ in both being and purpose. Drawing upon John 17, the Lord clearly reveals the missional purpose of believers' unity in Him when He says, "that the world may know that you sent me." The captivating beauty of diverse members of Christ's body being united in love in Him is to be an intoxicating beauty that believers get to delight in themselves and an alluring beauty in the eyes of an otherwise divided and wanting world. In light of the magnitude of these profound ontological, relational, and missional truths, Andreas Köstenberger stressed how crucial it is that believers earnestly strive to abide harmoniously in our present oneness in Christ. He effectively underscored that point when he observes in John 17 that "[Jesus'] concern for his followers' unity is his greatest burden as his earthly ministry draws to a close."[178]

In the course of that study, the present reality of believers' oneness in Christ was recognized to be the indicative behind the church's imperative pursuit of koinonia—that is, the church's lived-out expression of her unity in Christ. The accompanying

[178] Köstenberger, *John*, 497.

study on the biblical use and meaning of koinonia then depicted what that harmonious, winsomely beautiful life together in Christ looks like. This was characterized by and expressed through believers' deep familial *fellowship*, heartfelt *sharing* in needs, and *willing contributions* to meet those needs. Starting with koinonia as *fellowship*, our fellowship with one another was shown to be intimately bound in our mystical, spiritual fellowship with Christ. Therefore, our fellowship with one another in Christ is not merely horizontal, but triangular. And out of that loving union flows a Christ-centered, Christ-revealing, other-oriented love. So, in essence, putting koinonia into practice was found to be an overflow of the love we ourselves have received from God, through our unity in Him. Yet in the midst of our individual and corporate brokenness, putting this into practice requires love-born intentionality. Those love-born practices were depicted in this study as heartfelt *sharing* in each other's needs and *willing contributions* to meet those needs. Scripture depicts *sharing* not merely in financial terms. Rather it is expressed through holistic personal engagement—in heart, mind, time, effort, and resources. Tellingly, the study on *willing contributions* further revealed that this heartfelt care extended beyond the local church. It extended across geographic and ethnic lines. And strikingly, it was characterized by the same depth of heartfelt concern expressed between those within a local church.

Civic Leaders' Depictions of Idyllic, Sustainable Community, and Perceptions on the Present State of Community

The contributing authors depicted similar visions of idyllic, healthy, sustainable community—describing that in terms of 1) experiencing a sense of *belonging* through a

sense of *membership*, and *ownership and accountability*, 2) honesty, fairness, trust, mutual-care and concern, and equal-opportunity, and 3) personal connection, bonds of trust and understanding, and networks of community building relationships. They also depicted similar pictures of the state of community today—not in terms of the personally "at home" sense of belonging, mutually concerned, and personally engaged ideal, but rather the polar opposite: isolated, alienated, and disengaged. One author pointed to our broader culture's relationally disconnected nature as the primary driver behind our fragmented state, while another directed our attention to drivers within the culture. Notably, Peter Block highlighted organized religion's prominent role in a community's health and that church membership and attendance had declined over the past ten years. Putnam & Feldstein further depicted the present isolated state of community and related challenges to affecting the relationally connected ideal when they observed that some social networks tend toward *bonding social capital* and others toward *bridging social capital*. Expounding on that they observed that "some networks link people who are similar in crucial respects and tend to be inward-looking—*bonding social capital*. Others encompass different types of people and tend to be outward-looking—*bridging social capital*. Both have their uses."[179] Delving further into the inward-looking *bonding social capital*, they recognized its benefits and challenges. The primary benefits being the high level of personal care and mutual concern that are found there. Conversely, on its inherent challenges, they write, "On the other hand, a society that has *only* bonding social capital will look like Belfast or Bosnia—segregated into mutually hostile camps. So a pluralistic democracy requires a lot of bridging social capital, not just the bonding

[179] Putnam and Feldstein, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*, 2.

variety."[180] Alongside the importance of forming *bridging social capital*, they recognized the difficulty of doing so in diverse contexts—a difficulty that is captured in the adage, "birds of a feather flock together. So the kind of social capital that is most essential for healthy public life in an increasingly diverse society like ours is precisely the kind that is hardest to build."[181]

Civic Leaders' Efforts to Build Healthy, Sustainable Community, notably in the Context of Ethnic Diversity

Despite the similarity in the contributing authors' depictions of the ideal and present state of community, their proposed means to affect the ideal were fundamentally different. The differences lay largely in the approach to building ideal community: 1) from the bottom up, 2) from the bottom up and at the community level, and 3) from the top down and bottom up. These differences revealed the multiple layers and multi-faceted complexity of community, and then also of the efforts to develop healthy, sustainable community in a diverse context. Starting with the first approach, Putnam & Feldstein argued for creating social-capital (community) from the bottom-up through individual conversations and storytelling. They depicted the creation of social-capital as a process—one that "develops through extensive and time-consuming face-to-face conversation between two individuals or among small groups of people"[182] and "is necessarily a local phenomenon because it is defined by connections among people who know one

[180] Putnam and Feldstein, 2–3.

[181] Putnam and Feldstein, 3.

[182] Putnam and Feldstein, 9.

another."[183] In step with that, these authors highlighted the particularly unifying power of storytelling which, along with creating mutually welcoming and comfortable spaces, provides an effective path forward. Consistent with a bottom-up flow, these authors recognized that creating social capital at the individual level generates expansive benefits that flow upward and outward—economic and social health benefits that are experienced not only at the individual level, but also at the organizational, city, regional, and national levels.

Block also embraced a bottom-up approach, but coupled that with engagement at the community-level. Like Putnam and Feldstein, Block emphasized the importance of personal conversations and storytelling in the process of building healthy community. But he added to that the fundamental role community itself plays in that process—a process in which "belonging can also be thought of as a longing to be. [Where] being is our capacity to find our deeper purpose in all we do. It is the capacity to be present, and to discover our authenticity and whole selves. This is often thought of as an individual capacity, but it is also a community capacity."[184] Alongside this, Block asserted that experiencing a fundamental shift in worldview (from self- to community-oriented) plays an important role in realizing that sense of *belonging*—the core, defining characteristic of ideal community.

Monbiot likewise agreed with Putnam & Feldstein and Block on the importance of a bottom-up approach to building healthy, sustainable community. But unlike these other authors, he also argued for a concurrent top-down, politically-driven approach. The latter

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[183] Putnam and Feldstein, 9.

[184] Block, *Community*, xii.

of which he viewed as the primary means for affecting healthy change. That is, Monbiot agreed that experiencing a personal sense of belonging is an essential component of healthy community; even more, he saw mankind's basic need for belonging as the driving impetus to affect healthy community from the top-down, through renewed political systems. That said, Monbiot embraced a simultaneous top-down and bottom-up approach, as one unified effort to rectify the prevailing wounds and division in society and to nurture the development of healthy community. He writes, "It is clear to me that we need both: state provision and the revival of community. In fact, it is hard to see how we can sustain the former … without the latter."[185]

Another notable point of difference in these authors' approaches was in regard to the primary area of focus, i.e. focusing on envisioning a better future together versus on the prevailing problems. Block argued that communities should not focus on the problems themselves. Rather, the first step in community transformation is to "start by shifting our attention from the problems of community to the possibility of community."[186] Conversely, Monbiot argues that the process must include honestly facing and learning from the past. He concludes:

> You cannot take away someone's story without giving then a new one. It is not enough to challenge an old narrative, however outdated and discredited it may be. Change happens only when you replace it with another … a story that learns from the past, places us in the present and guides the future.[187]

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[185] Monbiot, *Out of the Wreckage*, 76.

[186] Block, *Community*, 1.

[187] Monbiot, *Out of the Wreckage*, 1.

Summary of the Interview Findings

The themes that surfaced during the pastor interviews in chapter 4 were identified, organized, and presented in accord with the research questions that directed this study—as summarized below.

Themes that Emerged Under "Biblical Impetuses"

Our Oneness in Christ. Each of the pastors spoke of believers' unity, our oneness in Christ as being a fundamental biblical impetus. Pastor Art captured this well. "Everything has to lead from that place, 'who we are.' It can't start from who we are ethnically, that's what the world does. For us it has to start with who we are. We are one! We're not trying to be one, we are one!"

The Great Commission. Several pastors also spoke of the Great Commission as being a fundamental biblical impetus. On this Pastor Evan reflected:

> Having grown up in the Jim Crow south, that's my history in terms of my personal journey. I remember signs in my small town that I lived in and grew up in, where there were signs that say 'white' and 'colored.' Different water fountains. And I remember as if it happened yesterday, my first real encounter with racism. At that point in my life when I was introduced to this evil—this specter that judged me and condemned me because of the color of my skin. And yet, despite that, when God called me to ministry, He placed in my spirit an openness to reach out and to engage and to interact with others, particularly those who didn't look like me. I've always felt that the Great Commission inherently is inclusive.

Relatedly, Pastor Brad recounted, "Seeing the New Testament pattern of proactively going after the different races caused me to ask, in what ways do we need to be proactive?"

The Second Great Commandment. Each of the pastors identified a prevailing love for our brothers and sisters in Christ as being a fundamental biblical impetus for this work. Some spoke to this more conceptually, others more directly. More conceptually, Pastor

Chris spoke of abiding by this commandment in terms of embracing and living out the selfless, prevailing-love-for-others kind of life depicted in the idyllic, Acts 2 Church. He said, "You get a picture of it, of the first-century [Church], and I like to label [this church] as a first-century church in the twenty-first century. So, they've given us the model of how a church ought to act and be. To live out the true teachings of Jesus and the Spirit of Jesus Christ. And, so, it's a process. But that's the goal." More directly, Pastor Frank attested, "Loving your neighbor as yourself. I mean, racial reconciliation is just about being obedient to the Second Great Commandment."

Themes that Emerged Under "Identifying the Challenges"

Fear. Categorically, the pastor interviews revealed that the expression of fear was observed as a challenge for both Anglo- and African-American believers. However, the particular manifestations of fear varied between the two:

1. *Fear of losing the worship or music style*. The fear of losing one's cultural expression of worship or music style was a commonly voiced concern. But this was observed more by the Anglo pastors. But, that may have been due to each of the Anglo-American pastors being engaged in marked efforts to pursue diversity within their church contexts. So, making the required changes to the worship and music style was an experienced, felt reality. Pastor Art identifies that possible point of distinction when he spoke about this from the perspective of his African-American church context; "There wasn't a real concern about losing worship style because we're not merging churches … Now if we were talking about merging churches, then yes, that would be a thing." In the wake of efforts to make those music style changes, Pastor Frank observed, "People just had this affection for the

music they liked and loved. And I get that. But, what price are we willing to pay to be obedient to Christ?"

2. *Fear of losing a cultural haven*. This surfaced primarily during the African-American pastor interviews. In light of the deep wounds of racism, Pastor Evan provided key insights into this when he described what the African-American church has meant historically for African-American brothers and sisters. He said, "What the African American church has meant to our community is that for many years it was an asylum, a sanctuary. I'm not just talking about a holy sanctuary, but a relational sanctuary. Years ago, particularly in the throes of Jim Crow south, it was the only place you could go where you could feel as if you were somebody." Affirming the present reality of this fear, Pastor Art said, "This is the one place where they go that is not white run, that is not white culture. They live their entire lives in white culture in America in their jobs and in their schools. Whatever else they do is white controlled. This is the one safe place they had."
3. *Fear of losing control and comfort*. Closely related to the previous fear, *fear of losing a cultural haven*, this particular expression was observed more so by the Anglo pastors. Pastor Brad identified the fear that "we're going to lose control" as a primary challenge. On this Pastor Frank recognized that discipleship always comes at a cost, and that often the cost is our own preferences and the control to maintain those. He attested, "We cannot obey the Great Commission unless we're willing to pay a big price for it. Jesus paid a big price for it and we will too. Or we should decide we're not that interested in obeying the Great Commission. Let's just be honest. But you can't have your cake and eat it too."

4. *Fear of conflict and losing your job*. This final area of fear was observed by both Anglo- and African-American pastors. They both witnessed the reality of push-back to the work of reconciliation from church leaders and congregants. Sometimes that resulted merely in uncomfortable and frustrating conflict. Other times it resulted in a pastor being pushed out of the church. On this Pastor Evan spoke of the importance of building relational capital, "pastoral capital," before trying to make weighty changes in a church's direction or introducing major initiatives. He said, "If I'm talking to a new pastor, I'm going to tell him, it's probably going to be five to six years in that position you have, that role. You're going to have to earn the respect of your congregants." Speaking specifically to leading a church in the work of reconciliation, he added, "You can't do that kind of thing, that kind of ministry, from a position of weakness."

Anger. The expression of anger was observed by almost all pastors interviewed. However, it surfaced during the interviews predominantly in terms of the understandable anger expressed by African-American brothers and sisters in response to the deep wounds of racism. Recalling his own experiences with racism, Pastor Evan described his senior year in high school as "Just horrific. It was terrible. So much prejudice. So much racism: blatant." Reflecting on the dysfunctional nature of racism itself and, consequently, the dysfunctional environment it creates, he said, "That cripples a lot of people of color." He added, "And I've encountered people, African Americans who are very bitter about it." Focusing on the church in America today, he said, "Some people, unfortunately, even some pastors in my denomination and others who are African American, they can't make that step toward reconciliation because they hold onto the bitterness."

Distrust. The theme of distrust emerged in almost all of the interviews. But while the theme was common among them, the particular expressions of that varied significantly.

1. *Keep an eye on the white guys*. African Americans' distrust of Anglo Americans was spoken of in each of the pastor interviews. Pastor Art articulated this concern particularly well when he said, "For most black people, part of the subtext that you're brought up with is that you don't trust white people. You just don't. And depending on your background, that can be more or less amplified."
2. *You want to steal our sheep*. Pastor Brad also experienced African-American believers' distrust of Anglos when he was engaging with African-American congregations in the work of reconciliation—while at the same time working within the church he was pastoring to make it more inclusive. He said, "I learned from African-American pastors and friends that unless that's stated very carefully, it comes across as, we want to take the people out of your church." In his response, Pastor Brad applied a healing balm to past wounds and present distrust; "We're into repenting of the days when we blocked the doors to the church. And we're trying to do this for gospel reasons. But we are not trying to steal your people."
3. *All-aboard the reconciliation bandwagon*. Pastor Frank also observed distrust. But this distrust was expressed by other Anglo-American believers questioning the motives behind his reconciling, unifying efforts. He said, "There's a natural and understandable push-back if people in the church feel like this is politically motivated. So, there's political correctness. And 'reconciliation' may be the bandwagon phrase." But, he added, "Love always seeks to reconcile people.

That's what God's love is like. So, it's not politically motivated. Reconciliation is not a political thing. If the world wants to do their form of it, that's fine. More power to them. But that's not what motivates us." In this case, the distrust was born of suspicion that "the church is just following the world." Pastor Frank observed firsthand that "it's a big issue for some people." Reflecting further, he concluded, "Some of my regrets around that are that I didn't earlier make the biblical case for a multi-ethnic church."

Guilt and Shame. Two pastors in particular emphasized how Anglo Americans' feelings of guilt and shame over racist actions—or inactions in the face of racism—can present formidable challenges to pastors' reconciling, uniting efforts. Pastor Brad observed this during his efforts to bring in African-American pastors to preach on the theme of reconciliation in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He said, "I got a lot of blow back from it before it ever started. Not from a lot of people. Overwhelmingly, again, it was eagerly anticipated. But the few opponents were very vocal." One of the prevailing vocalized concerns was born of guilt and shame; "Why are we bringing in these people to rub our noses in it, to punish us, to bring back the old days?"

Surprise. Several pastors observed this as an area of challenge, in both Anglo- and African-American congregations. In light of African Americans' present-day life experiences with racism, the surprise typically expressed by Anglo Americans was "I had no idea!" Conversely, the corresponding surprise expressed by African Americans was "How could you not know this?"

1. *I had no idea!* On this Pastor Art recounted, "I knew from interacting with our white brothers, I knew there was going to be ignorance and offenses that was

going to be said." He recognized that these were not malicious in nature. Rather, in his experience, Anglos have revealed "ignorant, ill-informed, naïve, and sometimes over-reductionistic thinking in regard to race." But it hadn't been malicious. He said he "knew that was going to be a thing coming in. And it was."

2. *How could you not know this?* Pastor Art also helpfully depicted African Americans' sense of wonder over Anglos' lack of knowledge of African Americans' present-day experiences with racism. He said, "I think for black people, when they encounter that naivete, they are shocked at how can you not know this. You don't know that this is my experience?" Thinking about what lies behind that and the underlying assumptions, he said, "I think black people underestimate the distance many whites, particularly suburban whites, have from this. There is so much distance. And so, because they [African Americans] don't know the level of distance, they take the ignorance for malicious actions."

Themes that Emerged Under "Working Through the Challenges"

Prayer. Pastor Evan spoke of the unwavering importance of prayer in this work. He said, "You have to spend that time with God and allow Him to impregnate you with that vision, with that perspective." Likewise emphasizing that God is the one accomplishing this work in and through us, Pastor Frank said, "I think this stuff teaches you to pray, because you're in over your head. You're not going to do this if you think you can go out there with some worldly wisdom and some great passion. If God doesn't work, it's not going to happen. It teaches us to pray and not lose heart."

The Gospel. Each of the pastors spoke of the essential role the power of the gospel and the redemptive biblical narrative has played in their efforts to help congregants work

through the aforementioned challenges. On this Pastor Art recalled, "I had a conversation one-on-one with one of our church leaders and he was literally like, 'Why do we need to do this? We don't need to be doing this. We need to leave them white folks alone.'" Pastor Art said this shocked him because the man "was a pretty mature Christian." He added, "For this man, I responded to him with Scripture." Viewing the present division through the lens of the gospel and our unity in Christ, he said, "There is the need to transcend our ethnicity and our history in order to be the Church. It's not like we don't say it never happened but we have to be the church. And that means for us, as the people of God, that we have to push through that anger, some of that discomfort and get to a place where we can live out what is true of us. Because we are one with them."

Friendship. Each of the pastors spoke of the fundamental role that personal friendship plays in working through the challenges. Several aspects of friendship surfaced during the interviews. But overwhelmingly, the most heavily emphasized was the conviction that friendship must begin with the pastors.

1. *It's Not Bottom-Up, It's Really Top-Down*. Pastor Evan emphasized that the work of reconciliation "begins with the pastors. It's not bottom-up, it's really top-down." Sharing some sage advice, he concluded, "It's not a detailed plan. It's dedicated persons. That's what it is. That's what I've been looking for to tell you. It's not a detailed plan, it's dedicated persons. And you can say, dedicated pastors. Because at the end of the day, this is not going to happen in our churches until it happens in us." Pastor Brad also testified to the power of pastoral relationships to affect healthy change—first and foremost, in the

hearts and minds of the pastors themselves. Experience had shown him that "stereotypes get broken down when you become friends."

2. *Sinfully Exaggerated Differences*. Relatedly, several pastors emphasized that initially, Anglo and African Americans have exaggerated perceptions of their differences. Pastor Art spoke directly to how growing in our personal friendships—and specifically in the understanding of our common ground—had been helpful in working through the challenges. He said, "It has to start with friendship, with common ground." He added, "I've come to the conclusion that our differences are greatly exaggerated. I think they are massively, sinfully exaggerated. There is way more common ground than we acknowledge. As Christians we have a whole lot of common ground and that is Jesus. And so, I would say, start there with relationships—genuine relationships—genuine friendships."
3. *Growing Beyond Ignorant White Person and Patient Black Person*. In the context of these developing, maturing relationships, Pastor Art described what he has observed regarding how these relationships grow in knowledge and understanding of each other, particularly in terms of each other's perspectives and life-experiences. At the same time, he said, "What I think that calls for is patience from my African American brothers. Because whites really don't know." But, he also emphasized that the relationship needs to grow beyond that. "The relationship has to grow from ignorant white person and patient black person."

Acknowledgement. Several pastors spoke directly to the mutual acknowledgement of the underlying sin and wounds of racism as being critical to working through the challenges. Emphasizing that point, Pastor Art said, "We have to start there. And then we can go other places." Relatedly, Pastor Brad stressed the importance of acknowledging and repenting of the sin of racism. In support of that, he described instances where he observed the fruitfulness of that in the life of his congregation. In some cases, this was observed in terms of individuals acknowledging and repenting of their own sins. In other cases, it was observed in terms of repenting of the sins of their forefathers.

Education. Most pastors emphasized education as being important to helping congregants work through the challenges. The topics of education that surfaced during the interviews were comprehensive in terms of American history—of past and present racism and its effects—and how that should be addressed in light of biblical redemptive history. These pastors' educational, friendship developing, gospel-healing efforts were affected through large and small group discussions, group book studies, and Sunday school classes. While some topics were common to both Anglo and African Americans, others were more specific to one or the other:

1. *Both-And's*. These pastors emphasized that not only does this work begin with pastors developing genuine friendships with each other across Anglo- and African-American lines, but also it entails pastors preparing their own congregations for this pursuit—a preparatory work that starts with church leadership. Pastor Evan made this point when he highlighted the need to invest time instilling the vision first and foremost within the church leadership team. In step with that, Pastor Dave also spoke of the need to prepare church

leaders well in advance to healthily engage in the life of an increasing diverse context. Further describing the need to instill openness to change—even within the leadership team itself—he added, "If there are changes, okay, let's have them join the leadership. God's doing something. People need to be represented. And we don't want to miss something." Several pastors spoke not only of the need to effectively instill that vision on the front end, but also to keep that in front of the church over time. For instance, from its inception, Pastor Frank's congregation desired to become multi-ethnic—that was a part of its fundamental DNA. But, as time went on, that did not come into being and that initial vision faded from view. Now years later, he spoke of the resistance he experienced to renewed efforts in that direction. "I assumed too much from the history that I knew of [this church's] effort to be an integrated congregation. I assumed that we were still all on board for that. And when it began to require a cost, that's when stuff hit the fan." In the wake of that, he stressed the need to keep the inclusive vision in front of congregants, both its long-term and new members. Without which, the congregation will lose sight of that. Along with the need to continually reiterate and re-embrace the vision, these pastors stressed the importance of educating congregants on history. More specifically, Pastor Frank said, "Somehow emphasize the importance of history. I'm talking about biblical history; but, how does the American story fit in with the larger redemptive history?" The need to educate congregants on how to engage others of another ethnicity was also noted. Here, Pastor Dave spoke of instructing members to openly acknowledge and delight in the

beauty of our God-given differences. He recounted hearing a congregant say, "Well, I don't see black, I don't see any color." To that he said, "That's preposterous. That's insulting to tell somebody you don't see any difference. God made all these differences. That's just completely ridiculous. It's just like if a bunch of guys are standing in a room and a woman walks in, and they say, we don't see gender."

2. *More Anglo American Specific*. Several pastors offered helpful insights into educational needs and challenges that are more specific to Anglo Americans. Pastor Brad said, "Whatever opportunity you have to prepare people to listen more than they speak or to ask questions, that usually leads to lots of good insight." Echoing the importance of these perspective-enlightening efforts, Pastor Dave affirmed, "Among whites, there needs to be a conversation, education first before there is any engagement. There has to be a kind of homework before people do this." Pastor Frank agreed on the importance of education, but emphasized Anglos' need to grow in their understanding of history and African-American traditions. In celebration of African-American church traditions and expressions of worship, he emphatically stated, "The black church tradition is just as valuable as the white church tradition. I don't think we have that sense in the Anglo." On that, he encouraged pastors to do "the hard work of learning black culture."
3. *More African American Specific.* Two pastors offered helpful insights into educational needs and challenges that are more specific to African Americans. Pastor Dave observed that "prejudice and racism are not limited to any one

> group of people. It's a sin. And for some African Americans, they believe that it's impossible. And thanks to liberation theology and different types of stuff, they've made victimhood an idolatry. To where, because I'm a victim I'm morally better. It's not biblical. And so, it's incumbent upon African-American pastors or pastors of color never to allow that to take place." Pastor Frank also identified an educational need—one that he observed across African-American generational lines. In the midst of the protests after Michael Brown's death, he attended an event "for clergy or faith communities." At this event, younger African Americans shouted down the older leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. He added, "Basically, the protesters were saying this is our protest. And they distanced themselves from the Civil Rights Movement. Personally, I think that was a terrible mistake and historically questionable. [The younger generation] didn't show much respect for the Civil Rights Movement that brought us here, or brought them there. So, to me, that was unfortunate. And it was a little frustrating for the older African Americans. Basically, because these younger people are standing on the shoulders of the people who had come before them."

Joint-Congregation Events and Ministries. Each of the pastors emphasized joint-congregational events and ministries as being essential in their efforts to help congregants work through the challenges in pursuit of koinonia. Regarding initial, introductory inter-congregational events, Pastor Dave said, "Some people are so cynical that they will pooh-pooh engagements, soft interactions. But you've got to start somewhere. And then you can be intentional about rolling in a little bit more in-depth stuff. But you've got to start

with people seeing each other as people first. We have to meet people where they are." Reflecting on the various church events he helped lead, Pastor Evan said, "I think one of the most powerful things that we did was the table talk. And then the incentive that we gave in that setting for groups to continue that dialogue." Recalling those groups' engagement over time and their varying abilities to work through the challenges, he added, "Some groups did that better than others. Some groups still interact. And some don't, because they weren't able to overcome that hurdle—the woundedness on one side and denial on the other, or the lack of sensitivity on the other." But despite the challenges, with stern resolve he concluded, "There has to be engagement. But there has to be sensitivity too. But apathy is not an option. It's just not an option."

Black Leadership. Most of the pastors stressed the importance of African-American leadership in the process of working through the challenges—particularly for Anglo congregations whose aim is to become diverse in its membership. Pastor Art insightfully identified a fundamental challenge to this when he recognized that "most white Christians" and "most white Christian leadership" would welcome African Americans into their congregations; "But the question becomes, for what? Do you want to actually empower me to lead the culture—actually inviting Christians of color in to strategically shape the culture of the white churches and institutions?" He added, "I think this is particularly important. I think white Christian leaders need to sit under black Christian leadership. I don't even think the conversation is real until white Christians do that." Broadly, he observed that "normally when people talk about racial reconciliation, they're talking about black folks coming into white spaces. But what I think needs to happen more often is white folks moving into black spaces and sitting under black leadership. Or

second-best scenario, is that black people go into white organizations and actually shape and control the culture." Similarly, Pastor Brad stressed the importance of hiring African-American pastors. But he then further stressed the need for Anglo pastors to intentionally step aside to make room for them. He said, "This is the kind of thing that it's going to take to really, really catapult forward a majority culture church into multi-ethnicity. It's going to involve some sacrifice by white leaders who can make room," even at the senior pastor level.

Themes that Emerged Under "Growth Through the Challenges"

Sense of Our Oneness in Christ (They good. We good. Why?). Pastor Brad was one of the pastors who observed this area of growth. He observed, "One mark of growth would be someone's simple willingness to accept someone of a different race as a brother or sister in Christ." Similarly, Pastor Art recounted his progression of conversations with brothers and sisters in his congregation. He said, "People who initially asked 'why are we doing this? … They good. We good. Why?' … A lot of those folks came to me later and said, 'You know, I was skeptical at first but I didn't know how much I needed this.'" Further clarifying his point, he said, "l saw people grow as they recognized the need that this is what we need for the church, and personally, this is who we are. This is more truly who we are than being a black church. This is more truly who we are together."

Patience (Waiting on the Lord). Pastor Brad recognized growth in himself, namely growth in patience as he needed to *wait on the Lord* in the face of overt racism. He lamented, "But still, there are people here who are overt racists." In the midst of that reality, he reflected on an initial racial reconciliation effort and the "surprising attacks" he experienced by the handful of overt racists in his congregation. But in the wake of that,

he said, “It has also been good for me. It hasn’t been pleasant. But it’s been good for me to be forced to wait for the Lord to build credibility for me.”

Humility, Repentance and Prayer (Love is Not Schmaltzy). Pastor Frank observed growth in himself in this area. He said, “I just think it makes you more dependent. It makes you realize how little you know about loving, period. Whether it’s in your family, your marriage, because love is costly. And I think too often we want love to be schmaltzy and sweet, but it’s painful. It cost Christ his life to redeem us. It’s not going to cost the disciples greater than the Master.” Building on that, he added, “And then praying; it teaches you to pray and I think it humbles you, or it should.” Reflecting on this area of growth in his congregants, Pastor Brad said, “I think another fruit has been people, parishioners recognizing that we bear responsibility for our forefathers’ sins. And we must repent of that. But also recognizing that repenting of it is a redemptive act. Because it not only provides healing for the person who is repenting, it provides healing for the person of a different race to whom you are repenting.” Describing the ongoing fruit and blessings of that growth, he concluded, “We ask for forgiveness for what our people have done. And so, that’s growth. And that opens worlds of relationships.”

Obedience (A Spiritual Transaction). Pastor Evan spoke to this continuing area of growth, both personally and in the church. He observed that “the spiritual transaction, the transformation that takes place, to me, has a lot to do with the blessings that come to us from obedience. Just being obedient and being faithful to what God has given you.”

Discussion of Findings

In this section, the findings from the pastor interviews are discussed in light of both the literature review and the researcher's own experiences. Because this discussion hinges around the pastor interviews, it is organized by the research question headers and resulting theme sub-headers.

Biblical Impetuses

I found it interesting and important to note that the three biblical impetuses the pastors identified as compelling in this work directly corresponded with the three aspects of our oneness in Christ that were identified in the theological study. Specifically, the corresponding areas are: 1) *Our Oneness in Christ* and *Our Oneness in Being*, 2) *The Great Commission* and *Our Oneness in Purpose*, and 3) *The Second Great Commandment* and *Our Oneness in Mutual-Glorification* (i.e. deferring and being "disposable"[188]—accessible, readily available—to one another, and edifying one another).

Our Oneness in Christ and *Our Oneness in Being*

Pastor Art summarized well the pastors' prevailing sentiment on *Our Oneness in Christ* when he said, "Everything has to lead from that place, 'who we are.' It can't start from who we are ethnically, that's what the world does. For us it has to start with who we are. We are one! We're not trying to be one, we are one!" The literature review supported his stance. Here we recall Gary Burge's recognition that "Jesus says that the oneness we

[188] Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 481.

experience with him should lead to a oneness we experience with one another."[189] Along with that, the literature review authors insightfully emphasized that unity does not mean sameness. Rather, this unity maintains and honors the distinctiveness of its diverse parts—as sameness is neither the ideal nor the aim. However, while the church in America may embrace that in theory, in practice it largely embraces *sameness* as both the ideal and the aim. This is evident in the challenges pastors faced in their cross-cultural pursuits of koinonia. There we saw that the desire for *sameness* lies at the root of our division (i.e. racism) and the challenges to overcoming that division (e.g., racism, the unwillingness to incorporate other cultural expressions of worship in order to be inclusive).

The Great Commission and *Our Oneness in Purpose*

The Lord Jesus commands His people in Matthew 28:19-20a to, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." Focusing on the "all nations" portion of the Great Commission, Pastor Evan spoke of the healing, unifying power of the Lord in his heart that compelled Him toward racial inclusivity, even in light of his own deeply painful experiences with racism. Pastor Brad also focused on the Great Commission. Recalling his own journey, he said, "I had begun to develop the conviction that a passive acceptance of mono-ethnic church was disobedience and contrary to the gospel." The literature review supported these pastors' views and convictions. Here Robert Yarbrough effectively tied together the missional importance of 1) the Son's unity of being and purpose with the Father, 2) the diverse

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[189] Burge, *John*, 479.

community of believers' concurrent unity of being and purpose in Christ, and 3) the crucial missional aim of that "unity and love."

> So the world may believe (17:20-23). Jesus concluded His prayer with a sweeping glance across the centuries of church history to come. He prayed for Christians of all ages who have believed in the testimony … of His first disciples (v. 20). Specifically, He prayed for their unity (v. 21). As Father and Son are united in person and purpose, there should be a melding of personalities, livelihoods, and goals among believers for the cause of Christ and His kingdom. This unity is crucial for 'the world' to come to faith in Jesus. For the gospel gains or loses credibility in the eyes of unbelievers to the extent that Jesus' followers show forth God's own unity and love.[190]

At this point in the story, the church in America broadly appears unwilling to put into practice a prevailing love for others, a prevailing love for others that includes deferring to one another's leadership and cultural expression of worship. It appears unwilling to put into practice the alluring, world-reaching beauty of our harmonious diversity in unity in Christ—in light of the costs of control and worship preferences that accompany that.

The Second Great Commandment and *Our Oneness in Mutual-Glorification*

In Matthew 22:37-39, the Lord Jesus identifies the two Great Commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Pastor Chris spoke to abiding by the Second Great Commandment in terms of embracing and living out the selfless, prevailing-love-for-others kind of life depicted in the idyllic, Acts 2 Church. He asserts, "When you can meet people's need physically, spiritually, and emotionally—and really strive towards that real koinonia, that fellowship—adopt a model of the first-century church. Make it in the twenty-first century. I mean, you're not doing nothing new here." The literature study on

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[190] Yarbrough, *John*, 175.

the "Biblical Use and Meaning of Koinonia" fully supports Pastor Chris' view, as biblical koinonia was characterized by deep familial *fellowship*, heartfelt *sharing* in each other's needs, and *willing contributions* to meet those needs. Emphasizing the power of love to both motivate efforts toward and affect reconciliation, Pastor Frank emphasized that "this is always what motivated me. It's really an issue of love. In the Old Testament, one of the Hebrew words for love is aháv [אהב]. And one of the meanings is 'striving to overcome distance.'" Here Pastor Frank provided a beautiful depiction of the power of love to "overcome distance," to close the grievous emotional, relational, and physical gap between Anglo- and African-American believers in the church today. Relatedly, theologian John Frame connected for us *The Second Great Commandment*—to "love your neighbor as yourself"—with *Our Oneness in Mutual Glorification*. He writes, "the concept of mutual glorification suggests an important way in which Christians can be like the members of the Trinity: we, too, are called to defer to one another in this way, to glorify one another, to be disposable [accessible, readily available] to one another's purposes, that is, to love one another as God loved us."[191] This distance-closing, mutually available care and concern kind of love is largely absent in church in America—at least between Anglo- and African-Americans. Instead the church looks like the civic leaders' depiction of the isolated state of community today. Instead of pursuing koinonia through building outward-looking *bridging social capital*, the church in America looks like a society that has solely embraced inward-looking *bonding social capital*. Consequently, instead of being a united, harmonious witness to the world around us, the church looks

[191] Frame, *Systematic Theology*, 481.

"like Belfast or Bosnia—segregated into mutually hostile camps." [192] Acknowledging both the difficulty and need of building *bridging social capital* in a diverse context, Putnam & Feldstein write, "The kind of social capital that is most essential for healthy public life in an increasingly diverse society like ours is precisely the kind that is hardest to build."[193] Building *bridging social capital* between Anglo and African Americans will require hard, love-born work on each other's part. Each will have to do the hard work of moving toward one another in love, humility, and grace. It will require us to do the hard work of dying to our prevailing love of self and living in accord with the prevailing love of others that is ours in Christ—a prevailing love for others that is manifested in lived-out expressions of heartfelt concern and attending care for each other's needs and wounds.

Identifying the Challenges

Pastor Chris leads us well into this discussion when he said, "Because of our history and because of our culture, and because of the racism that's ingrained and instituted into the very fiber of our society, we always have to continually be working towards" experiencing our unity in Christ—who is our one true foundation that supersedes everything. Emphasizing the depth of pain caused by racism, he tellingly said there's "not only a lot of pain, but a lot of hurt. And there's no hurt like a church hurt." In these observations, Pastor Chris identified racism and the deep hurts of racism as the two main drivers behind this division—a notably deeply painful division within the church. In doing so, he also identifies these as the two main challenges to the pursuit of koinonia.

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[192] Putnam and Feldstein, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*, 2–3.

[193] Putnam and Feldstein, 3.

The other pastors agreed, but they also observed these root challenges being expressed through core human emotions: 1) Fear, 2) Anger, 3) Distrust, 4) Guilt and Shame, and 5) Surprise. A few of the more strongly emphasized expressions are discussed below.

Fear of Losing the Worship or Music Style

The Anglo pastors in particular observed this fear as a significant concern among their congregants. For instance, Pastor Brad observed that "there's a fear that we're going to lose the 'quality' of our music and worship. So, the implicit racism is white, western European classical music is quality and anything else is beneath us." Other expressions of this fear stemmed from unwillingness to let go of personal preference in order to be inclusive. Pastor Frank recounted, "People just had this affection for the music they liked and loved. And I get that. But, what price are we willing to pay to be obedient to Christ?" Like most pastors I suspect, I was told early on to "not mess with the worship space"—no matter how minor a change may appear, it is a big deal. Notably, those warnings were given in the context of making changes within established cultural confines. So, where changing the color of the sanctuary walls would be problematic, changing the complexion of the worship style would be foundation rocking. I say this in recognition of the prevailing white-elitist attitude I have also heard regarding the "quality," the "theological richness and depth," of western hymns—alongside the low-estimation of the relatively "simple," "repetitive" African-American gospels. On this, Anglo pastors have work to do in learning (and educating Anglo congregants on) the African-American church culture, growing in appreciation and delight of the richness of that tradition and expression, and incorporating the best of both traditions—all in pursuit of koinonia and inclusivity. The reason I focus more on Anglos in this need is because African-Americans

are already largely bi-cultural. By necessity, they are already familiar with and have some appreciation for aspects of Anglo worship music and styles—along with their critiques on Anglos' relatively "stiff" style of worship.

Fear of Losing a Cultural Haven

This fear surfaced primarily during the African-American pastor interviews. Pastor Evan depicted well what the African-American church has meant historically for African-American brothers and sisters—describing it as "a relational sanctuary." Where, "in the throes of Jim Crow south, it was the only place you could go where you could feel as if you were somebody." Against that historical backdrop, Pastor Art also observed that the fear of losing that African-American cultural haven is very much a present reality. Therefore, going into intentional efforts to pursue relationship with Anglo brothers and sisters, he "knew there were going to be people in our church who did not feel that this is something we needed to be doing." He noted that this was particularly challenging for his congregants because they lived and worked in predominately white areas; "They interact in white America all week long." And so, the church is "the one safe place that they have. This is the one place where they go that is not white run, that is not white culture. They live their entire lives in white culture in America in their jobs and in their schools. Whatever else they do is white controlled. This is the one safe place they had." Further filling out the underlying sentiment expressed by some members, he recounted, "It was like, hey, we want to be cordial to white people but that's enough. Yah, we'll be friendly, we'll be peaceable. We can even come over, we can have a worship service, we can hold hands and sing kumbaya. And that's enough!" The idea of a cultural haven is foreign to Anglos because we live in an Anglo culture and are not required to engage with minority

cultures in order to function. That said, Anglos need to be mindful of what the African-American church has meant and currently does mean to African-American brothers and sisters; and that for them, to intentionally move out of that space is an understandably hard thing to do—particularly amid the deep, grievous wounds of racism. For my African-American brothers and sisters wrestling through this weighty challenge, I point you to Pastor Art's loving exhortation. "For African Americans who are dealing with the pain, the PTSD and the history of the black experience in America, I'm always sensitive to affirm those feelings and fears because they are real. But also, for Christians, I have to call you beyond that. If you're a black person in America, you can just sit in that anger .... But, I'm going to have to challenge you and say that how do we not bury the anger but how do we work toward reconciliation, or conciliation, because we've never been reconciled in this country."

Distrust: Keep an Eye on the White Guys

Pastor Art articulated this concern well when he said, "For most black people, part of the subtext that you're brought up with is that you don't trust white people. You just don't. And depending on your background, that can be more or less amplified." He added, "You know, you're a little bit more careful, you listen a little more carefully when you're dealing with white folks … I do think the general disposition was positive. But for many there was a sense of, *keep an eye on the white guys*." Trust has to be earned in any relationship—even when that begins on neutral ground, without a backstory. But because of the distance Anglos have from African Americans' past and present life-experiences, Anglos tend to enter into relationships with African Americans thinking that they are starting with a clean slate. But Anglos must be aware that is not the case. Even though

there is no backstory between two individuals, there is a long, deeply formative backstory in terms of Anglos oppressing and taking advantage of African Americans. Such that, Anglos are viewed with deep distrust and suspicion at the get-go. That said, building and instilling trust in these relationships will likely be a much longer process.

Distrust: All-Aboard the Reconciliation Bandwagon

Pastor Frank also observed distrust. But this distrust was expressed by other Anglo-American believers questioning the motives behind his reconciling, unifying efforts. He said, "There's a natural and understandable push-back if people in the church feel like that this is politically motivated. So, there's political correctness. And 'reconciliation' may be the bandwagon phrase." But he added, "Love always seeks to reconcile people. That's what God's love is like. So, it's not politically motivated. Reconciliation is not a political thing. If the world wants to do their form of it, that's fine. More power to them. But that's not what motivates us." In this case, the distrust was born of suspicion that "the church is just following the world." Pastor Frank observed firsthand that "it's a big issue for some people." Reflecting further, he concluded, "Some of my regrets around that are that I didn't earlier make the biblical case for a multi-ethnic church." I have also heard the phrase "reconciliation bandwagon" from Anglo pastors pushing back against intentional efforts toward reconciliation and inclusivity. But in my experience, this push back has been born of lack of understanding. Here Pastor Art's insights come back to mind, "I think black people underestimate the distance many whites, particularly suburban whites, have from this. There is so much distance." In light of that reality, if you are an Anglo brother or sister, and you find yourself thinking that present-day racial division and strife is simply being fabricated by news agencies to spur

viewership or by special interest groups to further their own agendas—and then churches' subsequent involvement in racial reconciliation is simply playing into their hands or is politically motivated—then I would candidly affirm Pastor Arts' observation that there is a terrible distance between you and African Americans' life experiences and that you don't understand. I don't say that as an Anglo who professes full knowledge of the African-American experience. Rather, I say that as someone who didn't understand. But through God's precious gifts of deep friendships with African-American brothers and sisters, I'm beginning to understand. I'm listening. And after saying innumerable times, "I had no idea!", I'm starting to see through their eyes and recognize the hurtful, divisive forces that have been and are now at work in our broader culture and the church today.

Working Through the Challenges

Prayer

Pastor Frank emphasized that God is the one accomplishing this work in and through us and, therefore, he said, "I think this stuff teaches you to pray, because you're in over your head. You're not going to do this if you think you can go out there with some worldly wisdom and some great passion. If God doesn't work, it's not going to happen. It teaches us to pray and not lose heart." Spiritual work is God's work. And so, we're never up to the task—we're always in over our heads. And that spurs us on in prayer to seek His will for His church and to partner with others of His choosing, in accord with His timing and purposes in and through us.

Friendship: It's Not Bottom-Up, It's Really Top-Down

Pastor Evan emphatically stated that the pursuit of reconciliation and koinonia "begins with the pastors. *It's not bottom-up, it's really top-down*." He said, "It's not a

detailed plan, it's dedicated persons. And you can say, dedicated pastors. Because at the end of the day, this is not going to happen in our churches until it happens in us." Literature review author George Monbiot also embraced a top down approach, but he coupled that with a bottom-up approach—as one unified effort to rectify the prevailing division in society and nurture the development and experience of healthy community. Yet, he emphasized the relative importance of the top-down approach to affect change.[194] In my experience, I agree that the pursuit of koinonia between Anglo- and African-American congregations must begin with the pastors—from the top down. The pastors must first develop genuine friendships. Experience has also shown me how contagious these genuine friendships can be to congregants. As they see the alluring beauty of these pastoral relationships, they long for that themselves. And when that happens, pastors are well-positioned to lead their congregations to move toward each other. At that point, Monbiot's broader approach comes into play—that is, a concurring top-down and bottom-up approach—yet, with an ongoing emphasis on the top-down aspect.

Acknowledgement

Several pastors in particular spoke directly to mutual acknowledgement of the underlying sin and wounds of racism as being essential to working through the challenges. Pastor Art candidly captured that when he said, "You don't get to roll up and say, 'what problem?' It's one thing to be ignorant of the problem, but it's another to say there is no problem or that you need to get over it. You know you don't have the right to tell a whole community that they need to get over it, as a member of the offending people group. That's crazy. That's what we call 'whitesplaining.'" Along with the need to

[194] Monbiot, *Out of the Wreckage*, 76.

mutually acknowledge the problem, is the need to initially work through the problem—at least to some degree—at the outset. Conversely, in the literature review, Peter Block argued that we must not focus on problems but rather on envisioning a brighter future together. His argument reflects a sentiment expressed by some Anglos today, i.e. "That was a long time ago. Get over it and let's move on." But dismissing and overlooking the problem in favor of envisioning a brighter future together will not work in this case. Here Monbiot's approach is more on target; "Change happens only when you replace it [a story] with another … a story that learns from the past, places us in the present and guides the future"[195] Pastor Art affirmed how key acknowledging and working through the problems is to being able to move forward in relationship, life, and ministry together. He said, "We have to start there. And then we can go other places." My experience fully supports Pastor Art's argument. For example, during an initial joint-congregation event—that took place in the wake of tragic shooting deaths of African-Americans—our congregations gathered together to pray about this, along with other areas of great concern in our country. The prayer service first addressed one of the other national concerns. In the midst of that, one African-American brother stood and said to the Anglos there that he couldn't join them in prayer over these other issues until they addressed the race issue first.

Education

Pastor Evan emphasized the importance of education when he highlighted the need to invest time instilling the vision first and foremost within the church leadership team. Along with the need to effectively instill that vision on the front end, the need to

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[195] Monbiot, 1.

keep that in front of the church over time was also stressed during the interviews. Otherwise, the vision gets lost over time—even if it was initially embedded within a church's DNA. The pastors also stressed the importance of educating congregants on history. Pastor Frank said, "I'd try to cultivate an interest in the bigger story and how we're related to that—that people realize that we're living out the story now folks. This is not just stuff that happened years ago. It's been handed down to us. And what are we going to do with it?" Accordingly, he challenged the church to ask, "What's our place in that? Do we want to be a part of that, or do we want to just go to a church where we like everybody and everything's fine?" He fully realized that, "Dealing with the historical part is going to be painful, and your feelings are going to get hurt, and you're going to hear things that make you mad." But he also saw that a way pastors can help congregants work through that is to instill "a strong interest in the biblical story and how the American story that we are now living out is related to that larger story." Relatedly, the authors in the literature review highlighted the particularly unifying power of storytelling. For instance, Putnam and Feldstein write, "Protagonists of our cases have discovered an impressive array of strategies for finding unifying themes in the presence of diversity. Storytelling itself turns out to be an unusually effective technique in this regard, as does the creation of common spaces, both physical and virtual." By effectively placing us as God's family in the context of the overarching biblical narrative—of God's grand redemptive story that spans the whole of human history—we embrace our identity and purpose in Christ, as He is both our unifying theme and our common spiritual space in our shared physical space and time. It is a story given us in Scripture that begins with God's creation and culminates with the presenting of His new creation. It is a story of

God's ongoing covenantal, redemptive work through Abraham, through whom, "all the peoples of the earth will be blessed" (see Genesis 12:3), through whose seed God would not only absolve us of sin (see Genesis 3), but also reverse the divisive effects of it—the scattering of the nations (see Genesis 11). Christ is that seed (see Galatians 3:16). And in Christ, we are Abraham's offspring (see Galatians 3:29). As such, we are now, not only "heirs to the promise," but also participants in Abraham's calling to be a blessing to and unite people from all nations in the Lord (see Genesis 12)—to participate with the Lord in His work to reconcile others to Himself and to reconcile (to rectify the division of) the nations in Him. As members of His family and participants in this ongoing drama, what is our role in it today—specifically as it pertains to racial division? In Christ, the story of His people is now our story. Whether Jew or Gentile, Anglo or African American, as children adopted into His one collective family, His story is now our story. And as one family in Him, we are now active participants in this familial epic—His ongoing redemptive narrative and mission—working together to bear witness to the nations (to nullify the effects of Genesis 3) and to remove the barriers between the nations in Christ (to reverse the effects of Genesis 11). With that in view, we—the united body of Christ—must earnestly, doggedly strive to rectify the causes of division between us and increasingly live out—as an alluring signpost to the world around us—the present reality and beauty of our unity in Christ. While presently a far-from-perfect reality, it yet points to the full, perfect, and sure realization of that in the future (see Revelation 5, 7).

Joint-Congregation Events and Ministries

Regarding initial, introductory inter-congregational events, Pastor Dave said, "Some people are so cynical that they will pooh-pooh engagements, soft interactions. But

you've got to start somewhere. And then you can be intentional about rolling in a little bit more in-depth stuff. But you've got to start with people seeing each other as people first. We have to meet people where they are." Pastor Evan echoed the importance of patiently, intentionally taking advantage of opportunities to build relationship with one another. Reflecting on the progression of inter-congregation events, he said, "I think one of the most powerful things that we did was the table talk. And then the incentive that we gave in that setting for groups to continue that dialogue." During those events, congregants had the opportunity to hear each other's life stories, which proved particularly formative in building relationship. Relatedly, in the literature review, George Monbiot insightfully stated, "You cannot take away someone's story without giving them a new one. It is not enough to challenge an old narrative, however outdated and discredited it may be. Change happens only when you replace it with another … a story that learns from the past, places us in the present and guides the future."[196] That is a particularly eloquent way of capturing what I also observed during inter-congregation events—events that were oriented toward perspective changing and relationship building by way of hearing each other's stories. There we intentionally avoided big-picture conversations—like systemic racism—and focused on personal stories. We started the table discussions by focusing on what unites us—they were asked to describe "how you came to the know the Lord." Then they were asked, "What was the community like in which you grew up?" The discussion topics gradually moved on to deeper questions pertaining to race; i.e. "What was the discussion or attitude about race like in your home growing up? How frequently do you experience racism or does your race impact you? Going forward, as a family made up of

[196] Monbiot, 1.

black, white and other races, how can we help each other continue to heal from racial wounds, and grow in healthy, personal relationship with one another?" The premise behind this is that you can't argue with someone's story. Discussions on systemic racism can quickly become volatile and divisive. But sharing personal stories softens hearts, expands perspectives, and promotes empathy, understanding, relationship, and unity.

Recommendations for Practice

As someone who loves structure and a well-defined plan, I initially hoped to emerge from this study with just that—a simple step-by-step plan for mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches to use in the pursuit of koinonia with one another. In light of the revealed complexity of the longstanding racial brokenness and of individuals' life-experiences, I now recognize how naïve and simplistic my initial expectations were. Instead of a *how-to* manual, I emerged from this study with the truth of Pastor Evan's sage words ringing in my ears; "It's not a detailed plan, it's dedicated persons. And you can say, dedicated pastors. Because at the end of the day, this is not going to happen in our churches until it happens in us."

There is no detailed plan because the Church is the Lord's and His plans for each congregation, their inter-relationships and joint-ministry work are just that—His. There is no detailed plan because the Lord's work in this area hinges around the personal relationships of unique individual pastors, who are leading uniquely personal congregations, comprised of unique compilations of histories, life-experiences, and ministry contexts. And there is no detailed plan because the types and mix of challenges pastors and congregations will face along the way are as varied as they are numerous.

However, while a comprehensive "plug-n-play" plan did not emerge, several guiding principles (or recommendations for practice) did—identified and summarized as follows.

Pray and Not Lose Heart

As in all things good and redemptive, this work is of the Lord. It is His doing. Therefore, the pursuit of koinonia across Anglo- and African-American lines must be saturated with prayer—all in accord with His perfect purposes and timing. As Pastor Frank testified, "This stuff teaches you to pray, because you're in over your head. You're not going to do this if you think you can go out there with some worldly wisdom and some great passion. If God doesn't work, it's not going to happen. It teaches us to pray and not lose heart." This work is the Lord's work. And so, we're never up to the task—we're always in over our heads. And that spurs us on in prayer to seek His will for His church and to partner with others of His choosing, in accord with His timing and purposes in and through us. Anytime we step out of that our efforts will flop. But when we seek and walk in step with His purposes and timing, we experience the joy of Him bearing abundant fruit in and through us. The present wounds and division in our Lord's body along Anglo- and African-American lines grieves Him deeply. That said, prayers to be used by Him in His reconciling, wound-healing, koinonia-nurturing work are prayers He delights to answer.

Relationships Flow from the Top Down

Preceded by and continually covered in prayer, the next recommendation is for pastors to intentionally pursue relationships with pastors of the other ethnicity—because the pursuit of koinonia begins with genuine friendships between pastors. And those

contagious relationships then flow from there into the congregations. This is in accord with Pastor Frank's exhortation to "enjoy the relationships the Lord gives us. And be good friends with people without seeing it as some big ministry goal or church strategy." That said, he recognizes that being strategic is not all bad. In fact, in the midst of our individual and corporate brokenness, love-born intentionality is required on our parts in order to do the hard work of moving toward one another in this pursuit. But the key here is that it is born of love. On that Pastor Frank argues, "Ultimately there are two Great Commandments. One is to love God with all your being. And the other is to love your neighbor as yourself. And if what we're doing is not enabling us to be more obedient to those, then I think we've missed it. We will just become a political bunch with the wrong sort of motives. So, to just enjoy having a relationship with one or two black pastors and that should be sweet—and not for some strategic reason. God will give us opportunities and they will be light to the world. But not in this sort of heavily preconceived, contrived set of friendships. If we want to do the Lord's work, He will bring people our way." And so, again—blanketed in prayer—the recommendation is for pastors to reach out to and intentionally pursue relationships with pastors of the other ethnicity. Not with a preconceived strategy or detailed plan in mind, but simply with the aim of enjoying the sweetness of those relationships. The Lord will surely guide you from there. And when He opens doors of opportunity to lead the congregations to pursue the koinonia that you enjoy as pastors, then boldly step through those doors—fully trusting the Lord to fulfill His reconciling, healing, koinonia nurturing work in and through you. That leads us to the next principle.

Let My Preachers Go

As the Lord opens those doors of opportunity, pastors, you must not let anything hinder you from walking through the doors the Lord is opening. If you find yourself hesitating, then you must prayerfully discern what hinders you from engaging in this essential work. Ask the Lord to reveal and remove those hindrances from you. As a pastor, you must not only model well that contagious koinonia, but also boldly, sensitively lead the congregation in their pursuit of that as well. If you allow your own fears or doubts to keep you stuck to the bench, your congregation will remain sidelined as well. Relatedly, Pastor Evans recalled a formative sermon he heard during seminary. He spoke of a local pastor who "preached in chapel and he took a take on Exodus 4 where God tells Moses to go down to Israel, to Egypt, and tell Pharaoh to let my people go. In chapel he said, 'I'm going to preach today about let my preachers go.' He says, 'because the people can't be free until the preachers are.' He said, 'God had to transform Moses' heart before He could transform the people.' So, I'll always remember that sermon, 'Let my preachers go.'"

Get Educated

The next recommendation is for pastors to intentionally engage in educating themselves, church leaders, and the congregation as a whole. This education includes Anglo pastors learning the African-American culture—particularly the beauty and richness of the African-American church culture. And, for all pastors, it includes preparing congregants for this pursuit of koinonia—a preparatory work that starts with investing time to instill that vision first and foremost within the church leadership team and then within the broader congregation. Along with the need to effectively instill that

vision on the front end, pastors need to keep that vision in front of the church over time—in front of both longtime and new members. Otherwise, the vision fades from view. Pastors also need to educate congregants on history and casting this reconciling, koinonia pursuing work in light of the Lord's ongoing redemptive, historical story—helping congregants see where we are in the broader story and their present role in that ongoing story. Along with that, pastors need to educate congregants on how to engage others of another ethnicity and the gospel-advancing, people-inclusive importance of making the necessary adjustments to church leadership and worship-style.

Seeing Through One Another's Eyes

Racism in our culture is not an African-American story. It is not an Anglo-American story. It is our collective story. While Anglo and African Americans have very different experiences within that, it is our story. And in order for healing to take place, that jointly-owned cultural story must be brought together (or overlapped in Venn-diagram fashion) with our likewise jointly-owned gospel story in Christ, and jointly viewed through its redemptive, healing lens. In order to do that we need to be able to see through each other's eyes. We need to be able to sit down together as a family and talk through the real-life experiences and hurts that divide us—not just events that happened in the past, but also the ongoing hurts being experienced here and now, today. If we're not willing to do that, we won't be able to effectively move toward one another; we won't be able to effectively, personally engage in the battle against racism or engage in the healing of those wounds; and we won't be able to more fully model the unity that is ours in Christ. The joint-congregation dinners and table talks described earlier have proven to be an effective means for that. Particularly when these are coupled with

encouraging congregants to exchange contact information with those from the other congregation—in order to continue the conversation and relationship building over coffee or a meal. I have seen tremendous barrier-demolishing fruit and deep, genuine, open, honest, mutually-trusting relationships develop out of these.

In Closing …

Leading mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American congregations to pursue koinonia with one another is an imperative pursuit—as it is the Church's lived-out, mutually-loving, missional expression of our present oneness in Christ. Moving forward in a pursuit of this nature and scope can feel daunting and scary, particularly at the outset. But as in all things redemptive, this is God's work. So, abiding in Him and the truth of His Word, we must prayerfully, lovingly, boldly, sensitively move forward in participating with Him in this work as He directs us—trusting Him with the results, that only He can accomplish in and though us. Here, Pastor Evan's wise council, earnest resolve, and loving exhortation comes to mind; "There has to be engagement. But there has to be sensitivity too. But apathy is not an option. It's just not an option."

Being where we are in the story, we are still a broken and sinful people. And no doubt, our best-intended efforts as mono-ethnic congregations to address the pervasive issue of racism will certainly not be perfect and will likely come with bone-jarring bumps along the way. That said, it will require pastors and congregations to stick their necks out a bit, to be willing to open up, make themselves vulnerable, and to lovingly, humbly, graciously make efforts to move toward each other. If we aren't willing to do that, we will remain essentially (albeit cordially) divided, and we won't look any different than the world around us. And a watching world will say, "So what's the difference?"

But if we are willing to do that—as we pursue and realize this koinonia—it will bring delight to our Lord's heart, a heart-healing, family-relationship-restoring balm to the Church, and an alluring beauty to a watching, otherwise-longing world that we have been sent into to reach. As I write these closing remarks, I'm recalling the joy that dear African-American pastor friends and I experienced as we walked through those doors of opportunity together. And with each step, we recognized (actually, we literally laughed with joy, amazement, and delight) that the Lord had already been at work long before we got there, preparing hearts and the way ahead. What an amazing, path affirming, confidence-in-the-Lord boosting experience! What a joy! What a ride! Do it again Lord!

With that, I encourage you to pray to the Lord to guide you in developing genuine friendships with pastors of the other ethnicity. And as those relationships develop, pray that He would work in and through you in leading your congregations to pursue the contagious koinonia you enjoy as pastors. Then, when He opens those doors, walk through them boldly and with great sensitivity. And then hold on! You're in for a ride of a lifetime—a ride that certainly comes with weighty challenges along the way, but challenges that pale in comparison to the abundant joy and fruit that come with them!

Recommendations for Further Research

This study focused on how pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity. As this study focused on a particular context, there are other related areas of study that are worthy to pursue. First of all, in light of Anglo Americans' oppression of other people of color in this country, similar studies in view of other minority groups may be helpful—a study on Anglos' longstanding oppression of native Americans and the

remaining rift in the church along these ethnic lines comes particularly to mind. Secondly, this study focused wholly on the church in America. Therefore, similar studies that explore longstanding divisions in the church along ethnic lines in other parts of the world may be helpful as well.

Appendix A

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

I agree to participate in the research which is being conducted by **Craig Doctor** to investigate how pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity for the Doctor of Ministry degree program at Covenant Theological Seminary.

I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary. I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that they can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

1) The purpose of the research is to investigate how pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches lead their congregants to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity.

2) Potential benefits of the research may include, 1) helping pastors serving in a mono-ethnic Anglo- or African-American church, in which its mono-ethnicity does not reflect its context, to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity—as a preliminary step in the process of becoming more diverse, and (2) helping pastors serving in a mono-ethnic Anglo- or African-American church, in which its mono-ethnicity does reflect its broader context and so expect to remain mono-ethnic, to pursue koinonia with congregants of churches of the other ethnicity—in recognition of the imperative importance of doing so.

   Though there are no direct benefits for participants, I hope they will be encouraged by the experience of sharing their experiences with an eager listener and learner.

3) The research process will include researching literature on, 1) the biblical impetuses behind this pursuit; 2) what ideal community looks like; 3) what community looks like today; and 4) proposed means to move from the present to the ideal states; as well as, 5) interviewing pastors of mono-ethnic Anglo- and African-American churches, and analyzing the data gathered in the interview process.

4) Participants in this research will be asked to describe, 1) what the pursuit of koinonia with a congregation of the other ethnicity looked like; 2) what biblical impetuses were behind that effort; 3) what challenges they faced along the way; 4) what efforts to work through those challenges looked like; and 5) what growth in relationship with God and Christ's likeness did they and/or members of your congregation experience as a result.

5) Potential discomforts or stresses: Sharing uncomfortable details about church experiences and relationships.

6) Potential risks: None.

7) Any information that I provide will be held in strict confidence. At no time will my name be reported along with my responses. The data gathered for this research is confidential, and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. Audiotapes or videotapes of interviews will be erased following the completion of the dissertation. By my signature, I am giving informed consent for the use of my responses in this research project.

8) The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the study.

_____

Printed Name and Signature of Researcher Date

_____

Printed Name and Signature of Participant Date

Please sign both copies of this form. Keep one and return the other to the researcher. Thank you.

Research at Covenant Theological Seminary which involves human participants is overseen by the DMin Committee. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to: Director, Doctor of Ministry; Covenant Theological Seminary; 12330 Conway Road; St. Louis, MO 63141; Phone (314) 434-4044.

Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

Name: _____

Date: _____

What is your age?

a. 25 or under _____

b. 26-40 _____

c. 41-55 _____

d. 56 or older _____

As a pastor of a mono-ethnic congregation, how would you classify yourself?

a. African-American _____

b. Anglo _____

c. Arab _____

d. Asian/Pacific Islander _____

e. Hispanic _____

f. Indigenous _____

g. Latino _____

h. Multiracial _____

i. Other _____ _____

How would you classify the mono-ethnicity of your congregation?

a. African-American _____

b. Anglo-American _____

To what degree are other ethnicities represented in your congregation (approximate %)?

a. African-American _____ %

b. Anglo _____ %

c. Arab _____ %

d. Asian/Pacific Islander _____ %

e. Hispanic _____ %

f. Indigenous _____ %

g. Latino _____ %

h. Multiracial _____ %

i. Other _____ _____ %

Has the representation of ethnicities remained largely consistent over the life of the church?

a. Yes _____

b. No _____

IF "No",

what has that change looked like?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

what do you think brought about that change?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

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