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**AN EAST AFRICA TEAM'S RESPONSE TO THE
CHALLENGES OF GLOBAL INTERDEPENDENCY
WORKING AMONG THE POOR**

By

WILLIAM C. YARBROUGH

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore how a multicultural AIDS Care and Treatment team serving in East Africa understands global interdependence in its work among the poor. Globally, churches, mission committees, and agencies desiring to link heart and hands to serve the world's poorest have an intrinsic need to listen to and learn from multicultural teams. Living and working among the poor, such teams have much wisdom to share, especially as their efforts are informed by Scripture and the available literature on dependency and interdependency issues.

This study utilized qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews with ten members of an AIDS Care and Treatment team in East Africa. Three research questions were used to guide this study. First, in what ways does theology inform the team's understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor? Second, in what ways does the issue of dependency inform the team's understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor? And third, in what ways does the experience of interacting with a multicultural team of workers inform the team's understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor? The study provided a platform for listening to the team's story and for team members to share their perspectives on Scripture and theology, the issue of dependency, and the ways in which their common life has informed their understanding of global interdependency. Their experiences and perspectives were analyzed and synthesized to help inform and instruct other teams, congregations, mission committees, and agencies desiring to serve the poor through global, interdependent relationships.

In the area of Scripture and theology, the findings of this study highlight the commitment and intentionality of God in his care of the poor, the oppressed, the widow, and the orphan. That care is practically expressed, on a local and global scale, in and through the work of the *Corpus Christi* and requires the necessary involvement of each unique member of that diverse body.

In the area of dependency, the study found that the teaching, literature, and contemporary discussions about dependency weigh on serious attempts to work interdependently with the poor. The study also found that while dependency is necessarily a key factor informing global interdependence, it can never displace God's practical expression of kindness and generosity to the sick and dying.

In the area of interacting as a multicultural team, the finding of this study highlighted the transformative nature of multicultural global relationships in terms of faith, character, and organizational learning. The study highlighted the reality that global, interdependent relationships are transformative and that the faith, perspectives, and insights of each and every participant in those relationships are necessary.

This study concluded that multicultural teams and congregations, mission committees and agencies that desire to serve the poor need to develop a theology of poverty from Scripture. They need to cultivate global relationships that celebrate diversity and permit listening and learning from teams who live and work among the poor. Understanding global interdependence and learning from those relationships necessitates partnering with multicultural teams who live incarnationally in the communities they serve. And, especially important to that process is to listen to and learn from the poor themselves.

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To Sue,
the wife of my youth and of our passing years,
lover, mother, grandmother, friend,
companion in prayer, and heir with me of the grace of life,

And to the East Africa team
who has helped me learn ever so much more about
what “seek ye first the kingdom of God” looks like
in the context of the poor.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

God's people locally, regionally and globally—are miraculously interconnected in and through the person and work of Jesus Christ. In today's world, regardless of the place one may call home, regardless of one's language, tribe or ethnicity, the dynamic reality of the ties that bind us together, crossing the boundaries of neighborhoods and nations, grows with each passing day. Christopher Wright tells us, "We live in an age of a multinational church and multidirectional mission."¹ And though the people of God have been a multinational and multidirectional community since the inception of the Christian movement, the proliferation of Internet use in everything from Web sites, news sources, multilingual blogging, and theological education is facilitating unprecedented bridge building between peoples. Additional contributors to the palpability of these connections are people's shared struggles and aspirations throughout the world's cities, the displacement and relocation of countless immigrants and refugees, and the ease of travel that facilitates the movement of millions of workers. While the geographical surface of our planet, in terms of square footage, remains relatively unchanged, our consciousness of and interactions with others have increased and intensified exponentially. Since the earliest days of the church, learning to navigate the often-turbulent waters of those interconnected relationships and working for reconciliation, restoration, mutual transformation and the extension of God's kingdom in and through those relationships

¹ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 38.

has been a challenge to each and every generation. The difficulty of this relational navigation applies still today within our local congregations, church movements and denominations, as well as missionary sending agencies.

Within a biblical framework, the apostle Paul tells us that our interconnectedness and interdependency is a God-given reality, a divine gift. The Scriptures teach us that God's people, in all of their multitudinous diversity, together make up the body of Christ, and each and every member is a necessary part and participant in it. We have been, according to Paul, "baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit."² God, by a work of the Spirit, makes of this amazing variety of races, culture, and socio-economic differences "one new man in place of the two, so making peace," that he "might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility."³ As believers, we have been called into fellowship with God, reconciled to one another, and sent into the world so that "through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord."⁴

In Christ, God has not only given us the foundation for making peace between peoples and for individuals' reconciliation with him and others. He has also fully established the fact that, for the common good, for the blessing of the nations and for the ultimate fulfillment of his purposes upon the earth, we genuinely need each another. Thus, the people of God are, in the very best sense of the word, an *interdependent* community. Paul makes our interdependence clear in his letter to the Corinthian church,

² 1 Corinthians 12:13.

³ Ephesians 2:15-16.

⁴ Ephesians 3:10.

The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor.... God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one other. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.⁵

“This,” according to David Howard, “is the most significant passage in the New Testament about our interdependency.”⁶ In light of our ever-compressing world, churches and mission agencies are challenged to grow in their understanding of what it means to live out mutual dependence both humbly and practically. As congregations and organizations, they are called to learn how to recognize the indispensability of the poor and the weak, to honor the seemingly less honorable and to suffer and rejoice together as we seek to “go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”⁷

Perhaps nowhere is the learning curve more challenging to churches and mission agencies than in the ongoing discussions about economic dependency and the global sharing of resources. In an age of unprecedented riches and poverty, themes of dependency and interdependency touch everything from church planting to the presence and lifestyles of cross-cultural workers, community development, displaced refugees and immigrants, and the global response to famine and disease. In the context of many economically privileged churches there exists both a heightened sensitivity regarding the sending of workers and funds, and a growing reluctance to address imbalances through generosity. Sadly, as the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization reports, “As materialism increases, luxury and selfishness usually reduce the individual’s desire for

⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:21-26.

⁶ Daniel Rickett and Dotsey Welliver, eds. *Supporting Indigenous Ministries* (Wheaton, IL: Billy Graham Center, 1997), 26.

⁷ Matthew 28:19.

sacrificial giving.”⁸ In the developing world, while there is still openness and receptivity to receiving funding, voices from many sectors are decrying waste, addressing corruption, and embracing accountability, while others are advocating an end to any and all aid. Gratefully, in the midst of the din of voices, many congregations and sending agencies are increasingly seeking to listen to and learn from colleagues, ministry partners, and relief and development practitioners in the global south. These southern voices are a valuable resource, as “there has been a massive southward shift of the center of gravity of the Christian world, so that the representative Christian lands now appear to be in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and other parts of the southern continents.”⁹ The bottom line is that, while issues of both dependency and interdependency are very real and can fuel some flammable discussions, Christians today are in the best possible position to *learn together* what it means to live as multicultural communities associating in global partnerships. As Walbert Buhlmann states it,

Until a short time ago it was a one-way street between Western churches and the Southern mission. In the North was the rich, charitable, teaching church; in the South were the poor, needy recipients of Northern Christian largesse. In the past twenty-five years that relationship has been transformed into a highway with two-way traffic. We are no longer dealing with one-sided mission help, but with a need for a frank and critical exchange of insights between churches that can and should occur on several levels.¹⁰

This case study research is a listening and learning part of the insight-exchanging process.

⁸ Rickett and Welliver, eds., 85.

⁹ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 9.

¹⁰ Jonathan J. Bonk, *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Missionary Problem - Revisited*, Rev. and expanded ed., The American Society of Missiology Series No. 15 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), xix.

Statement of Problem and Purpose

Across the globe, multicultural teams—consisting of workers from the north and south, east and west, from countries rich in financial and technical resources, and others from emerging nations—are challenged to learn together with some of the world’s neediest peoples what it means to be an interdependent global community. Books and articles exploring and debating the challenges of dependency while calling the church to biblically rooted, Spirit-sated interdependency are on the increase. What is needed is to hear more stories from those who prayerfully listen to Scripture and to other practitioners who lay their hands to the plow in their service to the poor. The church and mission agencies have an intrinsic need to listen to and learn from the stories of such multicultural teams as they wrestle and work with both Scripture and the available literature on dependency and interdependency; this need is what makes qualitative research so important. And, most significantly, local congregations, mission committees and agencies need to listen prayerfully and carefully to the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable members of those teams. In light of our need to listen and learn as people of faith, the purpose of this study will be to explore how a multicultural AIDS Care and Treatment team serving in East Africa understands global interdependence in their work among the poor.

In order to gain insight into the team’s understanding of global interdependence, the following research questions were used to guide this study. First, “In what ways does theology inform the team’s understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor?” Second, “In what ways does the issue of dependency inform the team’s understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor?” And third, “In

what ways does the experience of interacting with a multicultural team of workers inform the team's understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor?"

Significance of the Study

This study has significance for a wide range of people, people who share a burden for the poor of the earth and especially those who work with the challenges created by HIV/AIDS. The team under consideration in this study will be of particular interest to multicultural/national teams working or considering working among the poor in developing nations across the globe. Teams learn from the practices of others teams, both from positive and negative experiences.

Additionally, church and lay leaders who are considering the theological and practical implications of interdependency and dependency in their desire to respond to global poverty will have a perspective that will help to inform their prayerful and biblical response to the world's needs. The research will also serve congregations, mission committees and agencies, together with individuals, who are making decisions about how to partner with multicultural teams and who desire to provide human and economic resources to those working among to the poor.

Significance for multicultural teams working among the poor:

Multicultural teams learn from one another. Teams learn from others who have interacted with Scripture and with current literature relevant to the unique locations in which they are called to serve. The victories, the advances, and the mistakes of likeminded workers who are addressing similar issues among an impoverished people provide a platform of learning for others who have either begun work in similar settings or are prayerfully considering doing so. Team insights are often transferable. The

experiences of one multicultural team can foster positive experiences among other teams and help limit or avoid long-term negative consequences in their work and in their relationships with the poor.

Significance for church and lay leaders who are considering the theological and practical implications of interdependency in their desire to respond to global poverty:

At this time in the history of the church, as has been gratefully true at other times of faithfulness, renewal and revival in her history, there is growing enthusiasm in reaching out to the poor in urban centers and in international contexts. Corbett and Fickkert note,

...while materialism, self-centeredness, and complacency continue to plague all of us, nobody can deny the upswing in social concern among North American evangelicals in the past two decades. There is perhaps no better illustration of this than the exploding short-term mission movement, much of which has focused on ministering to the poor at home and abroad.¹¹

The movement and interest among evangelicals to minister to the poor is causing church and lay leaders to ask serious questions about the benefit and/or detriment of their giving and of their involvement among the world's neediest residents. Church and lay leaders, sensitive to concerns about dependency and interdependency in their own communities, are asking serious and probing questions about how those same themes work out among the world's poorest. This study provides an opportunity for such leaders to learn—from the perspective of a multicultural team living and working among urban HIV/AIDS infected people in East Africa—about giving, resourcing, and the sending of short- and long-term workers.

¹¹ Steve Corbett and Brian Fickkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor - and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 27.

Significance for congregations and mission committees that are making decisions about how to partner with multicultural teams and desire to participate with resources in service to the poor:

Daniel Rickett commented in the late nineteen nineties, “In the past decade...partnership with independent ministries of the non-Western world has become widely accepted. A score of new agencies has emerged for that specific purpose. Some traditional Western mission sending agencies are now also adding separate programs to support indigenous ministries.”¹² Due to that reality and its inevitable growth, coupled to the increasing challenges to historical methods of sending North Americans, many congregations, committees, and agencies have begun to seek allies and partners in the global communities of Christians. This dynamic, tied to the growing accessibility of communications and travel, is making global, interdependent relationships a possibility for large and small congregations. Those congregations are asking questions about how best to go and serve multicultural teams and how to partner practically with them, sharing resources over extended periods of time. This case study research will provide invaluable information and insight for such congregations as they prayerfully consider their responses to extreme global poverty.

Definition of Terms

Dependency – The unhealthy and unhelpful patterns of reliance on the resources of others for paid workers, ministry projects, buildings and facilities.

Interdependency – A gift of God’s grace, a theologically rooted, relational dynamic that exists between Christians locally and trans-locally, which is nourished and sustained by the interactions and mutual contributions of various individuals and partners.

Multicultural Teams – A team unit comprised of members from different countries and different local communities that includes gender, demographic and socioeconomic diversity.

¹² Rickett and Welliver, eds., xi.

Organizational Learning – Learning within an organization that actively researches, captures, transfers, mobilizes and disseminates knowledge to enable the organization to transform itself in changing and diverse environments. The key aspect of organizational learning is the interaction that takes place among individuals in the context of their lives and labors.

Partnership – A long-term relationship of two or more congregations and/or organizations that share a common vision and purpose, with the desire intentionally to share complementary gifts and resources and to learn from one another.

Expert Patients – These patients, primarily women, are HIV positive participants in the HIV/AIDS care and treatment program who have learned to manage their disease through the responsible and consistent use of antiretroviral drugs, personal hygiene and diet. Within the program, they have the responsibility of serving other HIV positive patients and to assist their families.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to explore how a multi-cultural AIDS Care and Treatment team serving in East Africa understands global interdependence in their work among the poor. The approach to this study was three-fold. The first goal was to explore the ways in which the Scriptures inform the team's understanding of interdependence in their work among the poor. The second was to understand how the issue of dependency informs the team's understanding of global interdependence in their work among the poor. And the third was to discover the ways in which the team's experience interacting as a multi-cultural team of workers informs their understanding of global interdependence in their work among the poor. In order to understand various influences on the team, several areas of literature were reviewed. First were the Scriptures themselves, contained in the Old and New Testaments. Scripture offers a rich understanding and perspective of interdependence with respect to the people of God, interdependence being both a local and global reality. Specifically, Scripture gives foundational principles and practical guidelines about how to share our lives and resources together with respect to the needy. Additionally, current literature was consulted from both Christian and non-Christian sources which address the three areas of dependency, interdependency, and the challenge of how to learn to share our lives and labors organizationally as work is done in the context of diversity and acute disparity. The following literature review raises key theoretical issues in the analysis of the qualitative research in light of the research questions above.

Scriptural Framework of Interdependence

Throughout Scripture, the dynamic of interdependence at the most foundational level recognizes that we are not alone in the world; at a heart level it confesses, “I am with you.” Being together, sharing our lives, labors, and resources together, is at the heart of living as Christian communities. Daniel Rickett, Assistant Professor of Leadership in the School of International Leadership and Development at Eastern University, comments that “‘I am with you’ are the four most solemn words spoken in a relationship. ‘I am with you’ is reminiscent of Jesus’ promise of authority. It echoes the promise of covenant and evokes the hope of fellowship.”¹³

God’s Promise to His People, “I Am With You”

Most importantly for Christian workers around the globe, dynamic interdependence is rooted, first and foremost, in God’s commitment to be with us. God has committed himself to live and walk among his people, to lead, guide, and protect them. As the late Donald McNeill, former Director of the Center for Experiential Learning at Notre Dame, Douglas Morrison, Director of the Pastoral Center at the Catholic University in Washington, D.C., and late Henri Nouwen, former priest, professor, author, and pastor/resident of the L’Arche community for people with developmental disabilities remind their readers,

God is a compassionate God. This means, first of all, that he is a God who has chosen to be God-with-us... As soon as we call God, “God-with-us,” we enter into a new relationship with him. By calling him Immanuel, we recognize that he has committed himself to live in solidarity with us, to share our joys and pains, to defend and protect us, and to suffer all of life with us. The God-with-us is a close God, a God whom we call our refuge, our stronghold, our wisdom and even, more intimately, our helper, our shepherd, our love. We will never really know God as

¹³ Daniel Rickett, *Making Your Partnership Work* (Enumclaw, WA: WinePress Publishing, 2002), xiii.

a compassionate God if we do not understand with our heart and mind that “he lived among us.”¹⁴

This point is at the heart of community relief and development work for those who share a Christian world and life view – God has chosen to “live in solidarity with us.” As the apostle John tells us in his gospel account of the life of Jesus, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”¹⁵

Prayerful and Prophetic Life Together Under the Word

As a Christian himself and an author writing about interdependency from the perspective of his faith in God and his Word, Rickett reminds missional agencies, teams, and congregations that in their efforts to foster international relationships and partnerships there can be “no substitute for the careful and prayerful reflection on the word of God for divine guidance. Seeking to build interdependent partnership without a firm grasp of the nature and calling of the community of God can result in separating Christians rather than uniting them.”¹⁶ Joy Alvarez, leadership associate for World Vision’s staff development, Elnora Avarientos, regional facilitator for World Vision’s Asia Pacific Regional Office, and Thomas H. McAlpine, World Vision’s director for Bible and holistic ministry share similar counsel. For them, Scripture is not a simple guide book but, rather, the very heart of all relief and development efforts in the world. They write,

¹⁴ Donald P. McNeill and others, *Compassion, a Reflection on the Christian Life*, 1st ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 13-15.

¹⁵ John 1:1, 14.

¹⁶ Rickett, xv.

The point of departure and the point of return is not the Bible as a source of rules or a conceptual foundation (although it may function in these ways), but as a mediation of the creative power of our God, the ultimate basis of our life and ministry. This is something that differentiates Christian development from secular development. Scripture gives hope, life, dynamism, and immense possibilities beyond human imagination. This makes reflection upon Scripture critical to human transformation.¹⁷

Community Relief and Development Work – Life Together Under the Word

Community relief and development work is a part of the story of redemption; practical care, kindness, and compassionate engagement are core to God's story of redemption. In other words, it is the big story, the mega story, that informs and guides the practical choices people make about their lives in the world. Bryant Myers, Vice President for International Program Strategy at World Vision International expresses it in this way:

Every community needs a big story, a story that frames our lives and our understanding of the world. Everyone must have some kind of transcendent narrative that gives answers to questions of meaning and provides moral direction and social purpose. We need to know who we are..., where we are..., what went wrong (making sense of the poverty, pain, and injustice we see), what we must do (what must change and how it can be changed), and what time it is (how our past, present, and future fit into this picture).... Any vision of a better human future must have its roots in the story that makes sense of our lives.¹⁸

With respect to living out the Christian story practically, as related to community relief and development and the world's poorest, Alvarez, Avarientos, and McAlpine comment that "the modern world often treats the Bible as a religious book used for isolated 'sacred' reading, irrelevant to 'secular' life. But our work with communities has led us to rediscover the Bible as a powerful story explaining the meaning and purpose of life, full of cases that model abundance, reconciliation, forgiveness and transformation of

¹⁷ Bryant L. Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, ed. Bryant L. Myers (Monrovia, CA: World Vision, 1999), 59.

¹⁸ Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 20-21.

persons, communities, nations and nature itself.”¹⁹ As German pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer expressed it some years ago, engaging God’s story in this way is simply “our life together under the Word.”²⁰

Scripture and the Prophetic Role of God’s People in Community

Jayakumar Christian, associate director of World Vision India-North Zone, professor at the Asian Institute of Christian Communication, and adjunct professor at the School of World Mission, Fuller Seminary writes, “If we are called to proclaim truth we must recognize we are fulfilling the prophetic function; we need to become a prophetic community that know the discipline of standing in ‘the counsel of the Lord’ before rushing to help people.”²¹ Standing in God’s counsel requires taking heed both to what we hear with respect to Scripture, and how we hear it. As John Mackay, former President of Princeton Seminary writes, “Commitment without reflection is fanaticism in action, though reflection without commitment is the paralysis of all action.”²² Christian adds, “The Christian faith offers the most radical of responses to these situations, namely, the formation of covenantal communities.”²³ Bonhoeffer adds, “Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this. Whether it be a brief, single encounter or the daily fellowship of years, Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ.”²⁴ Christian aid, relief, and community development as international,

¹⁹ Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 67.

²⁰ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans., John W. Doberstein (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1976), 17.

²¹ Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 23.

²² John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990), 29.

²³ Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 7.

²⁴ Bonhoeffer, 21.

multicultural teams is life together in the world, under the Word, united in Christ the Living Word, and guided and nurtured by reflection on and study of the Word.

Interdependency is a Gift of God that Reaches around the World

In Scripture, the interdependence of covenantal communities, the dynamic of belonging to one another, is addressed as both a local and trans-local dynamic.

Foundationally, Scripture describes the dynamic interdependency of God's people as a gift of God's grace. According to the apostle John, the essential connectedness and unity of the people of God is expressed in Jesus' High Priestly prayer, recorded in John 17:

"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."²⁵ From this divine vantage point, interdependency must be understood as a dynamic gift of life and relationship rooted in the eternal, love relationship of the Trinity, a love relationship, which according to Christ, is meant to have an impact in the world – "that the world may know." The rendering of Romans 12:3-5 in Eugene Peterson's *Message Bible* states that interdependence cannot be viewed as a product of human ingenuity but, again, as a gift from God manifest in and through his people:

The accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him...In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body.²⁶

The reality and true value of this gift can be, and often is, lost in the contemporary church. As Bonhoeffer comments in his book on Christian community, *Life Together*, "It

²⁵ John 17:22-23.

²⁶ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message: The New Testament in Contemporary English* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1993), 328.

is easily forgotten that the fellowship of Christian brethren is a gift of grace, a gift of the Kingdom of God.”²⁷

Dr. Peter Kuzmic, President of the Evangelical Theological Faculty, Osijek, Croatia, writing the International Forward to John Rowell’s *To Give or Not to Give*, affirms also that interdependency is dynamic, purposeful, and stretches around the world: “It is time for the worldwide church of Jesus Christ to learn how to move from the secular patterns of competition and independence toward the full-fledged biblical way of complementarity and interdependence in both life and practice.”²⁸ John Stott, Anglican author, rector emeritus of All Souls Church in London, founder of Langham Partnership International and of the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity, of which he is now the honorary president, asserts that such biblically-rooted global complementarity and interdependence arch above and beyond geopolitical boundaries. Stott writes, “Christ’s kingdom, while not incompatible with patriotism, tolerates no narrow nationalisms. He rules over the international community in which race, nation, rank and sex are no barriers to fellowship.”²⁹ Alvarez, Avrientos, and McAlpine express it this way: “Scripture presents a captivating vision of a new humanity, a new heaven and new earth; indeed, a new world, a new creation.”³⁰

Interdependency in the New Testament

The New Testament describes the interdependency of God’s people, using various living images and metaphors. According to Scripture, the community of faith have been

²⁷ Bonhoeffer, 67.

²⁸ John Rowell, *To Give or Not to Give? Rethinking Dependency, Restoring Generosity, and Redefining Sustainability* (Tyrone, GA: Authentic Pub., 2007), xvii.

²⁹ John R. Stott, *The Message of Acts: The Spirit, the Church and the World*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 43.

³⁰ Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 67.

united to God and to one another as “one new man,”³¹ and the individuals comprising this multi-member “one new man” are variously described as “fellow heirs, members of the same body, partakers of the promise,”³² a “spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood,”³³ a “chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and a people of his own possession.”³⁴ It is from this new humanity, priesthood, race, house, body, and nation that Christ promises, “I will build my church.”³⁵ It is significant to note that the “church” Jesus promises to build is composed of believers with varying degrees of association on a local and global scale. The extent of the church’s association ranges in size and scope from smaller groupings in homes,³⁶ to larger and more numerous associations of Christians in a city,³⁷ and then to congregations connected regionally and internationally.³⁸ It would seem, in God’s economy, that no one was to be overlooked, excluded, or displaced as members of this first local and ultimately global, multicultural, multinational, and interdependent movement.

The apostle Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians gives theological understanding and practical application of biblical interdependency. Paul tells us that by a divine act of God’s grace the community of faith has been “in one Spirit...baptized into one body,” becoming “the body of Christ and individually members of it,”³⁹ and that God has

³¹ Ephesians 2:15.

³² Ephesians 3:6.

³³ 1 Peter 2:5.

³⁴ 1 Peter 2:9.

³⁵ Matthew 16:18.

³⁶ Romans 16:5, “Greet also the church in their house.”

³⁷ 1 Corinthians 1:2, “To the church of God that is in Corinth...” 1 Thessalonians 1:1, “To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father...”

³⁸ Acts 9:31, “So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up.”

³⁹ 1 Corinthians 12:27.

uniquely arranged the members of his body, “each of them, as he chose.”⁴⁰ Edmund Clowney, emeritus professor of practical theology and former president of Westminster Theological Seminary writes that the diversity of the body “is not defined by distinctions between Jew and Gentile or between slave and free (for they have all drunk of the one Spirit), but rather by differences in the gifts of the Spirit and in the ministries that these gifts enable.”⁴¹ “God has not,” John Calvin tells us, “acted at random, or without good reason, in assigning different gifts to the members of the body; but because it was necessary that it should be so, for the preservation of the body; for if this symmetry were taken away, there would be utter confusion and derangement. Hence we ought to submit ourselves the more carefully to the providence of God, which has so suitably arranged everything for our common advantage.”⁴² Paul tells this diverse Christian community that each member is significant and contributive and that no member could ever say to another member of the community that “I have no need of you.”⁴³ As Paul has it, the collective need of the people of God is related, not only to the administrative, teaching, preaching, and mercy gifts evident within a specific demographic, or culture, but is a multicultural, multiethnic, and multi-socioeconomic dynamic possible only by a deep and powerful work of the Holy Spirit. According to Paul’s inspired understanding of interdependency, “in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free,”⁴⁴ and it necessarily follows that the Jew needs the Greek and the free person needs the slave under the lordship of Christ. David Prior, biblical commentator

⁴⁰ 1 Corinthians 12:18.

⁴¹ Edmund P. Clowney and Gerald Lewis Bray, *The Church, Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 222.

⁴² John Calvin, “Institutes of the Christian Religion,” <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom39.xix.iii.html>.

⁴³ 1 Corinthians 12:21 (NIV, my emphasis).

⁴⁴ 1 Corinthians 12:13.

who has pastored churches in South Africa and Oxford, England notes, “It is important not so to identify Christ with his church that we lose sight of his pre-eminence and transcendence. Nevertheless, Paul is clearly referring here to the way Christ today manifests himself by the Spirit to the world through his church.”⁴⁵ With respect to working and walking together, especially across socioeconomic and geopolitical divides, and uniquely among the poorer members of Christ’s church, Christian comments that

Jesus rebuilt community by challenging the very lines that divided people. He further made those lines a religious issue about which God was deeply concerned. While issue-based community organization techniques exploit numbers and mobilize people around issues, covenantal communities deal with issues without reducing the poor to mere numbers. Personhood is valued; diversity is celebrated and not exploited. Rebuilding relationships demands investing in relationships.⁴⁶

He goes on to say with respect to the poorest members of the covenant community, “If poverty is about broken relationships—exclusion from society’s mainstream and the fragmentation of community—then our transformational initiatives must result in rebuilding community. We must move beyond community organizing to something more radical and fundamental.”⁴⁷ In the apostle Paul’s mind, community building/ church planting included and was dependent on each and every member of Christ’s body. Paul insisted that every member of the church is essential to its well-being and “the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts should be treated with greater modesty.”⁴⁸ The composition of the body, socially, ethnically, and

⁴⁵ David Prior, *The Message of 1 Corinthians*, eds., John R. W. Stott and J. A. Motyer, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 210.

⁴⁶ Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 8.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁸ 1 Corinthians 12:22-23.

culturally is God's doing—"God has so composed the body"⁴⁹—and as Prior notes, "composed" is the Greek word "*synekerasen*" that "has the basic meaning of mixing different parts together with a specific purpose in mind, *i.e.* to produce mutual support and interdependence."⁵⁰ According to Paul, a need exists for the input and perspective of colleagues and friends from other nations whether they are the poorest of the earth, literate or illiterate, a displaced immigrant or refugee community, or the international elite.

Reconciling the Weak and the Strong in Relief and Development Work

How to be an interdependent people with the seemingly weaker, less honorable, and unpresentable parts of the global community has proved to be a challenge to congregations and agencies regarding the practical sharing and distribution of resources, economic and otherwise. Such interdependence, on a global scale, is especially challenging in the areas of acute global disparity and/or health concerns such as HIV/AIDS which, according to Steven Fouch, are "inextricably linked to poverty."⁵¹ Dr. Paul Farmer, Presley Professor of Medical Anthropology at Harvard Medical School, founding director of Partners in Health, and Chief of the Division of Social Medicine and Health Inequalities at Boston's Brigham and Women's Hospital discusses interdependency in terms of "pragmatic solidarity" with the world's neediest:

Pragmatic solidarity is different from but nourished by solidarity per se, the desire to make common cause with those in need. Solidarity is a precious thing: people enduring great hardship often remark that they are grateful for the prayers and good wishes of fellow human beings. But when sentiment is accompanied by the goods and services that might diminish unjust hardship, surely it is enriched. To

⁴⁹ 1 Corinthians 12:24.

⁵⁰ Prior, 215.

⁵¹ Richard Tiplady, ed. *One World or Many? The Impact of Globalisation on Mission* (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2003), 135.

those in great need, solidarity without the pragmatic component can seem like so much abstract piety.⁵²

From Scripture, the apostle John speaks of the “pragmatic component” simply and succinctly: “But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”⁵³ For the believing community, such freedom and generosity comes not from innate good will and intentions but is rooted in the reality of the power of the gospel: “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.”⁵⁴ At the end of the day, it is the power and freedom of the gospel that leads to incarnational work among and identification with the world’s neediest. Christian writes, “Poverty by its very nature demands a spiritual response. We need to respond at a level that goes deeper than our traditional level of engagement. We need to expand our scope from addressing dignity issues to clarifying the very identity of the poor.”⁵⁵

Solidarity in the Early Church – Locally and Globally

From the pages of Scripture, it appears that interdependence *a la* Farmer, “pragmatic solidarity,” gripped the early church. On a local level, Luke tells us that as a direct result of a deep work of conversion to Christ, those who “received [the] word and were baptized”⁵⁶ not only dedicated themselves to the study of the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer, but “were selling their possessions

⁵² Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor: With a New Preface by the Author* [2005 ed.], California Series in Public Anthropology 4 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 146.

⁵³ 1 John 3:17-18.

⁵⁴ 1 John 3:16.

⁵⁵ Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 22.

⁵⁶ Acts 2:41.

and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.”⁵⁷ The palpable interdependency of God’s people worked itself out in the pervasive worship of God, the believing community having favor with all the people, and a daily increase of the number of disciples.⁵⁸ This description of the common life of the early church paints a compelling picture of local and regional interdependence with respect to caring for the churches’ neediest members. Beyond the local dynamics of practical sharing, Scripture gives examples of trans-local economic interdependence during times of famine and distress that is described as a work of “the grace of God.”⁵⁹ In 2 Corinthians, Paul writes of the churches of Macedonia, “in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty...overflowed in a wealth of generosity”⁶⁰ for the neediest among God’s people in distant Jerusalem. Christopher Wright, an ordained Anglican priest and international director of Langham Partnership International, in discussing this merciful sharing between geographically separated communities, notes,

It is very probable that Paul saw in the collection he organized among his Gentile churches to take to the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem...a token or symbol of the tribute of the nations as prophesied in the Old Testament. He invested a lot of energy, both theologically and logistically, in this act, which doubtless had straightforward charitable objectives as its primary motivation.⁶¹

Paul, in commending the generosity of the Macedonians to the believers in Corinth, affirms that generous sharing of resources on a global scale is rooted, not simply in humanitarian concerns, but in the generosity of God in Christ. The apostle writes, “For

⁵⁷ Acts 2:45.

⁵⁸ Acts 2:46-47.

⁵⁹ 2 Corinthians 8:1.

⁶⁰ 2 Corinthians 8:2.

⁶¹ Wright, 524.

you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for you sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.”⁶²

The Covenantal Foundation for New Testament/Contemporary Sharing and Generosity

The historic covenantal documents of the people of God, expressed in Genesis through Deuteronomy, bear testimony to the generosity of God and his intentionality about the care of the poor, the oppressed, the needy, the widow, the orphan, and the alien. It was from these documents that the apostle Paul drew his understanding of the practical work of interdependence. The covenantal documents give foundational orientation about how to care for the most vulnerable in the midst of the covenant community and how resources can and should be shared. And the covenantal documents show that God himself is the source of kindness, generosity, justice, and truth. Scottish theologian John Drane writes,

When the Old Testament demands justice, mercy and truth in human relationships, it does not appeal to some abstract notion of morality. Instead, it goes back to the roots of the covenant faith, in the justice, mercy and truth of God himself.... And it is no surprise that one of the most eloquent statements of God’s will – the Ten Commandments – begins not with a command, but with a statement: “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, where you were slaves.” Right behaviour should stem naturally from the response of a grateful people to what God has done for them. Morality and theology are inextricably interwoven with each other—for it is within the context of a personal relationship between God and his people that the ethical principles of the Old Testament can most fully be understood.⁶³

Exodus 16:18 instructs the community of faith about the just and equitable distribution of manna, thus assuring that the basic nutritional needs of the community of

⁶² 2 Corinthians 8:2.

⁶³ John Drane, *Introducing the Old Testament* (Oxford: Lion Publishing, 1987), 286.

God's people were met.⁶⁴ Paul, citing the distribution of manna in Exodus, tells the Corinthian church, in relationship to his appeal for the distribution of resources to the Jerusalem church in times of famine, "I do not mean that you should be burdened, but that as a matter of fairness your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. As it is written, 'Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.'"⁶⁵ The distribution of manna was, according to Paul, a guiding light on the path toward economic interdependence between members of the covenant community who found themselves in dire straits.

Throughout the Law, God speaks of practical, positive ways to address disparity and need among his people. Exodus 22:25 states that "if you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him and you shall not exact interest from him," addressing the possibility of interest-free loans and, on a local and global scale, could have practical application in the areas of micro-enterprise and financing opportunities. Exodus 23:12 guaranteed a day of rest for the slave and alien throughout the year. Leviticus 19:10 instructs the covenant community to assure that there is a continual provision for the community's neediest during the time of harvest: "And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God." Leviticus 19:13 instructs those who hire workers to pay wages immediately ("the wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night"); laborers were never to be left unpaid. Deuteronomy 14, in discussing the tithe, addresses the requirement for

⁶⁴ 2 Corinthians 8:13-21.

⁶⁵ 2 Corinthians 8:13-15.

the community of faith to meet basic alimentary needs for the most defenseless members of the covenant family: “At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your town. And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.”⁶⁶ Deuteronomy 15 instructs God’s people how to deal with members of the community whose needs are such that they are unable to provide for the basic domestic requirements of their everyday lives. God addresses the release of credit debt⁶⁷ and seeks to insure that, while there will “never cease to be poor in the land,”⁶⁸ among his people “there will be no poor.”⁶⁹ Centuries later, Jesus referenced these very words in Deuteronomy in a discussion in the house of Simon the leper. About that encounter John Stott comments that “when Jesus said, ‘the poor you will always have with you’...he was not acquiescing in the permanence of poverty. He was echoing the Old Testament statement ‘there will always be poor people in the land’ (Deuteronomy 15:11). Yet this was intended not as an excuse for complacency but as an incentive to generosity....”⁷⁰ In practical terms, the first eleven verses of Deuteronomy 15 address the duty to lend to the poor but put “specific limits on the power of those who do so.”⁷¹ Steve Corbett and Brian Fickkert note that “the

⁶⁶ Deuteronomy 14:28-29.

⁶⁷ Deuteronomy 15:2-3.

⁶⁸ Deuteronomy 15:11.

⁶⁹ Deuteronomy 15:4.

⁷⁰ Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 239.

⁷¹ Wright, 289.

commands were so extensive that they were designed to achieve the ultimate goal of eradicating poverty among God's people....⁷²

Noting Scripture's guidance with respect to the neediest among the community of faith, Gustavo Gutierrez, a Dominican priest, who spent many years of his life living and working among the poorest of Lima, Peru, and who is known as the founder of Liberation Theology, writes in a working paper prepared for Peruvian bishops, "The privilege of the poor...has its theological basis in God. The poor are 'blessed' not because of the mere fact that they are poor, but because the kingdom of God is expressed in the manifestation of his justice and love in their favor."⁷³ After discussing directives for forgivable loans, Moses discusses possibilities for helping former slaves by furnishing them "liberally out of your flock, out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress."⁷⁴ Such a provision does not simply provide for the initial sustenance of the individual or family, but opens up the possibility of an initial resource for local business. As Gutierrez notes, "Poverty contradicts the very meaning of *the Mosaic Religion*. Moses led his people out of the slavery, exploitation, and alienation of Egypt so that they might inhabit a land where they could live with human dignity."⁷⁵ The heartbeat of God, throughout his directives for practical, covenantal life, is that his people "open wide [their] hand to [their] brother, to the needy and to the poor, in [their] land."⁷⁶

⁷² Corbett and Fikkert, 39.

⁷³ Robert Benne, Richard John Neuhaus, and Center on Religion & Society (New York, NY), *The Preferential Option for the Poor: Essays*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus, Encounter Series (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1988), 37.

⁷⁴ Deuteronomy 15:14.

⁷⁵ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 167. Author's emphasis.

⁷⁶ Deuteronomy 15:11.

God's Prophetic Word to His Erring People

It was precisely the loss of the “open hand” in the religious life of Israel that provoked God’s anger against his chosen people in and through the ministry of the prophets. Wright tells us that “the prophets saw a people whose appetite for worship was insatiable but whose daily lives were a denial of all the moral standards of the God they claimed to worship.”⁷⁷ C. Hassell Bullock adds that “nowhere was the decay of the society better restored than in the neglect of the indigent poor, and nowhere was the true nature of Israel’s God more faithfully conveyed than in the words of the prophets for the disadvantaged and oppressed...they saw justice as the golden thread that bound Yahweh’s society together in wholeness.”⁷⁸ The prophets address every kind of neglect that would foster, exacerbate, or sustain the economic or social load of the poor. For the prophets, more than simple chance, choices, or laziness, societal oppression and poverty were rooted in the personal and systemic actions of others,

Thus says the LORD:

“For three transgressions of Israel,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment,
because they sell the righteous for silver,
and the needy for a pair of sandals—
those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth
and turn aside the way of the afflicted;
a man and his father go in to the same girl,
so that my holy name is profaned;
they lay themselves down beside every altar
on garments taken in pledge,
and in the house of their God they drink
the wine of those who have been fined.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Wright, 288.

⁷⁸ C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), 25.

⁷⁹ Amos 2:6-8.

Throughout the history of God's people, the prophets address every kind of economic and systemic abuse related to the needy. From exploitation in business and commerce,⁸⁰ to crooked and dishonest judicial systems,⁸¹ to unjust leaders and rulers.⁸² In the words of the eighth-century BC prophet Amos, God announced judgment upon his people "because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals—those who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth and turn aside the way of the afflicted...."⁸³ Bullock notes that "no prophet before Amos, with the exception of Moses, had linked the welfare and survival of the nation to the moral obedience of the people."⁸⁴ As with Isaiah, the prophet from Tekoa, Amos rejected the feasts, took no delight in solemn assemblies, did not accept burnt, grain, and peace offerings but called upon the covenant community to "let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."⁸⁵ As Yehezkel Kaufmann has it, Amos does not denounce the religious practices of the nation unconditionally, but "Amos rejected the cult in favor of morality."⁸⁶ It is crucial to note that to confess to know God can never be viewed as a purely cognitive endeavor divorced from the compassionate care and distribution of resources to the needy and vulnerable. Jeremiah, speaking words of judgment to King Josiah's son Shallum states,

Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness,
and his upper rooms by injustice,
who makes his neighbor serve him for nothing
and does not give him his wages,
who says, "I will build myself a great house
with spacious upper rooms,"

⁸⁰ See Hosea 12:7-8.

⁸¹ Amos 5:7.

⁸² Jeremiah 5:26-29.

⁸³ Amos 2:6-7.

⁸⁴ Bullock, 55.

⁸⁵ Amos 5:21-25.

⁸⁶ Bullock, 57.

who cuts out windows for it,
 paneling it with cedar
 and painting it with vermilion.
 Do you think you are a king
 because you compete in cedar?
 Did not your father eat and drink
 and do justice and righteousness?
 Then it was well with him.
 He judged the cause of the poor and needy;
 then it was well.
Is not this to know me?
 But you have eyes and heart
 only for your dishonest gain,
 for shedding innocent blood,
 and for practicing oppression and violence.⁸⁷

As Gutierrez sums up the prophetic text, “To know, that is to say, to love Yahweh is to do justice to the poor and oppressed.”⁸⁸

Worship – Justice and Mercy on the Ground

Especially important for Christian organizations, churches, and agencies is that the care of the needy and poor must be viewed as a matter not only of the distribution and redistribution of resources, but as core to the substance of corporate worship and fellowship. And, as Christopher Wright has argued, the moral weight of the Old Testament should continue to impact God’s people today. The Old Testament laid the foundation for the practical work of relief and development in the early church, and should necessarily direct our response to the world’s needs in an increasingly connected world. Wright writes that “the paradigmatic force of the *socioeconomic* legislation that governed Israel’s life in the land still has ethical and missional relevance for Christians – in church and in society.”⁸⁹ The prophet Isaiah called God’s people “Sodom and Gomorrah” because they were a nation that offered a “multitude of sacrifices....burnt

⁸⁷ Jeremiah 22:13-17. Author’s emphasis.

⁸⁸ Gutiérrez, 110.

⁸⁹ Wright, 305. Author’s emphasis.

offerings of rams...the fat of well-fed beasts...the blood of bulls...lambs....and goats”⁹⁰ and yet was empty of practical righteousness, kindness, and generosity. God had “looked for justice, but behold bloodshed, for righteousness, but behold, an outcry”⁹¹ among a people that “turn aside the needy from justice and...rob the poor of [his] people of their right....”⁹² God was calling his people to “...remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause.”⁹³ There could be no mistaking that God’s character, his kingdom life touching the earth, was rooted in justice, righteousness, and mercy. As Wright puts it,

It seems legitimate to me to draw the same conclusion that Israelite worshipers seem to have drawn, which is that the loving concern and redemptive action that God had demonstrated in the social arena of Israel’s history, while they were unique within the framework of his covenantal relationship with them, were not exceptional and exclusive. Rather they were, in the proper sense, *typical*. That is simply how it is with YHWH God. Such concern and action are definitive of his character.⁹⁴

Jesus, the Word Made Flesh

An important factor for Christian agencies and congregations desiring to foster interdependent relationships is how Jesus, the incarnation of God, perfectly expressed the heart and soul of the practical covenantal faith of God’s people. Jesus, as “the word made flesh” was the heart and soul of the Law and Prophets walking upon this earth. Wedding his words to his actions, Jesus walked out in his earthly ministry practical divine grace, goodness, generosity, justice, and righteousness. Jesus, announcing the bent of his life and labors in the synagogue of Nazareth, quotes directly from the prophet Isaiah,

⁹⁰ Isaiah 1:11.

⁹¹ Isaiah 5:7.

⁹² Isaiah 10:2.

⁹³ Isaiah 1:16-17.

⁹⁴ Wright, 283.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.⁹⁵

The words of the prophet cited by Jesus, point to the “poor as primary actors in rebuilding and restoration.”⁹⁶ When John the Baptist, imprisoned for his own prophetic voice for God's righteousness, heard of the deeds of Jesus, he sent two of his disciples to ask him if he was the promised “one who is to come or should we look for another?”⁹⁷

Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert make the point that

there are so many ways that Jesus could have answered this question. He could have pointed out that His birth in Bethlehem from the line of David was consistent with prophecies about the Messiah. Or Jesus could have referred to His remarkable knowledge of the Scriptures and to His unparalleled teaching abilities. Or Jesus could have reminded John that they had both witnessed the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus in the form of a dove and had heard God the Father say, “This is my beloved Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”⁹⁸

However, as Corbett and Fikkert additionally observe, “Jesus chose not to point to any of these signs. John was already aware of these and apparently needed something else to comfort him.”⁹⁹ What Jesus did for the Baptist's inquiring disciples was to link his preaching and his teaching to his practical acts of kindness and mercy to the sick, the needy, the poor, and the dying, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Luke 4:18.

⁹⁶ Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 68.

⁹⁷ Matthew 11:3.

⁹⁸ Corbett and Fikkert, 34.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Matthew 11:4-6.

“In essence,” Corbett and Fickert observe, “Jesus was saying ‘John you have not run the race in vain. I am the promised Messiah. And you can be sure because of what your disciples are *both hearing Me say and seeing Me do*. I am preaching the good news of the kingdom, *and* I am showing the good news of the kingdom, just as Isaiah said I would.’”¹⁰¹ With respect to this kind of liberation, Gutierrez comments, “Christ the Savior liberates from sin, which is the ultimate root of all disruption of friendship and of all injustice and oppression. Christ makes humankind truly free, that is to say, he enables us to live in communion with him; and this is the basis for all human fellowship.”¹⁰² Scripture then highlights the reality that repentance, true liberation, and community transformation are deeply linked and consistent with God’s character. So deep and pervasive was the understanding of economic responsibility, accountability, and practical kindness among God’s people that Zacchaeus, in his repentance before the Lord Jesus, assured the Savior, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.”¹⁰³ In that exchange, Jesus was quick not to warn him of the dangers of creating unhealthy dependency, but to assure the repentant tax collector that “today, salvation has come to this house.”¹⁰⁴ Such an open-handed practical spirit of sharing defined the heart of the worshipping community born on Pentecost. It was from the earliest days of the Christian movement that God’s people

devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Corbett and Fickert, 35.

¹⁰² Gutiérrez, 25.

¹⁰³ Luke 19:8.

¹⁰⁴ Luke 19:9.

¹⁰⁵ Acts 2:42-45.

Eschatological Implications

In addressing the separation of the sheep and goats at the end of time, Jesus teaches his followers,

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.” Then the righteous will answer him, saying, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?” And the King will answer them, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.”¹⁰⁶

Practical sharing and generosity is revelatory of the work and presence of God’s grace and forgiveness among members of the believing community.

As agencies and congregations work to build interdependent relational bridges and partnerships with teams working in the world’s disparate conditions, Scripture tells them openly that a community of faith is dead to God that does not weave together its faith and its works. James writes, “If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”¹⁰⁷ James reminds the world of Christian aid, relief, and development organizations, and congregations who desire biblical faithfulness and integrity as they network with the world’s neediest, that “religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstrained from the world.”¹⁰⁸ The church father Ignatius “stressed the responsibility of the church to care for widows and children. Indeed, Ignatius made it

¹⁰⁶ Matthew 25:35-40.

¹⁰⁷ James 2:15.

¹⁰⁸ James 1:27.

clear that he was not simply discussing doctrines about good works but was affirming the reality of a massive structure of Christian voluntarism and charity.”¹⁰⁹ When asked by the rich young man about eternal life, Jesus put things very simply: “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”¹¹⁰

Dependency

For many Christian agencies, international teams, and congregations, the sharing of resources and the building of international partnerships and networks have surfaced concerns about fostering unnecessary and unbiblical dependency. These concerns did *not* come, at least initially, from a desire to truncate the sharing of resources with the world’s neediest. Nor were these concerns birthed from a sense of need for mutual learning that comes from the interaction, input, and perspectives of colleagues, workers, and development practitioners, nor even from the theological reflection on the Scriptural dynamics of interdependency. Concerns surfaced when multinational, multicultural teams and partnerships saw the sharing of resources fostering an institutional and functional *dependency* that allows, as Glenn Schwartz puts it, “someone...to carry [another] along financially and, sometimes administratively.”¹¹¹ In other words, concerns have arisen about the one-way sharing of resources to sustain, from a distance, projects which can or should be maintained in their local context with local resources. These concerns have produced the contemporary, impassioned discussion about dependency. It is when “inter” is disconnected from “dependence” that the challenge of dependency raises its

¹⁰⁹ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*, 1st HarperCollins pbk. ed. ([San Francisco, CA]: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997), 189.

¹¹⁰ Matthew 19:21.

¹¹¹ Glenn J. Schwartz, *When Charity Destroys Dignity* (Lancaster, PA: World Mission Book Service, 2007), 340.

head. This is a theme not only among Christian agencies and congregations, but which also touches the discussions, decisions, and literature of both Christian and non-Christian teams and organizations. Farmer, reflecting on the work of medical practitioners trying to raise funds to serve the poorest in a rural Caribbean clinic writes,

As to the attitude of rich countries toward poor countries, “aid before trade” seemed legitimate enough if the goal was to prop up U.S. friendly family dictatorships. But a free clinic seeking to serve the destitute sick had to fight against the logic of users’ fees and had to endure scolding from aid agencies and development specialists, since our approach, we were told, was neither “sustainable” nor “cost-effective.” By which they meant that it’s all right to treat poor people but only if they pay for it themselves.¹¹²

Sustainability and cost-effectiveness become powerful points of discussion and decision for those who have an abundance of resources to share with those who lack them. Author David Rieff, who has referred to humanitarian aid workers from any background or persuasion as the “last of the just,” sounds a similar note in *A Bed for the Night*. In addition to concerned debate about sustainable or cost-effective aid and development work in the international sharing of resources, comes the social and political baggage of seeing these efforts foster or promote unintended social or political agendas. Rieff writes,

The aid worker’s life is constant effort to get supplies or services to those who need them, trying all the while as best he or she can—often with mixed and sometimes with bitter and unintended results—to, as the doctors say, do no harm, while attempting to mitigate horrors most people in the home countries are at best dimly aware of. Perhaps there was once, but today there is nothing innocent or unself-conscious about these efforts. Of course, it is impossible to really do no harm, unless one is a Jain, and, following strictly the tenets of that religion, sweeps the streets to save the lives of insects as one walks along. And aid workers can do great harm, however inadvertently, so they are absolutely right to worry, despite all the undeniable good they do. Are they serving as logisticians or medics

¹¹² Farmer, 250.

for some warlord's war effort...? Are they creating a culture of dependency among their beneficiaries? And are they being used politically...?¹¹³

Among some Christian relief, aid, and development workers, dependency has come to represent what John Rowell, a minister in the Evangelical Free Church of America and director of Ministry Resource Network, Inc., describes as “the unhealthy patterns of reliance on Western financial support that are presumed to be encouraged when missionaries readily offer support for indigenous workers, for ministry projects, or for facilities’ development in pioneer settings.”¹¹⁴ When that definition becomes the working understanding of dependency among Christian organizations and international teams, concerns about the sharing of human and financial resources are more related to the ongoing work of building infrastructures, maintaining community development projects, and church planting, which efforts, according to Schwartz, should be “locally owned and operated.”¹¹⁵ Concerns about the sharing of human and financial resources then become less related to the compassionate life-saving aid and relief given to sufferers of HIV/AIDS, which is the focus of this study. For most prayerful practitioners, the core discussion is one that alternates between the compassionate, direct intervention and sharing of resources to save lives, and the building and maintenance of structures and projects that would maintain and sustain those lives—in other words, the interplay between unfettered aid and relief to rescue the distressed and dying, and the development or renewal of the structures and systems that maintain and nurture those lives.

¹¹³ David Rieff, *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 22-23; *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Rowell, 15.

¹¹⁵ Schwartz, 163.

The Issue of Power

International partnership developers and team builders like Rickett would argue that generosity, and even the most compassionate giving, must consider the necessary component of community building and mutuality of involvement and responsibility. They go, or should go, hand in hand. Rickett writes that “unhealthy dependency occurs when reciprocity and responsibility are ignored, overruled, or undervalued. If the accent is on the exchange of money or personnel and not on the complementary contributions each partner makes, the importance of reciprocity is easily overlooked.”¹¹⁶ Rickett goes on to say that “money is one form of power, and in international partnerships is proven to be the most problematic. When one ministry relies solely on another for financial support, the balance of power leans heavily toward the funding source. This is a problem because unhealthy dependency thrives on the imbalance of power.”¹¹⁷ According to Rowell, financial resourcing that stands in isolation of the development of partnerships with relational integrity and mutuality can and will produce associations that are oppressive. Funding and resources, done to facilitate the vision and projects of cultural outsiders, can throttle local freedom and initiative, and can lead to subjugation and passivity. Rowell writes,

Whenever funds are provided at the initiative of cultural outsiders in a manner that limits local leaders’ freedom to act on their own vision, or when outside sources of financial aid are offered in a fashion that subjugates native workers, relegating them to a passive role or to an inherently subordinate position in relationship to their benefactors, unhealthy dependency can be the result. Whenever funds are given without regard to the capacity of nationals to manage, maintain, or multiply

¹¹⁶ Daniel Rickett, *Building Strategic Relationships : A Practical Guide to Partnering with Non-Western Missions* (Pleasant Hill, CA: Klein Graphics, Pleasant Hill Media Center for Partners International, San Jose, CA, 2000), 18.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20.

the investments made, or to make their own contributions along the way, dependency is a distinct possibility.¹¹⁸

With respect to power and authority, it is significant to note the words of Jesus about the relational ambiance that should exist among God's people working together in partnerships. The ambiance and climate that should exist in multicultural relationships and on multicultural teams should, according to Jesus, stand in stark contrast to secular and worldly relationships. According to Matthew's gospel, Jesus says, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."¹¹⁹

Linking International Resources to Local Communities through the Church

A common theme in many Christian organizations with a global reach is the desire to link what are termed "mercy ministries" to indigenous, local congregations. In the absence of a practical, working relationship with local churches in an area of extreme need, there is often a desire to see works of mercy and compassionate relief lead to the planting and development of new communities of faith. A practical example is the work Mission to the World (MTW), the missionary sending agency of the Presbyterian Church in America. MTW facilitated the transition of several United States citizens to the team interviewed in this study, making the interaction of MTW with the multicultural team critically important. With respect to both commending people and resources to the world mission movement, specifically related to developing partnerships rooted in the global church, the Vision Statement of MTW reads, "Mission to the World will seek out and

¹¹⁸ Rowell, 15.

¹¹⁹ Matthew 20:25-28.

partner with Christ-centered and Holy Spirit-initiated church-planting movements from our Reformed and covenantal perspective.”¹²⁰ The commentary on the Vision Statement defines MTW’s emphasis on the church and church planting movements specifically:

A church-planting movement is a God-glorifying, God-centered work of His grace whereby the Holy Spirit energizes indigenous leaders to plant clusters of churches with a common vision and purpose to reproduce themselves often by means of evangelizing and discipling a specific region or people group. Such movements balance orthodoxy, unity, and liberty and are built upon indigenous structures and institutions as well as local funding and native worship. The focus of these movements is the establishment of Christ’s Church through word and deed, and will result in the transformation of all of life as a culture’s highest good is realized through His Lordship.

MTW’s statement is a declarative commitment that seeks to wed together the teaching and preaching of the theology of grace with deeds of kindness and compassion in and through the work of local, indigenous churches. While these churches and leaders would work in partnership with international leaders and congregations, the hope is that these communities of faith would be shaped and organized *via* indigenous structures and institutions. In other words, MTW as a sending agency and partnership-facilitator desires to see interdependent communities of faith form from the interaction of international teams and partnerships with local believers.

Three-Self Emphasis

As in the case of MTW and other Christian organizations, discussions, and plans about church planting, especially when a decisive exchange of resources exists, there is a goal, at least in part, of facilitating of “three self churches.” While not always explicitly stated, in most congregations and agencies with a substantial link to churches and church planting, and with a core commitment to mercy ministries, the value of “three-self churches” is implicit in their thinking and planning. According to the literature consulted,

¹²⁰ Mission to the World, “Vision Statement,” (Atlanta, GA: 2008).

three-self churches are congregations that should be, or mature to be, self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting. The emphasis on such churches and movements was “articulated in the mid-nineteenth century by missionary leaders Henry Venn of England and Rufus Anderson of the United States. Later it was more fully developed and implemented in Korea by the American John Nevius.”¹²¹ With respect to the sharing of resources, Rowell notes that “modern missiologists have placed particular emphasis on the last point, interpreting it to emphasize financial independence and developing a whole stream of thought trumpeting ‘the dangers of dependency.’”¹²² The concern is not unfounded. Glenn J. Schwartz has observed that one small denomination in the United States had invested more than a million dollars in one Latin American congregation which, after ten years, had no more than fifty members. Another denomination planted several congregations in Latin America investing several million dollars. To date, they are still waiting for those congregations to give sufficiently to support the church planter who serves them. In Europe, it has been calculated by some that the average cost of a church plant is one million dollars. Yet, those congregations rarely grow beyond one hundred members and often have no indigenous, national pastor to lead them.¹²³ These are sobering statistics for those who share a love for the nations of the earth and the church and who desire to be good stewards of the human and financial resources of God’s people.

¹²¹ J. Nelson Jennings, *God the Real Superpower* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2007).

¹²² John Rowell, “The Dread Cancer of Stinginess,”

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/october/17.42.html> (accessed December 12, 2009).

¹²³ Glenn J. Schwartz, “Avoiding or Overcoming Dependency in Cross-Cultural Church Planting,” <http://www.wmausa.org/page.aspx?id=83809> (accessed January 30, 2010).

While there are very few principles that have been as core to the thinking and practice of the modern mission movement as the “three-self paradigm,”¹²⁴ Rowell and others are concerned that the quest to cultivate this formula can actually hinder global partnerships, especially as related to fostering community, compassion, and learning. Rowell writes,

The fundamental presumption of the dependency school is that the global cause of Christ would be better off if indigenous ministries stood on their own, with whatever resources may be available to them in their local communities. They encourage indigenous leaders to develop a healthy resistance to receiving outside resources, and they urge Westerners to develop a healthy reticence about offering aid... The message of dependency school proponents is interpreted by many as a general call “not to give”—the simplest way to avoid the presumed dangers of dependency.¹²⁵

What is clear is that, with respect to navigating the waters of God’s call to wed together the proclamation of grace and the practice of compassionate justice, congregations and agencies need a great deal of wisdom. This is crucial when considering the role and value of international partners, especially the poor. Rowell writes,

Advocates of the dependency school also argue that well-intentioned Western charity “destroys the dignity” of those who receive foreign assistance. Glenn Schwartz borrows that theme for the title of his recently released book, *When Charity Destroys Dignity: Overcoming Unhealthy Dependency in the Christian Movement*.... He...concludes that Western financial aid can generally be delivered only as a handout. Because he believes handouts destroy the self-worth of those on the receiving end of the philanthropic equation, Schwartz anticipates that outside support will serve only to handicap indigenous ministries. He therefore condemns foreign funding as a negative influence—even calling it a poison that pollutes the lives of the global poor.¹²⁶

The Journey toward “Something More” on a Global Scale

In 1959 Harold Cook, in discussing the three-self paradigm, cast a vision for something more, something that takes a concern for interdependence beyond purely

¹²⁴ Rowell, “The Dread Cancer of Stinginess.”

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

economic discussions. Cook writes, “What is our ultimate objective in the church?

Unquestionably it is a vital, flourishing church, grounded in Jesus Christ and carrying on a full, active ministry, in fellowship with other churches but not dependent on them.”¹²⁷

With respect to a movement toward practical, global interdependence, Nelson Jennings, Professor of World Mission at Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, comments that the three-self paradigm is a factor that can “mitigate against interdependency between Christians across cultural and national boundaries.”¹²⁸ With respect to the often turbulent waters produced by the confluence of three-self thinking and the fostering of interdependent relationships Jennings writes,

Those who raise this matter (I include myself here...) suggest that the goal of producing independent (or non-dependent) churches can unwittingly run counter to the need to live as the pilgrim people of God who are always, by nature, beyond and foreign to any particular setting. Yes, we are to be “at home” wherever we are, but at the same time we are to be pilgrims and strangers—international, with respect to national settings. If we seek to create nondependent churches that mirror ourselves (as allegedly nondependent churches, which need no other part of the body of Christ), both we and they can fall prey to the quicksand of each setting’s enveloping power that will inevitably render our life and witness ineffective, parochial, and ultimately self-serving.¹²⁹

Rickett points out that “to refuse to share our resources with overseas brethren because there have been abuses is like saying we should outlaw marriage because some husbands beat their wives. The problem is real but the solution is simplistic.”¹³⁰ He goes on to add that “rather than steep Christians away from reliance on one another, the Bible seems to celebrate dependency in the body of Christ. Yet this is clearly *not* the way we normally think of dependency. The dependency implied by the image of the body is

¹²⁷ Harold R. Cook, *Missionary Life and Work: A Discussion of Principles and Practices of Missions* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), 229.

¹²⁸ Jennings, 101.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹³⁰ Rickett, *Building Strategic Relationships: A Practical Guide to Partnering with Non-Western Missions*, 13.

complimentary and reciprocal.”¹³¹ As Rowell expresses it, commenting on the generous, sacrificial giving of the Macedonians to the needy saints in Jerusalem,

Charitable giving is not an insidious danger but an important kingdom dynamic. Those who receive material help will not only have their physical needs met, they will be grateful and rejoice over God’s grace. They will praise the Lord. They will pray for the donors who helped them. They will feel more connected with the body of Christ because of the relief they have experienced through the generosity of their spiritual brothers and sisters.¹³²

Interdependency

Gratefully, in the midst of discussion and debate about the challenges associated with dependency, whether in the area of aid, relief, community development or the wedding of Word and deed in church planting endeavors, there is an ever-growing awareness of and interest in the fostering of global interdependence. As seen above, sharing our lives and resources is deeply biblical. At its core, interdependence is about mutual dependence among peoples and touches the warp and woof of the lives and labors of God’s people spiritually, emotionally, educationally, culturally, and economically. The community-built reference encyclopedia Wikipedia offers a broad stroke entry that reflects much of the contemporary literature on interdependence and speaks to the width and breadth of the impact of dependent relationships:

Interdependence is a dynamic of being mutually and physically responsible to, and sharing a common set of principles with, others. This concept differs distinctly from “dependence” in that an interdependent relationship implies that all participants are emotionally, economically, ecologically and or morally “interdependent.” Some people advocate freedom or independence as a sort of ultimate good; others do the same with devotion to one’s family, community, or society. Interdependence recognizes the truth in each position and weaves them together. Two states that cooperate with each other are said to be interdependent. It can also be defined as the interconnectedness and the reliance on one another socially, economically, environmentally and politically.¹³³

¹³¹ Ibid., 15.

¹³² John Rowell, *The Dread Cancer of Stinginess*.

¹³³ The free encyclopedia Wikipedia, April 24, 2010 at 20:58. "Interdependence" (accessed May 17,2010).

According to this entry, the relational dynamic of interdependence weds our lives emotionally, economically, ecologically, and morally. While economics is a necessary piece, it is just that, a piece. The late David Bosch, former professor and head of the department of missiology at the University of South Africa comments,

The individual is not a monad, but part of an organism. We live in one world, in which the rescue of some at the expense of others is not possible. Only *together* is there salvation and survival. This includes not only a new relationship to nature, but also among humans.... Here lies the pertinence of the rediscovery of the church as Body of Christ and of the Christian mission as building a community of those who share a common destiny.¹³⁴

As discussed above, a significant part of laboring in international partnerships, of learning to live and share together as God's people, is a special concern for the world's neediest. With respect to those with a medical relief and care bent, such as the HIV/AIDS team in this study, Farmer writes,

A preferential option for the poor offers both a challenge and an insight. It challenges doctors and other health providers to make an option – a choice – for the poor, to work on their behalf. The insight is, in a sense, an epidemiological one: most often, diseases themselves make a preferential option for the poor. Every careful survey, across boundaries of time and space, shows us that the poor are sicker than the nonpoor. They're at increased risk of dying prematurely, whether from increased exposure to pathogens (including pathogenic situations) or from decreased access to services—or, as is most often the case, from both of these “risk factors” working together. Given this indisputable association, medicine has a clear—if not always observed—mandate to devote itself to populations struggling against poverty.¹³⁵

Rieff, in discussing generic humanitarianism would add, “...at its core, humanitarianism remains the vocation of helping people when they most desperately need help, when they have lost or stand at risk of losing everything they have, including their lives.”¹³⁶ Bosch

¹³⁴ David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series No. 16 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 362.

¹³⁵ Farmer, 140.

¹³⁶ Rieff, 27.

makes reference to a preferential option for the poor, a phrase coined in 1979 at the Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops in Puebla, Mexico in *Transforming Mission*. Bosch, referencing an observation made in the Bishops' documents for that gathering, quotes,

As their wealth accumulated, rich Christians increasingly tended to interpret the biblical sayings on poverty metaphorically. The poor were the "poor in spirit", the ones who recognized their utter dependence upon God. In this sense, then, the rich could also be poor—they could arrogate all biblical promises to themselves. Gradually, however, the faces of the poor forced themselves on to the attention of the rich Christians of the West in a way that could no longer be ignored or allegorized.¹³⁷

Bosch goes on to observe, referencing the work of Liberation Theologian Gutierrez, that the

very word "preference" denies all exclusiveness, as though God would be interested *only* in the poor, whilst the word "option" should not be termed to mean "optional". The point is rather that the poor are the first, though not the only ones, on which God's attention focuses and that, therefore, the church has no choice but to demonstrate solidarity with the poor.... The danger in all of this, of course, is that one may again easily fall in the trap of "the church for others" instead of "the church with others", "the church *for* the poor" rather than "the church *of* the poor."¹³⁸

What then is critical for Christ-confessing multicultural teams, who desire to live "under the Word," is that the poor are an extremely high priority in considering global interdependence and mutual learning and transformation. The poor are core to the global work and transformation of all believers – as individuals, agencies, and congregations.

Interdependence and Relational Shalom

Development practitioners Joy Alvarez, Elnora Avarientos, and Thomas H. McAlpine have written,

¹³⁷ Bosch, 435.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 435-436. Author's emphasis.

Shalom (“sustainable peace” or “harmony within diversity”) is first God’s vision and then our vision for the world. It is the reign of right relationships, where God rules over the created order. The creation account in Genesis portrays a blueprint of God’s intention for life as it should be: harmony between God and human beings, harmony within each person, harmony among persons, and harmony between human beings and nature.¹³⁹

There is a growing understanding in many circles that reliance upon others can, according to Rickett, “actually be more important than being independent.”¹⁴⁰ As noted above, interdependence is both a gift and core to learning and transformation as global partners. Rickett adds, as observed in the biblical section above, “taking our cues from the Bible, the kind of dependency expected from and commanded of Christians is characterized by reciprocity and responsibility,”¹⁴¹ where there is recognition of “each partner’s ability to make distinctive and complementary contributions”¹⁴² to the relationship, wedded to “each partner’s ability to meet their obligations as Christians.” Recently, Pope Benedict XVI wrote, “today humanity appears much more interactive than in the past: this shared sense of being close to one another must be transformed into true communion. *The development of peoples depends, above all, on a recognition that the human race is a single family* working together in true communion.”¹⁴³ Bosch shares a similar perspective. He writes that

the Enlightenment creed taught that every individual was free to pursue his or her own happiness, irrespective of what others thought or said. This entire approach had disastrous consequences.... [W]e need to retrieve togetherness, interdependence, “symbiosis”.... [T]he individual is not a monad, but part of an organism. We live in one world, in which the rescue of some at the expense of others is not possible. Only together is their salvation and survival.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 56.

¹⁴⁰ Rickett, *Building Strategic Relationships: A Practical Guide to Partnering with Non-Western Missions*, 14.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 17.

¹⁴² Ibid., 20.

¹⁴³ Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth Caritas in Veritate* (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009), 60. Author's emphasis.

¹⁴⁴ Bosch, 362.

Bosch adds, “The ‘psychology of separateness’ has to make way for an ‘epistemology of participation.’”¹⁴⁵ Jonathan Bonk, director of the Overseas Ministries Study Center, the editor of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, and the editor of the internet-based *Dictionary of African Christian Biography*, sounds a similar note with respect to the current changes taking place in mission agencies with a global reach. He writes regarding the sharing of resources and a systemic moving away from key themes like independence, autonomy, and self-sufficiency toward a more practical understanding of Christian community. Bonk comments on the movement toward mutual dependency, learning, and even systemic transformation while engaging in meeting some of the world’s most pressing needs. He comments,

A number of Western mission agencies, while not addressing the problem of their affluence by renouncing it, have recognized the morally questionable pattern of relationships that have long characterized and bedeviled Western missions and non-Western churches. They have begun to move away from the traditional Western stresses on *independence*, *autonomy*, and *self-sufficiency*, restructuring along lines more consistent with biblical teaching on the church as the Body of Christ. In these societies, the emphasis is on the *interdependence* of Western and non-Western churches and institutions. At the institutional level, this has resulted in structures which – in terms of power, policies, and personnel – are becoming more genuinely international.”¹⁴⁶ Liberation theologians sound a similar note when discussing the treatment and care of the sick and global learning....

Liberation theologians, in contrast to official line and policies of many global organizations and business, argue that genuine change will be most often rooted in working with and learning from small communities of poor people. Farmer, commenting on Liberation Theology writes, “It advances a simple methodology – *observe, judge,*

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Bonk.

act.”¹⁴⁷ Farmer writes further, regarding the interaction of literature and practical observation prior to judging and acting,

The “observation” part of the formula is key, for it involves careful review of a large body of literature that seeks to explain the distribution of the disease within populations, to explore its clinical characteristics, and to evaluate tuberculosis treatment regimens. This sort of review is standard in all responsible health planning, but liberation theology would push analysis in two directions: first, to seek the root causes of the problem; second, *to elicit the experiences and views of poor people* and to incorporate these views into all observations, judgments, and actions. Ironically enough, some who understand, quite correctly, that the underlying causes of tuberculosis are poverty and social inequality make a terrible error by failing to honor the experience and views of the poor in designing strategies to respond to the disease.¹⁴⁸

Interdependency relies upon global learning, individual and collective, in which participants from all layers and levels of communities are active participants.

Becoming a Learning Organization

People of the Christian faith who work in relief and development, in mercy and justice ministries, and in church planting increasingly understand that we need both human diversity and the sharing of multi-faceted ideas and perspectives to work as global community. Having the world’s poorest at the table and collaborating to shape discussions, decisions, and practical outcomes is a refreshing development in recent years, as globalization presses and compacts the connections of organizations and congregations around the world. Jennings notes, “All branches and expressions of the Christian church need other parts of Christ’s people to enable effective, prophetic living within our own particular contexts.”¹⁴⁹ While this has always been understood by some, it is becoming increasingly understood by a wider audience in the Christian community. Contemporary missional movements which seek to embrace the simplicity and

¹⁴⁷ Farmer, 140.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 146.

¹⁴⁹ Jennings, 103.

minimalist characteristics of the monastic movement are taking note of and learning from the interdependent practices of their predecessors. Scott Bessenecker, author of *The New Friars*, commenting on the predecessors of contemporary friars, says that they "...sought not simply to *bring* the gospel to the lost or oppressed from the outside, as if by remote control, but to *be* the gospel by becoming part of the communities of dispossessed they sought to serve."¹⁵⁰ Walbert Buhlman, in his forward to Jonathan Bonk's *Mission and Money*, comments on the necessity and importance of learning in context, learning that is shaped by mutual dependent relationships and sharing. He writes,

Until a short time ago it was a one-way street between Western churches and the Southern missions. In the North was the rich, charitable, teaching church; in the South were the poor, needy recipients of Northern Christian largesse. In the past twenty-five years that relationship has been transformed into a highway with two-way traffic. We are no longer dealing with one-sided mission help, but with a need for a frank and critical exchange of insights between churches that can and should occur on several levels.¹⁵¹

Emmanuel Katongole, a Catholic priest, born and raised in Uganda, the son of Rwandan parents, who now teaches at Duke Divinity School, where he is co-director, with Chris Rice, of the Center for Reconciliation makes a similar observation about the need for incarnational living and learning. Katongole, in an interview for *Christianity Today*, made this comment with respect to what people must learn and unlearn in order to be God's agents for transformation in the modern world:

The problem with the world is not that we do not see others. We do. We know the needs of the world. But to feel the gifts and needs of the world—that means learning to journey with people in different parts of the world. This kind of journeying is slower than mission done as delivery of aid, slower even than partnership. It takes time just to learn the history, for example, of Gulu in northern Uganda, to learn what is happening there. But when we take time for that, it begins to transform the pilgrim. You have learned the names of people and places,

¹⁵⁰ Scott A. Bessenecker, *The New Friars* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 20. Author's emphasis.

¹⁵¹ Bonk, xv.

these far-flung places with names very difficult to pronounce. You have inhaled the dust.¹⁵²

Commenting on the two-way nature and dynamic of the world's missional traffic, Jennings notes, "Ministry flowing in both directions, indeed in multiple directions, is needed as we 'serve one another.'"¹⁵³ Regarding the learning curve related to sharing our lives and resources as the world continues to compact, Jennings further adds, "God has thus liberally distributed numerous resources into different sectors of the worldwide church in such a way as to set before us a wide-open situation for working together. How to do that is a major challenge we face at this stage of historical transition in the worldwide missions enterprise."¹⁵⁴

For teams working among the world's very poorest, as considered in this study, the wedding of Word and praxis rooted in relationships is indispensable in order to both learn and be transformed. Unfortunately, the world's poorest are often not found at the planning and discussion table. Uruguayan journalist, writer, and novelist Eduardo Galeano said that "our system is one of detachment; to keep silenced people from asking questions, to keep the judged from judging, to keep solitary people from joining together, and the soul from putting together its pieces."¹⁵⁵ Farmer notes in his work among Haiti's poorest that "pragmatic solidarity is different from but nourished by solidarity per se, the desire to make common cause with those in need. Solidarity is a precious thing: people enduring great hardship often remark that they are grateful for the prayers and good wishes of fellow human beings."¹⁵⁶ Bonk sounds a similar note with respect to the

¹⁵² "From Tower-Dwellers to Travelers," *Christianity Today*, July 3, 2007, 08:43AM (accessed June 15, 2010).

¹⁵³ Jennings, 216.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 162.

¹⁵⁵ Farmer, from the dedicatory page.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.

missional community of faith. He writes, “Since biblical faith is above all a relational faith, it is not only sad, but tragically wide of the mark (sinful) when personal possessions and privileges prevent, distort, or destroy missionary relationships with the poor.”¹⁵⁷ Such a perspective would be true in all areas of engagement, but especially true with respect to learning from the poor as multicultural, multinational teams. According to Farmer, “Human rights abuses are best understood (that is, most accurately and comprehensively grasped) from the point of view of the poor. This too is a relatively novel exercise in the human rights community. In no area is it more needed than in that of health and human rights.”¹⁵⁸ In faith-based projects like the one discussed in this study, learning and transformation happen when Scripture is embraced by agencies, congregations, and God’s people in the actual context in which they are working. Alavarez, Avarientos, and McAlpine write,

Our search for appropriate ways of reading Scripture in the context of development projects is one of the number of activities highlighting the need for more intentional and strategic relations with the churches. This is true from two perspectives. First, using Scripture in projects is sustainable only if project agents engage in regular personal Scripture reading and receive formation regarding Scripture from some local expression of the church. Second, development projects have a great deal to do with money and power. Scripture has plenty to say about how we deal with these elements, regarding them as fundamental questions for discipleship.¹⁵⁹

When resources, either human or financial, are added to the mix, the need on the ground arches beyond the simple contracting of workers or the redistribution of financial resources. Again, it is relationship that fosters learning. As Rickett points out, “*Hiring local Christians is not partnership; it’s employment*. There may be very good reasons to hire local people to administer programs of a foreign mission. But employment

¹⁵⁷ Bonk, 56.

¹⁵⁸ Farmer, 17.

¹⁵⁹ Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 75.

relationships should never be confused with partnership.”¹⁶⁰ Yet, as Bonk points out, partnerships among economically disparate colleagues is fraught with potential problems:

A frequent side effect of economic and social disparity in close proximity is envy—one of that sinister cluster of sins labeled “deadly” by medieval theologians.... Although practice has lagged far behind, mission theory has long advocated the establishment of close personal relations with the people being proselytized. Ironically, therefore, the closer the social ties between missionaries and their Third World protégés, the greater the likelihood of envy.¹⁶¹

Jennings frames this challenge of working with poor and suffering as a question. He writes,

Understandably...many of our missions discussions focus on the best ways to share money. Yet how can we share and utilize those resources born out of situations of poverty, suffering, war, and overt spiritual activity? In a related way, how can we avoid thinking that sharing gifts is simply a redistribution of a finite set of items unevenly possessed, and instead realize that the Holy Spirit is freshly granting gifts and resources to his worldwide people?¹⁶²

Like Jennings, other advocates of global learning recognize that the inevitable reality is that people must learn together. Alvarez, Avarientos, and McAlapine, quoting Robert C.

Linthicum in his work, *Empowering the Poor: Community Organizing Among the City's "Rag, Tag and Bobtail,"* write,

The church...enters into the life of that community and becomes partners with the community in addressing that community's need. That means the church allows the people of the community to instruct it as it identifies with the people. It respects those people and perceives them as being people of great wisdom and potential. Such a church joins with the people whom they have identified as their own...recognizing that the only people who in the final analysis have this capability to change the community and to deal with its problems are the people of that community.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Rickett, *Building Strategic Relationships: A Practical Guide to Partnering with Non-Western Missions*, 21. Author's emphasis.

¹⁶¹ Bonk, 64.

¹⁶² Jennings, 162.

¹⁶³ Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 71.

Though written in the context of urban America, Linthicum's words have a global reach and impact global interdependency. Christian, noting the debilitating effects of sharing resources without mutual learning and transformation writes,

Years of work among the poor have taught us that limiting our investment among the poor to just money makes the poor beggars, and limiting our investment to programs makes the poor glorified beggars (beneficiaries), but if we believe transformation is about transforming lives then we must intentionally invest our lives. Only life can reproduce life. If transformation is about investing lives then we must pay attention to the quality of our lives. We must graduate to becoming communities where celebration, diversity and accountability are important hallmarks.

Missional author G. Thompson Brown echoes this perspective:

The church must be seen as the base from which mission moves out into the world. Churches enter into partnership, not so much to help each other, although this may be a by-product of mission, but to share resources, insights, and spiritual gifts in the crossing of frontiers, in bearing witness of a common faith to an unbelieving world, and in demonstrating by deeds of compassion and justice God's love for his suffering and alienated creation.¹⁶⁴

Jennings sums it up well and anchors the reality of global learning in the critical need of humility. He writes, "Other Christian brothers and sisters are equal partners in the gospel and its worldwide ministry. Humble international partnerships, all forged in humble dependence on God's Spirit, are therefore the constructive way forward in missions. Such partnerships, wherever their focus of ministry might be, are important because God's love compels us to be and live as his worldwide, international people."¹⁶⁵

Working Together, Learning Together

With respect to the dynamics of global learning, problem solving, and who should be involved in the process, Ravi I. Jayakaran, zonal associate director for World Vision of India - West Zone, writes, "There has been increasing recognition that 'top

¹⁶⁴ Rickett, *Building Strategic Relationships: A Practical Guide to Partnering with Non-Western Missions*, 8.

¹⁶⁵ Jennings, 215.

down' externally conceived solutions do not solve the problems of communities, nor are such solutions sustainable."¹⁶⁶ Popular contemporary literature speaks of the same global dynamic. Organizational learning advocates David Schwandt and Michael Marquardt write that a "learning organization *should* be experimental, it *should* open its communications and dialogue, it *should* maintain a vision that motivates its members and provides direction for the organization, and it *should* also promote and develop organizational learning disciplines...."¹⁶⁷ As Rickett points out, in the arena of developing Christian partnerships, "One of the quickest ways to get into trouble in a partnership is to assume others share your perceptions and expectations."¹⁶⁸ Author on themes related to organizational culture C.C. Lundberg, quoted by Schwandt and Marquardt, comments that "for any organization to perform, to deal with the multiplicity of ongoing problems and issues, to adapt to environmental changes, to survive and prosper, implies that it must learn."¹⁶⁹ The necessity of transformational learning as global partners is as needed in the non-profit, faith-based sector as it is in every sector of organizational life. Rickett writes, "No mission or church can go it alone," and "in this new age of missions," he adds, "coalitions, alliances and strategic partnerships are not an option; they are a necessity. To take advantage of the opportunities, and be a part of what God is doing around the world, churches and missions today must be able to create and sustain a variety of intercultural partnerships."¹⁷⁰ Jayakaran writes, "Christian development agencies...have fallen short of learning from others the crucial need to

¹⁶⁶ Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 31.

¹⁶⁷ David R. Schwandt and Michael J. Marquardt, *Organizational Learning : From World-Class Theories to Global Best Practices* (Boca Raton, FL: St. Lucie Press, 2000), 19-20. Authors' emphasis.

¹⁶⁸ Rickett, *Building Strategic Relationships: A Practical Guide to Partnering with Non-Western Missions*, 51.

¹⁶⁹ Schwandt and Marquardt, 19.

¹⁷⁰ Rickett, *Building Strategic Relationships: A Practical Guide to Partnering with Non-Western Missions*, III.

understand the spiritual reality of communities as the community sees it.”¹⁷¹ This can be especially true of Western mission agencies and congregations, often those with the greatest economic clout. Rickett comments that “to the communities with whom we work, we ourselves do not come across as a community, with a community’s vibrant and supportive relational interaction. They see us as a group of individuals who are hierarchically aligned.”¹⁷²

Technology, so endemic and foundational to work in the West, can and does contribute to the breakdown of community. Strategic relationship advocates William Berquist, Juli Betwee, and David Meuel have observed that as “technology gives rise to independent and often impersonal work, partnerships satisfy a human need for community; they recognize our deep interdependence on each other to get a job done.”¹⁷³ Partnerships, multicultural partnerships, can provide a context where “people come together as peers for mutual benefit. They look for shared interests, goals, and benefits—often reinforced by a shared sense of higher purpose.... They are not partitioned into the leaders and the led. They are not separated into winners and losers. They are each a part of the whole, working together for an intrinsically better life.”¹⁷⁴ Rickett notes that

complementarity, not assistance, lies at the heart of effective partnerships. *Assistance* is focused on meeting the needs and interests of one party. *Complementarity* concerns the accomplishment of mutual purposes and a shared vision, and includes each partner’s needs and interests. A partnership moves beyond assistance to complementarity when each partner makes different but crucial contributions to a common goal.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷¹ Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 31; *ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁷³ Juli Betwee William Bergquist, David Meuel, *Building Strategic Relationships* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1995), 16.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

¹⁷⁵ Rickett, *Building Strategic Relationships: A Practical Guide to Partnering with Non-Western Missions*, 22. Author's emphasis.

Corbett and Fickkert note that a significant reason for the slow progress of dealing with the ravages of poverty is the “*inadequate participation of poor people in the process*.” Researchers and practitioners have found that meaningful inclusion of poor people in the selection, design, implementation, and evaluation of an intervention increases the likelihood of that intervention’s success.”¹⁷⁶ Schwandt and Marquardt, sounding a note that is common to faith-based aid, relief, and development agencies and congregations, in their research on transnational organizational learning have noted,

Global organizations are companies that operate as if the entire world were a single entity.... Global firms emphasize global operations over national or multinational operations. They use global sourcing of human resources, capital, technology, facilities, resources and raw materials. They deem cultural sensitivity to employees, customers, and patterns as critical to the success of the organization. Globalization of an organization has occurred when the organization has developed a global corporate culture, strategy, structure, and communications process.

The global economy has created a level of complexity that most organizations are not prepared to understand, let alone deal with. Organizations must now relate to the ever-growing complexities of multiple relations in their environments—foreign markets, partnerships, and growing and failing economies to name a few.¹⁷⁷

In the same vein, Farmer notes that “it is difficult enough to ‘think globally and to act locally.’ But perhaps what we are really called to do in efforts to make common cause with the poor, is to think locally *and* globally and to act in response to both levels of analysis. If we fail in this task, we may never be able to contend with the structures that create and maintain poverty, structures that make people sick.”¹⁷⁸ Farmer, citing the emphasis of Liberation Theologians with respect to contextualized medical treatment and the inclusion of the poor in their treatment writes,

¹⁷⁶ Corbett and Fickkert, 142. Authors’ emphasis.

¹⁷⁷ Schwandt and Marquardt, 9-10.

¹⁷⁸ Farmer, 159.

Liberation theology, in contrast to officialdom, argues that genuine change will be most often rooted in small communities of poor people; and it advances a simple methodology – “*observe, judge, act.*” The “observation” part of the formula is key, for it involves careful review of a large body of literature that seeks to explain the distribution of the disease within populations, to explore its clinical characteristics, and to evaluate tuberculosis treatment regimens. This sort of review is standard in all responsible health planning, but liberation theology would push analysis in two directions: first, to seek the root causes of the problem; second, *to elicit the experiences and views of poor people* and to incorporate these views into all observations, judgments, and actions.

Ironically enough, some who understand, quite correctly, that the underlying causes of tuberculosis are poverty and social inequality make a terrible error by failing to honor the experience and views of the poor in designing strategies to respond to the disease.¹⁷⁹

In the arena of multicultural and multinational and generational teams, it seems that relationship building that includes the poor is a critical element that enriches the exchange of ideas and the sharing of financial resources. Rickett notes that “relationship is the means by which trust, communication, and collaboration are made possible.” Developmental partnerships move far beyond transactional relationships and achieve a deep sense of kinship.”¹⁸⁰ Such relationships can take nothing for granted, especially as it relates to both intercultural understanding and expectations. Rickett adds, “In partnership, developing cultural awareness works both ways. Understanding your cultural differences is a mutual responsibility.”¹⁸¹ In a recent interview, assistant bishop of the Diocese of Kampala, Uganda and Langham scholar David Zac Niringiye told a Western pastor inquiring about “what to do” with respect to joint partnerships and projects related to everything from running an AIDS clinic, as considered in this study, to the building of churches, “First find a brother pastor in the place where you want to connect. Appreciate

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 146.

¹⁸⁰ Rickett, *Building Strategic Relationships: A Practical Guide to Partnering with Non-Western Missions*, 7. Author's emphasis.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 61.

that pastor as a brother in Christ, a fellow disciple walking with Jesus. Find ways in which he hears Jesus as you hear Jesus. Expand your horizons, so that his discipleship connects with yours.”¹⁸² As Jayakaran puts it,

Understanding the community’s reality ‘as the people see it’ is mandatory for effective Christian witness. The community’s reality counts.... Communities must be empowered to share their worldviews, to tell their stories.... Communities have definite understandings about the causes and effects related to the circumstances and the issues facing them. Development workers must let communities present their understanding of the causes and effects of matters that have an impact on communities’ survival strategies.¹⁸³

Schwandt and Marquette, in discussing the growth and process maturation of a large American NGO, comment that the organization

can best lead change by being bold in learning, unlearning, and relearning:

- Bold in learning to deal with the emerging truths from diverse communities.
- Bold in unlearning old myths and methodologies. “We’ve always done it that way” is only a statement of history, not one of predestination. In fact, having “always done it that way” may be the very best reason to change.
- Bold in relearning what we have known all along: this is strength in unity.¹⁸⁴

Dirk Booy and Sarone Ole Sena, national director and capacity building director for World Vision Tanzania respectively, also note regarding learning and working among the poor that

Local participation by communities became a necessary ingredient in development. Communities were considered as catalysts or partners in development. Villagers became actively involved in the social construction of knowledge. Development planners sought community cooperation in the problem-solving process. From the beginning, participants in a project or program were recognized as thinking, reflective people with some capacity for action.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² David Zac Niringiye, "We Need to Rethink - the Global Conversation," *Christianity Today*. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/globalconversation/january2010/> (accessed March 6, 2010).

¹⁸³ Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 35.

¹⁸⁴ Schwandt and Marquardt, 16.

¹⁸⁵ Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 39.

There can be no substitute to joining heart and hands – that is foundational to organizational learning and, by extension, transformation.

Summary of Literature Review

This chapter addressed a biblical and theological understanding of interdependency as well as perspectives about interdependency and dependency from a diverse body of literature. The literature included both Christian and non-Christian sources.

There is, across the globe today, a great deal of interest in interdependency and dependency, and currently, many people, organizations, and agencies are dedicated to fostering holistic interdependent relationships between diverse people groups and communities and are seeking to address the global disparity of wealth and resources. While the biblical and non-biblical literature is both challenging and humbling, it is important to understand its impact on learning, structures, decision-making, worship, and theologizing and to guide the work of congregations and agencies in their efforts in church planting, community renewal and restoration, and the sharing of resources among peoples and for projects. It is important to understand how interdependent thinking and relationships impact specific teams working in specific contexts in their desire to address the reality of global disparity. Thus, it is important to listen to and hear the stories of the individual members of those teams to better understand how that literature affects and transforms their lives and labors among the poor.

CHAPTER THREE

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore how a multi-cultural AIDS Care and Treatment team serving in East Africa understands global interdependence in its work among the poor. The study was composed of three parts: a review of biblical literature related to the themes of dependency and interdependency; a review of literature, both Christian and secular, related to those themes, together with the impact that they have on organizational learning; and interviews conducted with members of the team in the community they serve in East Africa. As noted earlier in this study, while books and articles exploring the challenges of dependency on the one hand and biblically rooted, Spirit-sated interdependency on the other are on the increase, a need exists to hear more stories from those who prayerfully listen to Scripture, to other practitioners, and to those who lay their hand to the plow in the service of the poor. And, most significantly, local congregations and mission committees and agencies need the opportunity to listen prayerfully and carefully to the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable members of those teams. That need is what makes qualitative research so important, specifically the research designed to listen in on multi-cultural teams working in the context of the world's neediest. To that end, the interviews of this study were conducted in person in East Africa, in order to "listen to their story" in the environment of the team's work and to hear and understand how Scripture, thinking, study, working, and learning about dependency and interdependency in multicultural team relationships impacts their

community life. This chapter will now delineate in greater detail the design of this study, the design of the interviews, and the limitations of the study, together with its biases and assumptions.

Design of the Study

The research design of this study followed a qualitative, case-study approach. This approach, according to Sharan Merriam in her book *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, is an “intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit”¹⁸⁶ and allows for “intensive descriptions and analyses of a single unit or bounded system....”¹⁸⁷ Merriam has defined three special features of a qualitative case study that will be directly applicable to the research study of the multi-cultural AIDS Care and Treatment team in East Africa:¹⁸⁸

1. The qualitative case study will be *particularistic*. This, according to Merriam, means that the study will “focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon.” For our purposes, the particularity will be the multicultural team in East Africa.
2. The qualitative case study will be *descriptive*, with the goal that the end product “is a rich ‘thick’ description” of the multicultural team under study.
3. The qualitative case study is *heuristic* which, according to Merriam, means that it seeks to “illuminate the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon under study...bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader’s experience, or confirm what is known.”

As per Merriam, the interviewees represented a sample selection of interviewees that is “nonrandom, purposeful, and small,”¹⁸⁹ yet representative of the various aspects of the team’s work. Additionally, the connection with some of the biblical and non-biblical literature is important because, since the inception of the team’s work, team members

¹⁸⁶ Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 27.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 19.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 29-30.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 8.

have sought to inform and transform both the work of the team on the ground in East Africa and, by extension, the world mission movement through their studies, readings, correspondence, and related work.

A qualitative approach allowed direct involvement and personal interaction with each of the interviewees about their work and interactions with other team members, with other expert patients and beneficiaries of the program, and with other members of the community and their families. The interviews took place in the context of the interviewee's work and/or living environment. The qualitative approach allowed the freedom to maintain a degree of flexibility to pursue both the basic guiding questions formulated prior to the interviews and to pursue follow-up questions in response to comments and observations that surfaced relating to the core research questions. As the goal of this study was to hear the stories and perspectives of the members of a multicultural team working with the poor, the qualitative method permitted just such a scenario. Having the opportunity to conduct the interviews on the ground in East Africa was helpful, in that it allowed the interviewees the comfort of interacting with a relative stranger in the context of familiar surroundings which, from what the researcher could observe, was especially helpful to the expert patients.

An important element of the interview was the translation provided by one of the workers, a member of the team, and an interviewee herself. The translator has an M.A. in Social Work and serves as the project manager of the team's work in the communities they serve in East Africa, also overseeing the planning, execution, and finalization of projects. Care was taken to ensure that the questions were well understood by the interviewees who had limited English language ability: questions were often repeated and

restated, and extra care was given to ensure that responses were well communicated through repetition and confirmation of content by the translator.

Sampling Criteria

For purposes of this study, the personal, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 10 team members at the team's main base of operations and in apartments nearby. A qualitative (rather than quantitative) approach toward this study allowed me to interact directly with team members who, for many years, have worked with (and/or are themselves) HIV/AIDS sufferers, their children, their extended families, and their neighbors. Merriam makes the point that "the investigator in qualitative research spends a substantial amount of time in the natural setting of the study, often in intense contact with the participants."¹⁹⁰ Contact in the natural setting of the participants happened via visits to the project's beneficiaries' homes, extensive times of sharing over coffee and meals, and visits both to the project's main office and to the homes of some of the interviewees.

With respect to participant criteria for this study, the selection of the interviewees was essential, not only because of their intentional commitment to serve the poor, some being very poor themselves, but also because of the collective desire and commitment of the members of the study to be biblically informed and directed in the development of their work. An additional reason for the choice of this team is that several team members are well read in the areas of dependency and interdependency. The interviewees consisted of the Team Leader, his wife, a resident Physician's Assistant—all expatriate workers from the United States—together with local staff workers and several expert patients who participate in the program. These interviewees were selected because, in addition to their

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

unique hands-on work in the project, they are continually interacting with a diverse representation of local churches, individual donors, and mission and government agencies. Selecting this particular team was also important for the purposes of this study because the team leader, his wife, and other teammates are members of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and have been sent to work in East Africa by Mission to the World (MTW), the mission-sending agency of the PCA in partnership with Serving in Mission (SIM). The interviewees included:

1. The team leader and his wife, both foreign nationals from the United States. The team leader has extensive training and experience in development issues, and his wife, who has training in accounting, serves as the project's finance officer.
2. One nurse practitioner from the United States, who, as the team's medical coordinator, supervises the team's medical activities, assesses the medical needs of the project, corresponds with medical colleagues and donors to fulfill the necessary medical input of the project, and assists in every area of the team's work, including the planning and oversight of short-term medical teams. Serving with her are two community-based health care nurses who meet regularly with beneficiaries in their homes, care for patients, assist with training for family members as they care for the beneficiaries, and assist with managing medication.
3. Three Ethiopian associates, with training in sociology, social work, and project management, who work directly in the project, teaching and counseling patients and their families, conducting administrative duties and government relations, as well as working with short-term visitors and workers. One of the associates served as the translator for our interviews.
4. Two "expert patients," HIV-positive members of the team who have learned to manage their disease and now serve other HIV-positive beneficiaries and their extended families. Such families thus become indirect beneficiaries of the program, through observing the expert patients' example of managing their illness, and by receiving their instruction and encouragement.

Data Collection

During the interviews, an open-ended, semi-structured interview protocol was utilized. This approach was extremely helpful because, as Merriam suggests, "less structured formats assume that individual respondents define the world in unique ways.

Your questions thus need to be more open-ended.”¹⁹¹ Merriam, in describing the semi-structured interview format writes,

In this type of interview either all of the questions are more flexibly worded or the interview is a mix of more and less structured questions. Usually, specific information is desired from all the respondents, in which case there is a more structured section to the interview. But the largest part of the interview is guided by a list of question or issues to be explored, and neither the exact working nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. 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.¹⁹²

Utilizing this format allowed the freedom to pursue other lines of inquiry related to the core research questions of the study, enabling additional comments and conclusions to be drawn from the unique answers and information each interviewee provided.

Prior to the interviews, only the Team Leader of the project was given a copy of the research questions, in order to solicit both his consent and counsel about the interview process. According to the Team Leader’s counsel and with his approval, the rest of the participants did not receive the questions beforehand. This format permitted us the freedom to keep the interviews as open and spontaneous as possible. However, while the interview questions were not provided beforehand, each of the interviewees was given a consent form prior to the interviews, reminding them that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary and could be withdrawn at any time. The consent form also affirmed that both the interview protocol and the core components of the actual interview had been explained to them. Both the consent form and the researcher’s interaction with the interviewees communicated the potential discomforts or stresses related to the

¹⁹¹ Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 90.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

interview process, any potential risks, and the assurance of confidentiality. Also communicated to the interviewees prior to the interview, both verbally and on the consent form, were the potential benefits of the research for other multicultural teams, local churches, and mission agencies working with those teams. Each of the interviewees was told that the interview would last between one hour and one and a half hours, that the interview would be recorded, and that the recordings would be transcribed for analysis.

In order to gather data related to the core research questions, the following questions were used during the interviews. While these questions served as a basic interview outline, some of them were omitted, and additional questions were added during the interview process. The questions were:

1. What Scriptures and/or teachings from Scripture inform your call to work among the poor and to address their unique needs and challenges?
2. What Scriptures and/or teachings from Scripture inform your understanding of interdependency and the connection of your team to other congregations, individuals and agencies around the world?
3. How have specific authors and/or theologians and their writings informed your understanding of interdependency and your work among the poor?
4. How has concern about dependency negatively or positively informed your work with the poor and with donors from other countries and contexts outside of the immediate context in which you work?
5. How has your work with others from different backgrounds, languages and cultures influenced, changed or transformed your:
 - a) Personal lifestyle?
 - b) Interaction with other team members?
 - c) Interaction with the very poorest members of the HIV/AIDS community?
 - d) Interaction with visiting members of partner churches and organizations?

Data Analysis Procedures

As stated above, each of the interviews was recorded on site with each of the interviews subsequently transcribed and printed for analysis. For purposes of this study, the constant comparative method was used to analyze the data gleaned from the

interviews. The interviews were read and reread, common themes were highlighted and notes on pertinent points and patterns made in the margins. As per Merriam, care was taken to bring together not only the transcripts of the interviews, but field notes, and additional documentation and correspondence related to the interview process and the work in East Africa particularly.¹⁹³ According to Merriam, the constant comparative method allows the researcher to begin “with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set. These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to each other and to other instances. Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualization until a theory can be formulated.”¹⁹⁴ In the case of this study, the data was analyzed and categorized in response to the core research questions.

Some of this study’s findings may be generalized and relevant to similar studies related to multi-cultural team building and partnership development in other contexts involving working with the poor. The findings may be of interest to and have implications for Christian congregations, relief and aid agencies, as well as individual donors and practitioners working among the poor and, specifically, among communities dealing with the ravages of HIV/AIDS. As with all case studies, both readers and researchers bear the responsibility to determine what information can be appropriately applied to their unique contexts.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the limitations of time and resources, this study only considers one multicultural team working in a single urban center in East Africa. This team was chosen

¹⁹³ Merriam, *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*, 194.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 159.

because of the unique role it plays among the many teams working with MTW across the globe. The special emphasis of this team, working with those who suffer from HIV/AIDS among some of the poorest of the poor in the communities they serve in East Africa, provided an excellent platform to practically discuss both dependency and interdependency and to give voice to those discussions throughout the MTW family. By extension, it can also give voice to those discussions within other congregations and agencies that either serve or desire to serve in similar contexts. Those interviewed will be representative of the multicultural team but could not include each and every team member or every expert patient in the program. Additionally, another limitation of this qualitative case study is that it did not include interviews with international partners from supporting churches or other mission agencies that are part of the team's network.

Researcher Position

Without the researcher's intending it to be so, this study includes some inherent biases related to both its context and to the experiences and views of the researcher. A primary bias is that the researcher is tremendously interested in the church's role and responsibility in working with the poor and is sensitive to the discussions about dependency and interdependency in our denomination and across Christian organizations generally. Another factor is that, since the East African AIDS Care and Treatment Team has members who are sent from the organization in which the researcher serves, he undoubtedly has a bias in wanting to see them "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly" with our God. And certainly, the researcher's interest in the team's success in seeing the poor loved and cared for biblically and practically could potentially influence a more positive interpretation of the interviews than may be justified by findings on the ground.

Conclusion

The methodology described in this chapter was extremely helpful in facilitating the interviews and interactions between the researcher and the multi-cultural AIDS Care and Treatment team. As stated above, a qualitative case study with a semi-structured interview design was used, querying ten team members who together represented leadership, administration, and expert patients. While recognizing the inherent biases and limitations of such a study, the researcher was able to gather and glean sufficient information to address the foundational research questions that will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore how a multicultural AIDS Care and Treatment team serving in East Africa understands global interdependence in its work among the poor. To that end, three research questions were designed to guide the study. First, in what ways does theology inform the team's understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor? Second, in what ways does the issue of dependency inform the team's understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor? And third, in what ways does the experience of interacting with a multicultural team of workers inform the team's understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor? In this chapter, all of the study participants will be introduced and their perspectives and insights concerning the research questions will be presented.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, ten members of the HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment team were selected for this study. The interviewees were both Western, from the United States, and from East Africa. The interviewees ranged in age from their twenties to early fifties. The names of the interviewees have been changed in order to provide some anonymity for the participants.

Steve, an American citizen and missionary with Mission to the World (MTW), has lived and worked in Africa for twenty-five years, including thirteen years of serving in the context of this study. About seven of those years were dedicated to the HIV/AIDS

Care and Treatment project. Steve is the MTW Team Leader and serves as the project director for the SIM/MTW HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment partnership. In his own words, “I found out the other day that the staff all refer to me as ‘Uncle’ but that isn’t a job title. I guess Program Director will do, and my job is overall supervision of the project, with a particular focus on fund raising and strategy.”

Steve’s wife Susan, also an American citizen, serves as the project’s Finance Officer. She is tasked with a host of responsibilities that include ensuring that all financial transactions of the project are accounted for and posted to the proper accounts in a timely and accurate manner in accordance with the standards of donors and the project. Susan is the accounting link between the project and financial partners and also manages the cash flow of the project to minimize losses related to currency fluctuations, while ensuring that adequate funds are maintained in the country to cover local obligations.

Elizabeth, a Nurse Practitioner from the United States, joined the project a few years back first as a short-term volunteer and now serves as a two-year missionary. Elizabeth has a background in oncology and serves the project as their Medical Coordinator. Her responsibilities include the supervision of medical activities and the quality of care for the project’s beneficiaries and the various health center sites. Elizabeth is also responsible to build the capacity of local health personnel through consultation, to do ongoing assessment of the medical needs of the project, and to correspond with, facilitate, and create an environment conducive to short-term medical teams and donors in partnership with the project.

Elizabeth has two local women, both with diploma-level training in nursing, serving with her. Ann serves as a community-based health care nurse, whose

responsibilities include meeting regularly with beneficiaries in their homes and, in the family context, providing and facilitating home-based health care for the beneficiaries. Additionally, Ann serves by assessing the medical care needs of different project sites and organizing site visits by the Medical Coordinator or other medical care providers.

Gail works alongside both Elizabeth and Ann and, like Ann, serves the project as a community-based health care nurse. Gail is tasked with facilitating mobile clinics and outreach programs for medical teams as well as leading visits to the homes of beneficiaries. Other responsibilities include assisting Elizabeth in her work as Medical Coordinator, determining medication and other medical input needs of the project, managing the pharmacy, and facilitating the purchase and distribution of medicine/medical products.

Another person working with the nursing team is Richard. An Ethiopian by birth, Richard has undergraduate training in nursing and is responsible to meet regularly with beneficiaries in their homes, assess the medical care needs of the project sites, and organize site visits by the other home-based health care providers. An important part of Richard's work is to assist the Medical Coordinator in determining medication and other medical needs of the project, provide care for patients, and like the other nurses, train family members in the care their loved ones. Richard also does the planning and organization of the project's mobile clinics, the outreach programs of visiting medical and short-term teams, and facilitates translation for non-Amharic speakers.

Eva, an Ethiopian by nationality, came to the project having done her undergraduate work in sociology and having completed a Master's Degree in social work. Eva serves as Project Manager with responsibilities that include the planning,

execution, and completion of specific tasks according to deadlines and within established budgets. Eva's responsibilities also include the acquisition of resources and the coordination of the assignments and responsibilities of team members and beneficiaries. As Project Manager, Eva is also responsible to define the objectives and parameters of specific programs within the project and to ensure quality control throughout the life cycle of specific programs.

Tomas, also an Ethiopian, serves as the Program Director and works directly with Steve. He did undergraduate studies in sociology and has a post-graduate certificate in project management. He is the "central point" of contact for the team, responsible to and for clients, workers, and the director. Tomas' responsibilities include the coordination of projects, and managing contracts, finances, and personnel in order to ensure fiscal responsibility and the timely completion of specific programs. Additionally, Tomas is tasked with developing and maintaining relationships with the project's stakeholders and systematically evaluating and facilitating a "culture of continuous individual and organizational learning."

An important element of the team's interviews was hearing from two of the "expert patients" in the project. Both of the Expert Patient interviewees are HIV positive and both are active in serving beneficiaries and their families. Lynn and Helen, both Ethiopian by nationality, have significant roles and responsibilities in the project. Lynn and Helen meet regularly with beneficiaries in their homes to care for them and to train family members to provide home-based health care. These women also help other team members by assessing the medical care needs of different project sites and organizing visits by the Medical Coordinator and other medical care providers. Lynn and Helen also

help to manage the pharmacy with responsibilities that include the purchase and organization of drugs and their distribution for beneficiaries.

These interviewees are the voices of the HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment team. The stories they shared related the role of Scripture and theology in their lives and labors, to the challenges of dependency and to the ways in which their experience of interacting as a team informs their understanding of global interdependency in their work with the poor.

In what ways does theology inform the team's understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor?

The first research question addressed the ways in which Scripture and aspects of theology inform the team's understanding of global interdependence as they work among some of the world's poorest. The question sought to address the role of Scripture in both the devotional and practical life of the team and how the Scriptures influence the way they work in the context of the city and with partnership churches and individuals.

Corollary questions allowed the interviewees space and freedom to address their biblical understanding of the work and their mission among the poor. The team, each of them in some unique and personal way, expressed faith in the finished work of Christ and a commitment to Scripture. The team's understanding and study of Scripture led them to a conviction about God's concern, even preference, for an incarnational interdependence with the poor and marginalized; it led them to see basic biblical theology as a builder of relationships across denominational divides innate to their context of ministry.

Theologically, the team understands interdependence as a reality born in God's creation of the world and humankind, directed and nourished by the teachings of the apostles and the prophets, with the life and ministry of Christ himself as the Chief Cornerstone.

A Theological Preference for the Marginalized Poor

As was expected in a team committed to serving the poor in the name of Christ, a variety of Scripture passages and Scripture emphases were discovered among the members of the team that contributed to their identification and interdependence with the poor. For each of the interviewees, working in interdependence with the poor was not optional to biblical Christianity, but a divine preference rooted in Scripture.

Steve, the director of the project was thoughtful and deliberate in addressing the question of Scripture and theology with respect to his calling and the foundational values of the team's work. He confessed that, for him, his biblically informed journey to work in and with the poor was a "life-long process" that began with a simple understanding, akin to a light that clicked on somewhere in his head and heart. "Shazzam," he said, "you know, God cares about the poor," and thus began a journey of practical obedience of caring for and laboring with the world's neediest.

Gail, one of the community-based health care nurses expressed her "shazzam" regarding the God of the Bible and his watchful eye over the needy and marginalized as a divine "expectation" that leads God's people, specifically the members of the HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment team, into intentional identification and interdependence with the poor. In her words,

God expects this kind of support from us...as you are serving, you are serving with the poor oppressed...these people are discriminated [against]...they are socially discriminated. They [are] told that they don't have any hope. They are still poor economically, and psychologically they are poor. And what I like from the project is this area: [not] just supporting working on charity, financially... the project supports all the areas: socially, economically, and spiritually, and physically.

Tomas, the Project Coordinator, also expressed a biblically-born, theologically informed burden to identify with and work among the oppressed, marginalized poor.

“Initially,” he said,

These people that we are working with [had been] pushed from the community. They are disconnected from their neighborhood. Whenever a person visits them they are open to listen [to Scripture] because they are sick. Because of [their] medical problem the community almost left them behind. If you see the [expression of] Christianity here, Orthodox Christianity is part of the culture, part of the core of the social system. We have initially found living in Christ,¹⁹⁵ they disconnect from the social system. They’re helpless and very much open....

The study of Scripture led Tomas to a deeper interdependence with the community. “We established a support group to share their spiritual concern[s]. To share and to understand what the Bible is saying...to [allow them to] see the love of Christ in their community, in their group.” And Tomas was clear about the need to address the heart and soul of community and team life through the teaching and application of the Scripture. He commented,

When I was working in Black Lion Hospital¹⁹⁶ as a secular organization, that focus is only the medical part of the human being. And I always feel the bigger part, the portion of the mind and the heart is not touched and treated, and seen that [way], I always feel there is a big gap in treating a patient or person who is affected by any sort of medical problem or social problem.

Basic Biblical Theology – Interdependence across Denominational Divides

Ethiopia, according to accessible statistics, is 62.8% Christian. Of that number 43.5% are Ethiopian Orthodox, 19.3% belong to other denominations, and 33.9% are

¹⁹⁵ Meaning, with other believers in Christ who are non-Orthodox.

¹⁹⁶ The Black Lion Hospital is the largest hospital in Ethiopia. It is the last referral hospital in the country. If an illness requires more care than what the hospital can offer, the next place patients are sent is Nairobi, Kenya, from there to South Africa. This hospital sees approximately 370,000- 400,000 patients a year but the exact number is not known. They have 800 beds, with 130 specialists, 50 non-teaching doctors. This is the largest teaching hospital in the region; there are about 350 Residents and 600 Interns.

Muslim.¹⁹⁷ That mix, and the inevitable divides that erupt along the lines of religious distinctives, present unique challenges to an Evangelical team working with the poor, a reality specifically mentioned by the Expert Patients in this study. These interviewees note that basic Bible knowledge and guidance bridge the divide between Ethiopian Orthodox believers, other Christians, and even people of other faiths. According to Helen,

In my opinion if there are many people of different religions, for example in my support group there are people, there are men who are mostly Orthodox, and other Christians, and even from different religions. We all believe that the Bible is important, that the Bible is our guideline. So when in the support group, when people read the Bible for us, I feel that everybody listens to it attentively, and they love it.

Lynn, an Orthodox believer, shares a similar story:

In my case...there are Bible study programs...I don't feel discomfort because they are sharing the Bible that I also believe in. That is the same Bible so I don't feel discomfort. But, some...may fear 'Are they going to make us change religions?' or such kind of fears. But this depends on the perception. Even if I am Orthodox, I don't perceive it that way, but there are some people who will.

Living out what Jesus did, according to one of the interviewees, is in the minds of some a Protestant thing. Gail comments, "[It's] not about the religion...not about the church that matter[s]. Just who is Jesus Christ, what he did for other people, what are we doing, just showing the way. Now people are coming and believing and attending Protestant church. This is the truth." That noted, basic biblical theology with a special focus on the words and work of Christ provides a foundation for bridge building and nurturing interdependent relationships among often divided members of the community the team serves.

¹⁹⁷ Ethiopia, ed. the free encyclopedia Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopia> (accessed November 17, 2010).

Created in the Image of God, an Interdependent Family

A foundational theological concept that informs the team's work and understanding of interdependency is that each and every person is created in the image of God. The language of Genesis 1, 2, and 3 was cited as the common denominator. Steve comments that "the most basic thing and where we started, and it's a core value for us, is that everybody that we work with is made in God's image and has infinite value because of that. And that puts us in a position that we are obligated to do the absolute best within our ability to care for that person." "We are compelled to ask the question," he adds, "'If I was in this person's place how would I want to be treated?' If we see the sick, hungry, or needy person in front of us as a symptom of a problem, rather than as an individual needing and deserving our love, compassion and care, then we are teetering on the edge of doing evil."

Susan echoes the fact that this foundational theological reality of creation informs her understanding of interdependence in her work with the poor. As she puts it, people are the same the world over, and "what I've come to realize is that the woman sitting in her little hovel in Ethiopia is concerned about the same things [as] the wealthy woman in America. They're concerned about [the] welfare of their children, school, providing for their family, safety. Those kinds of things that are universal, and that people struggle with." As people created in the image and likeness of God, Susan recognizes that "in a lot of aspects [people] are struggling with the same emotional needs and the need to be loved and cared for and all those things that it just boils us all down to one family." There is a basic understanding, informed by biblical theology, that all of humankind is an interrelated, interdependent, global family.

Interdependence – Built upon the Foundation of the Prophets

An important factor for many of the interviewees is that God's concern and care for the poor and the team's interdependence with them are not simply born from the Scriptures of the New Testament but are deeply rooted in the Old Testament. Steve comments that interdependence with the world's poorest "is something that God has been speaking about from the very beginning" and "something [God] really went after the Israelites for." The prophetic literature of the Old Testament significantly informs the team's work, helps to define their sense of calling, and is central to their understanding of biblical faithfulness. Two team members made specific reference to, and quoted from, Isaiah 61:1-3:

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;*
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to grant to those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit;
that they may be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, that he may be glorified.

With respect to how Isaiah (and where he is quoted in the New Testament) informs Elizabeth's work with the poor, she commented that "the...passage that really speaks to me about [our work with the poor]...is a couple places in Isaiah 61 and again in Luke 4 about how the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, bind up the brokenhearted, to comfort those who mourn, the oil of gladness instead of mourning."

The prophet Isaiah also informs Susan's sense of calling to and interdependence with the poor. She notes,

I feel like in our broken world, that is what we have been called to do. And as we have worked in this project, I think the thing for me is...as we began to know people and to get to know their names and their faces and their stories...I've seen the rest of this Scripture, "He gave me beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness."

In her experience of working with others, "just seeing mostly in these women that we've worked with, just seeing the transformation in their lives, from mourning to joy, and just seeing this Scripture fulfilled, it's been what's driven me to get involved and also to see the results of what's going on, to stay involved." For these team members, biblical hope for community transformation is informed, fed, and encouraged by the words of the prophet.

For both Tomas and Elizabeth, the prophet Isaiah was also of particular importance in informing their work in the community. Tomas cites Isaiah 52:7 as core to his understanding of the team's calling to work within the community: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'" Tomas comments, "When I read these [verses], it helps me to run more than I can. And when I do this, I feel that I'm serving God. And I feel that God is ready to give me the grace to serve those people [in the project] and God...See, those feet were running to help those people. Nice. Beautiful...." Elizabeth's work in the community is also informed by Isaiah's message in chapter 58. She notes that God

talks about acceptable fasting, and talks about pouring yourself for the hungry and satisfying the desire of the afflicted. And how God will continually guide you and satisfy your desire in scorched places. [This community] probably falls into one

of those scorched places. Those [passages] speak to me about the need to care for the poor and be here.

The prophets, especially the oft-quoted Isaiah of the interviews, have both informed and led the team's movement toward and interdependence with the poor.

The Link between Idolatry and Lack of Biblical Obedience with Respect to the Poor

The team's work is informed by the significant connection the prophets make between idolatry and a disregard for the poor. The issue of idolatry is, in Steve's words "one of the things that [God] really went after the Israelites over. It was their idol worship and that they weren't caring for the poor, for the widows, for the orphans, and for the stranger. And, when the prophets came along and they were preaching that message to repent...that change was almost always one of the major things...." In the mind of the team's director, interdependence and association with world's poorest is not optional; it is a matter of biblical faithfulness and worship.

Jesus Takes the Team to the Needy and Disenfranchised

The life and ministry of Jesus, both his words and his deeds, and the good news of Christ's finished work deeply inform and guide the team's understanding of their interdependence with the disenfranchised poor and, by extension, the involvement of the wider Christian community with their work. Helen summarizes these emphases, which are extensive within the team and among those served by their ministry: "The one thing I hear mostly and amazes me most," she says, "is the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. That we hear he died on the cross and the suffering that he passed through, all those things...that really amazes me. I feel that if I were in his position I would never do such a thing so I really like that – thinking of that thing. I often think about that thing. I am amazed by that." "That Jesus loves, receives, forgives and heals the sick and the sinner"

was also at the heart of Eva's understanding of the work, and Gail summed up her practical theology in a similar way: "It seems to me just show them love. Caring [for] them with love. Giving care [to] every needy people with equally care. What Jesus did is this... Showing God is love by practice, and advising them. Showing them the way to follow him."

Other Scriptures inform the team's theological understanding of their work and guide them in their efforts among the poor. Gail explains, "Matthew chapter 5 verse 13...it talks about the salt and the light...our services are in the light. The people here we are working with them, most of them are [found] in the verse." "It is," she says of the team's work, "challenging to be salt and to be light." Having cited John on Jesus' encounter with the accusers of the woman caught in adultery and his encounter with the disciples and the man born blind, Eva went on to indirectly quote several portions of Scripture relating to the life and ministry of Jesus that inform the team's approach to global interdependence. She recognizes that

in terms of being interdependent on each other, I feel that Jesus' life by itself has set a big example in my life. How he had been ready to help other people in need—to help them in their physical need as well as in their spiritual need. And not ignore their physical needs as well, like when Jesus works in the neighborhood, he was talking to the people, but he cares not only for the righteous ones. He came for sinners. And he was really willing to share the gospel as well as serve their physical needs. So I feel like that's a really big example in my life in terms of this work. While I work in this project I see that especially John chapter 8 where the woman is caught in adultery, and chapter 9 where the blind man...the blind man, yeah... I really like those verse(s) very much. I can see how Jesus was not at all detrimental. I [see] people who are poor, who are needy, who come with complicated problems, I feel that I should be able to see beyond what they're presenting to me, like the suffering they have and the pain they're coming through. And some of the labels put on them, that people might say to them—that they're sinners or this disease came upon them because they're not responsible or things like that. If you are of such a mentality, it's really difficult to serve those people. So I feel that being an encouragement and looking at them, looking at

what God has for them, and looking at what God wants me to do in their lives is a very big encouragement for me.

Critical to the team's understanding of global interdependence as they serve the world's poorest is the reality of a universal need for God's forgiveness and mercy, for his kindness and compassion, and the conviction that Jesus calls and leads us to engage with the world, in response to this reality, as salt and light.

The Future Breaks in on the Present – Word and Works through God's People

Another significant theological understanding that informs the team's understanding of global interdependence in their work with the poor is how the future, the "not yet," impacts the present in terms of practical, hands-on ministry. Five interviewees made specific reference to Matthew 25: "you do it unto one of the least of these, you've done it unto me." This passage, where Jesus discusses the separation of the sheep and the goats, and its fulfillment at the end of time is essential to Steve's understanding of the team's work among the poor. In his mind, practical kindness, active compassion is to be the work of the church past, present, and future and, as foundational to the teaching of Scripture, cannot be separated from the preaching of the gospel.

"Twenty-five years of development work in Africa would make Pollyanna a pessimist, so why do I keep working?" Steve posits. "Matthew 25" is his answer. He continues, "I want to be one of the sheep on the right." In Steve's mind, "when I think about missions and coming to a place like Africa...the idea that we would leave that [working with the poor and needy] out of what we were doing, we were going to come share the gospel, but caring for the poor was someone else's job" seemed "like a fantastically unbiblical idea." Regarding the team's work, Steve observed that it is not possible to "drive through this city and not have your heart broken by what you see there. And [if you] feel like you

don't have an obligation as a Christian to respond to that...picking one Scripture and try and back that up...I mean it's just everywhere."

Tomas, the Project Coordinator, agrees with Steve. Reflecting on the Matthew 25 text (esp. verses 35 and 36) Tomas says,

Jesus...[told] us we have to take people the love [that] God gave us. You have to share that. On top of that, those people who are in bondage of a different type, medically, physical, or socially stigmatized, those need to know the love of Christ. And these two verses are...energy for me to work more and [to be] involved in a ministry like this. It keeps me strong always. These two verses are strong.

Gail shared a similar thought; citing Matthew 25 she says, "[this is] what the ministry, the program is like. Of course, we are not visiting Jesus, we are not feeding Jesus...but the poor." Helen says, "I hear this verse here, and that really amazes me also. Because God himself is not a patient, and it is not that he comes...starving or needing food or drink, but he is saying that whenever you do that to all those people, it's the same that you are doing that for Jesus...so that is nice...." In the team's understanding, interdependence with the world's neediest is both directed and sustained by the Lord himself, who serves the hungry and thirsty and visits the sick and suffering in and through his people, and that is one of the markers that will separate the sheep from the goats at the end of time.

Interdependent as Members of the Same Body of Christ

The theology of Christ's people as one body, dependent on Christ as the head and interdependent members one of another, informs the team's understanding of growing in the knowledge of Christ. It is from that knowledge and understanding that Christians, locally and globally, learn to live as an interdependent community. Philippians 3:10 was an important foundational and theological goal for two team members: "that I may know

him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death....” Susan commented, “I feel like that is the basis for doing [what we do]...really looking at Christ and knowing him.” Both Elizabeth and Susan made a specific reference to Paul’s teaching from 1 Corinthians 12 regarding the “body life of the community.” With Christ as head over all, “[the Scripture]...talks about us being all part of one another...without an eye we’re nothing and without a hand we’re nothing, and we all need each other.” Susan adds that she sees the community the team is called to serve through the lens of Paul’s words: “...you see too just the Body of Christ in all aspects. People come with different gifts.” There is an understanding that in working with the world’s poorest, each and every person associated with the project, near or far, brings unique gifts and abilities that flow from identification with Christ and the power of his resurrection.

Learning Theology, in Word and Praxis from Others

The theology that informs, guides, and directs the team’s understanding on the ground comes from a variety of sources. As noted, that understanding is informed from Scripture and then, too, from the work and commentaries of others who have either been challenged by and responded to a call to work among the poor or whose labor in the area of personal and corporate piety encourages others on their journey of faith. The team specifically mentioned C. S. Lewis’ *The Problem of Pain*,¹⁹⁸ a book that had been a point of discussion and interaction among team members during the time of the interviews. Eva also mentioned Paul Miller’s *Love Walked Among Us*¹⁹⁹ which, though not necessarily a theological tome specifically related to living and working among the poor, was an

¹⁹⁸ C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001).

¹⁹⁹ Paul E. Miller, *Love Walked among Us: Learning to Love Like Jesus* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001).

especially helpful encouragement to her calling to live incarnationally in the community the team serves.

Especially important to the theological tone and tenor of the team's understanding of interdependence were writings by both Roman Catholics and Evangelicals who, in the last few decades, have addressed faithful Christian living in a world awash with poverty.

Steve, in reference to his reading and study noted,

If I had to say in terms of a biblical understanding of the poor, it would have to be the Catholic guys...it would have to be Nouwen. They're the ones that have had more of an influence...some of the liberation theology [writers and thinkers]. When I think about this, that's kind of what shaped me in the last few years.

Earlier on in his experience, Steve says,

there were some evangelical guys writing. There was *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*²⁰⁰ and some people like that that I read when I was in college that had an influence on me. But in terms of what I am doing now, where I am now, how I'm trying to think about the poor, it's been more of the Catholic view of being incarnational and being there with the poor and really walking with them.

Working Together as a Team - Theologically

As discussed in this section, the team's responses to inquiries about the first research question revealed that Scripture, especially the writings of the prophets and the work of Christ himself, has been significant to guiding, inspiring, and encouraging the team in their work. Especially significant is the fact that Scripture has led the team toward a deeper dependence upon Christ, recognizing that God's perfect future is breaking in the terribly broken present, while guiding them to an incarnational interdependence with the poor and marginalized in the community they serve.

²⁰⁰ Ronald J. Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger: A Biblical Study* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977).

In what ways does the issue of dependency inform the team's understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor?

The second research question sought to understand how current literature, thinking, discussions, debate, and teaching about dependency inform the team's understanding of interdependence in its work among the poor. According to the team, grappling with dependency and interdependency, discovering what is and is not valuable and applicable from the literature and current debates requires listening and learning in the context of working with the poor. Several key themes emerged from the interviews.

Frustrations with Historical Practices Related to Dependency

Discussions about historical practices related to dependency stir up passionate reactions, frustration specifically. As noted above, the HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment team as it works today was born from the theological and practical struggles that, for the team's director, spanned many years of living and working in Africa. Not unlike other practitioners, Steve's response to what he found to be inadequate working models from his history on the continent was to "scrap everything" and simply begin again. Without throwing rocks at others, Steve recognized, "...I [didn't] start with an idea of this is what it is going to look like. Most of the time I've done that, it's been a disaster... When I sit down and say okay, we're going to do this and that and this is where we're going to end up, I rarely get there...."

Frustrations about a Multicultural Disconnect

Again, from prior years of experience, Steve confessed regarding global interdependence or the lack of it, "I looked at organizations that I had been a part of, and I looked at how Westerners and Africans worked together, and I looked at the relationships that are part of it...and I thought, this just sucks, it just stinks." Steve found

gaps between what he had read and studied and the practical ways that his learning was being applied among Western and African colleagues. He had done his

cross cultural communications and read all the missions books that you're supposed to read...and, after being there a little while [I] looked around and went 'this crap just doesn't work.' We're just going nowhere. We keep talking about contextualization, and we keep talking about church planting, and we're talking about being on the side of mercy ministry, caring for the poor. And I just looked around and [said] this is a dead loss almost.

He added, "It is easy to be critical of other projects and ideas, but harder to offer an alternative, compelling vision." From the inception of the current HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment team, a sense of angst and frustration with previous models of ministry guided the team to take a fresh look at the dependency/interdependency discussion and to consider how to live out biblical faithfulness as a team in their work with the poor.

Dependency Discussions Provoke Varied Opinions in a Single Agency

Passion can run deep among people involved in the world mission movement, so it should come as no surprise that colleagues in the same mission-sending agency would have differing opinions about dependency. Different experiences and differing opinions and ideas about caring for the poor provoke discussion and, often, frustration between members of the same mission. Elizabeth, commenting on a rather lengthy and multi-tiered discussion said, "There was this whole online debate going back and forth this summer between [various colleagues] about dependency." It was, in her opinion, "a debate that stirred the emotions of other team members," including a new missionary on the field. Reflecting on that exchange Elizabeth commented that her colleague "got hot one day and was ready to send off an email...[though] I don't think he ever did...."

Discussions about dependency are important and inevitable; they can stir passionate debate and underscore the need for more reflection, dialog, and learning in the

actual context of working with the poor. Elizabeth confessed, “I can honestly say I haven’t read enough in detail to really know where I fall on that [discussion]. I think there’s no question that we have created some sort of dependency in this project because without us these people would be in far worse shape than they are.” Frustrations, fueled by historical experiences of working in Africa and by the experience of living and working among friends, colleagues, and beneficiaries, go hand in hand with discussions about dependency, whether they are localized (related to lifestyle) or organizational (between colleagues working in different contexts).

Key Values

For teams that desire a greater understanding of global interdependency, dependency discussions and decisions are inevitable and challenging to relationships. Steve notes that with “almost all the kind of development stuff we do now, sustainability and dependency are key values.” How those values are fleshed out in the context of working with a multicultural team requires thoughtful suppleness and adjustments to the team’s life and strategy, in order to foster healthy relationships with those served by the project and with the international community. Steve goes on to say,

It is difficult...because you have people coming from the West with expertise and with money and with resources and agendas. And then you have people here who are dependent or who have become dependent on us. They are looking to us to advance them. It’s a way to a job; it’s a way to charity. There’s all sorts of things happening on both sides, and all those different things that are happening seem to often be in conflict with each other and make it really difficult...I have rarely ever seen healthy relationships like that.

Dependency Discussions and Starting Points

New wineskins and fresh initiatives can be the fruit of dependency discussions in a team that desires to understand global interdependency. In the case of the East African

team, frustrations about dependency questions and concerns led the team to begin again.

Steve comments, as mentioned above,

I think the very first thing is you need to ditch the dependency and sustainability model. That is what's out there, it's the conventional wisdom, and it's the gorilla in the room. And until you do away with that as a starting point, not just say it has no relevance at all, but until you say that is not where we're going to start, that is not going to be our concern, then you're hamstrung. You're never going to get where you're want to go. Because if you say, "We're not going to create dependency—every activity, every project, every intervention you design, that's going to be where you start."

As Steve sums it up, "Do your best to help and care for the poor, focusing on them."

In the project, the saving of the lives of the HIV/AIDS victims preceded other "first" concerns about dependency. The survival of the beneficiaries became the starting point for discussions and practices pertaining to the key values of global interdependency. When the HIV/AIDS project began in its current form the team had "the luxury," Steve noted, "of working with people that were all going to die. And so, [dependency] just wasn't an issue...." Steve says that during those early days when someone came along and asked, "Aren't you worried about creating dependency here?" he would simply respond, "This person is going to be dead in a very short time, so if they're dependent on me for this period then that's not an issue...." For Steve, looking back on those first days, it was clear that beginning a project amid the dead and dying with dependency as a primary concern is like "putting handcuffs on you... it tends to pull us back." Dependency concerns that lead to interdependent lifestyles and relationships are meaningful and, as Steve says, were "key values" once the beneficiaries were able to get on their feet again.

Global Interdependence Requires Generosity

Beginning with dependency or sustainability can stifle or truncate compassionate giving or care that could save lives. Steve, commenting about the early days of the project, noted that

when dependency and sustainability are the initial starting point, decisions and strategies are formed in ways that are distinct from interventions and responses that would develop when the saving of lives is the first order of the day...It affects every decision you make about how you are going to work...You design projects that have minimal impact.

Charity to the sick and needy can become, in the words of one of the interviewees, “a dirty word.”

Dependency Discussions in Context

Recognizing the importance of discussions about dependency between colleagues, agencies, and congregations in the development of projects among the poor, care should be taken to conduct those discussions in context, among those and with those who are served by teams. Discussions about dependency, with and between the poor, the team, and partners, lead to global interdependency. As Steve puts it, “I think sustainability and dependency have put us in the position where it prevents us from being incarnational. It’s the one thing that keeps us from getting down where people are, living with them, and doing the kind of things that actually make a difference.” He adds, “The closer you can get, the better.”

The history of many initiatives between Westerners and Africans reflects a relational disconnect between the sharing of ideas and information about dependency and sustainability, the giving of aid and relief, and an actual physical presence of laborers among the poor. Steve observes, “It’s tough to do development from 10,000 miles away.

Unless you are in the neighborhood you can't filter out the noise, or determine what is important and what is needed and what might help." With that kind of scenario present, blame shifting about what works and doesn't work is inevitable. Steve observes that in faith-based development circles, "we have these projects where we're not ultimately intermediary because then we can say we've passed along whatever they need and if there's no success, it's their fault, not our fault if medical care doesn't get delivered, it's not our fault if the gospel is not really preached." For Steve, this disconnect is a core concern for how the East Africa team understands its work. It is his personal "hobbyhorse," believing it insufficient simply to expect recipients of aid and relief to "get the issues of dependency and sustainability" without building the relational bridges that would make discussions about theology, generosity, and dependency relevant to global interdependence.

Steve laments that some would say that it is easy for training and information about dependency to become a substitute for having to "get dirty." One can think that "we've done our part and we've given something to them that they should be able to carry on. You know, some of that comes out that whole view of 'give a man a fish, feed him for a day'...And so that's almost like the mantra for everything that we do, so we're never giving a guy a fish." It is possible that in today's world, "assistance, mentoring, and capacity building are all euphemisms for consulting or training and can substitute for the kind of concrete help that is needed." As Steve shared, you cannot "fish without a hook." For the East Africa team, an incarnational closeness to the community makes discussions about dependency relative and real to global interdependency.

Interdependence Signifies Healthy Dependence on the Contributions of Others

Core to understanding global interdependency are the many ways peoples and projects are “dependent” upon others for their expertise shared in the context of the poor. In the areas of information, especially in areas related to the HIV/AIDS crises, multicultural teams are dependent on the contributions of others—their resources, human and financial, that come from inside and outside the project. As Tomas points out, “If you go down the ladder of the social system, the information is...very rudimentary. And [our beneficiaries] may not understand why things are happening that way. And they’re completely dependent on the decisions of others.” Gail comments, “We have to know about their condition...[if they] are taking their medicine, [and] how are they doing.” She adds, “We are working in adherence,²⁰¹ getting them information about their medicine, about HIV... And they have a support group that come[s] to the office...they come to the adherence group.” Tomas adds, “one of our ministry’s tasks is to actively give information, to [help others] think rationally, and bring them to the level that the government or the global philosophy is right now.”

Additionally, the issues related to dependency lead the team to foster interdependent relationships between the beneficiaries and the services of recognized community and governmental agencies. Eva encourages the beneficiaries to “utilize existing resources in the community, government provisions, and all those things...we try to fulfill their needs when it is beyond their capacity, beyond the environment’s capacity...In terms of health care the government provides free service, and we want beneficiaries to make use of all those services.” Susan adds a similar comment. In carrying out her responsibilities, “We try to limit the project’s care and support to some

²⁰¹ The program’s service is to ensure the consistent, timely taking of the antiretroviral medications.

extent. So the beneficiaries can utilize existing resources in the community, government provisions, and all those things.”

The Issues of Dependency Inform Choices about Boundaries and Limitations

The dependency discussion takes on new meaning as people survive and begin to thrive as they have done in the project; with survival, issues of appropriate boundaries, the meeting of needs, and the stewardship of resources surface. Eva, the Project Manager, stated that avoiding unnecessary dependency is a “big agenda” item. From her perspective in the project, “...we usually talk as a staff, and in our meetings we usually talk about how we can prevent [unnecessary dependency] from happening because whenever you’re providing [for peoples’ immediate needs] it’s easier for people to be dependent on you.” Various team members ask themselves, “Are we making people dependent on us, are we just providing, providing, providing? Limits to rent are discussed, ‘How much rent do you pay?’ ‘The whole rent, or do you pay part of it?’ and then, ‘Do we give them responsibility to pay part?’ as there are limits to providing other basic needs.” Eva, speaking for the team, says, “One of the ways we try to keep dependency from happening is like not providing every need of the family.” At almost every level of the work of the project, discussions about boundaries surface in the day to day life of the team.

With those dependency concerns in mind, fostering interdependency requires a thoughtful, prayerful response. Elizabeth comments, “...we’d like to see [those served by the project] get into income generation and be less dependent on us. And we’re certainly not meeting 100% [of] everybody’s needs. So we’re making their lives better but not perfect, so they are having to do something to assist with that.” Susan adds, “...there’s

that real struggle that goes on all the time. And we've opted to say, we've got to be generous, we've got to give. And yet we've tried to think of ways, like investing in someone to send them to school, to help their family come out of poverty rather just giving them a few birr²⁰² here and there." The team's understanding of the issues of dependency leads them to find ways to encourage interdependent relationships with the community, with employers, with small business, and yes, with managing day to day the needs of those who are HIV/AIDS positive.

Wisdom from God Is Needed

The issues of dependency require teams that are serious about them to look to God for wisdom about how to be generous and responsible, while promoting the best practices of interdependent living. Susan says,

I think our struggle is that we want to give and be generous, but we want to be wise about it. And we know that there are people that are going to be dependent on the project, at least, for some period of time. But the goal is to help them be as self-sufficient as they can. But also, just really realize that God made them, that we're brothers and sisters in Christ, and as the body of Christ, we're called to help people and what that looks like is going to be different with every person...[the challenge] never goes away. We're always faced with that.

Concerns about Dependency Lead to Thoughtful Assessments

Assessing need is crucial to discovering the limitations and boundaries of caring for people in the community when concerns about dependency are on the table. It is also extremely personal. In practice, the assessments a team carries out are necessarily rooted in relationships which in turn require, as stated above, an incarnational presence. As

Tomas points out,

If you go to the statistics of the project, about 80% of the beneficiaries are widows whose bread holder died some years ago. They are completely destitute, the poorest of poor...[Our beneficiaries need] some assistance like food, sending their

²⁰² Local Ethiopian currency

children to school, paying school fees, assisting with school material... We also subsidize house rent... We are doing this... based on assessment.

Assessments have a very personal component. Tomas notes, “We do home visits every day. We meet our beneficiaries... We’re trying to see [each family] once a week... We provide support based on the actual need of [the person].” Eva goes on to say, “We take time to discuss. I feel that it [our discussions] is something, especially in terms of the project beneficiary relationship, something that’s a big agenda,” which leads to intentionality about boundaries within the project. She adds, “there are some [needs] that are beyond the beneficiary’s capacity, and government’s capacity... so we provide support in some things... [but] not providing for the whole need.” Movement from dependency to interdependency involves assessing specific needs and recognizing boundaries and limitations of the team’s possible involvement in meeting those needs.

Freely One Receives, Freely One Learns to Give

The issues of dependency have taught the team that every person, agency, and congregation has something to give to help others. That is the wonder of global interdependency. Significantly, the information and resources that are given to save lives can also be passed along in ways that enable receivers to become both workers and givers. Fostering interdependency recognizes that everyone who receives can also contribute to others according to their abilities and training. The dynamics of receiving and then learning to give can lead to the formation of interdependent relationships locally and, by extension, beyond the project. Eva notes, “The beneficiaries are encouraged to work outside of the project, once they are healthy enough to secure work.” Gail adds that once beneficiaries “are healthy enough to work outside they could produce some money.

So they could start to support themselves. That is growing out of dependency.” Tomas remarks,

We are working with [our] expert patients...we train them. We bring them to the level so that they can make an informed decision for themselves, for their community and for their family. And once they have arrived there, we [encourage and train] them to work in their community; we [encourage and train] them to work in the health facility, to advise people, to inform people to [help others] understand what’s going on now.

Illustrative of this dynamic is Helen. As an Expert Patient she has a unique perspective. She comments,

There are people that really need to be dependent on the project. I have also passed through the experience. When I was very sick, seriously sick, I used to be highly dependent on the project. But now I would say that [I] am not that dependent on the project...I take care of my medication, I go to the hospital for a check-up, I take care of my house...[then] we try [to] share our experience and try to give [others] that awareness or be aware that they shouldn’t always be dependent on the project rather than have to work hard to earn something [for] their family...I try to help others in terms of raising their awareness.

Interacting as a multicultural team has fostered an appreciation for the contribution that everyone brings to serving the poor. In Tomas’ words,

This approach really has great impact in the system, even the health system, if competently [applied]...If you go down into the community, the beneficiary will tell you they know [what is going on]. The information they have is quite different [from that of the rest of the community]. Our beneficiaries now are a little bit aware of what is going on...they ask questions now. They know the [issue of] dependency and the relationship we have with the [rest of] the world.

Working as a Team – Considering Dependency

Dependency concerns weighs on the AIDS Care and Treatment team’s intentional efforts to foster interdependent relationships locally and globally. Working with Scripture has allowed the team to both appreciate the challenges of dependency and to prayerfully work together to shape a common life that is generous to the dying and gracious with respect to boundaries and personal responsibility. Historical frustrations

have given birth to new initiatives that link compassionate, life-saving generosity to the training and equipping of the project's beneficiaries. This enables the beneficiaries to become givers to others, thus establishing a chain of interdependency that stretches around the globe.

In what ways does the experience of interacting with a multicultural team of workers inform the team's understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor?

The third question recognizes that working together as a multicultural team impacts the participants' understanding of global interdependence in a host of ways. Their life together as a working community informs everything from questions about the practical dynamics of working with partners and donors, to a personal life of faith, to understanding how to nurture biblically accountable relationships between diverse peoples. The team has learned about how relationships that span oceans are formed and maintained and about how to live out practical Christianity as a small team among millions of disparate souls. One of the interviewees, an Ethiopian national, when asked if she could say anything to sum up her experience working on a multicultural team with the poorest of the poor, simply said, "I think that interdependence is a very hard thing."

We Are the World, Globally and Locally

In no uncertain terms, the global crises of HIV/AIDS necessitates that people of faith join hearts and hands across oceans and continents to enable teams to serve the poor in communities like this one in East Africa. The impact recognizes the need for both resources and spiritual and emotional encouragement. In Tomas' estimation, "A strong program like this one is interdependent on other part[s] of the world especially [with those] who have a connection or...insight of the problem of the poor. The discussion

really affects every move of the ministry, every move....” Eva adds that interdependency is played out not only with respect to global connections but in the ways team members and beneficiaries support one another in the local community. She says,

I see interdependency as really important for every good fruit that you want to yield. For example, if we are not interdependent [in the project], it is very difficult to handle burdens by yourself. Even in our work with beneficiaries, even to support and care for them, you need to be working interdependently with them. Unless they are really [involved], unless they are willing to share their problems with you, unless they are willing to be part of this program, unless they are willing to cooperate with the programs here, it is difficult even to care for people.

Tomas sums up the team’s understanding of global interdependency recognizing the diversity of workers, the participation of Westerners, and the contribution of beneficiaries by simply saying, “From scratch, from the funding and everything, I feel that there is always interdependence.”

Global Interdependence - Learning to Live as a Christian

In the team’s understanding, global interdependence is an issue of learning to live as a Christian in a diverse and multicultural world. This is a significant area for the team, especially for those sent and sustained economically from the West. Susan asks the question expressed by several of the interviewees, “How do I live as a Christian?” or “How do we really be charitable?” Working as an international, multicultural team highlights the income gap between Western missionaries and local beneficiaries. “It has,” says Susan, “been one of the hardest things because we [the expat workers] are wealthy [in comparison to the beneficiaries]. No matter what, even if we’re poor in America we’re wealthy compared to people here.” Elizabeth echoes that deep struggle in comments about receiving her steady and consistent stateside-based support: “I think the connectedness with the poor makes me think about my own life, and certainly living here

on my MTW salary is less than half of what I was making when I left my job, but it's sufficient, and I have no wants or needs in that regard." This specific challenge is a reminder that while global interdependence shines a light on economic disparity, it doesn't immediately answer the questions of inequality and disparity. Susan adds,

We go back and we see the wealth of the West, but we come here and we look at our wealth, and we go, 'We still have too much.' 'We live so much differently than people here and how do we justify that?' It's a convicting thing all the time. It's convicting when we go home, it's convicting when we're here. I think maybe it's our age as well. Looking at your life and thinking, "How does God really want us to live as Christians?"

Global interdependence also puts a spotlight on simple living and, while not providing any easy solutions to disparity, leads the team to make adjustments in personal lifestyles and spending. Elizabeth confesses that "when I came here the first time and fell in love with the project and really felt that God was calling me to be here, I probably simplified my life even more, trying to downsize to get ready to go here. But just being here, I still feel really rich compared to everybody that I take care of." Susan, commenting about changes in her lifestyle since arriving in the project, said, "For a long time we'd come into the [project's] office and then we'd drive away and go back to the suburbs. Just making the move [into the community] meant that we had to downsize and to be closer to everything, [that] has really been satisfying for us." For a multicultural team working among the poor, lifestyle questions rarely raised in mono-cultural communities can and do produce searching questions and practical adjustments as the team learns to work among the poor.

Sensitivity to the Availability and Quality of Medical Care

Global interdependence not only surfaces concerns about lifestyle; it also reveals concerns about basic medical care. In an ever-compressing world, a multicultural team is

forced to recognize the disparity between care given to the needy in more prosperous contexts and the care given to the poor in communities like the one in this study.

Elizabeth confesses,

I sometimes get frustrated because I can't give them US level of medical care, but I know that what they're getting from us is better than what they would get otherwise. And I would like it to be even more, but it [is] sometimes hard to work around the system... I feel that God has given me a real love for these people, and I really don't want to go back and work with the "worried well" sort of thing.

Relationships Always Need Work

Living with people, spending time in their communities, promotes the relational connections that are key to global interdependence. As Steve puts it, "If you move in people know you are serious and not just a tourist. This leads to friendships, which leads to deeper understanding, which leads to better ways to help." Even among the interviewees, questions surface about how deep relationships run and how much work still needs to be done in this area. In discussing the visits of workers from the West, Helen says, "Those people²⁰³...come like every three months...they come here. And when the guests come from outside we usually meet them and we try to identify people who need prayers and encouragement. And so we go [together] to those people, those families. We pray together and become courageous together. So I know them...." All that said, Elizabeth adds,

I know when [the beneficiaries] tell us their stories they always say how grateful they are for SIM to have been helping them out and be part of this project. And they see our medical teams come in from the States. But so many of them are Orthodox [Christians], and so many of them have never seen much of the outside world that I wonder if they can even comprehend that sometimes. I know they know that we're rich, we come from America and if we weren't here their lives would be significantly worse, but I don't know that they understand the global aspect of it because their focus of life is so small.

²⁰³ International visitors and medical personnel

There is recognition that the work of relationship building has gaps and limitations that can only be addressed by more time together and closer physical proximity. As Steve puts it, “You can’t substitute a strategy for living in a community and observing and getting to know whom you can trust and what is happening below the surface.”

Global Interdependence Necessitates an Incarnational Approach to Ministry

Working as a multicultural team has shown that in understanding global interdependence, there is no substitute for being there—and not only being in the country, but being in the neighborhood. The team’s interaction has taught them that global interdependence, an interdependence rooted in growing relationships and friendships, necessitates an incarnational approach to ministry among the poor that identifies with local suffering, that can facilitate relational bridge building with international visitors, and that can make the distribution of resources from abroad meaningful and responsible. As Steve expresses it, “The closer you get the better. It’s tough to do development from 10,000 miles away.”

Global interdependence requires an identification that shares the pain and suffering of the community that cannot be done from a distance or as compassionate commuters to the community. This is especially true with respect to the pain and suffering of the local community the team serves. Gail adds, “The work is...inter-personal... inter-related... We are in [the] area we are serving. The shame and a common understanding, we share that, yes...the work, what we are doing...We will [get to know] them. And they will [get to know us]... We are working together.” Susan similarly affirmed that “just moving a little closer has helped us identify more with people that we

work with,” and another noted, “You can read books, you can hear about things, but unless you’re actually there...you don’t have a clue what’s it’s like.”

Having the team physically present is also important to facilitating relationships with the donors and partners visiting from the United States. Susan comments, “...we have donors from the States that come out and really get to know the people here. They know their names and they pray for them. And I think that’s influenced people here.” She adds,

We’ve talked to people in the project and say it’s people from the outside who care about you and are praying for you and are providing what we are able to give to you. And I think that makes a difference in their life. I think they feel connected then in some way to the people who are halfway across the world, which are a part of their life. And when we have a lot of people that return, come back on teams and just the relationships they build with people here and seeing how they enter into people’s lives, I think that has made a big difference.

These relational bridges are possible because the team is able to facilitate the home visits between the Western visitors and the local beneficiaries. From her perspective, Gail adds,

...what I understood is just going to every individual’s home, working in an individual’s home is very different²⁰⁴...and to understand who one is, what he or she has, in what areas they are needy economically, socially, psychologically...you can assess everything when you go into an individual’s home. This is something very different from my experience.

Lynn adds a similar note, “In my opinion, going to people’s house[s] each day and helping them...is a big contribution to the project...the fact that we’re going each day to people’s houses [to] assist them.”

The team recognizes that distance, both geographical and emotional, limits the impact of what it means to be globally interdependent. Regarding partners and supporting churches that have yet to visit the team, Elizabeth commented,

²⁰⁴ In contrast to taking people to hospitals as in another project with which she served

I'm not sure if too many of my supporters would think of [their relationships] as being interdependent. I think they would probably like the idea of supporting somebody who's doing something to help the AIDS crisis in Africa, but in terms of the interdependence that that involves, I think that most if not all of my supporters probably have no clue about what it's really like here.

Regarding the support that comes from outside the country, Elizabeth summed up the need for incarnational connections that make global interdependency possible. In her words, "I think my supporters at home...need me to be their hands and feet here. God doesn't call everybody to go overseas and certainly without people who can provide for me to be here, I wouldn't be here. So I need my supporters so I can be here to be doing the work I really like to do." She adds, "...the beneficiaries here need my supporters as well so I can be here providing medical care and showing the love of Christ to them." Elizabeth shared a story that underscores the importance of connections with people living and working among the poor. After sharing a particularly difficult story on her blog,

I got some really good responses to that blog because people just couldn't believe how horrible things were here and how much we really have to deal with on a day to day basis. So we really are all globally interconnected from the churches in Brooklyn, New York that have just really adopted this project and support me...There's just this whole network of people out there that this project couldn't run without. And I couldn't be here without.

Global Interdependence Teaches "I Am Not Alone..."

The work of a multicultural team underscores the reality that people, especially the poor and disenfranchised, are not alone in the world. Helen, one of the HIV positive Expert Patients has been with the project for four years and recognizes this gift from interacting with people from the West and other parts of Ethiopia. She comments,

When I first came here I used to feel that I was the only one infected by HIV, and I had a feeling of loneliness. When I came here and see other people working here I see good acceptance from them. I like the way they accepted us, and I feel

comfortable from seeing other people like me...I feel like, “Oh, I am not alone. There are people who [are] concerned for me, and there are people who are in the same status just like me.” So I get comfort at that point.

Heart-felt Mutuality

A multicultural team experience teaches its members that global interdependence is, or should be, reflected in the sharing not only of funding and medicines, but especially of hearts. As Tomas expresses it, the influence of the beneficiaries on the team is enormous in terms of “heart” reciprocity.

I learn from the beneficiaries, they have their own reason to live the type of life they’re living now. And I learned the other thing is they also have heart, a good heart to listen to you and learn from you. And they have every feeling that I have... If you show them love, they are people who love you, give you love, and they are full of life experience.

Love is a core theme in Tomas’ experience with the beneficiaries and with the project:

God loved us and God invested in us through his love. And God ordered us to share our love to you...That’s why we’re caring for you. Now it’s your turn to love each other, and care for each other...If there is somebody sick...they feel that is their responsibility... They take their friend to hospital, they care for the sick one, and they hug each other...

Interdependence Means the Work Is “Ours”

Language, unique words in the local tongue, informs the team’s understanding of interdependency. Christian collaboration on a global scale cannot be viewed as “us and them,” but rather as “us.” Tomas says,

In the local language there is one word *enya*... It means “ours.” This project is ours, and we have to advertise our project, and other projects have to learn from our project. [The beneficiaries] have such expression. And they feel belonging. And we want to continue connecting with these people... The ultimate goal of this project is establishing and launching a church in their community where everybody belongs to that community...to that church.

Global Interdependence Fosters Learning

The reality of global interdependence underscores the benefits of learning from one another, learning that serves to the benefit and blessing of everyone involved – individuals, congregations, or agencies. In Tomas' words,

When I joined this program, I had a heart [to serve]...[with] a little bit of knowledge about HIV. In Black Lion Hospital there were thousands of doctors, nurses working in the medical aspect. I determined that it's hard to [practice] social work after joining the university, and I tried to address the social part. It was important for some to fulfill this part. And even there I think the spiritual part was not fulfilled. When I joined here I experienced with the people coming from the United States, American personnel from different university[ies], highly specialized individuals. They told us really how to care [for the] HIV patient, especially when the drug starts to take. We learn a lot, train a lot from the team coming. Some of them are interested to treat the patient to help the patient, and others were very much interested to build our capacity so that we care for thousands of them. In fact that approach was so different, the wisdom trying to fulfill everything, we don't have the resource here.

As Steve puts it, "if you are going to do poverty work you should know the history and the players...and know what has been tried and failed."

In interacting as a multicultural team, members have understood that a significant part of learning on a global scale is recognizing that learning is always a two-way street. Global interdependence recognizes that things are done differently in different contexts, that adjustments must be made, and that lessons must be learned. In Tomas' work,

When the medical teams come [from outside the country], they want to know all [kinds of] information. It was very expensive for the project [to provide the information they needed from tests] for every patient. We established...a policy...to use our resource[s] efficiently. We have to test the patient regularly... [unlike the United States]. In our setting it is very difficult [due to the expense of testing]. This is the cultural difference and we should talk, we tell them to understand why we are doing the way we are doing. They learn from us and we learn from them...how to maintain our beneficiaries healthy...God helped us through many of these walls.

Interdependency Requires Communication

The dynamics of a multicultural team underscore the necessity of clear and consistent communication both on the field and to global allies and supporters. All aspects of global interdependency rely on good communication – language is important. While language is not everything in a multicultural team’s experience, linguistic bridges from one community to another must be built. Tomas explains,

This is my first experience to work with an international community... It has been very hard to communicate with the foreigner and saying my idea, and understand them. Even though our school media is English, we understand reading, writing and speaking a little bit, but not to the extent that we ‘understand’ each other. This is the first thing that I [learned]. Now I can express my idea even though my English is not good, I can express my idea. This is one of the changes [and enables me to] learn from the other people who are coming from United States, and other parts of the world.

Eva adds a simple and practical observation about communication related to global interdependence. In her experience,

I feel that [donors, partners, medical personnel] need to hear, they need to know that there are really people who need their help, and they can make a big contribution by coming here. And that they have a significant impact on people’s lives, the way they come here, if they contribute to the project, if they come here to serve the people, that’s a big blessing for the people here. I feel that mostly I get inspired when I see the people coming from the outside when they come and share their experience, new faces, new spirits, new encouragement, it gives new encouragement even for us as a staff working here. So I feel that they are really needed here, and they can make a lot of change by coming here and working here.

An Appreciation for Humility, Gratitude, Peace, and the Love of God

Working as an international team underscores the reality that Christian character and the fruit of the Spirit are essential to the dynamics of global interdependence.

Humility is foundational, as Eva notes,

I learn humbleness from [those that visit us]. I see, especially like when I was here during my first years of working in this project, all they do is training for me because I never had experience of working with people from outside, caring for

the poor like this. I used to feel that the poorest are here and not there. That they have a different status, different conditions and people from outside, I used to have a perception, they are rich, they are well-to-do and they don't have that much heart to poor people. But when I see the way they care for people, I really see that they are humble. So I learn humbleness from them.

Gratitude to God is another aspect that the team has learned in its interactions with each other and with others. As Gail noted and echoed by Ann, "People say, 'God sent this project to us or otherwise we [would suffer] and die.... God sent this project to [the community]..., [international partners] are supporting the orphan, are supporting us with food, with housing...this is God's gift....'"

Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, is how working with a multicultural team impacts its members with respect to peace of mind and working with and from the love of God. Tomas stated, "The other change [in me] is I have peace of mind. Peace of mind, and above all I learn a lot from this organization working with the missionary. It opened my eye[s] to see love of God in a different way... This ministry has impacted my spiritual life a lot." As an Expert Patient working with other beneficiaries, Lynn adds that what is needed "is to have a motive of loving others, and calling people together by love, not by force. Not trying to change people by force, rather by love. [My advice] to that person...if you try to change people through love, they can be changed."

Learning Together to Trust in God

Learning to trust God in the midst of poverty and illness is a lesson that the multicultural team has learned in their interactions with one another and with the global community. Helen, one of the projects Expert Patients, sees their contribution as one of helping others to trust in God's work and ways. Our role, she says, is to

teach [others] how we need to have our help in God, how we need to be dependent on God. And how it's very important to care for each other. My feeling

is that they learn from us the respect that we have for each other ...the humor we have in our life...the care we have for each other. They can see those things, and they appreciate those things, I think.

She added during the interview, “If you spend more time with us, you’ll have more time of laughing.” In the work of the team, the link between laughter and trust in God is palpable among the poorest served in the community.

Eva had a similar response regarding trust and confidence in God:

As part of the body of Christ, I feel that...I have learned that people have a really strong dependency on hope on God, and that gives them the courage to persevere. There are so many complicated problems, complicated issues, and after passing through all those things you hear people saying, ‘Praise God, Thanks to God, God is with me...’ they pray for God, and they do all those things.... That is really a big lesson for me.

The International Community Needs the Perspective and Influence of Multicultural Teams and Its Beneficiaries

The multicultural team has experienced that, as the world compresses, the wider Christian community needs the perspective and insights of those who work among the poor to help focus their own priorities in ministry. A culture of learning is essential. As noted previously, Elizabeth remarked, “I think they [supporters back home] need me to be their hands and feet here.” It goes deeper. As Tomas sees it, “When teams are coming from the United States to our program...the first few days, they are indifferent or they can’t [understand] the purposes of serving... They learn from the life of the poor....”

A posture of learning is crucial for partners and team members alike. Eva notes that collaborating together is a learning experience. When asked about the interdependent camaraderie in the project, Eva says that those visiting the project should come to learn. In her words, all should come “to learn and to serve...If they have open hearts to learn, there are lots of things that they can learn here. If they come only to serve, they can serve

[but] they...need to be open to learn, so if they come with that mentality of learning and serving, they can learn and serve the community.”

The Challenge of Global Interdependence Underscores the Reality of Weakness

The experience of interacting as a multicultural group informs the team of the reality of human weakness as they more intimately understand global interdependence. For Elizabeth, weakness is experienced in an ongoing sense of being overwhelmed. She says, “I think for me, seeing the poor everyday...some days it’s just so overwhelming, and the problems that we see in our project are overwhelming. But you can walk down any street here and be overwhelmed by the smell and the poverty, and the beggars and anything else that is related to it.” Additionally, Elizabeth summed up the thinking of several team members: “I think it’s a stretch...at times, keeping focused on the goodness of God and knowing his nature is not going to change. And that it’s going to be consistent. I still don’t understand except the Bible says that you will always have the poor with you, why there isn’t more equity in the world.”

Grace in Suffering

The team’s experience of working together with the poor accentuates the reality and meaning of suffering together as a necessary part of embracing global interdependence. Susan asks, after so many years of living and working in Africa, “What does it mean to enter into somebody’s suffering?” She reflects, “It’s easy to be on the outside and say you’re entering in...but then just go home on the weekend and shut it off.” In exploring the suffering of the beneficiaries she asks,

How do they deal with the pain in their life? How do they function? We sort of compare things to the West where we have counselors and psychiatrists. [For] people here there’s nothing. How do they deal with the pain in their life? And I think too, that’s why grace is so wonderful for them to hear that God loves them

and He knew about their pain when they were going through it. And he is using that in their life and to be able to share the gospel with people who have experienced what pain really is, it is amazing.

Elizabeth, from her perspective as a nurse practitioner, observed God's grace in the dynamic of the team's interaction and connectedness with the HIV/AIDS sufferers, "If one part of the body suffers then we all suffer." God's grace is an essential component of interdependent relationships on a global scale.

Global Interdependence Makes Ministry Possible in a Multicultural World

The reality of diversity and multiculturalism, understanding it, appreciating it, and even challenging it, is an important piece of working as a multicultural team trying to understand global interdependence. Susan notes the positive role that gaining knowledge and understanding of culture brings to work of multicultural teams: "We couldn't [do this ministry] without [our colleagues]. They bring the expertise of knowing the culture and knowing what the lives of the people are like." Such mutual dependence serves to instruct the team about what is and what is not appropriate in terms of the sharing of resources.

"There are incidences," Susan notes,

where people will come and ask for something, and as Westerners we would say, "Well, they need this, and we've got to do it." And our colleagues will say, "Don't go there. You're opening up this can of worms," or, "This is not something that we need to get involved in," or, "We know their situation and they're okay in that area," or, "They're going to find what they need from another source, and that's not where we need to go." Without our colleagues, we would be floundering, and we would have gone off on some tangent that wasn't right...

Local Leadership Is Crucial on a Multicultural Staff

The work of a multicultural team underscores the need for the influence of local leadership in the care, nurture, and vision of the community. Steve, commenting on his former forays into multicultural team building, lamented earlier attempts: "there was

never genuine fellowship and accountability and real repentance and real cooperation. [We] almost never really shared values and goals. I mean I can't think of a single situation in twenty years." Interacting with the team now, a different story emerges, and a significant factor for the change has been the influence of local leadership and teammates. In Steve's words, "...it's really not as much me as it has been [Tomas] and some of these [local colleagues]. They've created a work environment... If you are just here for a while you will see just how close these people are to each other, and how much they care about each other. And how much they care about the people that we're ministering to."

Global Interdependence Is Spiritually Transformational

Interacting with a multicultural team with a vibrant faith in Christ helps those involved with the project to see global interdependence as spiritually transformational. Interacting as people of faith, says Gail, "is a heart thing" and transformative when serving together. Of his own journey, Steve notes that working with colleagues and partners "when [others] are dying, when they're at their greatest need" brings internal changes that are hard to put into words. For him,

that is where that interdependence really started for me because what I got out of that, you can't measure it. And to me, I could do this the rest of my life. This is worth doing. It's not a program; it's not a strategy...I feel like what that did for me spiritually is even hard to put into words. And so it wasn't just me coming in with money or with food or with medicine for this person. It was something that is mystical I guess is the only way to put it. That there is something happening that is going both ways...I know that working with the poor like we do now has changed me...has made me more Christ-like somehow...When you are caring for [people] and hearing from them and hearing their stories... you see the power of the gospel in people lives. And you see how the Holy Spirit changes people.

As an Ethiopian worker in the project, Gail adds,

It was the interaction with the team that opened up the needs of [my] own country...I was thinking, I have lived here for so long, and people from a different country come here, and let me see my problem...my country's problem. So I really see that there is a lot that I can contribute to my country, to the people around here, and to the needy. So it really affected my desire for my future in life, and my passion for the area, and that has really changed my attitude. Most of my life has changed after being a part of this project.

Working as a Team - Multiculturally

In one sense, the world is changed by the spiritual renewal that happens as people of faith interact together in multicultural teams. Believers are challenged as to what it means to actually live as Christians in a world of acute disparity. Words like community, relationships, heart, and love take on a radical new significance when teams live incarnationally among the poor. The dynamics of living together as a multicultural team not only provide a learning environment but, when prayerfully embraced, are spiritually and practically transformative.

Summary

As stated above, the purpose of this chapter has been to hear from individual members of a multicultural HIV/AIDS Care and Treatment team in East Africa about how they understand global interdependence as they work among the poor in a community that is ravaged by both oppressive poverty and illness. Scripture and teaching have had, and continue to have, a powerful impact on the team. The team see themselves on a biblical journey with God who is a Father to the fatherless and who is intentional in his care for the poor and needy. Together, as teammates, they have been learning to serve in partnership with others around the globe and uniquely with the beneficiaries they have been called to serve in Ethiopia. Their experience together has taught them the reality of

global interdependence and has shown them that, serving together, diverse colleagues and partners can be joined heart and hand in ministry to the poor, can learn the meaning of Christian living, character, and unity, and can build relationships that bridge socioeconomic and cultural divides. Those relationships, with a commitment to humble learning, are transformative and through the grace of Christ can change the world.

CHAPTER FIVE

The purpose of this study was to explore how a multicultural AIDS Care and Treatment team serving in East Africa understands global interdependence in its work among the poor. To that end, three research questions were designed to guide the literature review and the interviews for this study. First, “In what ways does theology inform the team’s understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor?” Second, “In what ways does the issue of dependency inform the team’s understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor?” And third, “In what ways does the experience of interacting with a multicultural team of workers inform the team’s understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor?” This study was intentional in its effort to listen to and hear from Scripture, historical and contemporary literature related to dependency and interdependency, and other sources. The study was also intentional in its focus on hearing from individual members of the Eastern Africa multicultural team. As the team members allow prayerful consideration of Scripture to shape their understanding of global interdependency and as they wrestle with the issues of dependency, their interaction as a diverse, multicultural team working among the poor begins to transform their lives and labors. In a very real sense, this study reflects a piece of the answer to the prayer that Jesus himself taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Multicultural teams working in and with the poor in places like East Africa are the hands and feet of Jesus in response to that prayer in the communities that they serve and are bridges from those communities to

congregations, committees, and agencies across the globe. It is, as Dr. Peter Kuzmic stated, “time for the worldwide church of Jesus Christ to learn how to move from patterns of competition and independence toward the full-fledged biblical way of complementarity and interdependence in both life and practice.”²⁰⁵ This is especially true with respect to the poor.

Summary and Findings

This study has shown that, consistent with the recommendation of much of the biblical literature related to interdependency, the team not only listens to Scripture but also has allowed it, together with the work and literature of other biblically informed writers, to inform and shape the warp and woof of their work with the poor. As expected because of its importance in contemporary discussions of missions and because of my experience working with teams in Africa and Latin America, the issue of dependency, whether through books, articles, or the voices of other colleagues and practitioners, has been a challenge for the team. It has been a source of much prayer, discussion, and heart-felt wrestling as they make decisions in their work. Significantly, while concerns about dependency have informed the team’s ongoing community development endeavors, those concerns have not diminished the team’s desire and intentionality to be compassionate and generous to the dying and destitute.

Additionally, as I anticipated through my own experience of working with diverse peoples in varied settings, the experience of serving together as a multicultural team, linked in purposeful relationships with connections stretching from the distant West to the HIV/AIDS sufferers and their families in the communities served in East Africa, has

²⁰⁵ Rowell, *To Give or Not to Give? Rethinking Dependency, Restoring Generosity, and Redefining Sustainability*, xvii.

expanded and deepened the team's understanding of global interdependence. In other words, the team is on a journey of transformation. Their faith is deepened on the journey. They learn from one another, and others learn from them. The team's interaction, locally and trans-locally, has brought focus to their understanding of the critical role global connections can play in the care of the needy. Their interaction has highlighted the importance of living and working in the context and community of HIV/AIDS sufferers. I believe it goes without saying that the team's interaction as a missional community can help congregations, mission committees, organizations, and agencies better to understand the challenges of being biblically faithful as global members of the *Corpus Christi*. This could be said of many similar teams across the globe and underscores the necessity, as stated in the first chapter, to hear more stories from those who prayerfully listen to Scripture and to other practitioners who lay their hand to the plow in their own service to the poor. As a community of globally sensitive believers, the team serves the wider church by enabling them to understand more fully the vital, nonnegotiable need to have an incarnational presence among the poor. It is life lived together, in and under the Word, that makes possible meaningful connections with global partners and provides a platform for the voices of the poor to be heard.

Several implications and recommendations are discussed in this chapter that may be of help to individuals, congregations, mission committees, and agencies engaging in service among the poor through multicultural teams, especially as they work and wrestle with Scripture and the current literature on dependency and interdependency issues.

The Word Is a Light unto Our Path

Related to the first research question, “In what ways does theology inform the team’s understanding of global interdependence in their work among the poor?” several important theological themes emerged from Scripture and the related literature.

The Poor

Foundational to the purpose of this study is the reality that Scripture and the literature reviewed for this study have a great deal to say about the poor. The poor and their plight cannot be ignored in any serious discussion about global interdependency. From my experience with the team, even before my interviews with them, I saw that they take seriously Gutierrez’s observation that “the privilege of the poor...has its theological basis in God. The poor are ‘blessed’ not because of the mere fact that they are poor, but because the kingdom of God is expressed in the manifestation of his justice and love in their favor.”²⁰⁶ It is evident in Scripture and in the writings of those who take the issues of economic and social justice seriously, that God intentionally directs the people of God to care for the oppressed, the widow, the orphan and the poor, and then instructs his people to live in holy and heart-felt solidarity and relationships with them as the body of Christ. As seen in related literature, Jayakumar Christian expresses God’s intentionality well, “Jesus rebuilt community by challenging the very lines that divided people. He further made those lines a religious issue about which God was deeply concerned... Covenantal communities deal with issues without reducing the poor to mere numbers...Rebuilding relationships demands investing in relationships.”²⁰⁷ This includes working among them and with them.

²⁰⁶ Benne, Neuhaus, and Center on Religion & Society (New York, NY), 37.

²⁰⁷ Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 8.

Echoing Christian's perspective, Steve stated in his interview, "When I think about missions and coming to a place like Africa...the idea that we would leave [working with the poor and needy] out of what we were doing...[seemed] like a fantastically unbiblical idea." As multicultural teams form, and congregations, committees, and agencies link hearts and hands with them to work with the poor, serious care must be taken to develop a biblically sustained theology of the poor. An understanding of global interdependence that omits the "the poor, widow, and the orphan" would be truncated and mono-cultural. Movement toward the poor, for theologically thoughtful congregations, committees, and agencies that confess and profess the lordship of Christ, is inevitable; and reading and study must, of necessity for Christians, be bathed with consistent prayer. As Rickett reminded us, there can be "no substitute for the careful and prayerful reflection on the word of God for divine guidance."²⁰⁸ A thoughtful approach to Scripture, wedded to a desire to listen and learn from it regarding the poor, requires a humble and prayerful posture; agencies, committees, and congregations must read, study, and work in God's presence. As Richard Sterns put it,

What does [God] expect from any of us who want to be followers of Christ and bearers of the gospel? Those expectations are not mysterious or difficult to discern. They are, in fact, etched clearly in page after page of Scripture – a bright thread of God's compassion for people and His zeal for justice: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."²⁰⁹ (Micah 6:8)²⁰⁹

Critical to both the literature review and the interviews is the certainty that, as Gutierrez wisely reminded us in echoing the prophets, "To know, that is say, to love Yahweh is to do justice to the poor and oppressed."²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Rickett, *Making Your Partnership Work*, xv.

²⁰⁹ Richard Stearns, *The Hole in the Gospel* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2009), 53.

²¹⁰ Gutiérrez, 110.

The Incarnation

I have found the word “incarnation” in the literature and teaching of almost every ministry with which I have come into contact that takes seriously the needs of the poor. The incarnation of God’s son, as Bonk reminds us, “is the very heart of the Christian faith,” and “the fact is, the Messianic *modus operandi* was not accidental, but deliberate....” He went on to say that “the missiological lessons of the Incarnation are clear. ‘As you have sent me into the world, I have sent [those whom you gave me] into the world.’”²¹¹ If congregations, committees, and agencies are serious about embracing global interdependency in ways consistent with biblical theology, they must foundationally embrace the nature of Christ’s ministry in the world as the Eternal Word made flesh,²¹² the image of the invisible God,²¹³ making palpable the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom.²¹⁴ Those congregations, committees, and agencies, in interdependent relationship with multicultural teams, must hear afresh, embrace, and intentionally pursue a kingdom agenda expressed by Christ as he lived and walked on the earth. Jesus, in his response to the inquiry of John the Baptist’s disciples, gives palpable response to what it means to have God walk among us:

Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.²¹⁵

As noted earlier in the study,

...God is a compassionate God. This means, first of all, that he is a God who has chosen to be God-with-us...By calling him Immanuel we recognize that he has committed himself to live in solidarity with us, to share our joys and pains, to

²¹¹ Bonk, 183.

²¹² John 1:14.

²¹³ Colossians 1:15.

²¹⁴ Matthew 4:23-25.

²¹⁵ Matthew 11:4-6.

defend and protect us, and to suffer all of life with us. The God-with-us is a close God, a God whom we call our refuge, our stronghold, our wisdom and even, more intimately, our helper, our shepherd, our love. We will never really know God as a compassionate God if we do not understand with our heart and mind that “he lived among us.”²¹⁶

Congregations, committees, and agencies that seek to understand global interdependency in partnership with multicultural teams must take seriously Stott’s maxim, “all authentic mission is incarnational mission.”²¹⁷ While short-term efforts cannot be dismissed—and as Fickkert and Corbett have noted, their numbers are “exploding”²¹⁸—and can serve to foster fruitful relationships that can lead to a better understanding of global interdependency, they cannot be disconnected from people and teams who are living in the communities they desire to help. Congregations, committees, and agencies must intentionally invest in people and projects that nurture and experience community life and ministry in context with the poor. Serious practitioners and those who join hands with them must recognize, as Bonk has so well said, that “medium and message are inseparable; it follows that it is not possible to have a contextually relevant Gospel if the missionary is out of context. Not only *what* is said, but *how* and *by whom* it is said are equally integral communicatory elements from the perspective of the person *to whom* a message is directed.”²¹⁹

Built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets

Paul tells the church in Ephesus that notwithstanding the very diverse community of people that they are, made up of both Jew and Gentile, all of them are “members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus

²¹⁶ McNeill and others, 13-15.

²¹⁷ John R. W. Stott, *The Contemporary Christian : Applying God's Word to Today's World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

²¹⁸ Corbett and Fickkert, 27.

²¹⁹ Bonk, 71. Author's emphasis.

himself being the cornerstone.”²²⁰ That Christ came, in and through the Incarnation, to fulfill the Law and the prophets through the proclamation of grace in spoken words and embodied kingdom life, has not been lost on the team. It has been important for the team, together with serious partners, to see work among the poor theologically bathed in the “whole counsel of God.” Paul, in his apostolic ministry to the Gentiles, was directed by his apostolic colleagues (who had been called to serve the Jews) to “remember the poor” during a season of distress in the early church. The multicultural team, like the Apostle Paul before them, has been and is “eager” to do so.²²¹

With respect to the prophets, knowing God, as Jeremiah explains, will always have an impassioned bent toward “justice and righteousness and judging the cause of the poor and needy.”²²² As the team’s director noted in his interview, interdependence with the poor is “something God has been talking about since the very beginning.” Calling God’s people back to biblical faithfulness regarding the poor and their plight is foundational, fulfilled perfectly in the person and work of Jesus. As members of the team noted in their interviews, Isaiah pointed down the corridors of time to the Messiah, assuring his listeners that “the Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor....” Those very words were on the lips of Jesus in the Nazareth synagogue as definitive of his earthly ministry. Those declarations, wedded together with the Apostle Paul’s eagerness to remember the poor, provide a solid base on which to build multicultural teams working among the poor. From Genesis to Revelation, this emphasis in the life and praxis of God’s people is foundational to biblical

²²⁰ Ephesians 2:19-20.

²²¹ Galatians 2:1-10.

²²² Jeremiah 22:13-17.

faith and it cannot and must not be lost to serious people of faith today who desire to understand and experience global interdependency.

Worship

The work of these teams among the poor highlights for the wider community of faith that global interdependence between God's people that ignores solidarity with the widow, the orphan, the poor, and the oppressed is radically unfaithful to the God they profess as their Savior and Lord. As one of the interviewees pointed out, "one of the things that God really went after the Israelites for" was "their idol worship...they weren't caring for the poor, for the widows, for the orphans, and for the stranger... When the prophets came along and they were preaching that message to repent...that change [regarding the widow, the orphan, and the poor] was almost always one of the major things...." As referenced in the literature review, Kaufmann stated that when God called his people to repentance, they did not denounce the religious practices of the nation unconditionally, but "rejected the cult in favor of morality."²²³

The multicultural team is committed to what the literature called "pragmatic solidarity" with the poor. In contrast to an "abstract piety," pragmatic solidarity makes "common cause with those in need," where prayers and good wishes are "accompanied by the goods and services that might diminish unjust hardship."²²⁴ Those congregations, committees, and agencies serious about nurturing a deeper understanding of global interdependence in relationship with multicultural teams working with the poor must see that connection, not simply as good *works*, but as biblical, Christ-centered *worship*. As James so succinctly puts it, "religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is

²²³ Bullock, 57.

²²⁴ Farmer, 146.

this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.”²²⁵ Truly, let us, our colleagues, and our partners “sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him...exult before him! Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.”²²⁶

Eschatology

Often overlooked is the impact of eschatology in the arena of global interdependency, especially as it relates to working among the poor. In the interviews, again and again, Matthew 25 was cited as core to the work of the team in the community. Steve summed it up well: “...why do I keep working? Matthew 25 is my answer. I want to be one of the sheep on the right.” In a recent interview Benedict XVI was asked why preachers are so deafeningly silent about eschatology when the doctrine of “the last things” is a central part of the patrimony of the faith. Benedict responded, “That this is a very serious question. Our preaching, our proclamation, really is one-sided, in that it is largely directed toward the creation of a better world, while hardly anyone talks any more about the other, truly better world.”²²⁷ In his book *The Mission of God*, Chris Wright in reference to the second coming of Christ writes, “The language of the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven echoes Daniel’s great vision in Daniel 7:13-14 and thereby associates Jesus with the universal power and authority of the Ancient of Days...By his right hand YHWH...will exercise final judgment, as in the parable of the sheep and the goats (Mt 25:31-46).”²²⁸ True global interdependence must understand, as is evident in the team’s work and the reviewed literature (especially Scripture), that the

²²⁵ James 1:27.

²²⁶ Psalms 68:4-5.

²²⁷ Benedict XVI, *Light of the World* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 179.

²²⁸ Wright, 114.

desire for a better world in light of the truly better world should be core for congregations, committees, and agencies desiring to foster partnerships that integrate the proclamation of grace with a kingdom agenda in their work with the poor.

The Body of Christ

Practically speaking, loving God and doing justice on behalf of the poor requires intentionality about embracing the very real global dimension of the body of Christ. The study has shown that both Scripture itself and a foundational theological understanding of Christ's church as a multi-member, multi-faceted body play integral roles in helping multicultural teams understand interdependency within the context of the project.

From the study we note that the team and its beneficiaries come from different ethnic groups, different socioeconomic backgrounds, different educational experiences, different religious traditions, and have been influenced by Ethiopian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and various Evangelical traditions and literature. In various ways the team echoes the importance of 1 Corinthians 12 and Paul's teaching on the body of Christ,

...the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor.... God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one other. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.²²⁹

As noted earlier in the study, Howard called this text in 1 Corinthians "the most significant passage in the New Testament about our interdependency."²³⁰ For congregations, committees, and agencies, it cannot be stressed enough that we must

²²⁹ 1 Corinthians 12:21-26.

²³⁰ Rickett and Welliver, eds., 26.

promote a theology that emphasizes the reality that, by virtue of being “one body,” God’s people are both a local and global family.

As seen in the Scripture and the literature, churches referred to in Acts not only shared a common faith in the risen Lord Jesus but, through practical body, life “had all things in common...were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.”²³¹ As one team member expressed, the team, its beneficiaries, and their international partners in their multicultural, multi-socioeconomic diversity are “all part of one another... You just see the Body of Christ in all aspects... People come with different gifts.” As evident from Scripture and in practice on the ground in East Africa, the common life of the church has a powerful global dynamic with respect to the “parts of the body” that suffer want. When the believers in the Jerusalem church who compassionately shared “all things in common” found their resources stretched beyond capacity, a need exacerbated by famine, the Macedonian church responded with generous, grace-sated relief. In Paul’s words about the Macedonians, “In a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty...overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part”²³² toward their brothers and sisters in Judea. The sharing of funds in such circumstances was called a work of the grace of God.²³³ This same working dynamic of grace is meant to flow in and through contemporary global connections and interdependent partnerships. It is imperative that multicultural teams today, and the congregations, committees, and agencies that partner with them, imbibe a full understanding of the church as God’s body. It is vivid imagery that must not be reduced to a purely local understanding and application, but must necessarily have a

²³¹ Acts 2:44-45.

²³² 2 Corinthians 8:2.

²³³ 2 Corinthians 8:1.

global stretch in both thinking and practice. Multicultural teams are a bridge to foster and nurture those global connections.

It is especially important that we in the West, who have enjoyed a season of political and economic power, stability and abundance, affirm that “the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts should be treated with greater modesty.”²³⁴ God teaches us, through our experiences with teams such as the one in East Africa, that our collective need is related, not simply to the administrative, teaching, preaching, and mercy gifts evident within a specific demographic, denomination or culture, but to the multicultural, multiethnic and multi-socioeconomic dynamics inherent to being “Jews or Greeks, slaves or free.”²³⁵ We must take time to listen to the poor, to hear their perspectives and insights about how we do our work in the world. There must be intentionality to include them and their voices in our congregations, committees, and agencies. Multicultural teams like the one in this study provide the context and the vehicle to help such communication take place.

A Body with a Common Ancestry

According to Scripture and affirmed by the team’s experience, a core component to working well among the poor is understanding humankind’s common ancestry as children of Adam. In my experience, having clarity about our common roots is a crucial component of both evangelism and discipleship. As Steve reminded us, “Everybody that we work with is made in God’s image and has infinite value because of that.” Such a clear declaration of our common roots, and our common family ties as children of God

²³⁴ Ibid. vs. 22-23. My emphasis.

²³⁵ Ibid., vs. 13.

through faith, recognizes the theological assertion of the apostle Paul that no one member of the body could ever say to another, “I have no need of you.”²³⁶ As stated in one of the interviews, “What I’ve come to realize is that the woman sitting in her little hovel in Ethiopia is concerned about the same thing [as] wealthy women in America... [People] are struggling with the same emotional needs and the need to be loved and cared for and all those things that it just boils down to one family.” Christians today, serious about their faith and the brokenness of the world, must recognize that the interconnectedness of peoples, as multicultural teams, congregations, agencies, and committees in and through the work of Christ, is a “gift of grace, a gift of the Kingdom of God.”²³⁷

As multicultural teams form among the poor, and congregations, committees, and agencies link hearts and hands with them, there must be intentionality to nurture a biblically informed understanding that all believers need the diversity of the body of Christ. For their own growth in grace, all believers need the uniqueness of God’s multifaceted family, with all its cultural and socioeconomic dimensions. Practically, the people of faith in less economically challenged settings “need” the poor, their voices, and their influence as much as poorer members of the family need the generous support of those who, at this time in the history of things, have an abundance or excess. It is imperative that local congregations, committees, and agencies understand that the care of the needy, like those served by the HIV/AIDS team in this study, is the responsibility of the extended family of God, his body, from New York to Amsterdam, London to Cape Town. In the economy of God we are called to “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill

²³⁶ 1 Corinthians 12:21.

²³⁷ Bonhoeffer, 67.

the law of Christ.”²³⁸ Teams like the one in this study make the connections between this multi-faceted body both possible and practical.

We can never minimize the influence of theology as we interact globally with people from every tribe, tongue, and nation. It is the Word that leads us to “remember the poor,”²³⁹ to live among them as the Word made flesh did so long ago, to worship in Spirit and in truth. It is the Word that reminds us that the members of the body which we are tempted to consider weaker and less honorable are not only necessary in a more detached or abstract way, but I personally have need of them.

The Weight of Dependency

The second research question asked, “In what ways does the issue of dependency inform the team’s understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor?” This question served to highlight the challenges and obstacles related to living as a globally interdependent community, especially when the exchange of resources is in the mix. In the experience of the team, like in the experience of other teams working in similar contexts, the issue of dependency weighs on everything from international aid and financial support, distribution of food and medicine, and meeting basic domestic needs within the project, to questions about lifestyle. Discussions about dependency are often difficult and, as seen in the interviews for this study, frustrating and discouraging.

But, as is clear from Scripture, the interviews, and the literature reviewed for this study, dependency concerns need to be addressed both contextually and in relationships. They affect the way in which one understands and pursues global interdependence in the context of the poor. As seen in the interviews, differences of opinion about dependency

²³⁸ Galatians 6:2.

²³⁹ Galatians 2:10.

can provoke relational fissures and, unfortunately, disunity. As shown in this study, colleagues in the same mission agency or on the same team can and do hold different opinions that can produce emotional stresses, yet those same stresses wedded to the study of Scripture and the relevant literature have proven to be the fertile ground for more thoughtful and prayerful work among the poor and in partnership with them. The question of dependency is crucial to the work of multicultural teams working among the poor, and as Steve emphasized, with “almost all the kind of development stuff we do now, sustainability and dependency are key values.”

Dependency upon God

Especially important to the team in this study is that genuine, biblical interdependency within the project and with the wider global community is foundationally informed by a personal and collective dependence upon God, his grace, his goodness, and his generosity. All questions about dependency, economic or otherwise, must be rooted not in agnostic discussions about global relationships, economics, and interdependence, but in prayerful discussions in the presence of God. As cited earlier in the study, it is God who “has chosen to be with us.”²⁴⁰ “He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.”²⁴¹

Christ tells us that he is the vine and we are the branches, and it was he who said “without him [we] can do nothing.”²⁴² As a voice from the team confessed, “I think it’s a stretch to, at times, keep focused on the goodness of God and know his nature is not going to change...it’s going to be consistent....” Keeping prayer, biblical studies, and

²⁴⁰ McNeill and others, 13-15.

²⁴¹ Deuteronomy 10:18.

²⁴² John 15:5.

reflection ever before us is going to be the continual challenge of teams, committees, congregations, and agencies as they embrace global interdependence in their work with the poor. Everything we do, every breath we take is ever and always dependent upon the grace of God. There must be continual repentance as our passions about economic dependency provoke us to criticize and condemn one another about the use and abuse of resources. It must be recognized, confessed, and embraced from the beginning to the end of this journey that “from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”²⁴³

Relational Dependency

As noted in the study, genuine interdependence is rooted in relationships, and those relationships must exhibit genuine mutual need and reciprocity. As Rickett puts it, “Rather than steep Christians away from reliance on one another, the Bible seems to celebrate dependency in the body of Christ. Yet this is clearly *not* the way we normally think of dependency. The dependency implied by the image of the body is *complimentary* and *reciprocal*.”²⁴⁴ But, importantly, the glue of those relationships cannot and must not be first and foremost the finances we depend on and use to help the weak and needy. As Kosuke Koyama points out, “The whole biblical teaching is rooted in relationship. Money has ultimate meaning only if it enhances human relationship.”²⁴⁵ As we have seen throughout this study, we desperately need one another; God has baptized us by one Spirit into one body and has wedded Jew and Gentile, slave and free together and bathed them with grace. And yes, as we have seen, economic disparity, famine, poverty, and

²⁴³ Romans 11:36.

²⁴⁴ Rickett, *Building Strategic Relationships: A Practical Guide to Partnering with Non-Western Missions*, 15.

²⁴⁵ Bonk, 53.

disease require the significant sharing of resources.

It was humbling to see in the team a deep desire to foster relationships rooted in Scripture and yet, in the midst of the ravages of HIV/AIDS, from its director to each of the Expert Patients, there was genuine concern expressed about fostering the right kind of dependency upon God and one another, a deep commitment to save the dying, and that care be taken to avoid fostering the wrong kind of dependency upon one another. The poorest members of the community were concerned about promoting the kind of dependency that allows “someone...to carry [another] along financially and, sometimes administratively.”²⁴⁶ The poorest were prayerfully concerned about their contribution to the project and to one another. What is gratifying to see is a team that actually understands the challenges related to the distribution of wealth and yet, with all the pain and angst caused by discussions related to dependency, is willing to wade in among the poor, whom Scripture assures us will always be out there.

I can only encourage congregations, committees, and agencies that desire to partner with multicultural teams to engage the literature on dependency both from secular and religious sources. But, as stated above, the literature must be engaged on our knees with a Bible open before us, and it must be engaged in discussion with the poor and with our partners. It is here that what Alavarez, Avarientos, and McAlpine write about studying Scripture in context is so important. They write, “Appropriate ways of reading Scripture in the context of development projects is one of the number of activities highlighting the need for more intentional and strategic relations with the churches...development projects have a great deal to do with money and power.

²⁴⁶ Schwartz, *When Charity Destroys Dignity*, 340.

Scripture has plenty to say about how we deal with these elements, regarding them as fundamental questions for discipleship.”²⁴⁷

Throttling Generosity

As voiced in one of the interviews, in “almost all the kind of development stuff we do now, sustainability and dependency are key values,” yet what comes through clearly from the study of Scripture and from spending time with the team is the reality that God is generous and kind to the needy and the disenfranchised. The climate of grace, with respect to the poor, is that God’s people “open wide [their] hand to [their] brother, to the needy and to the poor, in [their] land,”²⁴⁸ and that cannot be lost in discussions about dependency. Even when voices are raised, often legitimately so, which call for greater discernment about the care of God’s people in the covenant community and those “outside,” Paul reminds us, “as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”²⁴⁹ The community served in this study, in this sense, is a land of opportunity. And, for those who would draw back from a more open approach to the needy of our planet, please remember that though only one of the ten lepers that Jesus healed returned to give him thanks, he graciously healed them all.²⁵⁰

Generosity bleeds through both the literature review and the comments made during the interviews. While materialism in its relentless march across sectors of the globe and luxury and selfishness drain many people’s desire for sacrificial giving,²⁵¹ the apostle John continues to raise his prophetic voice us:

²⁴⁷ Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 75.

²⁴⁸ Deuteronomy 15:11.

²⁴⁹ Galatians 6:10.

²⁵⁰ Luke 17:11.

²⁵¹ Rickett and Welliver, eds., 85.

...if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth"²⁵² and James reminds us that "religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction."²⁵³

As comes through in this study, saving the dying is the beginning of that generosity with respect to the poorest of the poor, especially with respect to those suffering the ravages of HIV/AIDS. That kind of generosity displaces any and all discussions, at least initially, about dependency. Rieff says it well: "at its core, humanitarianism remains the vocation of helping people when they most desperately need help, when they have lost or stand at risk of losing everything they have, including their lives."²⁵⁴ As previously cited in the literature, and something that serious congregations, committees, and agencies must remember, Stott makes the point that "when Jesus said, 'the poor you will always have with you'...he was not acquiescing in the permanence of poverty. He was echoing the Old Testament statement 'there will always be poor people in the land' (Deuteronomy 15:11)...as an incentive to generosity...."²⁵⁵ While it is important to take the challenges of dependency seriously, as this multicultural team does, great care must be taken that those concerns do not throttle Christian compassion. If dependency, not generosity, is the starting point, "you're never going to get where you want to go," as expressed in the interviews. "You're hamstrung," you will "design projects that have minimal impact," and that approach to the poor will prevent teams from being truly "incarnational." And, as we have seen in both the literature and the interviews, an incarnational presence of God's people among the poor is core to fostering an understanding of global

²⁵² 1 John 3:17-18.

²⁵³ James 1:27.

²⁵⁴ Rieff, 27.

²⁵⁵ Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 239.

interdependency. It is essential then, that in developing and supporting teams that work among the poor, care is given to understand the challenges of dependency deeply but to do so on a solid foundation of generosity. As Rowell so beautifully expressed it,

“Charitable giving is not an insidious danger but an important kingdom dynamic.”

Certainly, as Rowell says, “those who receive material help will not only have their needs met, they will be grateful and rejoice over God’s grace. They will praise the Lord. They will pray for donors who helped them. They will feel more connected with the body of Christ....”²⁵⁶

If we pray as Christ taught us, “thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” it will inevitably lead us to discuss dependency with hands wide open to the poor and needy. Congregations, committees, and agencies that desire to foster biblical community among the world’s poor should pray for a deep work of the Holy Spirit in their midst. As we see from Scripture, the answer to the cry for God’s kingdom to come “on earth as it is in heaven” is in part the sharing of resources so that everyone’s needs are addressed. Luke tells us that, as a result of a deep work of conversion in members of the early church, those who “received [the] word and were baptized” did not simply dedicate themselves to the study of the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread and to prayer but “were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.”²⁵⁷ The outcome of this palpable interconnectedness of God’s people was the pervasive worship of God, favor with all the people, and a daily increase of the number of disciples.

²⁵⁶ Rowell, “The Dread Cancer of Stinginess.”

²⁵⁷ Acts 2:45.

Transformational Interdependency

The third research question was, “In what ways does the experience of interacting with a multicultural team of workers inform the team’s understanding of global interdependence in its work among the poor?” Both in the literature review and in the interviews, several themes related to global interdependence emerged that will be critical to congregations, committees, organizations, and agencies who desire to serve the poor in and through multicultural teams.

The Reality of Interdependency

As expressed earlier in the study, due to the compressing nature of the world today, we are in an unprecedented position to embrace the poor, to serve them, to serve with them, and to learn from them. The press of the peoples allows for the possibility of unprecedented bridge building and global learning about what it means to incarnate the theological reality of interdependence in practical ways. As Buhlmann puts it, until only recently “it was a one-way street between Western churches and the Southern mission,” but “in the past twenty-five years that relationship has been transformed into a highway....”²⁵⁸ We are, as Buhlmann observes, “no longer dealing with one-sided mission help, but with a need for a frank and critical exchange of insights between churches that can and should occur on several levels.”²⁵⁹ This study—and others like it—shows congregations, committees, and agencies that such an exchange can happen as they partner with a multicultural teams like the one in this study, a team that, in turn, links hearts and hands with a multicultural staff and associates who not only work with some of the world’s poorest but are some of the world’s poorest.

²⁵⁸ Bonk, xix.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

From the interviews it became clear that everyone in the project has an opinion about Scripture and sees its power at work both in guiding the project and in building bridges between often-divided communities of faith and other organizations and institutions in the city. It is also clear that team members, from differing backgrounds, nationalities, and levels of educational training (or lack thereof) have a voice and an opinion and share insights and perspectives on everything from home visits, to the ill and their families, to the challenges of dependency. In very practical ways, the experience of the team accentuates the biblical truths that “the body does not consist of one member but of many...now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it” and that “the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’”²⁶⁰ On the contrary Paul assures us that the parts which we believe to be “weaker, less honorable, and unpresentable” are, in his words, “indispensable.”²⁶¹ It is imperative that congregations, committees, and agencies desiring to partner with multicultural teams listen to and learn from the communities they desire to serve. The seriousness of the relationship goes far beyond the giving of money, sending short-term teams, or even promoting medical services and resources.

Christian was deeply insightful in his assessment of the depth and breadth of learning and transformation in the context of the poor: “Years of work among the poor have taught us that limiting our investment among the poor to just money makes the poor beggars, and limiting our investment to programs makes the poor glorified beggars... If we believe transformation is about transforming lives then we must intentionally invest

²⁶⁰ 1 Corinthians 12:14, 27, 21.

²⁶¹ 1 Corinthians 12:22-24.

our lives.”²⁶² It is inexcusable at this time in history to continue to foster a one-way street between Westerners and the global south without intentionally and consistently listening prayerfully to those living and working in the context of the communities involved. And, as has been said repeatedly in this study, special care must be taken to listen to the voices of the poorest and most vulnerable of those communities since, as noted in the literature review, “there has been increasing recognition that ‘top down’ externally conceived solutions do not solve the problems of communities, nor are such solutions sustainable.”²⁶³

Transformational Learning

As was clear from the interviews and the literature review, relationships are the backbone of global interdependency and the platform for personal, collective, organizational, and community transformation. This cannot be overemphasized; relationships with the poor are nonnegotiable. Relationships are the channels by which we foster trust, collaboration, and communication. As Rickett tells us, “Partnership is nothing if it is not personal. It’s all about relating. In the end it comes down to how people relate to each other and how they work together.”²⁶⁴ We learn together and, in order to work well in our compressing world, congregations, committees, and agencies in partnership with teams working among the poor “must learn”²⁶⁵ in and through those relationships. As noted in the interviews, we cannot let our learning and concerns about dependency keep us from being incarnational – moving into the neighborhood, “from getting down there where people are, and living with them, and doing the kind of things

²⁶² Myers, *Working with the Poor: New Insights and Learnings from Development Practitioners*, 71.

²⁶³ Ibid., 154.

²⁶⁴ Rickett, *Making Your Partnership Work*, 55.

²⁶⁵ Schwandt and Marquardt, 19.

that actually make a difference.” As groups waded into the poorest communities, humble reflection will acknowledge, as was quoted earlier in the study, that “no mission or church can go it alone... [I]n this new age of missions coalitions, alliances, and strategic partnerships are not an option; they are a necessity... [C]hurches and missions today must be able to create and sustain a variety of intercultural partnerships.” This, of necessity, includes the partnership of the weak, the displaced, the sick, and the dying.

As noted previously by Corbett and Fickkert, our lack of learning about dealing with the ravages of poverty is due to the “*inadequate participation of poor people in the process....*”²⁶⁶ As I heard repeatedly from the team in Ethiopia, “...we have worked in this project...we began to know people...their names...their faces...their stories...” and that interaction impacted people connected with the team on both sides of the Atlantic. Those relationships, especially with the poor, accentuate for those who have more than they need the power of grace in the midst weakness, and teach us about the faithfulness of God in the midst of despair. They teach us that generosity toward others can spring from the soil of poverty, and that the poorest can be and are agents of change. As one of the interviewees expressed it, “I have lived here for so long, and people from a different country come here [and]...let me see my problem...my country’s problem...I really see that there is a lot that I can contribute to my country, to the people...to the needy.”

Transformational Spirituality

Transformation takes place not only on a practical level; interdependent relationships are also spiritually transforming, and deeply so. As expressed in the interview with the director, “when [others] are dying, when they are at their greatest need...that is where that interdependence really started for me... [W]hat I got out of that,

²⁶⁶ Corbett and Fickkert, 142. Authors' emphasis.

you can't measure it...what that did for spiritually is even hard to put into words... [I]t was something mystical... [T]here is something happening that is going both ways." This is the treasure of global interdependency experienced and learned by interacting with people of faith. It highlights the radical statement of Jesus, "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of God."²⁶⁷ Jesus spoke those words "having lifted his eyes on his disciples." It is important that congregations, committees, and agencies increasingly *see* the world, ask God to help them to *see* the world, especially the poor, through the lenses of Christ's eyes.

Transformational Living

As was seen in the literature review, ever-deepening partnerships among congregations, committees, and agencies that appreciate the dynamics of global interdependence face unique challenges. Perhaps the most significant challenge with respect to partnering with the poor is learning humbly, yet decisively, to address the economic disparities that exist between members of multicultural teams. The challenge of disparity is relentless and, as was evident from both the literature and the interviews, it remains a minefield for multicultural teams and their partners. As expressed on the ground, "[T]hat has been one of the hardest things because we [the expat workers] are wealthy compared to people here..."; "some days it's just overwhelming..."; "it is a stretch at times [to] keep focused on the goodness of God and know his nature is not going to change." Most significantly, as expressed by the team, "I think the connectedness with the poor, it makes me think about my own life..." and "why isn't there more equity in the world?" Understanding that global interdependence is rooted in relationships of integrity and transparency, the questions of lifestyle are incredibly

²⁶⁷ Luke 6:20.

significant. As Bonk notes, “since biblical faith is above all a relational faith, it is not only sad, but tragically wide of the mark (sinful) when personal possessions and privileges prevent, distort or destroy missionary relationships with the poor.”²⁶⁸ I would suggest that, from my experience in the world Christian movement, this is the area that is the most challenging for agencies, committees, and organizations that desire to really live authentically and biblically in relationship to the poor. How to live together as an interdependent community, marred by sin, and the deep cleavages wrought by disparity is, in one sense of the word, the final frontier of incarnational living.

The community life of the multicultural team highlights the challenge of finding ways to live that necessarily do not include ways that would be impossible to replicate or reproduce in the communities of the poor with whom we labor. As Bonk has it, “Global poverty is an acute material challenge, no doubt; but Western affluence is a profoundly spiritual one. It is at least as difficult for affluent Christians to surmount the spiritual challenges of our affluence as it is for our poverty-stricken brothers and sisters in the rest of the world to survive their poverty.”²⁶⁹

Recommendations for Practice

Congregations, committees, and agencies that desire to foster biblical community among the world’s poor should, no, must pray for a deep, deep work of the Holy Spirit. I would encourage promoting specific and intentional prayer not only for the work of multicultural team members and their supporters, but for the congregations, committees, and agencies that desire to partner with them. We need guidance, wisdom, and

²⁶⁸ Bonk, 145.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 157.

understanding, and Paul's prayer for the Ephesians provides an excellent template to guide our prayers—

that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ....²⁷⁰

As we partner with others, there must be prayerful intentionality about supporting teams and projects that do not simply serve the poor, as important as that is, but partner to work *with* them, listen *to* them, learn *from* them, and live *among* them. In light of the vast potential of God's harvest in the world, Jesus asked his followers to "pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."²⁷¹ It is essential in these times of multi-site, multi-national, and multicultural movements in mission that congregations, committees, and agencies build bridges with teams who live and work in the context of the poor. Some simple steps would be to leverage short-term trips to include yearly visits to the same location to promote longer-term relationships that can grow and deepen over the years. Members of congregations, committees, and agencies should be included in internships and two-year stints of service among the communities in which there is a desire to foster truly interdependent relationships. Time must be taken to study the community where teams and their partners hope to invest their lives. Time must be taken to interview its residents, and to write papers *with* the locals, not *about* the locals. And most importantly, invest time and resources in people, colleagues, and partners who actually will live or do live in the community, who study their Bibles and read their books in the community, and plan on staying in the community with an intentionality to

²⁷⁰ Ephesians 1:17-19.

²⁷¹ Luke 10:2.

partner with national workers and practitioners who also live and work in the context of the poor. Additionally, those congregations, committees, and agencies who desire better to understand the dynamics of global interdependency must take intentional steps in their places of residence to include both cultural and socioeconomic diversity within their local community life. At the end of the day, we export what and who we are.

Recommendations for Further Study

Study and research related to global interdependency, especially when working with and listening to the poor, must necessarily include thoughtful and prayerful research related to systemic justice and liberation in communities of poverty. Studying Chris Wright's *The Mission of God*, Gutierrez's *A Theology of Liberation*, Keller's *Ministries of Mercy*, Conn's *Evangelism: Preaching Grace and Doing Justice*, and Rowell's *To Give Or Not To Give* would be a good place to start. These books offer, thoughtful, theological reflection and practical teaching that engages both the theology of the poor, generosity, and the systemic concerns about justice. Teams, congregations, committees, and agencies serious about listening to Scripture and heeding the voices of the poor, those truly interested in developing independent relationships, will find foundational help in Rickett's *Making Your Partnership Work* and in Steven Corbett and Brian Fikkert's *When Helping Hurts*, cited in the bibliography. These works offer a good beginning to hearing practical and thoughtful counsel regarding the building of relational bridges with those who live among the world's neediest. Time should be taken to understand the larger scope humanitarianism; Rieff's *A Bed for the Night: Humanitarianism in Crisis* is a good place to begin. For those with a specific interest in Africa Moss' *African Development: Making Sense of the Issues and Actors* would be a helpful place to begin your research.

An important read for those interested in the confluence of technology, science, disease, and poverty should read Farmer's *Pathologies of Power*. In Farmer's words, "Anyone who wishes to be considered humane has ample cause to consider what it means to be sick and poor in the era of globalization and scientific advancement."²⁷² Regarding what is happening on a global scale it would be important to become informed about the Millennium Development Goals (MDS). There are eight goals that all 192 United Nations member states and some 23 international organizations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015. Among those goals is the desire to end extreme poverty, the reducing of child mortality rates, developing new strategies to combat HIV/AIDS, and developing global partnerships for development, all themes either touched on or alluded to in this paper. As Steve counsels, time should be taken to become versed in and "understand who and what the Bretton Woods Institutions are...USAID...and The International Declaration of Human Rights." The information gleaned from these sources are helpful in terms of what works, what doesn't work, what is effectual, and what is efficaciously challenging.

Recognizing the importance of living incarnationally in the context of the people the church is called to serve must be given the most serious and intentional consideration. Serious inquirers about the challenges of resources and lifestyle as multicultural teams form among the poor should prayerfully work through Bonk's book *Missions and Money*. It would be especially helpful to work prayerfully through the chapter, "Toward a Missiology of the Righteous Rich," to discover biblically faithful paradigms in which to live and work as pilgrims upon this earth and especially so among the poor. Bonk gives practical steps for individuals, families, mission agencies, training institutions, and

²⁷² Farmer, xvii.

sending churches. Especially helpful, together with Bonk, would be Heuertz's and Pohl's *Friendship at the Margins: Discovering Mutuality In Service And Mission* with respect to relational bridge building.

Regarding the dynamics of organizational learning and the transformation associated with working on multicultural teams in the context of communities of faith like the one in this study, it would be helpful to consult Dr. Gary Waldecker's dissertation, *Organizational Learning from Cross-cultural Experiences: An Ethnomethodological Case Study Examining the Relative Importance of Social Structure and Cultural Values During Dynamic Interaction*. With respect to global interdependency, the goal of congregations, committees, and agencies should be learning to both work together and be transformed together in humble dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ.

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