ABSTRACT

BEST PRACTICES FOR LOCAL MISSION WORK: DEVELOPING HEALTHY AND EFFECTIVE MISSION IN THE CHURCH

by
Victoria Harrison

Historically, United Methodist Churches have participated in a variety of local mission programs in response to need in their community and significant resources are often invested in these programs. Primarily, churches engage in relief-based local mission, such as feeding programs, food pantries, clothes closets, and benevolence programs. Books such as *Toxic Charity* and *When Helping Hurts* provided a critique of these efforts, contending that relief-based local mission alone leads to dependency in those served. These texts and others argued that change was drastically needed and pushed churches to consider development over relief. However, there was little in the literature to help guide this shift or give more insight into what constitutes healthy and effective local mission.

The purpose of this research was to develop a set of best practices for local mission to help pastors and mission practitioners as they evaluate current mission practices and guide decisions for future work in their community. The project consisted of two parts: an online questionnaire sent to the forty-seven members of the UMC Large Church Mission Connection and eight individual interviews of pastors and mission practitioners identified by the Florida Conference Office of Missional Engagement as having effective mission programs. The questionnaire and the interview used a similar line of questioning designed to assess the amount of resources invested in relief-based vs. development-based local mission and the evaluation and effectiveness of each.

There were several main findings. First, "mission-minded" churches are spending a significant amount of money on both relief-based and development-based local mission. Second, evaluation leads to change. Finally, healthy local mission leans toward development but relief can effectively be used in specific, targeted ways.

The data also yielded this list of best practices to help guide those working in the field:

1. Take time to understand the root causes of problems in the community.
2. Become educated on the difference between relief and development.
3. Engage primarily in development-based mission and use relief in limited, targeted ways.
4. Ensure evaluation is a central component of the mission program.
5. Avoid reinventing the wheel by partnering with relevant organizations (those "doing it well").
6. Align mission strategies with the mission of the church and ensure that the church fully supports the mission program. Local mission is intended to promote life change for those receiving services and those offering services.

BEST PRACTICES FOR LOCAL MISSION WORK:

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE AND HEALTHY MISSION IN THE CHURCH

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of

Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

by

Victoria H. Harrison

May 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

Page

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to start by giving glory to God for providing me the opportunity to be part of the Doctor of Ministry program at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. These four years have been such an amazing learning and growth opportunity, both academically and spiritually. I am also very thankful for our professors and the spectacular staff of the DMin Program. They have challenged me but also supported and cared for me and I am forever grateful for their time and dedication. I give special thanks to Ellen Marmon who read this dissertation multiple times, offered guidance over the phone, and was absolutely amazing in the whole process.

There have been several other specific individuals who made this project and dissertation a reality. First, I want to thank my dissertation coach, Scott Lewis, who took the time to read and edit this paper many times. He sacrificed much of his free time to help me process ideas, offer insight, and provide feedback on this project. I can't thank him enough. I also want to acknowledge and give thanks for Lynette Fields (St. Lukes UMC) and Molly McEntire (Mission Engagement Office, Florida Conference of UMC), both of whom served as my expert reviewers. Molly also was extremely helpful by providing the names of churches in the Florida Conference which have effective missions programs, a list that was critical to the individual interview portion of this project.

Finally, I want to thank my family (husband, Richard, and three children, Daniel, Rosie, and Sam) and my church, New Hope UMC, both of whom have put up with all of my studying and writing over the past four years. The church has been incredibly flexible and supportive, and my family has been loving and understanding, even when it

meant time away from them. I never could have completed this program without their incredible support.

CHAPTER 1

Overview of the Chapter

Chapter One includes an overview of the entire project, which developed a set of best practices for local mission work to be used by churches seeking to create healthy and effective mission programs in their communities. This chapter also includes a personal introduction, statement of the problem, rationale, purpose, research questions, definition of key terms, delimitations, overview of research design, and an overview of the relevant literature.

Personal Introduction

For the past ten years, I have overseen our local mission efforts at New Hope United Methodist Church in Brandon, Florida. When I first started in this position, we did very little for the community around the church and we knew this needed to change. I felt God leading us to reach out to the homeless community in Brandon so we started a weekly spaghetti dinner. This was a place where anyone could come to eat a good meal, get a pair of dry socks, and receive it all with love. We also had an active food pantry and partnered with over twenty local agencies and ministries around our region. All of this was done with wonderful intentions but little thought was given to whether the feeding, the food pantry, and our many mission partnerships were actually effective. To be honest, it made us feel good to do them and we felt like we were answering Christ's call to serve the least and the lost.

It was somewhere in the midst of this that I started doing studies on mission effectiveness. I had read the books *Toxic Charity* by Robert Lupton, *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, and *Serving with Eyes Wide Open* by David

Livermore, along with others that emphasized the need to be sure our efforts to help do not actually hurt the people with whom we work. At the time, I was part of several networking groups of other mission ministers at large United Methodist Churches in Florida and across the U.S. We discussed these issues at length. We recognized that our local mission efforts leaned too far to the relief side and there was a very distinct possibility that they were enabling and taking dignity from the people we want to help. However, besides the books mentioned, there was little information available for how to design local church mission that is effective and without harm.

Even though I was not positive about the direction in which we needed to go, I knew what we were currently doing was no longer acceptable. Jesus has called us to serve; it is a core part of who we are as Christ-followers, but I felt certain he would not want us to create programs and systems that enable people, degrade initiative, and remove dignity. We started to reassess our own programs. Eventually, we decided to stop our weekly meals. I prayed about it for a year and waited until I truly felt God saying it was time. We transitioned our food pantry into a food cooperative. We reevaluated all our mission partners. I felt like we were flying by the seat of our pants. There is very little information out there, particularly scholarly information, that speaks to what truly effective local mission looks like or answer questions like what kinds of evaluative standards should be put in place and what the best practices for local mission are. None of this is available to the average mission director or pastor. Considering the amount of precious resources that are put into mission work, both money and time, and the importance of it for God's Kingdom, it has become quite evident to me that more research is needed in this area.

Statement of the Problem

Historically, United Methodist churches have responded to Jesus' call to serve the least and the lost by developing a wide variety of human service programs (local mission work) in the community around the local church. A great deal of resources, including time and money, have been committed to developing and maintaining these programs. These local mission efforts often have as their goal the alleviation of human suffering, helping people live more productive lives, or working toward a greater level of peace and justice. However, there has been disagreement and confusion in the local church as to what constitutes effective local mission work.

For many years, local churches have engaged in predominantly relief-based local mission, such as feeding programs and food pantries. Since the publication of books like *Toxic Charity* and *When Helping Hurts,* those who work in mission have felt the need to reassess and make significant changes to their local mission efforts, to ensure that their efforts are truly making a difference for those they seek to assist rather than enabling or creating a cycle of dependency. However, there is very little information in the scholarly literature that points to what makes for effective local mission and what kinds of strategies and programs really lead to transformation in the lives of those in need. A list of best practices for local mission work is sorely needed to guide the work of mission directors and pastors to promote effectiveness, ensure a better use of resources, and provide a better witness for God's kingdom.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the research was to develop a set of best practices for local mission work, using data gathered through on-line questionnaires and individual

interviews from pastors and mission practitioners of United Methodist Churches, that have been identified as having a high level of effective local mission.

Research Questions

These are the research questions that guided this project.

Research Question #1

Does evidence suggest that mission practitioners are taking steps to move from relief-based to development-based local mission when appropriate?

Research Question #2

What evaluative tools are used by mission practitioners to determine the effectiveness of their relief-based programs and their development programs?

Research Question #3

Under what conditions are relief-based programs useful or effective? Under what conditions are development-based programs effective?

Research Question #4

Based on the attributes of effective local mission work (as determined by the above questions and the literature review), what are the best practices for local mission work?

Rationale for the Project

Historically, the United Methodist church has been on the cutting edge of responding to the needs of the community, alleviating suffering, helping people lead more productive lives, and fighting for justice and peace. All of these activities, which involve both demonstrating and proclaiming the kingdom of God, could be described as local mission work, as they are one way the church has embodied Christ's call to serve the least and lost. While the twentieth century saw an increase in global mission efforts

in the UMC and less emphasis on local mission, the twenty-first century has seen a significant increase in local mission efforts in the United Methodist Church. Growing awareness among mid-size and large United Methodist Churches of the significant needs in their own community, coupled with a stronger emphasis on the role of the church in caring for the poor, the infirm, the outcasts, and the vulnerable, has led to increased local mission efforts in churches across Florida and the nation as a whole.

In many ways, this renewed interest in local mission has been positive. United Methodist Churches are more in touch with their community. Furthermore, as there has been a reduction in federal entitlement programs, United Methodist Churches have filled some of that gap by providing needed resources, such as food, clothing, and counseling services, to the most needy in their community. In the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church, there has been a drastic increase in the number of churches hiring mission directors and mission pastors to design, organize, and oversee their expanded mission programs.

Then two popular books were published that changed the way the local church began to look at mission work in general. Fikkert and Corbett's *When Helping Hurts* (2009) and then Robert Lupton's *Toxic Charity* (2011) both forced mission practitioners to look at whether their programs were effective. Although each book had a slightly different perspective, the authors were aligned when asking whether social service and mission programs that focus on relief-based services, such as food pantries, clothes closets, and weekly feedings, are actually helping people. They pointed to the many millions of dollars that are spent each year running these programs when there is evidence that they do not help people, but instead hurt them by creating a culture of

entitlement and dependency. Relief-based programs, according to these authors, strip clients of their dignity and do little to help them live fuller, more productive lives. They suggest abandoning relief-based services (except in cases of crises, such as natural disasters) in favor of services that involve rehabilitation and empowerment.

There is no question that local mission work in the church is well-intentioned but the question is yet to be answered regarding its effectiveness. Those who work in the field have spent the last ten years reassessing their programs to determine if they lean too heavily on relief and not enough on development. Yet there is very little information in the literature to guide this process. United Methodist Churches are certainly not abandoning their local mission work but are reworking programs to lean more on the side of rehabilitation, development, and empowerment and less on relief. The reality is that relief-based programs are easier and make parishioners feel good, so change has sometimes been slow and even painful.

Guidelines and best practices are needed to guide the work of mission practitioners in the local church. Considering the significant amount of money currently flowing into local missions and the importance of local mission work to the kingdom of God, this is a critical need. Involvement in local mission in the community is nonnegotiable. This is who believers are called to be as Christ-followers, but they must ensure they are carrying out this work in a respectful, effective way, and keeping in mind limited resources in regard to time, volunteer hours, and money. In no way should they harm those whom they are assisting. As Christ-followers, they must empower and equip others to both live life abundant and experience healing and wholeness. Best practices

that encourage ministries and programs that do just that will be an important step in this journey.

Definition of Key Terms

1. Best Practices – The procedures, techniques, or strategies accepted as being most effective

2. Local Mission Work – Social service ministries designed to demonstrate and proclaim the Kingdom of God in the community around the local church; these programs usually have as their goal the alleviation of human suffering, empowering others to live more full and productive lives, and/or working toward justice and peace

3. Relief-Based Programs – Mission work in the community that seeks to provide "relief" for an immediate need, such as giving away food or clothing. This is usually one-directional giving, requiring nothing of the person who receives it.

4. Development-Based Programs – Mission work in the community that seeks to help individuals or families "develop" and grow in a way that they can live fuller and more productive lives and reconcile broken relationships with God, self, others, and creation. Long-term life change is the goal. This might include employment programs, life skills, budgeting, or micro-finance. These programs typically involve the person who receives the program or service putting in time, effort, or money. This term is often used synonymously with empowerment-based programs.

3. Small-Sized UMC – Churches with under 250 in weekly attendance.

3. Mid-Size UMC – Churches with 250-499 persons in weekly attendance.

4. Large UMC – Churches with 500 or more in weekly attendance; many in the study were very large UMC churches with 1000 or more in weekly attendance.

5. Mission Practitioners – Mission directors or mission pastors; people, either lay or clergy, who have as a core of their job description the development and maintenance of mission work in their local church.

6. Mission-Minded Churches – Churches that make missions a high ministry priority, as evidenced by a full- or part-time missions practitioner or pastor on staff, a significant sum of resources being directed toward mission, a well-thought-out missions strategy, or other evidence of highly effective mission.

Delimitations

The first part of this research project included mission practitioners from very large United Methodist Churches across the United States (1000+ weekly worship), all of whom are part of a mission practitioner networking group called the Large Church Mission Connection, numbering forty-seven people. Each member of the networking group received an invitation to complete an on-line questionnaire. The second portion of the project included eight individual interviews with mission practitioners from small, mid-sized, and large United Methodist Churches across the Florida Conference of the UMC. Those interviewed were identified by Florida Conference officials as churches with noticeably effective local mission programs. Even though small churches are included in the individual interview process, more larger-sized churches were included under the assumption that larger churches have more robust local mission programs due to greater levels of staff and financial resources.

Review of Relevant Literature

Jesus directs his followers to care for the least and the lost. Through his teachings and example, Jesus provides instruction for Christ-followers to care for the "least of

these," as it is the same as caring for Jesus himself (*New Living Translation* Matt.25). In his sermon on the mount, Jesus teaches that his followers are salt and light, tasked with living out Godly values on earth in a way that brings glory and honor to God (Matt. 5:13-16). Jesus himself hung out with the poor and downtrodden of his day, cared for the sick, accepted the outcast, and provided healing and wholeness to those who accepted it. All of this was part of bringing about God's kingdom on earth, a kingdom where God reigns supreme and his values are lived out in real and tangible ways. These values include compassion, mercy, perfect justice, freedom for the poor and oppressed, righteousness, forgiveness, and love. All that Jesus did, from the beginning of his ministry through his death and resurrection, was a picture of God's kingdom being ushered in on earth. His followers are called to continue this mission to bring about God's kingdom in the here and now.

The Methodist Church has historically taken this mission very seriously. Joh Wesley, founder of Methodism, continuously developed ministries to address the problems of the people in the communities where he preached (Heitzenrater 34). From food distribution to small loans to literacy education, Wesley and the Methodist societies sought to alleviate suffering and help "the poor" live fuller and more productive lives (34). As the Methodist Church became more centralized in the United States, it continued to live out the directive of caring for the community and welcoming those in need.

Today, church community work, or what could be described as local mission work, is still very common in church communities. With the downsizing of government entitlement programs, churches have often stepped in to fill in the gap. While very few

recent research studies have looked at how much money is spent on church mission, several studies from the late 1990s and early 2000s suggest that the 350,000 American congregations spent in total between ten and twenty-four billion dollars annually for the purposes of human services, health, and international programs (Biddle 98; Saxon-Harrold et al. 5-6). With that kind of investment, churches are in a unique position to make a huge difference for the kingdom in their communities.

Despite the large amount of funds being channeled into local mission work, there is little information about whether these programs and ministries are effective and accomplish what they seek to do, that is, alleviate suffering, promote peace and justice, and empower people to live more full and productive lives. Robert Lupton, the author of the now nearly ubiquitous book *Toxic Charity*, proposes that most church programs are not helpful and may hurt people by increasing dependency, taking away dignity, and promoting a sense of entitlement. He strongly admonishes churches and other nonprofits to move away from one-directional giving and increase programs that involve rehabilitation and development. Likewise, Corbett and Fikkert encourage churches to focus on employment, financial management, and wealth accumulation because these efforts help people support their families and see the fruit of their own labor rather than rely on the benevolence of others (175). They stress that most Americans are capable of engaging in a process to improve their lives (175).

Scholarly work also supports this. There is ample research that suggests how community and other mission work is done is just as important as doing it. In fact, in many cases churches inadvertently create unhealthy power relationships between the giver of the service and the recipient when they offer relief-only services that require

nothing of the participant (McQuilkin 57; Keidel 48-49). Dichter calls helping others "a very tricky business" as many types of programs and ministries tend to discourage self-help (153).

Despite this, most American churches focus on relief-based ministries that are one-directional in nature. The 2010 National Survey of Congregations indicated that of the 11,077 American congregations surveyed, up to seventy-five percent engaged in some kind of local mission work but the vast majority was relief-based (soup kitchen, direct cash assistance, etc.) (Faith Communities Today 3). The mantra seems to be to just get out and do something in the community, with little emphasis on what and how. Research is needed to guide pastors and mission practitioners to develop local mission strategies that are truly effective and seek to empower people to live full and productive lives in a way that promotes dignity and indicates true betterment.

Research Methodology

This research was initiated to develop a set of best practices to guide pastors and mission practitioners with the development of local mission programs. The first stage of the research was an on-line questionnaire sent to mission practitioners from the United Methodist Large Church Mission Connection, a networking group of mission practitioners for UMCs with over 1000 in weekly worship attendance. These forty-seven mission practitioners are scattered across the United States. The second stage of the project included eight individual interviews with pastors or mission practitioners of churches in the Florida Conference: two small churches, two mid-sized churches, and four larger churches. Those interviewed were recommended by Florida Conference

Missional Engagement specialists as churches that have noticeably effective local mission efforts.

Type of Research

This was a pre-intervention, mixed-methods research study. Data collection included email questionnaires, which included both qualitative and quantitative responses, and a series of individual interviews, which included all qualitative questions.

Participants

Participants included pastors and mission practitioners. Online questionnaires were sent via email to all members of the United Methodist Large Church Mission Connection, a group of forty-seven mission practitioners from United Methodist churches across the United States with weekly worship attendance of 1000 or more. This group consists of both males and females in a variety of age groups, but all are educated, most with a college degree and an expertise in missions. Seven of the respondents were lay mission directors and four were ordained clergy. Participants in the individual interviews included eight mission practitioners and pastors from small, mid-sized, and large UMCs across the Florida Conference who were identified by Florida Conference Missional Engagement as having noticeably effective local mission programs. This group consisted of seven females and one male; six lay mission directors and two clergy.

Instrumentation

The first portion of the research utilized an on-line questionnaire which was sent via email to mission pastors and practitioners from the United Methodist Large Church Mission Connection. It included both qualitative and quantitative responses and had an informed consent question build in as the first question. The intent was that the online

questionnaire would yield baseline information about whether large, mission-minded churches are in fact moving from relief to development and what criteria are used to evaluate the effectiveness of local mission.

The second stage of the research study included eight individual interviews of United Methodist pastors and mission practitioners identified by the Florida Conference of the UMC as having highly effective mission programs. The interview guide included open-ended questions intended to elicit more in-depth information about local mission effectiveness, under which conditions churches are doing relief-based versus development work, how their primary focus has or has not changed, and what kind of criteria are used for evaluating their efforts.

Data Collection

The time frame for this research project was seven months. The first stage of the data collection included on-line questionnaires sent to the forty-seven mission practitioners in the United Methodist Large Church Mission Connection, which includes mission pastors and practitioners from very large United Methodist Churches across the United States. This process took approximately two months. The second stage of the data collection included eight individual interviews with pastors and mission practitioners from two small churches, two mid-sized churches, and four large United Methodist Churches across the Florida Conference. This process took approximately three months. This left almost two months for data analysis.

Data Analysis

This was a mixed-methods study. The online questionnaires included both qualitative and quantitative questions and were created and distributed using Survey

Monkey to ensure anonymity. The individual interview guide consisted solely of open-ended questions, yielding qualitative data. The data (all textual) was analyzed using qualitative textual analysis, which specifically looked for common themes and patterns in the data.

Generalizability

Findings from this study and the list of best practices for local mission work can be generalized to other similar church settings. While only United Methodist churches were in the sample, it is highly likely that the study results are relevant to other American denominational churches. While more research is needed, it is likely that the list of best practices can be extrapolated to most faith-based organizations operating in a Western context. This is also a study that could easily be replicated in other denominational settings.

This research is important for two critical reasons. First, as Christ-followers, mission practitioners want to reveal God's kingdom by helping others in ways that are compassionate, just, merciful, and never hurt their progress or promote dependency. They want to empower individuals and families to become the people God created them to be. Second, the money entrusted to them by parishioners belongs to God and they are called to be good stewards of those resources. Using money in programs or mission projects that create a cycle of dependency rather than rehabilitate or develop the individual or family is contrary to what they learn from both Scripture and past experience, both inside and outside the church.

Project Overview

The purpose of this project was to develop a set of best practices for local mission that equips churches to develop healthy, effective mission programs in their community. The first part of the project included online questionnaires to pastors and mission practitioners from the UMC Large Church Mission Connection, all of which are experts in their field. The second part of the research included eight individual interviews of pastors and mission practitioners from churches doing local mission well, as identified by the Missional Engagement Office of the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The purpose of this project was to develop a set of best practices for church local mission work. This chapter provides a literature review for the project and covers Biblical and theological foundations, the history of local mission work in the church, the current state of local mission, financial implications, a comprehensive understanding of poverty, and healthy models of mission demonstrated in domestic and global mission work. While the literature does not specifically address best practices for local mission, it certainly points to the need for more research and the development of healthy strategies to guide mission pastors and practitioners.

Biblical and Theological Foundation for Mission

There is a great deal in Scripture that addresses caring for those in need and God's people responding to the needs of people inside and outside the church. One of the main themes that emerged through this research is God's desire for his people to care for the needs of the poor and oppressed. It is not merely a suggestion, but most certainly a mandate. Interestingly, Scripture does make distinctions about different kinds of poverty and how to respond. Finally, there is ample evidence from both Jesus' ministry and the early church that caring for the community is part of God's mission for his people. Caring for the community is a key part of making God's kingdom a reality in the here and now and a way to alert others to Christ's reign.

The Directive to Care for the Poor

There is a large body of Scripture that deals with helping and defending the poor. Deuteronomy 15:11 states, "There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore, I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land." In fact, throughout the Old Testament there is quite a bit of scripture that deals with caring for those among them who were poor (i.e. Deut. 15:7-8, Lev. 25:35, Psalm 41:1-2, Prov. 19:17, 22:9, 28:27). There is a common theme of providing for the basic needs of those who have little or nothing.

Jesus also addresses the issue of the poor, often showing others how to care for the poor through his actions. He feeds the crowds, he heals, and he shows compassion. He says to "love your neighbor as yourself" and gives a broad definition of neighbor in the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Other parables touch on this as well. In Luke 14, he says to invite the poor and lame to banquets, not only rich friends, because people are to bless those who cannot bless them in return. In Matthew 25, when Jesus talks about separating the sheep from the goats, he clearly warns those who ignore the needs of the hungry, the naked, and the imprisoned. Jesus clearly cares for the needs of the poor and oppressed and strongly encourages his followers to reorient their hearts toward the things of God and his kingdom, which includes elevating the status of the least of these.

Different Kinds of Poverty and How They is Addressed in the Bible

The Bible addresses different kinds of poverty. A great deal of Scripture speaks about those who are poor because of oppression, injustice, or extremely difficult circumstances. Widows and orphans were often included in this group, people who would have been quite destitute in near-East culture because of a lack of male relatives to

care for them. In Deuteronomy 10:18, scripture speaks to how God, "…defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing." Many of the Psalms address this as well. Psalm 10:17-18 reads, "You, LORD, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, so that mere earthly mortals will never again strike terror." Psalm 35:10 says, "…Who is like you, LORD? You rescue the poor from those too strong for them, the poor and needy from those who rob them." Psalm 82:3-4 provides a powerful message, "Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

Certainly the prophets were often warning the people to not exploit the weak and needy, indicating both God's care for the oppressed and that this must have been common practice. Jeremiah warns in 7:5-7, "If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your ancestors for ever and ever." In Jeremiah 22:3, it says, "This is what the LORD says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place." Amos 2:6 expresses God's anger toward Israel because "They sell the innocent for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals." Zechariah 7:10 states, "Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.'"

There were certain provisions put in place to aid those in need. Leviticus commands that some food should be left in the fields for the poor to glean (Lev. 19:10, 23:22). In the story of Ruth, Ruth sent Naomi to the fields to glean for their basic food needs. There was also a second tithe every three years specifically for those who were in need. Deuteronomy 14:28-29 reads, "At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands." In the New Testament, the early church was encouraged to have compassion towards those in need (again widows and orphans are mentioned several times) and share their resources (2 Cor. 9:7, 1 Tim. 5:9-10, 6:18, James 1:27).

There is also Scripture that speaks to people who are impoverished due to their life choices such as laziness or neglect. Proverbs 10:4 says that "lazy hands make for poverty," and 19:15 reads "laziness brings on deep sleep and the shiftless go hungry." Proverbs 23:21 addresses the result of drunkenness and gluttony, "for drunkards and gluttons become poor." In addition, Scripture addresses the necessity of hard work and the difficulties that result if one fails to work. Proverbs 12:11 reads, "Those who work their land will have abundant food, but those who chase fantasies have no sense" and 14:23 states that, "all hard work brings a profit but mere talk leads only to poverty." This was obviously a value in the early church too, as 2 Thessalonians 3:10 reads, "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat." 2 Timothy 2:6 further emphasizes the

importance of hard work when it states that, "the hardworking farmer should be forced to receive a share of the crops."

The Mission of God (Missio Dei)

The Christian God is a God of mission (Missio Dei). His mission is to reconcile and redeem his people. He is a "putting things right" kind of God. This is clear throughout the Old Testament as God pours himself into the nation of Israel, blesses them, and continues to shape them into the people he called them to be. When the Israelites repeatedly rebel, God reveals his ultimate plan of redemption in Isaiah 49:6, "You will do more than restore the people of Israel to me. I will make you a light to the Gentiles, and you will bring my salvation to the ends of the earth." Six hundred years after that prophecy, God sent Jesus Christ to reveal his mission of redemption for all people.

Throughout the life and ministry of Jesus, the missional nature of God is revealed in more clarity. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus speaks of his mission of proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Luke 4:43 reads, "But he said, 'I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." In fact, the New Testament message is that the kingdom has been made discernible in Jesus Christ (Synder 75). In all his teachings, his miracles, his interactions, through the cross and the resurrection, Jesus' life embodied the kingdom of God, demonstrating a new way of doing life. For instance, sickness is not part of God's kingdom, it is the result of living in a fallen world, so Jesus healed. Hunger is not part of God's kingdom so Jesus fed. Discrimination is not part of God's Kingdom so Jesus spent time with people who were ostracized by their community, such as prostitutes and tax collectors. In God's kingdom,

every single human life has value, so Jesus elevated the status of children, women, the disabled, and the poor.

Jesus' teaching on the kingdom demonstrates that his ministry was not simply about individual salvation or the idea that individuals can go to heaven when they die. That was part of the good news but to leave it there would be incomplete. Rather, life in God's kingdom means being reconciled to God right now. One can live under the reign of Christ and live life abundant. Jesus' entire ministry, including his death on the cross and resurrection, pointed to God's kingdom being ushered in on earth. However, there is certainly a now and not yet quality about the kingdom. It is here, as Jesus proclaimed, but it will not be fully realized until he returns in final victory and makes all things new. Although believers wait in hope for Christ's return, they do not become complacent. Christ-followers have the task of living out the kingdom in all they do, living in such a way to alert those around them to the reign of Christ. Both as individuals and as the local church, they have the privilege of continuing Jesus' mission of bringing more of God's perfect kingdom into the here and now. This means both proclaiming and demonstrating the kingdom through acts of reconciliation, healing, and justice. It means creating opportunities in ministry and carving out time in busy lives to engage in specific tasks that both proclaim and demonstrate God's kingdom in neighborhoods, communities, and the world.

Defining Church: How God's Mission is Carried Out

It may be helpful to think of the church as the main vehicle for carrying out God's mission. Defining what is meant by the church is critical but also difficult, as one single definition of church is challenging. In Greek, ecclesia (assembly) is often translated

church but this seems tremendously lacking. Grudem defines church as "the community of all true believers for all time," a very broad definition lacking many of the unique elements of people coming together to follow Jesus (853). It may be more appropriate to describe the church as the body of Christ formed to carry out his message throughout the world. As the Apostles' Creed suggests, it is intended to be one body in Jesus Christ, consisting of a holy people, universal, without boundaries; and apostolic, with teaching passed down from the apostles (Joyner 44). Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the church is a place where the word of God is preached, disciples are encouraged and instructed, and the body of Christ comes together to pray and care for one another. But the church was never intended to have an inward focus. Rather, the church is intended to be the place where disciples are created and developed so that they can be sent into the world; it is a movement of people who, living under the Lordship of Christ, are sent to proclaim and demonstrate the good news of the kingdom, to be agents of the mission of God.

Bosch contends that the concept of mission is finally starting to be understood as the core identity of the church rather than simply an activity or duty (Van Gelder Chapter 7). Guder, in Hirsch's *Forgotten Ways,* defines mission as sending and calls it "the central biblical theme describing God's action in human history" (129). Elaborating on this, Hirsh asserts that believers are a sent, missionary people (129). Jesus himself said in John 20:21, "…as the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." The church, as a body of believers and as individuals, then lives out this sent nature, reaching out into the world to continue God's mission of the redemption and restoration. While caring for the poor, working to fight injustice, and relieving human suffering are just parts of what it means

for the church to be on mission, they are still critical. While this research paper discusses engaging in specific mission activities, it is important to note that these "missions" are all part of the greater mission of God. Both local and global mission work on the part of Christians reflect the work of the church in the Missio Dei.

The Early Church on Mission

The early church understood that they had been directed by Jesus to continue his mission of building God's Kingdom in their community and world. They took seriously Jesus' command to his disciples in Luke 9 and 10 that they are a sent people, tasked with going into the world to proclaim the Kingdom in both word and deed. Both Acts 2 and 4 seem to indicate that the earliest believers cared for one another, took care of the poor, and engaged with their community in such a way that thousands were added to their numbers. However, by Acts 6, there was already conflict in the church over how to best care for the widows and others who were hungry and displaced. They prayerfully and skillfully devised a plan for mission to ensure the effective delivery of food, putting priority not only on preaching and teaching, but also on caring for the tangible needs of the community.

Summary of Biblical Evidence

It is obvious that God cares for the poor. He warns against exploiting the poor and expresses strong disdain towards those who ignore the needs of the poor and oppressed. He expects his followers to respond to the needs of those who are hungry, naked, imprisoned, or sick, and to provide justice for those who are vulnerable. Jesus directs his followers to care for the least and the lost. Through his teachings and example, Jesus provides instruction for Christ-followers to care for the "least of these," as

it is the same as caring for Jesus himself (Matt.25). In his sermon on the mount, Jesus teaches that his followers are salt and light, tasked with living out Godly values on earth in a way that brings glory and honor to God (Matt. 5:13-16). Jesus himself hung out with the poor and downtrodden of his day, cared for the sick, accepted the outcast, and provided healing and wholeness to those who accepted it. All of this was part of bringing about God's kingdom on earth, a kingdom where God reigns supreme and his values are lived out in real and tangible ways. These values include compassion, mercy, perfect justice, freedom for the poor and oppressed, righteousness, forgiveness, and love. All that Jesus did, from the beginning of his ministry through his death and resurrection, was a picture of God's kingdom being ushered in on earth. His followers are called to continue this mission of bring about God's kingdom into the here and now. Their work in mission, both local and global, is part of this involvement in God's great mission of redeeming and restoring his creation.

Historical Perspectives on Local Mission

The Church's History with Local Mission

In an effort to continue the mission of Jesus, the church has a long history of being involving in the social needs of the community. Tertullian, at the end of the second century, wrote about the values of the early Christ-followers, "If he likes, each puts in a small donation…These gifts are, as it were, piety's deposit fund. For they are not taken and spent on feasting and drinking-sessions, but to support and bury poor people, to supply the wants of needy boys and girls without parents, and of house-bound people…People say, how they love one another…" (Chester 17-18). Similar themes are

seen in the writings of Iraneous, Basil the Great, and Justin Martyr, all of whom describe the early church's care of those in need in the name of Jesus Christ (18).

There are two noteworthy examples of the early church living out its mission despite intense persecution. During several plagues in the second and third centuries, Christians were known to stay in the cities when everyone else was fleeing (Stark 160). They cared for the sick and dying, often at great risk to themselves. The Christ-like values of love and charity were translated into caring for thousands of dying people, saving many of them, and leading many to Jesus (160). Christian and non-Christian sources alike attest to the selfless nature of the early church during both smallpox and measle epidemics. In a letter to the Roman high priest, Galatia, in 362, Julian complained, "the impious Galileans support not only their poor, but ours as well" (167).

Gruber writes how the early church also was instrumental in caring for orphans in the Roman world. A third of all children in the Roman Empire died before age ten, and children were largely considered expendable. Infanticide was common and babies were killed if they were illegitimate, unhealthy, deformed, a burden to their family, or because of their gender (female babies were highly vulnerable) (2). Christians were known for fighting against infanticide by caring for the poor, forbidding its members to practice it, and by adopting and caring for abandoned children (4). They would wait at garbage dumps to collect deserted and unwanted children, and then care for and adopt them as their own (Van Voorst 290; Sprague 201).

Historians suggest that throughout the Middle Ages, the church was the primary source of help for those in need. In fact, the church, by then an institution in the government and all elements of society, had a paternalistic, albeit patronizing, obligation

to help the poor (Pillay). During this time, churches and monasteries established almshouses, shelters, hospices, and leprosaria (Brodman). However, there was little done to deal with the root causes of poverty and the general consensus was that some would be rich, some would be poor, and that the poor would be subject to the rich (Pillay). By the 1100s, some of the more affluent came alongside the church and established private charities to supplement the church's benevolence (Brodman).

The Methodist Church's History with Local Mission

The Methodist movement in England in the 1700s was an attempt to reform the established Anglican church and reclaim the church's original mission. Wesley continuously developed ministries to address the problems of the people in the communities in which he preached (Heitzenrater 34). From food distribution to small loans to literacy education, Wesley and the Methodist societies sought to alleviate suffering and help "the poor" live fuller and more productive lives (34). The expectation of the Methodist societies, as early as the mid-eighteenth century, was that members give a penny a week to the benevolence programs (32). There was an emphasis on creating programs that directly affected the poor in their communities, while also encouraging charitable and generous acts by individual Methodists (Pritchard 54-55). Indiscriminate donations to beggars on the street was discouraged, as the Methodists sought to use their scarce resources in the most efficient and effective manner (Carlton and Porter 1384).

As the Methodist Church became more centralized in the United States, it continued to live out the directive of caring for the community and welcoming those in need. In 1820, the Methodist Episcopal General Conference created the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church as well as two other benevolence groups to

attend to the needs of vulnerable populations within the United States and abroad (Karesh 39). Kreutziger discusses how by the mid-1800s, the Methodist Settlement Movement was staffing outreach programs to attend to the needs of the most marginalized residents of America's inner cities (81). Unlike other faith groups, the Methodist societies were compelled to address the needs of American society as a whole, reaching beyond their own church, to care for freed slaves, American Indians, and urban populations (Karesh 11).

Local Mission Work in the Twentieth Century

It was not until the New Deal of the 1930s and then the development of the federal entitlement programs of the 1960s that the federal government took such a large role in providing for the poor and became the primary agent of charity in the local community (Carlson-Thies, 59). Before that, churches and large non-profit organizations were the primary "caregivers" for those who were poor and struggling. In fact, Bjork describes how the church in the United States has played a crucial role in caring for those on the margins of society, including the hungry, the ill, the poor, the imprisoned, and the addicted (4). Although some Christian traditions have failed to address the needs of the marginalized, the church as a whole has often been the only institution to step up and provide assistance for those who are struggling, particularly in communities of color (Bjork 4; Drewery 34; Barnes 203-204; Chaves and Higgins 439; DiJulio 43).

It was in the midst of the Great Depression that then President Franklin D. Roosevelt advocated legislation that led to the Social Security System and early federal housing programs, essentially opening the door for the federal government to be the primary provider of care for the poor (Lewis and Trulear 347). These efforts expanded

during the 1960s with the creation of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Medicaid, and federal food assistance programs, all of which might collectively be termed "welfare." Despite some assistance from large non-profit agencies like Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services, and Jewish Federations, the care of the American poor became largely a product of the government and less and less connected to churches and other faith-based organizations (Carlson-Thies 59). Although the federal government gradually started pushing the care of its poorest citizens to the states during the 1970s and 1980s, the whole process became largely a secular task, one in which there was tremendous stigma with participation and little evidence of effectiveness (Lewis and Trulear 348; Marshall and Rector 3-5).

Certainly, the government was not solely to blame for the secularization of social welfare. Many church leaders point to an over-emphasis on personal piety in the latter half of the twentieth century, as churches turned inward and abdicated their social ministry to the government (Norris and Speers 108). Even the Methodist churches, long advocates for the poor and vulnerable in their communities, gradually abandoned their commitment to providing local mission in their communities as they established institutional churches away from city centers that focused more on programming for members (Karesh 54).

Change came with the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act in 1996, otherwise known as welfare reform, which included a section called the Charitable Choice Clause, encouraging churches to seek government funding to provide social services within their communities without abandoning their religious identity (Lewis and Trulear 349; Carlson-Thies 57-58; Garner 484). The push for more

involvement of churches in social welfare was a continuing theme in the George W. Bush administration with his support of faith-based initiatives. While the reduction in government funding created a more urgent need for assistance in many communities, the governmental changes seemed to create an atmosphere in which churches were seen as valuable and necessary partners in addressing difficult social problems (Bjork 7; Garner 486). By the early 2000s, there were already several research studies looking at the push to move social service programs away from state and local agencies to faith-based programs and religious congregations (Cnaan et al. 48).

Around the same time, there was renewed interest in social ministry among evangelical and mainline churches. Larger churches such as Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, Ebenezar Baptist Church in Atlanta, and Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago, among others, led the way in reclaiming the idea that the church should work to relieve poverty and other social problems because it is called to actively live out the faith, becoming a living illustration of God's hope and redemption (Norris and Speers 105).

Current State of Local Mission Work among American Congregations

Today, local mission work carried out by churches is increasingly common in the community. While very few churches reached out into their neighborhoods in the late 1970s, research indicates that by the mid-1990s and early 2000s, somewhere between sixty-five and ninety percent of churches provided some form of local mission in their communities (Bjork 7; Cnaan 51; Cnaan and Boddie 568-569; Dudley and Roozen 48). Chaves and Wineberg's more recent study did not find any significant increase or decrease in congregational involvement since that time, but did find that churches with active social

service programs may be more intensively involved with those programs now than they were in 1998 (350-351).

The kinds of programs and ministries offered vary greatly, and include food security programs, job placement, healthcare, education, to cash assistance (Dudley and Roozen 46). Chaves and Eagle's research across denominations indicates that food assistance is, by far, the most common way churches engage their communities (*National* 22). This confirms older studies, such as Cnaan and Boddie's research specifically focusing on Philadelphia churches, which found most were likely to offer food pantries (46.8%), but others also offered summer camps (38.2%), clothing closets (33.8%), soup kitchens (24.1%), tutoring (24%), prison ministries (21.2%), programs for gang members (20.9%), and many other services including health education, parenting skills, and job counseling (Cnaan and Boddie 570). Churches are more likely to provide short-term relief (i.e. food assistance, clothing, bus passes) than long-term assistance (i.e. mentoring, employment help, budgeting classes, drug and alcohol rehab) with food pantries being the most common social service activity among churches (*National* Chaves and Eagle 22; Chaves and Tsistsos 670). Chaves and Eagle found churches were more inclined to avoid the kinds of community work that involved long-term engagement and commitment with the needy (*National* 22).

Although churches of all sizes participate in local mission, larger churches with access to more resources tend to be more active in local mission and have developed more extensive partnerships and social delivery systems ("Congregations" Chaves and Eagle 4; Levanthal and Mears 63). Chaves and Eagle found that some fourteen percent of congregations (mostly larger churches) have a staff-person devoting at least a quarter of

their time to social services and/or community engagement (*National* 23). Additional work by Chaves and Eagle found that churches consisting of more educated, predominantly middle-class congregants are more likely to have active local mission programs than both more affluent and poorer churches ("Congregations" 4). On the other hand, Owens and Smith's research indicated that those churches located in poorer communities tend to do more local mission than those not located in poorer neighborhoods (328).

Financial Cost of Local Mission Work

Because church spending in general is not reported to any specific governing body, clear data on how much money is put toward social service spending through local mission is difficult to attain. Bane, Coffin, and Thiemann propose that congregations give approximately twenty percent of their income to social service provision (56). Other widespread surveys indicate this number may be closer to five percent (Henshaw). However, Chaves and Eagle point to the financial, in-kind, and staff-person contribution of churches to social services in their community as substantial (*National* 23). Several dated research studies (from the late 1990s and early 2000s) suggest that the 350,000 American congregations spent between ten and twenty-four billion dollars annually for the purposes of human services, health, and international programs (Biddle 98; Saxon-Harold et al. 5-6). Adjusted for inflation, this number would be much greater.

The amount of money spent on local mission by United Methodist Churches across the U.S. is unclear. All United Methodist Churches are required to pay apportionments, similar to tithes, to their Annual Conference and roughly half of these resources are invested in mission work around the world. For example, the denomination

invested almost seventy-eight million dollars in the World Service Fund (consisting of a variety of global mission programs) and the vast majority of that money came from apportionment money from local churches (General Council on Finance and Administration 6). However, data is not consistently collected on the amount of money spent by individual United Methodist Churches on local or global mission activities.

Value of Faith-based Mission vs. Secular Non-profit Programs

Despite declines in church attendance, the United States is still a faithful country. Brauer estimated that there were 384,000 congregations in the U.S. in 2012 (445). The pure number of people involved in faith communities, as well as their diverse memberships, organizing capabilities, and continuous presence in local communities, make churches a viable option for addressing social problems and delivering social services in the community (Miller and Engel 30). Others contend that the real value of local mission work through churches is the life transformation that can only occur through Christian faith (McClain 365).

Research on nonprofit faith-based organizations has demonstrated some advantages of faith-centered organizations over secular organizations. It is assumed that faith-based organizations are better at addressing religion's role in development, have broader social networks (including churches), have a higher level of moral authority within the community, and excel at conflict intervention and peace building (Nordstokke 189). Although these are strong points for a faith-based organization, Nordstokke's study also found their real strength is in intangible religious health assets, including belonging, trust, and the development of strong relationships (200).

Unfortunately, other research has yielded inconsistent information on the effectiveness of faith-based organizations, which can vary significantly in their theology and change models (Garner 484; Neff et al. 49; Wuthrow et al. 3).

Relief vs. Development in Local Mission Work

Historically, the church has operated as if all that mattered was doing something for God without much thought given to effectiveness. Churches have typically offered the kind of services that were feasible for them, recognizing they have limitations in finances, volunteer time, and their knowledge-base. The general assumption was that it was better to do something in the community than to do nothing. However, this has often resulted in well-intended but ineffective local mission, creating programs that are poorly managed, financially draining, culturally insensitive, or simply do not achieve their intended purpose or yield long-term change (Nelson 18). In an age of declining church attendance and the secularization of society, many churches have adopted haphazard local mission programs as a way to attempt to be relevant in their communities. Considering the importance of local mission work, the ability to impact the lives of individuals and communities, and the amount of financial resources being channeled into such programs, it is surprising that researchers have largely neglected this topic. Those working in the field as mission practitioners have been left to simply figure it out as they go along.

Then came the publication of two popular books – Corbett and Fikkert's *When Helping Hurts* (2009) Lupton's *Toxic Charity* (2011), both of which sent the local and global mission worlds into a tailspin. Corbett and Fikkert begin by laying a theological foundation, explaining that Jesus came to earth to proclaim and live out God's Kingdom

and put all things back into right relationship with God (32-33). The church is tasked in continuing in Jesus' mission of proclaiming and embodying the kingdom of God and living out his values of love, peace, justice, mercy, and righteousness (41). This includes going to the people and places that Jesus worked among: the poor, the sick, the oppressed, and the outcasts (41). However, Corbett and Fikkert are highly critical of how Western churches have responded to the needs of those living in poverty. The tendency is to treat the symptoms of poverty (lack of material resources) without treating the causes. When the church fails to recognize the multi-faceted, complex nature of poverty, then it tends to choose solutions that are superficial, over-simplified, and even harmful. The authors point to four relationships that are the building blocks of the life: relationship with God, relationship with self, relationship with others, and relationship with creation (55). When these are working well, human beings can live the abundant and full life that God intended. Poverty then is "the result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious and enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of shalom in all its meanings" (59). Thus, all are impoverished in some capacity, even those who are materially wealthy, either with a poverty of intimacy, of being, of community, or of stewardship (59). The authors contend that until people recognize their mutual brokenness, then their work with the poor has the potential to do more harm than good (61).

When most think about poverty alleviation, according to Corbett and Fikkert, the goal is not to give the poor more money and material possessions, but rather to move them toward reconciliation, "moving them closer to glorifying God by living in right relationship with God, with self, with others, and with the rest of creation" (74).

Defining poverty alleviation as the reconciliation should then shape the kinds of missions and ministries a church utilizes when working in its community. The authors strongly suggest that churches evaluate each situation and ask whether it calls for relief, rehabilitation, or development. Relief is the provision of emergency aid like food or clothing to reduce immediate suffering (100). Rehabilitation involves working with people to restore their lives, families, and communities to the pre-crisis condition (100). Finally, development is an on-going process that moves everyone involved, both helper and participant, into right relationship with God, self, others, and creation (100). Unfortunately, most churches focus almost exclusively on relief, even when situations clearly demand rehabilitation or development. Doing this actually harms individuals by creating dependency and lack of initiative. Empowering individuals by encouraging their participation in the solution, focusing on their assets rather than deficits, and not doing what they can do for themselves is essential for real transformation to occur (107-114).

Lupton's work, drawing from his own experience working in urban ministries, is even more critical of both the global and local mission work done by American churches. He points out that the billions of dollars being spent on poverty-alleviation programs have only served to create a permanent underclass, harm family structures, and erode work ethic (3-5).

Lupton goes on to say that most church mission work, including short-term mission trips, one-directional giving, and other short-sided mission projects, are more about meeting the needs of the church or organization rather than what is best for the poor people with whom they work. Although well-intentioned, these efforts may actually weaken those being served, build unhealthy relationships, undermine a good work ethic,

and create dependency (16). To combat this "toxic charity," Lupton encourages redirecting traditional mission models into systems of real exchange, which bring parity to relationships between people of unequal power (37-38). For instance, instead of a traditional food pantry in which members of a middle-class church give food away to poor people in their community, Lupton suggests establishing a food co-op in which people pay something to receive food, equalizing the relationship and preserving dignity. Other examples include a thrift store instead of a free clothes closet or a Christmas store, with reduced prices, rather than angel tree programs where gifts are purchased by more affluent people and given to poor children. Programs should empower people and encourage healthy relationships built on trust rather than need (60).

Lupton also recommends that church mission programs narrow their focus and concentrate their time and resources on specific places and issues that are a good fit for the talents in their congregations (77). The church should think in terms of long-term investment. In doing so, churches have a better chance of affecting lasting change than with a short-term mission project or trip. Lupton insists that mission programs have focused for too long on what is easy and what makes the participants feel good, rather than what is in the best interests of the people they serve. In an effort to reduce toxic charitable practices, Lupton encourages the following Oath for Compassionate Service for all who engage in service work. These principles are also a great synopsis of his book as a whole:

- "Never do for the poor what they have (or could have) the capacity to do for themselves.
- Limit one-way giving to emergency situations.

- Strive to empower the poor through employment, lending, and investing, using grants sparingly to reinforce achievements.
- Subordinate self-interests to the needs of those being served.
- Listen closely to those you seek to help, especially to what is not being said-unspoken feelings may contain essential clues to effective service.
- Above all, do no harm" (128).

Although these two books are not scholarly texts, the limited scholarly work on the healthy mission strategies supports their conclusions. Research suggests how churches do community and other mission work is just as important as doing it. In fact, in many cases, churches inadvertently create unhealthy power relationships between the giver of the service and the recipient while offering relief-only services that require nothing of the participant (McQuilkin 57, Keidel 48-49). Dichter calls helping others "a very tricky business" as many types of programs and ministries tend to discourage self-help (153).

As reported earlier in the literature review, most American churches clearly offer relief-based services whether they are warranted or not. The 2010 National Survey of Congregations indicated that of the 11,077 American congregations surveyed, up to seventy five percent engaged in some kind of local mission work and the vast majority was relief-based, such as soup kitchens and grants of direct cash assistance. (Faith Communities Today 3). Chaves found that only ten percent of churches participate in local mission that has sustained involvement with the people they serve (678).

Poverty Alleviation

As illustrated by Corbett and Fikkert in *When Helping Hurts*, poverty is much more than a lack of material resources. If poverty were simply a lack of money, it would be much simpler to address. But poverty, both in the U.S. and globally, is complex. A 2011 survey of those living in poverty in Rwanda indicated that poverty could be defined in a variety of ways (Greer 3). According to the survey:

1. "Poverty is an empty heart.
2. Not knowing your abilities and strengths.
3. Not being able to make progress.
4. Isolation.
5. No hope or belief in yourself. Knowing you can't take care of your family.
6. Broken relationships.
7. Not knowing God.
8. Not having basic things to eat. Not having money.
9. Poverty is a consequence of not sharing.
10. Lack of good thoughts" (3).

Ehlig and Payne's text, *What Every Church Member Should Know About Poverty,* based on Ruby Payne's extensive research and work with those living in poverty in the United States, insists that churches cannot continue to address poverty by focusing on financial resources only (78). The authors contend that poverty, even in the US, is more dependent on a lack of other resources: emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, relationships and role models, and knowledge of the hidden rules of middle-class society (79).

The multidimensional elements to poverty indicate that there is no easy solution.

In fact, any effective poverty alleviation strategy will have to tackle root causes, and address the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of the issue. As Greer contends, "Obedience to the Biblical command to clothes the naked and to give food to the hungry is not easy. Requiring us to go beyond surface needs – the symptoms of poverty – an effective response demands a longer-term commitment" (6).

One place to start is to distinguish between different kinds of mission activities that are typically employed in addressing poverty and alleviating human suffering. The Neighborhood Transformation for Global CHE Network provides workshops for churches to be more effective in addressing need in their community. They separate mission and ministry activities into three categories: relief, betterment, and development. Relief would include providing assistance for people without addressing long-term needs. This kind of giving is one-directional and is usually given by an outsider to the person needing help with no expectation of life change (Collaborative for Neighborhood Transformation). Because relief-based mission does not affect life change and can foster dependency, they strongly urge that this type of giving be short-term and limited. Betterment, on the other hand, is defined as coming alongside someone in need to provide coaching and create caring environments that offer respite and positive experiences (Collaborative for Neighborhood Transformation). This would be mission with the person in need and some limited life change may come about, such as in a youth tutoring project. Finally, development (also called empowerment or multiplication) focuses on increasing skills, knowledge, and abilities of the person in need in a way that leads to long-term transformation (Collaborative for Neighborhood Transformation).

Development addresses root causes of need and requires ownership and personal investment from the person requesting help.

Effective Strategies for Poverty Alleviation

Although not specifically focused on local mission, there are several examples of "nontoxic" poverty alleviation strategies that build healthy relationships, empower participants, and focus on development over relief. One of those areas is international microfinance. Both *When Helping Hurts* and *Toxic Charity* touch on the positive attributes of microfinance around the world as one possible model for how to do mission right (Corbett and Fikkert 195-196; Lupton 18). In *From Dependence to Dignity: How to Alleviate Poverty Through Church-Centered Microfinance,* Fikkert and Mask build the case that many efforts to alleviate poverty in the Majority World have ignored the strengths of the people and churches already there, created dependency on foreign dollars, and undermined the dignity of the people (20). Moyo also makes this point in *Dead Aid,* emphasizing that the more relief given to Africa, the worse the social and economic situation as incentive has been thwarted and dependency on foreigners increased (46). Microfinance, on the other hand, lends small amounts of money to poor people to start their own microenterprises. The income of the borrower increases as their business expands; the loan is then repaid, and the money can be lent out to another individual who seeks to start their own microenterprise. Microfinance loans have a very high repayment rate (around 97%) and have become quite popular, attracting over 204 million borrowers around the world (Fikkert and Mask 55). Although not a panacea for global poverty, certain elements of the microfinance model are worth trying to replicate in other areas. These include building on the assets of the poor, empowering borrowers

to use their own ingenuity and initiative, creating ownership in poor communities as they monitor loan recipients and payments, and focusing on long-term, sustainable investment. Although microfinance exists in the U.S., it has had limited success due to American banking regulations, the difficulty in starting a successful small business, and the lack of social pressure to pay back loans in a group lending model (Ball 11-12).

Another area of healthy, effective mission has been in international child development programs that seek to change lives and communities holistically in the name of Jesus Christ. Two such examples of these are World Vision and Compassion International. Both organizations have successfully used child sponsorships to alleviate poverty in individuals, families, and communities. Furthermore, services and programming are run through the local church, as they seek to transform the whole person, physical, emotional, and spiritual. Wydick, Glewwe, and Rutledge's study found that adults who were sponsored as children were more likely to have gone further in school and have formal employment (19-20). Studies of children sponsored through Compassion International in both Guatemala and Indonesia also indicate increased positive outcomes for not just the child but the family as a whole (Allen 80; Carrillo 14). However, these studies may have failed to assess the real value of such programs, the holistic model that incorporates not just material and educational improvement, but spiritual transformation. Bryant Myers in *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development,* writes:

> The fulcrum for transformational change is no longer transferring resources or building capacity or increasing access, agency, and choices, as important as these things are. These are, all means, after all. These things count only if they take

> place in a way that allows the poor to recover their true identity and discover the vocation God intends for them (179).

Myers contends that a sustainable model for transformation development always points to the Kingdom of God (202). The goal is changed people and changed relationships (as broken, unjust relationships are central in poverty). The development process, however, must belong to the people, focus on relationships, promote truth, justice, and righteousness, and always do no harm (202).

Zoe Ministries is an interesting example of healthy mission because as an organization, they totally changed their helping model from relief activities to solely empowerment. Zoe works with very vulnerable or orphaned children in five different African countries and India. The orphan crisis in Africa alone is quite overwhelming, with 20 to 30 percent of all children in sub-Saharan African living as orphans by 2010 (Warner and Warner 44). Zoe recognized that their relief activities were making little to no long-term difference in the lives of the children they helped. Thus, they switched to a model totally built around the concept of empowerment. Zoe works under the principle that these children already have the ability to do for themselves and can be empowered to never need charity again (wearezoe.org). They have no physical structures, such as orphanages or child care facilities, have very few staff people to encourage the children to be leaders and make their own decisions, and they do not distribute food (80-81). Rather, they offer children training in farming and animal husbandry, offer grants for small businesses and home repair, help reduce social isolation, address hygiene and medical issues, provide spiritual support, and generally work to address the root causes of destitute poverty rather than the symptoms. As a result, the young people who work with

Zoe have high rates of success. They not only make enough money to support themselves and their families but also become leaders and mentors in their community.

One other area of "nontoxic," effective mission has been in asset based community development. Unlike the previous examples, asset based community development (ABCD) has been accomplished in the United States as well as internationally. The traditional approach to community development focused on delivering care and services to deal with a community's deficits and needs (Duncan 22). ABCD, on the other hand, focuses on assets and strengths already in existence in the community (22). According to the ABCD Institute at Northwestern University, ABCD is a community development strategy in which the community themselves drive the process by identifying and mobilizing existing (but sometimes unnoticed) assets (Collaborative). The basis of ABCD is active participation on the part of residents and empowerment. Some of their guiding principles include:

- Everyone Has Gifts/Assets
- Relationships Build a Community
- Citizens are at the center as they actively engage/advise rather than simply receive services (as in traditional model)
- Leaders involve others as active members of the community and they follow based on trust, influence, and relationship
- People always care about something (apathy is a symptom that you didn't listen well enough)
- Motivation to act must be identified
- Asking and inviting are key community-building actions

- Asking questions rather than giving answers invites stronger participation
- A citizen-centered "inside-out" organization is central to community engagement (where local people control the organization and set the organization's agenda)
- Institutions have reached their problem-solving limit
- Institutions serve as servants (Collaborative)

ABCD projects have a proven track record. Successful ABCDs in Tucson, AR, and Edmonton, Canada, have been written about recently in the literature (Duncan 23; Hopes et al. 1-21). The Polis Institute, located in Orlando, FL, uses ABCD in their mission of designing solutions to social problems in neighborhoods, communities, workplaces, or cities. In their research brief, *Seeking the Welfare of the City,* the Polis Institute did an extensive evaluation of the Greater Orlando area. They found that there are one hundred distressed neighborhoods in Orlando, based on variables related to income, home ownership, crime statistics, family structure, and education. Their conclusion was that the best way to alleviate distress in these neighborhoods is through ABCD (Polis Institute).

The Polis Institute adds one important element to their research, however, that is not found in the work done at Northwestern. Polis contends that the Christian church has the unique ability to play a central role in ABCD, as it seeks to care for the welfare of the city and respond to the needs of those in need in the name of Jesus (Jer. 29:7 and Matt. 25). They posit that relief-based services are ineffective and run counter to community development and instead encourage churches to focus their resources on discovering and building upon the strengths and assets of their community as a means of mission and

outreach (Polis Institute). Unlike relief ministries, community development values self-sufficiency and "dignified interdependent relationships" that build up communities (Polis Institute). Polis is currently partnered with St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Orlando to use ABCD in a clearly defined neighborhood not far from the church, East Winter Garden. St. Luke's has redirected all their mission efforts to focus completely on this extensive local mission effort.

One other highly effective mission model, designed to be used on a local/community level, is Circles USA. Through trainings and weekly meetings, participants (primarily individuals living in poverty) build friendships and mentoring relationships with middle-income and high-income volunteers. There are long-term commitments to training and relationship-building on both sides as mentors guide participants in finding better jobs, managing credit card debt, negotiating a lease, or learning other ways of gaining financial stability (Circles USA Impact Report). These relationships also provide emotional support as participants hit road blocks. Results indicate that those who stay with the program achieve a thirty-nine percent increase in income after six months and a seventy-five percent increase after eighteen months (Circles USA Impact Report). Circles may be most effective used in conjunction with other models, such as Asset-Based Community Development.

Research Design Literature

This is a mixed method research project that includes primarily qualitative data. The data was collected using an online questionnaire (with both closed and open-ended questions) and individual interviews. In Rovai, Baker, and Ponton, the authors describe qualitative research as primarily concerned with process, meaning, and greater

understanding (21). Qualitative studies are usually exploratory, seeking in-depth understanding of a particular concept, idea, or problem, and the researcher is the "primary instrument" for collecting data and information (21-22). Qualitative studies do not use statistical procedures for analysis but rather analyze reoccurring themes in the textual data. Examples of qualitative research methods include questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and field observations (22).

Questionnaires have been shown to be an effective, efficient way to collect qualitative data and an important research tool (Patten 1; Oppenheim 100). While questionnaires' main purpose is to measure a specific idea or concept, they are to be differentiated from less flexible scales and tests (Oppenheim 100). The main disadvantage to questionnaires is low response rates, but the benefits include low cost, avoidance of interviewer bias, and the ability to reach a large number of people (102). With the advent of inexpensive, on-line questionnaires, the desirability of questionnaires has increased. Additionally, questionnaires typically provide data that is easy to analyze and when questions are specific and well-designed, can yield very useful data (Patten 9-20). As Creswell describes, the quality of the answer is closely linked to the quality of the question (389). Thus, language must be clear and understandable to the reader and the researcher must keep questions short. Use single, focused questions rather than addressing multiple ideas in the same question and avoid negatively worded phrases or words or expressions that could be considered leading (389).

The online questionnaires were followed by a series of in-depth individual interviews with pastors and mission practitioners from small, mid-sized, and large United Methodist Churches. Qualitative interviews generally fall into three categories:

structured, semi-structured, and unstructured (Gill et al. 291). The questionnaires in this research were semi-structured, meaning there were several main questions to help define the topic to be explored, but there was still enough flexibility to delve into a particular question in more detail (291). This allows for the discovery of information that both the researcher and participant may not have initially considered (291). Individual interviews have several advantages, including a rapport between research and participants, the ability to ask follow-up questions, the ability to clarify questions for participants to gain a deeper understanding, the need for fewer participants, and the ability to gain very insightful, rich data (Steber). However, individual interviews can be time-consuming, particularly the textual analysis, and require a skilled interviewer, and participants have to be carefully selected to avoid bias (Steber).

Summary of Literature

Scripture provides much instruction to care for the poor. Jesus himself directs his followers to care for the least and the lost (Matt. 25). In his sermon on the mount, Jesus teaches that his followers are salt and light, tasked with living out Godly values on earth in a way that brings glory and honor to God (Matt. 5:13-16). Jesus was intentional about building relationships with those whom the rest of society rejected, he loved the poor, cared for the sick, accepted the outcast, and provided healing and wholeness to those who accepted it. All of this was part of bringing about God's kingdom on earth, a kingdom where God reigns supreme and his values are lived out in real and tangible ways. Afterall, God is a God of mission (Missio Dei) and he wants his creation to experience healing, wholeness, and redemption. Christ-followers are called to continue God's mission in order to bring more of his kingdom into the here and now.

The church is the main vessel through which God's mission is accomplished. This was a mission that was taken very seriously by the early church. Early church fathers wrote about the necessity of caring for the poor and outcast. Despite intense persecution, the earliest churches went to great lengths to care for those that the rest of society rejected, including the very ill and abandoned children. The first Methodists did likewise. Wesley continuously developed ministries to address the problems of the people in the communities where he preached (Heitzenrater 34). From food distribution to small loans to literacy education, Wesley and the Methodist societies sought to alleviate suffering and help "the poor" live fuller and more productive lives (34).

Today, many churches try very hard to care for those in need with U.S. church mission spending measuring in the billions of dollars. While this money is being channeled into food pantries, clothes closets, educational programs, and many other noble endeavors, there is little information about whether these programs and ministries are actually effective and accomplish what they seek to do. Robert Lupton, the author of the popular book *Toxic Charity*, contends that church programs tend not to be helpful and may actually be harming people by increasing dependency, taking away dignity, and promoting a sense of entitlement (Lupton 1-10, 127-146). He strongly advises churches and other nonprofits to move away from one-directional giving and increase programs that involve rehabilitation and development. Likewise, Corbett and Fikkert (175) encourage churches to focus on employment, financial management, and wealth accumulation because they help people support their families and see the fruit of their own labor rather than relying on the benevolence of others. They stress that most Americans are capable of engaging in a process to improve their lives (175).

The literature also supports this. Research suggests how churches do community and other mission work is just as important as doing it. In fact, in many cases, churches inadvertently create unhealthy power relationships between the giver of the service and the recipient of it when offering relief-only services that require nothing of the participant (McQuilkin 57, Keidel 48-49). Dichter calls helping others "a very tricky business" as many types of programs and ministries tend to discourage self-help (153).

The mantra seems to be to just get out and do something in the community, with little emphasis on what and how. Yet, experts acknowledge that distinguishing between relief and development is critical in order to avoid dependency in the needy and affect long-term life change. Some development-oriented mission programs working in other countries, such as Zoe, offer good insight into developing healthier models for local mission. Research is needed to guide pastors and mission practitioners to develop local mission strategies that are truly effective, in that they seek to empower people to live full and productive lives in a way that promotes dignity and indicates true betterment.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The purpose of this project was to develop a set of best practices for local mission to equip churches to develop healthy and effective mission programs in their communities. This chapter addresses the specific research methodology used for the project. It addresses the nature and purpose of the project, explores how the measurement tools address each research question, discusses specifics regarding the measurement tools (in this case an online questionnaire and an individual interview guide), provides a description of participants, and discusses various ethical considerations. Finally, it covers how data will be collected and analyzed.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project was to identify a set of best practices for local mission work among different sized United Methodist Churches through on-line questionnaires and individual interviews with mission practitioners and pastors. There was a particular emphasis on whether churches are moving away from relief-based services toward rehabilitation and development. The goal was for this to be a project with immediate practical application so that churches can better serve those who are needy and marginalized and be better stewards of their scarce resources.

Research Questions

Research Question #1: **Does evidence suggest that mission practitioners are taking steps to move from relief-based to development-based local mission as appropriate?**

This question was addressed by the on-line questionnaire in questions numbered five through seventeen which look specifically at the kinds of local mission a church participates in, the amount of resources invested in relief-based and development-based mission, how these missions are evaluated, and what changes have or will occur. In the individual interviews, questions four through seventeen are intended to address in more detail whether or not churches are moving from relief-based to development-based mission as appropriate.

Research Question #2: **What evaluative tools are used by mission practitioners to determine the effectiveness of their relief-based programs and their development programs?**

In the questionnaire, questions ten and fifteen address if and how churches are evaluating their local mission programs. In the interview guide, questions ten and fourteen address if and how churches have evaluated their relief-based and development-based mission work. The individual interview was intended to get more specifics about what kinds of evaluative tools were used.

Research Question #3: Under what conditions are relief-based programs useful or effective? Under what conditions are development-based programs effective?

In the questionnaire, questions ten, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, twenty-four, twenty-five, and twenty-six address if and how churches are evaluating their local mission programs and the result. In the interview guide, questions ten, fourteen, sixteen, and seventeen address if and how churches have evaluated their relief-based and development-based mission work. The individual interview was intended to get in-depth information about the results of the evaluation in each type of mission work.

Research Questions #4: Based on the attributes of effective local mission work (as determined by the above questions and the literature review), what are the best practices for local mission work?

In the on-line questionnaire, questions ten, fifteen, sixteen through twenty-one, and twenty-three through twenty-six were intended to specifically address this question. In the individual interview guide, questions ten, fourteen, and fifteen through nineteen all informed the answer to this research question.

Ministry Context(s)

This researcher is the executive minister at a large United Methodist Church in Brandon, Florida, just outside Tampa. All the participants were also part of a United Methodist Church, either as a mission director or a pastor. The United Methodist Church has a long history of working in their community and participating in both local and foreign mission work. Most United Methodist Conferences have departments dedicated to missional engagement and missions is emphasized on the regional and global level as well. There are vast differences between individual local churches in the kinds of mission they support and engage in. In general, larger congregations have more resources, both financial and human, at their disposal to hire missions staff people and invest the time, energy, and money it takes to move from relief to development-based mission. For that reason, much of this study focuses on larger United Methodist Churches. Smaller churches are also doing effective mission in their communities. The individual interviews were an attempt to explore local mission work at the small, mid-sized, and large church level, as all the interviewees were from churches recognized by the Florida Conference of the UMC as having noticeably healthy, effective local mission work.

Participants

Criteria for Selection

The participants were chosen based on their ability answer the research questions regarding healthy and effective local mission. All the participants were considered highly knowledgeable in the area of local mission work. For those who participated in the on-line questionnaire, this was demonstrated by their involvement in the UMC Large Church Mission Connection, a networking group of forty-seven mission pastors and practitioners from United Methodist Churches with at least 1000 or more in weekly attendance. This group meets annually to discuss best mission practices and share what they have learned over the course of the year. They are considered to be experts in their field.

Those who participated in the individual interviews were identified by the Florida Conference of the UMC Missional Engagement Office as pastors and mission practitioners at churches who are doing local mission very well. These are churches who have been noticed by the conference as being particularly aware of healthy mission practices and being intentional in how they engage their community.

Description of Participants

All the participants in the on-line questionnaire were members of the United Methodist Large Church Mission Connection. This group of forty-seven consists of both men and women employed by large United Methodist Churches (with 1000 or more in weekly attendance) from around the United States. Members of this group all have at least a Bachelor's degree, and many have Master's degrees in Social Work, Christian Leadership, or another related field. This group is a mix of ordained United Methodist clergy and lay professionals. Of those who completed the survey, most were mission directors (lay

personnel) and four were ordained clergy. Practitioners from around the U.S. completed the study: four from the Florida Conference, two from the Southeast Region (other than Florida), one from the North Central Region, and four from the South Central Region. All identified themselves as working for a church in either a suburban or an urban area.

Participants in the individual interviews were identified by the United Methodist Church Florida Conference Missional Engagement office as pastors or mission practitioners at churches in the Florida Conference that have exceptional local mission programs. Two were from small United Methodist Churches; two were from mid-sized churches, and four were from larger churches. The two participants from small churches were both clergy. Five were paid mission directors (lay people), and one was a full-time volunteer mission director. All were women except for one male clergy in the small church category. The eight participants were from varied geographical areas in the state of Florida.

Ethical Considerations

An informed consent form was included as part of the online survey. Participants were asked to answer yes to having read it. It stated that answering yes and continuing on meant that the participant had given consent to the terms of the questionnaire. For those who participated in individual interviews, an informed consent form had to be read, signed, and dated before the interview could begin. Informed consent forms for both the questionnaire and interview can be found in Appendix C.

Confidentiality was ensured by using Survey Monkey for the online questionnaires. Survey Monkey's privacy policy is available on their website, https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/legal/privacy-policy/. While basic demographic information was gathered (position in church, region of country, setting of church), there

was no identifying information collected from the participant. Additionally, the data was coded by Survey Monkey and only presented in aggregate form.

For the individual interviews, the researcher assigned each interviewee a code and was the only one with personal knowledge of the participants. All interview data from that point forward was identified with the code rather than a name to ensure confidentiality. It was also stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's laptop.

Instrumentation

The first portion of this project used an online questionnaire to gather data about local mission work from participants in the UMC Large Church Mission Connection. The online questionnaire consisted of twenty-six closed and open-ended questions (see Appendix A). For the most part, the questions moved from general demographic information to more specific questions about different kinds of local mission, resources allocated, and evaluation.

In the online questionnaire, question one is a general question asking participants if they agree to complete the survey. Next, questions two through four ask for basic demographic information such as position in church, geographic region, and church setting. Question five asks how much is spent overall in local mission work. This question is intended to give an overall picture of how invested a church is in local mission. Question six asks the participant to choose a category to describe the majority of their local mission work to specify if it is mainly relief-focused, development-focused, or a mix of the two. This question also helps to define these terms which are used throughout the rest of the questionnaire.

Questions seven through ten gather data specific to relief-based local mission while questions eleven through fourteen focus on development-based local mission. These questions are intended to look at where most of the church's mission resources are being directed and how they are evaluating their mission programs. These questions also show whether or not a church has shifted more emphasis toward development-based local mission. Question fifteen was another question designed to see where a church's main focus is in local mission. Typically, a church will be most proud of the local mission focus that they consider to be most effective or fruitful. Finally, question sixteen offers insight into whether or not a church is looking to make changes to their mission programs and why.

Question seventeen asks about specific best practices that they may use when deciding upon how to engage in local mission. This gives insight into how much thought and discernment has been invested in their local mission planning and visioning. Questions eighteen through twenty-one look at how deep they have gone in evaluating the needs of their community and how they have assessed those needs. Questions twenty-two and twenty-three deal with volunteer training, and twenty-four and twenty-five evaluate the decision-making process. The final question, number twenty-six, asks if there is any additional information they would like to share.

The individual interview guide follows a similar pattern with a similar line of questioning (see Appendix B), moving from demographic and descriptive questions to more specific and detailed questions regarding how they make decisions regarding their local mission programs. In the interview guide, questions one and two address the participant's position in the church and has them describe their church, specifically

regarding its setting, budget, and the need of the local community. Questions three and four address local mission in general, including total amount of resources allocated and a general overview of their local mission work. Question five asks about the decision-making process, specifically how local mission decisions are made and by whom. Question six addresses how engaged they are with partners in their community. Questions seven through ten address relief-based mission work, including kinds of relief-based activities a church is engaged in, the amount of resources allocated toward it, and evaluation of those programs. Questions eleven through fourteen do the same for development-based local mission, addressing resource allocation, the specific kinds of activities engaged in, and how they are evaluated. Question fifteen deals with volunteer training while question sixteen asks about the local mission project or initiative they are most proud of and why with probes that address its efficacy and how that activity is bearing fruit. Question seventeen addresses changes to mission work in the last year with a follow-up probe about changes over the last five years. Question eighteen asks about what best practices they are currently using to determine the structure and composition of their local missions program. Finally, question nineteen asks if they have anything additional to share.

Expert Review

Before the instruments were designed, this researcher met with officials at the Florida Conference of the UMC Missional Engagement Office to discuss the project. Initially, the project was going to rely on surveys of all Florida Conference churches and pastors regarding the topic of healthy local mission. Based on their past experience with surveys, the Conference officials were concerned with the likelihood of low response

rates. Their suggestion was to use selective individual interviews in order to get better participation and gather richer data. The Missional Engagement Office provided a list of churches from small to large-sized across the Florida Conference who are known for their involvement in healthy local mission.

Because this study has as its focus the development of a set of best practices for local mission, Ellen Marmon, of Asbury Theological Seminary's Doctorate of Ministry program, suggested focusing solely on participants who have advanced knowledge in this particular field. Thus, the UMC Large Church Mission Connection was chosen as the source of participants for the online questionnaire. Those who participate in this group are all employed by large United Methodist Churches in the area of mission and they are largely considered to be experts in their field. The individual interview participants were chosen from the list provided by the Florida Conference Missional Engagement office, as these were all pastors and mission practitioners from churches that were noted as being intentional about the ways they participate in local mission.

Because both the on-line questionnaire and the individual interview guide were designed by the researcher, they were sent for expert review to Lynette Fields, Executive Director of Community Engagement at St. Luke's UMC in Orlando, Florida, and Molly McEntire, Mission Training and Volunteer Coordinator for the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church. Based on their input, several additional questions were added to both the online questionnaire and the interview guide.

Reliability and Validity of Project Design

Leung contends that reliability in qualitative research is largely connected to consistency (324). That is, whether the same or similar results will be gathered if the

study were to be replicated. Of course, this is problematic when studying human behavior, as there can be much variation. Because of this, Cypress suggests that a better way of thinking about reliability in qualitative studies is the consistency and care applied to research practices and procedures in the study (256). In the first part of this study, reliability was increased because it used an online questionnaire. Each participant received the same questionnaire, distributed in exactly the same way. For the individual interviews, the researcher was very careful to use the same interview protocol with each participant. While some participants are inclined to talk more and get off task, the researcher was careful to redirect and stay on topic.

Validity can also be tricky in qualitative research. According to Cypress, the basics of research validity are grounded in quantitative principles and whether the instrument measures what it is intended to measure (256). She contends that in qualitative research, it may be more helpful to think of validity in terms of quality, rigor, and trustworthiness (257). This researcher made every attempt to use the existing research, her own experience in the field, and feedback from expert reviewers to create measurement tools that would glean information that actually answers the research questions. Furthermore, the participants, both for the online questionnaires and the individual interviews, were carefully selected based on their expertise in the field of mission so that the data that was gathered would be quality, trustworthy data.

Data Collection

This project is a pre-intervention research study which used mixed methodology, questionnaires and individual interviews. Because this is an area in which little research has been done, a pre-intervention study design allows the researcher to describe the

overall situation and try to understand what is happening. It is a form of qualitative research, which uses the researcher as the main mode of data collection and analysis and seeks to interpret and make sense of lived experience (Sensing 57). The rationale behind qualitative research is to gain greater levels of meaning and understanding, not to predict outcomes (Rovai et al. 21). Qualitative methods, particularly interviews, are considered more effective at providing deeper understanding of social phenomena than could be gathered using purely quantitative methods (Gill et al. 292).

The first portion of this study consisted of online questionnaires. The questionnaire was a mix of closed and open-ended questions that were developed based on information gleaned from the literature review and the researcher's own experience in the field. It was then reviewed by experts and modified slightly to incorporate their feedback. Next, the questions were entered into Survey Monkey in order for the questionnaire to be distributed to the UMC Large Church Mission Connection group via email. Follow-up emails were also sent through Survey Monkey.

The second portion of the research consisted of eight individual interviews. The individual interview guide was developed based on the literature review, the researcher's own experience in the field, and feedback from the expert reviewers. Based on the list of churches provided by the Office of Missional Engagement of the Florida Conference of the UMC, individual interview participants (pastors or mission practitioners in those churches) were contacted via email and telephone by the researcher. The purpose of the project was explained in detail, and participants were told that their participation would be completely voluntary. Interview dates and times were set up for those who agreed to participate. Because the pastors and mission practitioners live throughout the state of

Florida, every effort was made to conduct the interviews at Annual Conference, which is required attendance for all pastors throughout the conference and takes place in Central Florida. When that was not possible, the researcher drove to the church location of the participant. Individual interviews were recorded on the researcher's cell phone and then transferred to her laptop to be transcribed.

Data Analysis

The online questionnaires were analyzed differently depending on the nature of the question. For instance, quantitative questions were simply analyzed using the tools available in Survey Monkey. This descriptive data was tallied and reported using both raw data and percentages.

Open-ended questions that provided a space for the participant to write out an answer yielded qualitative data and were analyzed using inductive thematic analysis. Textual data was read multiple times and themes and patterns that emerged were recorded. Once a list of themes was generated, the data was coded based on those themes.

All individual interviews were transcribed using an app called Otter. The codes generated from the online questionnaire provided a place for the researcher to start in thematically analyzing the interviews as well. In the case of the interviews, each transcript was read at least three times. Codes were applied to pieces of textual data that corresponded to that theme. After all the transcripts were read and coded, any new themes that emerged in the individual interviews were added to the list. The transcripts were then reread and coded with the additional themes.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

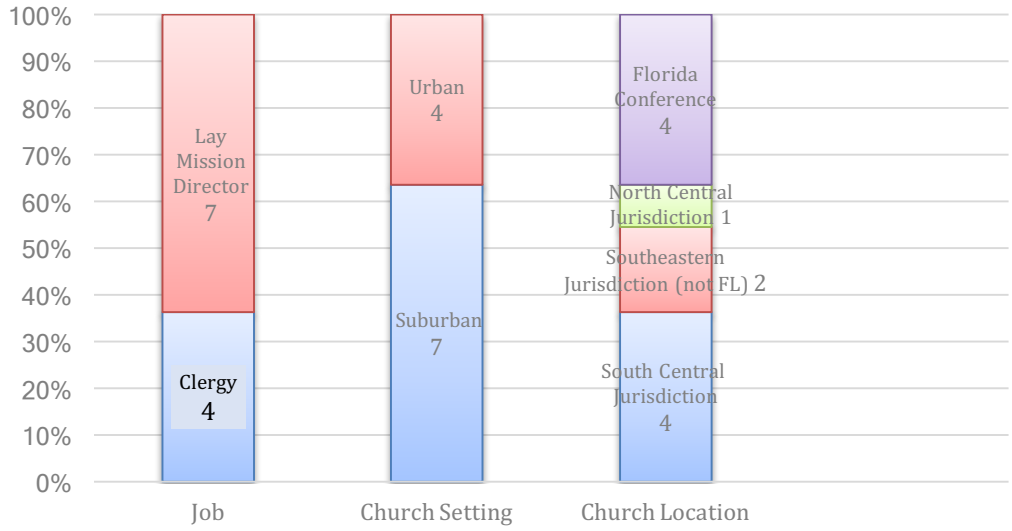
The purpose of this research project was to develop a set of best practices to help pastors and mission practitioners create effective, healthy local mission programs and strategies. There is currently very little in the literature to guide practice. This chapter begins with a detailed description of the participants. Then, there is an extensive description of the evidence, broken down by research question and then source of data (either online questionnaire or individual interview). Main themes are identified and discussed. Finally, there is summary of major findings.

Participants

An email with the link to the online questionnaire on Survey Monkey was sent to forty-seven members of the UMC Large Church Mission Connection, a networking group of mission pastors and practitioners who are employed by United Methodist churches with average worship attendance of 1000 or more from across the United States. The first question of the online questionnaire included an informed consent form, stating that participation was voluntary. Seventeen of the forty-seven members started the questionnaire by answering the informed consent question as a yes or no, and eleven chose to complete the entirety of the questionnaire, for a response rate of 23.4%. Figure 4.1 provides an illustration of participant characteristics. Of those who completed the questionnaire, four were mission pastors or clergy and seven were mission directors (lay people). Four (36.36%) were located in the Florida Conference of the UMC and another two (18.18%) were in the Southeastern Jurisdiction (not in Florida). One (9.09%) was

located in the North Central Jurisdiction, and four (36.36%) were in the South Central Jurisdiction. Of the participants, seven (63.64%) described their church setting as suburban and four (36.36%) described their setting as urban.

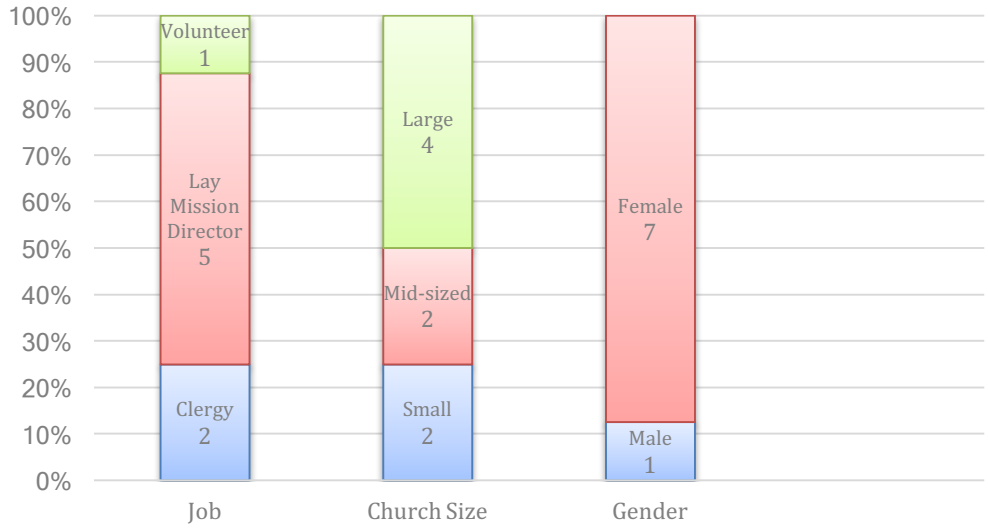
Figure 4.1 Description of Participants in Online Questionnaires



In addition, eight individual interviews were conducted with pastors and mission practitioners from across the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church. Figure 4.2 describes the characteristics of those who were interviewed. All were from churches recommended to this researcher by the Missional Engagement Office of the Florida Conference as having highly effective mission programs. Two of the participants were from small churches, two were from mid-sized churches, and four were from large churches. Of these eight participants, two were UMC clergy, both from small churches, five were paid mission directors (lay people), and one was a full-time volunteer mission director. There was one male clergy from a small church, and the rest were women. They represented churches from across the state of Florida, but all were in suburban or urban

settings. All signed an informed consent prior to the interview, participated voluntarily, and appeared to be in satisfactory mental and physical states of health.

Figure 4.2 Description of Individual Interview Participants



Description of Evidence

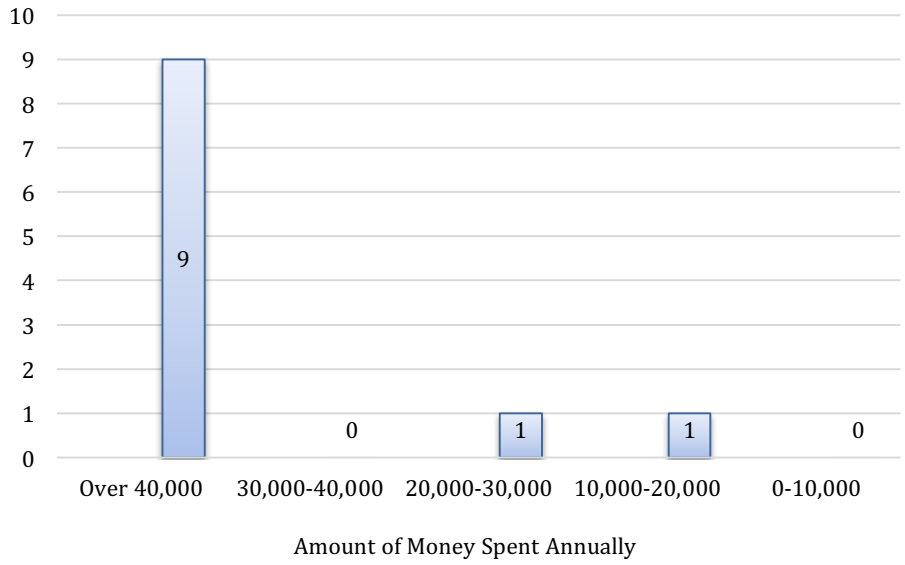
Research Question #1: Does evidence suggest that mission practitioners are taking steps to move from relief-based to development-based local mission as appropriate?

Online Questionnaire Data

Based on the data from question five on the on-line questionnaires, a significant amount of money is being spent on local mission, as illustrated by Figure 4.3. Of those who completed the questionnaire, nine (81.82%) spent over $40,000 a year on local mission, one (9.09%) spent $20,000-$30,000/year on local mission efforts, and one (9.09%) spent $10,000-$20,000/year on local mission. This money is being spent on both relief-based and development-based mission. Two (18.18%) of the participants described their local mission activities as mostly relief-based; three (27.27%) described their local mission as mostly development-based; three (27.27%) described their local

mission as an even mix of the two; and three (27.27%) chose other. In the response section for other, all three respondents stated their local mission is a mix of relief and development but still leaning more heavily on relief.

Figure 4.3 Total Amount of Money Spent on Local Mission Annually in U.S. Dollars



Description of relief activities (question seven) typically fell into several broad categories including food drives/pantries, clothing programs, homeless and emergency services, school supplies, Christmas programs, and disaster relief. One participant stated that the only relief-based local mission they engage in is disaster relief. Description of development-based local mission (question eleven) also fell into a number of broad categories including school partnerships, job placement/training programs, place-based community development, mentoring, and two specific organizations: Family Promise and Habitat for Humanity. A significant amount of money is spent in both relief-based and development-based local mission, although more is invested in development. Table 4.1 shows the specific amounts spent in each category.

As far as staff hours spent administering these programs (questions nine and thirteen), respondents' answers varied widely. For relief-based local mission, staff and volunteer hours ranged from ten hours/week to "thousands" of hours per week. For development-based local mission, staff and volunteer hours ranged from fifty-five hours per week to 1000 or more.

Table 4.1 Money spent on Relief-based vs. Development-based Local Mission

Amount of Money Spent Annually	Relief-based Local Mission Spending	Development-based Local Mission Spending
Under $5,000	1 (9.09%)	1 (9.09%)
$5,000-$10,000	0	1 (9.09%)
$10,000-$20,000	4 (36.36%)	2 (18.18%)
$20,000-$30,000	0	1 (9.09%)
$30,000-$40,000	2 (18.18%)	1 (9.09%)
Over $40,000	4 (36.36%)	5 (45.45%)

Question fifteen asked respondents to discuss the local mission project they are most proud of and why. Only one participant listed a relief-based mission (a feeding program) and the other ten all listed development-based local mission. These included place-based ministry in which they are seeing "long-term changes" and prison mission work which "empowers and transforms lives." Two participants responded by stating they were most proud of their work with Family Promise (formerly Interfaith Hospitality Network) which helps homeless families obtain permanent stable housing.

Question sixteen of the questionnaire asked respondents if they were making changes to their local mission programs, also providing some insight into whether practitioners are shifting their focus from relief to development. Answers varied but only two participants indicated no change. Others answered that they seek to be "more strategic" or "narrow focus." Two reported that their church was in the midst of a strategic planning process that would involve local mission work.

Individual Interview Data

Due to the sheer quantity of interview data, main themes were identified that fell under each research question. The main themes are below with discussion following.

Substantial Spending on both Relief and Development in Local Mission

With the exception of one small church, all those interviewed spent a significant amount of money on local mission. The most money spent on local mission was $90,000 annually by a large suburban church in Tampa and then $60,000 by a large church in Orlando. Most of those interviewed spent in the $30,000/year range. The kinds of local mission varied widely. Two churches focused exclusively on relief work, focusing on clothes closets, food pantries and homeless feedings, and providing financial assistance (benevolence) to those in their communities. Two churches participated almost exclusively in development/empowerment local mission, including place-based community development, job assistance programs, school partnerships that included tutoring and mentoring (rather than simply collecting school supplies), prison ministries, and programs that work with victims of human trafficking. Four churches included local mission programs that were a mix of relief and development. Five of the eight churches actively participated in Family Promise, a program that helps homeless families with

children find jobs and obtain stable housing (which could be considered a development/empowerment-based model).

The size of church did not appear to have any bearing on the kind of local mission work in which they engaged. For instance, both small churches engaged in a mix of relief and development work. The two churches engaged solely in relief-based local mission would be considered mid-sized churches, and the large churches included both those who engaged almost exclusively in development-based local mission and those who did a mix of relief and development. The difference appeared to be that the large churches who engaged in both relief and development were very strategic about the kind of relief they took part in.

Most Churches Taking Steps to Move Toward Development

The interviews indicated that with the exception of one church (a mid-sized suburban church), all had begun to take steps to move toward development-based local mission or had at least started the conversation regarding when to do relief and when to do development-based local mission. The two large churches who engaged almost exclusively in development and empowerment were the farthest along in the conversation and had developed very specific local mission strategies and church-wide volunteer training programs on this topic. One participant describes the process her church went through ten years ago:

> "We were a regional church doing mission that followed the passions of individual people in our congregation...we realized we weren't being intentional about long-term impact and we had no way to measure what we were doing…we started to read all the research on place-based strategy and asset-based community

development…we now have a church-wide strategy to impact the lives of children in poverty."

"We had over 200 people read that book [Toxic Charity] and then did a Dignity Serves training…it gave us a boost to the next level."

"Our global training informed our local training…was not a drastic shift because foundation was laid and people were understanding you can bake muffins for the Coalition for the Homeless but you're not going to impact homelessness."

"When it comes to training, we are learning we need to shift to immersive experiences…So COPE [Cost of Poverty Experience] is a 3 hour training to increase poverty IQ, Bridges Out of Poverty by Ruby Payne has been helpful too because books like Toxic Charity and When Helping Hurts provide a critique, which is important, but they…paralyze..didn't provide, okay, then how do we do it differently? Didn't provide tools for how to do it differently."

"We want people to understand the Scriptures that underlie this rationale, what's our Wesleyan missional theology?"

Another participant (from a primarily development-based church) described her church's experience:

"We've done some great church-wide studies…A few years ago we did *The Hole in Our Gospel* and that *s*tarted a good shift in our thinking in the congregation. Then we did *Toxic Charity*…these were eye-opening…and right now we are in the middle of *When Helping Hurts*…we have to always keep these ideas in front of the church."

> "The *Toxic Charity* conversation totally shifted us and we started doing annual evaluations. Okay, what do we need to get rid of? What does not fit the model? And yeah, we dumped quite a few things."

Other participants discussed recognizing that shifts need to be made. There was much discussion about where they are in this conversation, their struggles, and steps that might be taken:

> "It's mostly relief. I think there is some development, like Family Promise, which provides housing and is sustainable, it has an empowerment piece…among the Go Team, we really love empowerment. We just need to figure out how to get there…I think we're going to be moving more and more in that direction…need to evaluate more."
>
> "My church does a good job addressing physical needs but we need to address emotional and spiritual needs…most of what we do has been relief except for the programs at the elementary school. Those are encouraging and empowering these kids to be leaders in their community and learn a new skill, to have confidence in themselves…want to expand church-school partnerships…it's a true betterment program."
>
> "Most is relief-based. It needs a mind shift but we do try to have some betterment, we are trying. We've talked about it but it's a hard shift. Family Promise has helped…it's empowerment and it's hope and sustainable and life-changing."

"So I'm all about empowerment, I'm an entrepreneur…how can we pour into people so they can pour into others? We trend empowerment but recognize that real suffering exists…we respond to those immediately."

"One scary thing is to disappoint our volunteers…lots of training and conversations needed."

When asked about the local mission program they were most proud of and why, all but one chose a development-based mission, a very significant finding. Four of the participants discussed Family Promise, and the other three chose other development-based local missions. These responses seemed to be focused on how these programs are successful, provide hope for volunteers and clients, are sustainable, and affect life change:

"Family Promise provides concrete steps…so many are working poor, one step from sleeping on someone's couch or the car and we're able to say – here's hope. And it's so successful…just to be part of that and facilitate that."

"I'm blown away when we host Family Promise…we use about 60 volunteers every time Family Promise comes to the church and they come 5 times a year. If you look at the 300 people whose lives get touched by offering hospitality to someone who needs it, this is what I love."

"All ages get involved and love on the families. I feel like it's a win."

"Family Promise is a great organization that provides for immediate housing needs and works for sustainability. It's empowerment."

> "Amazing Love Ministries, they have living testimonies. [Without them] men and women would literally…commit suicide or would be dead in the gutter but for the love and discipleship and the care they receive…"

These quotes suggest several things. First, while some of the churches have moved almost entirely to an empowerment-based strategy, others are still trying to figure out how to make the shift. Even those who still have relief-based mission are beginning to engage in a conversation about how to restructure their local mission programs. Connecting to nonprofit organizations like Family Promise, which use an empowerment-based approach, has helped some churches see the long-term benefits of development/empowerment over relief.

Research Question #2: What evaluative tools are used by mission practitioners to determine the effectiveness of their relief-based programs and their development programs?

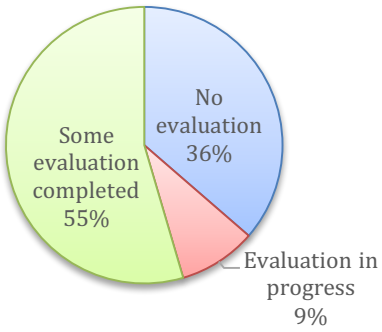
Online Questionnaire Data

In the online questionnaire, this research question was primarily answered through questions ten and fourteen. Three (27.27%) of the respondents stated that they had never engaged in evaluation of their relief-based ministries; one (9.09%) said evaluation was in progress; and seven (69.3%) said they did engage in some kind of evaluation of their relief-based local mission. Specific kinds of evaluation tools mentioned included surveys and "team-based evaluation." One participant spoke about evaluating based on how much it involved the church members themselves in local mission, "we reevaluate our projects annually. Our evaluation involves determining if we had good involvement, enough opportunities, feedback received…cost compared to

number of volunteers able to participate, do we have service opportunities for all demographics of our congregation, are the projects making a difference (impact)..."

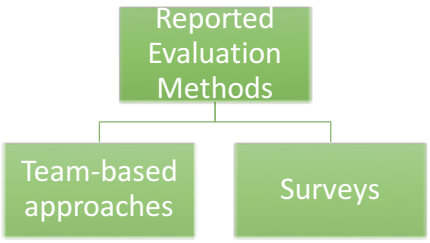
In regard to development-based local mission, six (54.5%) had engaged in some kind of evaluation effort, one (9.09%) was in progress, and four (36.36%) said no evaluation had been done. Figure 4.4 illustrates this.

Figure 4.4 Churches Engaging in Evaluation



Only a few respondents commented on the specifics of how they were evaluating their development-based mission. Again, a team-based approach and surveys were mentioned. One mentioned the struggle of getting volunteers to follow-through with evaluation requirements.

Figure 4.5 Evaluation Methods



Comments regarding how the evaluation work was done included:

"Yes, I had a team that looked at the effectiveness of each of these. These are projects/missions/organizations that are truly making a difference in our

community. They all walk alongside people over a period of time, addressing core issues."

"Yes - we did a logic model that included evaluation. However, it has not been followed and utilized like it should. We are currently in the process of gathering surveys from our clients to evaluate how we are doing on dignity and practical help. The biggest challenge on evaluation is the volunteer leaders being consumed by day to day details and not looking more at outcomes. Our actual evaluation process is also lacking - just gathering the right data to even evaluate."

"Annually we send Mission Grant Applications to nonprofits that fit our focus. Every year we decide if they are still serving in our focus and decide if we are going to add or remove nonprofits using this application, site visits and our personal experiences with them."

Individual Interview Data

Due to the sheer volume of interview data, main themes were identified that related to each research question to help in organizing the data. Main themes are highlighted with discussion following.

Evaluation is Critical

All but one participant expressed the importance of evaluation. Most of the churches (five of the eight) engaged in some kind of annual evaluation process for their local mission efforts. In general, larger churches with paid mission practitioners had more systematic, complex processes for evaluation. Relief-based and development-based local mission were typically evaluated using the same kinds of assessment tools. Four of the participants worked with teams of lay people to evaluate each mission program or

partner using assessment and evaluation tools that they created. Two themes in this process included assessing *effectiveness of program* (many used development/empowerment language when describing effectiveness – long-term change, responsible help, life transformation, sustainability) and assessing *fit with church and volunteer growth opportunities*. Participants expressed their thoughts on evaluation:

> "We have a lengthy questionnaire to identify those who are really producing fruit and those who are not…everyone says they are doing God's work, but okay, where's your examples? Where's your stories of life transformation?"
>
> "Yes, they are evaluated…that's something we've been doing for a while…is it moving people along the discipleship pathway? It's slowly taking root here."
>
> "So we've developed an assessment and evaluation tool that we use all the time…around budget time, we have criteria. We say – is it giving our church members an opportunity to connect, to be in relationships, to grow in their faith? …and is it helping the people served in a responsible way? helping our community."
>
> "We did a mission assessment…see if it's a community call, then you have to find other people from the church…to put together a team because that promotes sustainability and we have a whole set of questions."
>
> "This has been an evaluation year…this whole ten months that I've been here has been spent observing, taking notes, listening, asking questions."

These comments indicate that most churches find evaluation an essential part of their mission program. The assessment tools used mainly evaluate long-term change (using language typically seen in empowerment-based strategies) and volunteer growth or

transformation. Information gleaned is then used to help guide budget priorities and to decide if a particular mission will be continued.

Research Question #3: Under what conditions are relief-based programs useful or effective? Under what conditions are development-based programs effective?

Online Questionnaire Data

In the questionnaire, questions ten, fifteen, and sixteen through twenty all address the result of the evaluations and why they find different kinds of mission work effective or ineffective. Four participants provided comments about the result of their evaluations of relief-based work, indicating that evaluation changed how they structured their local mission:

> "We've shifted our community partners. We've worked with community partners on evaluation. We've changed how our money gets distributed."
>
> "Yes, we found that they were quite ineffective, particularly our giveaways (like manna bags) to the homeless. It seemed to perpetuate the situation rather than help them. I had a team look at the effectiveness of each mission."
>
> "We have eliminated relief based programs that didn't lead toward development. We did this by identifying 'outliers', ministries that weren't connected to anything else we were doing. Then looking at our relief based ministries and seeing how to better utilize them to build relationships and use them as an on-ramp to our development based programs. The result is a set of mission ministries that all influence one another and work together to get us toward a healthier, development based mindset. There's still plenty of transactional opportunities (good for new volunteers) but it's a part of a bigger picture."

Comments regarding the results of evaluative work done with development-based local mission included:

"Switched community partners. Helped community partners assess and improve. Launched non-profits that filled in a missing gap."

"Yes. We have helped twenty-two men in the last three years get off the street and into safe housing. We also evaluated the percentage that move to stable housing after they depart the program."

"Yes, measure results of local schools, making progress."

Question fifteen regarding the local mission project or initiative they were most proud of and why was intended to assess more deeply what the mission practitioner values in local mission and why they find that effective. All eleven participants responded in some way and only one listed a relief-based mission, which was "Loaves and Fishes Feeding Ministry." Others spoke to more development-based mission that empowered and changed lives:

"Our holistic place-based ministry because we have developed long-term relationships and are able to witness and track long-term change."

"Prison Work. Empowers and transforms. After men go through the faith-based programs, recidivism drops from 63% to 8%"

"Family Promise - it's a mission that truly empowers clients to pull themselves out of homelessness by addressing root causes but also allows people in the church to volunteer and be part of their lives in a healthy way. So it really is a great combination of things - empowerment/betterment of clients AND it engages the church in a healthy way."

"New Hope - our goal is provide dignity and empowerment to struggling and hurting families and when we have someone say, "I love to come here. You all are so nice and you treat people with such respect" then I know we're hitting that mark. Our partnerships with the community are healthy and strong - especially with the school district, which is a rarity."

"The Portico workforce housing and The Portico Café."

Question sixteen about whether a mission practitioner or church planned on making changes to their local mission work yielded minimal data. A few reported no change was necessary, others said yes, but very little was related to the kind of mission work in which they were engaging.

However, inquiring about community assessment (questions twenty and twenty-one) did help address this research question. All eleven respondents had engaged in some kind of community assessment. Methods of community assessment included surveys, community listening, asset mapping, and strengths-based approaches.

Figure 4.6 Community Assessment Methods

Based on this data, community assessments seem to provide information regarding the kinds of services available in an area and the level of duplication.. When asked about the results of these community assessments, a few participants responded:

> "A lot of duplication of services, a lot of relief. We have no need to provide relief services, there is already plenty of that."
>
> "It helps our organizations communicate better so that cuts down on the families having to navigate our web and it also helps us eliminate duplication of services. We're not there yet, but it does help."
>
> [We learned] "That people had a hard time getting their first job. It's the reason we started The Portico Café. Also there is no affordable housing so we started…workforce housing for men specifically who have jobs but who are homeless."

Individual Interview Data

Due to the sheer quantity of interview data, main themes were identified that fell under each research question. Main themes are in bold italics with discussion following.

Relief-based Mission: When is it Effective?

While most of the churches simply evaluated their local mission activities for effectiveness and fit with church, those more familiar with the relief vs. development conversation were very specific about when and how relief-based mission can be engaged in and when development/empowerment is more appropriate. For the most part, their evaluative processes indicated that relief-based local mission was most effective when it filled a gap that currently was not being filled and when it provided assistance to existing agencies doing development/empowerment work. Several participants discussed their experiences evaluating relief-based mission:

> "We've dropped ministries after the evaluation. We've learned…we still do some things that are relief, like a food drive, but a food drive to me, if we're doing this

then we're giving the food to the Christian Service Center and they are doing important development work in the community."

"So we certainly have some relief-based mission but it serves a specific purpose…to grow people in relationship, to teach people in the church, and then you take it [blessing bags, food, etc.] to partner agencies that are doing more development work."

[In regard to relief] "We identified things not being done by other churches or organizations so that we kind of fill a gap. So we identified paying for licenses, because that has a direct impact on job. And we don't pay rent but we may help with a down payment. To this day, I haven't found an organization that pays for a down payment."

"We still collect backpacks and school supplies, all relief, but we use them in an intentional way in our five learning communities where all the other activities are about empowerment."

"Through the community transformation, we started sending our collected school supplies from our congregation and making it available for the parents in the community to purchase at a small cost…we do a Christmas shop instead of a gift giveaway…so even our relief activities have kind of shifted…empowering people…it's a process."

"Evaluation has shown us that we can make sure relief work is channeled in a responsible and relational way."

"Even food drives are targeted food drives…when there's a food gap."

Even for churches who engaged in mostly development-based local mission, these comments indicate that relief work has not been completely abandoned. However, relief-based local mission is used in targeted ways. It may be used to fill a specific but essential need that is not being met by other organizations, such as paying for driver's licenses, which has a direct effect on employment. Relief might also be used to come alongside other nonprofit organizations, for example by providing school supplies and food in order for them to be more effective in their development work.

Relief-based Mission as an Entry Point

There was also some discussion that relief-based mission provides an entry-point for young people, senior adults, and families who want to get involved in mission:

> "There are still some relief missions that we do because they're great entry points or good for groups doing service. And that was probably ten to twelve years ago and we've been able to shift our focus to going deeper into the community in healthy responsible ways…"
>
> "We have learned that we have to offer a spectrum of opportunities from relief to relational in order to serve our whole congregation because we want to meet both populations where they are – both our congregation who are wanting to serve and the people we are serving…"
>
> "We still do some mercy/relief kind of activities. What we have done is really tighten it up. It provides a launching pad for our students and families to go to the next level."

Research Question #4: Based on the attributes of effective local mission work (as determined by the above questions and the literature review), what are the best practices for local mission work?

Online Questionnaire Data

While many of the questions on the online questionnaire elicited answers that inform this research question, seventeen was the most direct in asking these mission experts their thoughts on best practices for local mission work. Nine of the participants responded to the question. Some of the specific answers included:

> "Our Missions Committee has a process that measures the focus and impact of new proposals and we try to make sure that anything we say yes to, leans towards development/empowerment based ministry."
>
> "Appreciative Inquiry for overall vision. Get input from congregation on their desires for what is most important in the next 5 years."
>
> "Is this mission in line with the mission and vision of our church? Is this mission "fruitful"? Is it effective, addressing root causes, rather than simply putting a band-aid on a problem? If the mission is relief-based, is it for a limited period of time? Does this mission allow for volunteer participation? What is the long-term goal for clients? Does this mission help people move forward in their lives? Will they be better off a year from now by participating in this mission? No enabling or creating dependency."

"I try to let relief dollars follow volunteer opportunities to build a sustainable base of human and financial resource. A clear path for volunteers to increase in their involvement with an outside agency is ideal."

"It does have to fit in to one of our existing ministries. For example, we are expecting to add literacy to our ministry program so we are working with the school district and the schools where we already partner as well as the low income community where many of our New Hope families live (and also attend these schools). And added ministry must help a current ministry go deeper rather than spread us out."

"It has to be in our areas of focus - housing and hunger. We serve with the nonprofits we support whenever possible. We try to balance the expense with the volunteer opportunities. For example, I wouldn't spend thousands of dollars on a service opportunity that only five people can participate in. We also try to balance our opportunities throughout the year and make sure we have ways for men, women, children, youth, families, seniors/handicapped can all serve."

"Sustainable, transformative, with Christ being glorified."

The data indicated a number of main themes regarding best practices. These included a greater focus on development/empowerment work, addressing root causes of issues, ensuring a limited period of time for relief-based mission, alignment with the mission and vision of the church, life transformation for all those involved, providing varied opportunities for volunteers, and making sure the work is Christ-centered.

Individual Interview Data

Best practices among interview participants fell into several broad areas: understanding root causes of problems, working toward betterment and using relief intentionally, evaluation, engaging the greater church community, and being prayerful/Spirit-led.

Understanding Root Causes

Several participants discussed understanding root causes of a problem as being an important best practice in local mission:

> "You have to take your time and understand what it is you're doing and what the problem is, what the goal is."
>
> "If you don't know what you're talking about, you can waste a lot of time doing more harm than good."
>
> "Listening to the people you are serving is really, really important…not assuming you have the answer. There's great training out there."

Work Toward Development/Betterment & Use Relief Intentionally

The theme of working toward development/betterment was a common thread when discussing best practices in the majority of the interviews. Respondents also stressed that while relief was not off-limits, it should be used in a strategic way. Partnering with organizations already doing mission and ministry well was mentioned often as well:

> "At least ask the question – are you really doing betterment and development? …and if you still choose to do relief, then maybe partner with organizations are doing betterment and development."

"Is it responsible? Is it healthy? Does it have lasting impact or is it just a short-term benefit? And that ministry assessment tool is part of this…relief must be targeted, limited for a specific purpose."

"Make sure you are doing ministry responsibly or partnering with an organization that is doing mission responsibly."

"Don't do something for someone that they can do for themselves."

"Use relief when there are natural disasters like hurricanes, local shootings…social unrest…respond to those immediately."

"Channel relief in a responsible way."

"What's important to you? What do you want to accomplish? That needs to be part of figuring out the right balance of relief and empowerment."

Evaluation

Besides the discussion about evaluation in other areas of the interview, evaluation was mentioned repeatedly when it came to the question regarding best practices:

"You have to create your own filter. I think so many churches of all sizes, they don't create their filter, they don't evaluate, and so they don't have an anchor."

"We have to be connected somehow…and feel like the organization is doing what they say they are doing…have a level of accountability."

"I think it's the evaluation piece to know where to invest our time and resources."

"Identify those who are producing fruit and those who are not."

Engaging the Greater Church Community

There was discussion about how local mission can only be successful if the church has ownership of it and God's people are being equipped. Local mission is

intended to affect life change in both the recipients and those doing the serving. In addition, it needs to be in line with the mission and vision of that particular church for it to be sustainable and effective. Participants describe their thoughts on this:

> "Does this fit with the mission of our church?"
>
> "Does it have the support of the pastor and the greater church?"
>
> "Equip our people to be incarnational…to live missionally."
>
> "My best practices are prayer and then radical obedience to what God is telling us."

Summary of Major Findings

There were three major findings in this study.

1. "Mission-minded" churches extend significant financial resources to both relief and development-based local mission.
2. Evaluation is essential, as it often leads to change.
3. Healthy local mission leans toward development but may use relief in targeted, intentional ways.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The purpose of this study was to develop a set of best practices for local mission work that can be used in a practical way to guide pastors and mission practitioners in forming mission strategies for the church. This chapter presents the major findings of the research with discussion about how these findings support or contradict the scholarly literature in the field, as well as how they relate to Biblical and theological foundations. In addition to the findings, ministry implications are explored. The final section includes a discussion of study limitations, unexpected findings, recommendations, including a list of best practices to guide local mission work, and a postscript detailing this researcher's journey.

Major Findings

"Mission-Minded" Churches Extend Significant Financial Resources To Local Mission

All the participants in the study were from churches that could be considered "mission-minded." Those who completed the online questionnaire were from large churches who invested in a paid missions staff person. Those who participated in the individual interviews were from churches who were identified by the Office of Missional Engagement of the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church as having effective mission programs. Thus, these were churches who had identified missions as a priority and were making some kind of financial investment in mission, both locally and globally.

What was discovered through the research was that missions-minded churches are investing significantly in local mission. In both the questionnaire and interview group, a substantial amount of resources was reported as being spent on local mission, usually invested in a mixture of both relief and development. In the online questionnaires, the vast majority reported spending over $40,000 per year on local mission alone. Among the interviews, one church spent as much as $90,000 on local mission, while $30,000 was average for local mission spending, this was for small, medium, and large-sized churches. What was not determined, however, was what percentage this was of their overall church budget. Because the small and medium-sized churches have smaller overall budgets, it can be safely assumed that they are spending a larger proportion of their budget on mission or are funding mission in some other way, such as through fundraisers, dedicated funds, etc. The church that invested $90,000 in local mission and $180,000 total in missions was a large church with a $4 million budget, making missions still just 5% of their budget.

There is little in the literature about the amount of money that individual churches invest in local mission, although some sources indicate missions spending in general ranges from 5-20% of a church's budget (Bane et al. 56; Henshaw). This seems consistent with the findings from this study but clearly more information is needed to understand how much churches are truly investing in their communities.

The data also indicated that most churches are using these financial resources to invest in both relief and development, with a greater amount going toward development. This was an encouraging finding, as the literature indicates that development and empowerment are more likely to lead to long-term change. Previous research studies

have indicated that the majority of churches engage in predominantly relief-based mission and very few have sustained involvement with the people they serve ("Congregations" Chaves and Eagle 4; Faith Communities Today 3). Despite this, experts contend that relief-based mission should be limited and used in crisis situations, while most resources should be directed toward programs that empower, engage clients over an extended time period, and support long-term change (Friendship House). The data from this study suggests that churches are beginning to heed this advice.

Certainly, the data also suggests that churches are making every effort to live out God's mission by caring for the needs of those in their community. Every church connected to the study, through the online questionnaires and the individual interviews, took seriously the Biblical mandate to care for the poor and oppressed. The types of local mission in which churches engaged was broad and included place-based community transformation, employment services, homeless services, and school partnerships, among many others. In every church represented, whether they engaged in relief, development, or a mix of the two, there was a genuine concern for community and a desire to bring hope and healing in the name of Jesus. While some churches were more strategic about long-term change, all had the desire to reveal more of God's Kingdom in their own context. While Lupton's text suggests that churches engage in mission work mainly to meet their own needs without regard for what is best for the poor, this study indicated otherwise (65-74).

This finding is important because the church truly is one of the primary vehicles for carrying out God's mission of reconciliation and redemption. While churches in the twentieth century may have focused inwardly on programs that benefitted members, this

significant investment in local mission indicates that trend has sharply shifted. Twenty-first century churches understand their role as the place where disciples are developed so that they can be sent into the world to proclaim and demonstrate the good news of the Kingdom. The importance of local mission work is that it is one part of God's greater mission of redeeming and reconciling his world. Believers, as the church, are sent (John 20:21) to be agents of the kingdom in their communities. In doing so, they also are obedient to the Biblical mandate of caring for the poor, the oppressed, the vulnerable, and the needy (Deut. 10:18, 14:28-29; Psalm 10:17-18, 35:10, 82:3-4; Jer. 7:5-7, 22:3; 2 Cor. 9:7; I Tim. 5:9-10, 6:18; James 1:27; among others.)

Evaluation Leads To Change

Evaluation was a theme throughout the research. The vast majority of those who participated in the research were from churches who did engage in some kind of mission evaluation process and then translated the results into decisions about resource allocation, mission partners, and the kinds of programs in which they wanted to align. In fact, evaluation was key in guiding many churches to move toward development-based mission and away from relief. The goal was that mission programs demonstrate health and effectiveness, usually translated into longer-term life change in those served. Over and over again, evaluation came up as an essential part of a healthy and effective local mission program.

Despite this, the literature indicates that churches do not have a good track record for evaluating their programs. In recent years, there has been increasing importance placed on evaluating social service and community programs in order to increase quality of services, improve outcomes and ensure cost-effectiveness (Carnochan et al. 1-3;

Metz). While a cursory internet search reveals many resources for evaluating mission and ministry, there is little to no evidence that churches on a greater scale are making use of these, nor is there any evidence in the scholarly literature. Sherman at the PCA Mercy Ministries National Conference contended that evaluation of a community/local mission should include whether it is consistent with a church's mission and whether it demonstrates effective practices. It should also evaluate outcome measurements and importance to God's Kingdom, specifically spiritual growth among participants, volunteers, and community leaders (1-2). It is possible that the mission-minded churches involved in this study were more forward-thinking about their mission programs than churches at large; they took evaluation seriously, integrated most of Sherman's essential elements of evaluation, and were very intentional about using the results to create more effective local mission strategies.

It can be argued that evaluation is strongly correlated with being good stewards of God's resources. In order to be good stewards, there must be intentionality and accountability in how money and other resources are used. Scripture is clear that God has called his followers to be generous in their resources in giving to the poor and those in need (Deuteronomy 15:7-11; Proverbs 14:31, 19:17; Hebrews 13:16; 2 Corinthians 9:7; I John 3:17; Matthew 6:1-4; Luke 12:33-34; among others). Alongside this, there is also an emphasis on using God's money wisely and on being deliberate regarding how it is spent. Scripture speaks to the importance of saving, avoiding debt, and making wise financial decisions (Proverbs 3:9-10, 13:22, 21:20, 22:7; Romans 13:8). There is also strong emphasis on the able-bodied person working hard (Proverbs 12:11, 13:4) and being responsible with God's generous provision (2 Thessalonians 3:8). Throughout the

Biblical text, there is a consistent theme – being intentional with what God provides means using money wisely, working hard when one can, and caring for those who are most vulnerable. In the modern world, evaluation ensures that this is happening.

Healthy Local Mission Leans To Development; Uses Relief in Targeted Way

Healthy local mission includes programs and ministries that are effective in affecting long-term life change, do what they say they are going to do, and yield kingdom results, while also being sustainable and cost-effective. Experts in the field have certainly emphasized the need to move from only relief-based local mission to more development and empowerment. If relief is needed, it should be used in a limited way and be short-term for crisis situations (Friendship House; Collaborative for Neighborhood Transformation). The popular books *Toxic Charity* and *When Helping Hurts* are clear in their own bent toward development, using relief in only the most limited circumstances.

This researcher came into this study with the assumption that churches need to basically eliminate relief-based local mission from their overall mission strategy. For the most part, the data supported this. Many of the participants discussed changing their mission strategies so that they include mainly development or partnering with agencies who are effectively using development/empowerment strategies. Many of the churches mentioned their work with Family Promise as being their most effective mission. This is a national organization with local chapters, that helps homeless families achieve stable housing by partnering with local churches to house families approximately once a quarter. Even those participants whose churches are not very far along in the relief vs. development conversation acknowledged they wanted to do more mission work like

Family Promise, in which root problems are addressed and needs are met in a comprehensive, sustainable way.

Because of its emphasis on addressing root causes of poverty, affecting holistic change in individuals and families, and working towards long-term transformation, development-based local mission aligns well with God's mission of reconciling and redeeming his people. Part of Jesus' ministry was equipping people to become whole and healed. While Jesus responded to the immediate needs of those he met, his ultimate goal was their total healing – mind, body, and spirit. For example, in Mark 2, Jesus heals the paralyzed man who was lowered through the roof of a home by his friends. Rather than simply healing the man's legs, Jesus declares that his sins are forgiven. While this angered the Pharisees, the bigger point was that Jesus cares just as much about healing the heart as he does our body. Jesus cares about healing the whole person rather than simply addressing the obvious immediate need. True redemption and reconciliation do not happen by simply putting a Band-Aid on a problem; rather, they require long-term, sustained investment and work.

Ministry Implications of the Findings

Despite the small sample sizes in this study, these findings are still the only guidelines for church mission pastors and practitioners in forming a local mission strategy. The reality is that most local church pastors and mission teams have little time to dedicate to researching best practices or how to be effective in their neighborhoods and communities. The findings of this study and the best practices presented in the recommendation section provide a starting place for churches in evaluating current practices and guiding new programs. Too often, church mission consists of projects and

programs that mix convenience with the passion of particular church members. Overwhelmingly, these consist of primarily relief-based mission strategies. These findings suggest that churches, if they have not already, should strongly consider having the relief vs. development conversation and begin to evaluate each mission program based on effectiveness for participants and volunteers. Trainings or book studies for mission teams and pastors may be helpful as well.

In most United Methodist Churches, leadership teams or administrative boards help guide church policies. However, mission is often left to a niche group of volunteers in small or mid-sized churches and to staff people in larger congregations. Based on these findings, it may be necessary for church leaders to craft policies and distribute mission funding around certain priorities. This research recommends prioritizing the long-term effectiveness of programs, evaluation of existing programs, the limited use of relief, life change for participants and volunteers, and community partnerships. While senior pastors may not always be the decision-makers in this area, they have tremendous influence in guiding church leaders and mission teams in determining mission priorities.

While this study included United Methodist churches, the findings should be useful across denominations as they transcend differences in theology, church size, and even polity. Most major denominational churches and larger non-denominational churches have placed a great deal of emphasis on both local and global mission over the past ten years and invested a significant amount of money in these areas. As churches look to make a difference in the neighborhoods and communities surrounding them, these findings provide a tool to guide how to allocate resources, illuminate when relief-based mission might be appropriate, and emphasize the importance of evaluation.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to the study. First, the sample sizes were rather small for both the questionnaire and the individual interview. Rich data was gathered, but it would be helpful to ask the same questions to a larger group. It may also be beneficial to determine if useful data could be collected in a quantitative survey, which may facilitate analysis across a larger sample. Gathering a mix of quantitative and qualitative data in a larger group would significantly strengthen the study. Second, the data was gathered solely from mission practitioners and pastors from the United Methodist Church. While this was related to this researcher being United Methodist clergy with connections in this denomination, similar studies across denominations could be insightful and constructive.

Another unexpected limitation was that the list of churches provided by the Florida Conference's Office of Missional Engagement was insufficient. Many of those on the list were eliminated because they focus almost exclusively on global mission. In addition, two of the churches involved in the interview process were really limited in their own understanding of healthy mission. It made this researcher question how well the Office of Missional Engagement really knows the inner workings of its churches.

Finally, once the study and research analysis was underway, this researcher became aware that research question 2 and 3 were very similar. If this study were to be done again, it might be helpful to combine these two questions. It could also be argued that there needs to be a more formal way of evaluating the effectiveness of local mission, both relief and development. This study was clearly exploratory and it opens the door for more research in the field.

Unexpected Observations

This researcher came into the project with the assumption that relief should be eliminated in all but crisis situations. While the findings indicated that local mission should always lean toward development, there are certain instances in which relief can be used effectively. This was unexpected. Study results indicated that relief can be used effectively as an entry-point into local mission for both youth and families. The reality is that children are often not allowed to participate in development-based mission work such as mentoring and coaching. However, they can be successful stocking a food pantry or making manna bags for the homeless and can learn about real needs in their community in the process. If one chooses to use relief-based local mission as an entry-point for certain groups in their church who might not otherwise be able to participate in mission, then the findings suggested it is most helpful to do this in partnership with agencies in the community. Partner with organizations that are doing development work and can use the relief activities in a way that augments their services or provides incentives in their program. While this was a surprise, it makes sense and would serve multiple purposes; it would help people "get their feet wet" in mission and help provide valuable donations to local nonprofits doing effective work in the community.

Another unexpected finding was that while caring for the needy and vulnerable in the community is a significant part of local mission, another component is the spiritual growth of those doing the work. Mission pastors and practitioners want to develop healthy mission strategies that empower clients to better themselves but also challenge church members to stretch themselves spiritually, so they also will learn and grow. This was emphasized by many of the churches. They provided opportunities for their

members to serve, provided trainings in various areas related to local mission, and also provided space for them to reflect on what they experienced and learned.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it seems essential to restructure local mission programs so that they are primarily development-based, using relief only in specific, targeted ways. While this may seem overwhelming to some churches, the shift to development may not be as big a leap as initially thought. A food pantry can become a food cooperative. A Christmas giveaway can become a low-price Christmas shop that allows parents to choose toys for their children and pay something minimal. Instead of simply giving money away in church benevolence programs, a church should start a financial literacy course or begin a mentoring program. Another important recommendation from the study was that churches do not have to reinvent the wheel; they can partner with effective nonprofit organizations in their community who already do this well.

Another recommendation is that evaluation needs to become an integral part of every missions program. Even an informal survey provides data as to whether the program is doing what it intends to do. Churches are encouraged to begin to take a serious look at each local mission and assess whether or not people are truly being helped: Are the same people coming back year after year? Is there long-term life change or is this simply a quick, temporary fix? The findings indicated that when evaluation was initiated, the church almost always started changing its programs to be more development in nature.

Based on the data from this study and the literature review, a list of best practices was developed. Best practices for local mission work include:

1. **Take time to understand the root causes of problems in the community.**

The first best practice is to understand the root causes of problems in the community. In order to be part of real, long-term change, it is necessary to have a good understanding of what problems exist, how they have developed, and what sustains them. The field of root cause analysis suggests that true change can occur only when the fundamental problems in a system are addressed (Doggett 34). According to the Community Tool Box, "Root causes are the basic reasons behind the problem or issue you are seeing in the community. Trying to figure out why the problem has developed is an essential part of the problem-solving process in order to guarantee the right responses and help citizens own the problems." Going through a process of identifying root causes helps determine is the problem is a result of individual issues (level of knowledge, attitude, awareness, behavior) or social issues (cultural, economic, or political factors) (Community Toolbox).

People in the church cannot assume they understand the complexities and root issues in their communities. Undergoing community needs assessments and asset maps, working with local agencies, and engaging in a process of listening to people is key. If church programs fail to address the root issue, then problems will only persist and may become worse when "solutions" exacerbate the true problem.

Throughout the Biblical text, there are narratives that illustrate the importance of dealing with root causes rather than surface-level issues. When the rich young man came to see Jesus in Luke 18:18-23, he asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life.

While Jesus tells him to keep the commandments, he also tells the man to sell all his possessions and come follow him. The rich man obeyed God's law, and on the surface he looked really good, but deep down he loved money more than God. Knowing the man's heart, Jesus saw the importance of identifying the root cause of the man's problem (Biblical Counseling Database). Throughout Jesus' ministry, many people followed him to see the extraordinary miracles and listen to his preaching but when the teaching got difficult, many deserted him (John 6:60-66). On the outside, they appeared to be true believers but when Jesus started digging deeper into more difficult issues, they abandoned the ministry (Biblical Counseling Database). Root causes are difficult to tackle but true resolution and reconciliation can only occur when they are addressed.

2. **Become educated on the difference between relief and development.**

The second best practice is to become educated on the difference between relief and development. Churches often have a tendency to see a need and respond without much thought to long-term consequences. While this is positive in the sense that churches want to engage in God's mission of putting things right and caring for those in need, it suggests that they are not always going about it in an effective, healthy manner. This is evident in the numerous studies that demonstrate the relief focus of churches (*National* Chaves and Eagle 22; Chaves and Tsistsos 670).

Understanding the difference between relief and development is key to developing models for mission that truly lead to life transformation. If nothing else, becoming educated in this field will allow churches to make informed, intentional and hopefully prayerful decisions about how they use their resources.

3. **Make an effort to engage in development-based mission and use relief in a limited, targeted way.**

The literature indicated that development-based mission is always preferable because it leads to more long-term change in the lives of people. However, the data from the questionnaires and interviews also showed that at times, relief-based local mission can be used effectively in targeted, intentional ways. For instance, churches can use relief-based mission as an entry point for youth and families who wish to serve. Most development-based mission is not open to children and youth because it requires a certain level of maturity and training. Relief-based local mission, such as assembling food bags or organizing a clothes closet, is one way to engage young people and other beginners in local mission. According to the data in this study, the best way to go about this is to partner with agencies who are already doing effective development work in the community. Use the relief activity to support or augment their existing services. In that way, relief is being used strategically in a targeted way.

4. **Evaluation is an essential part of any healthy missions/outreach program.**

One of the major findings of this study was that evaluation leads to change. When a church actively engaged in an evaluation process, they always made significant shifts away from relief and toward development. Without evaluation, it is impossible to know if mission work is effective, responsible, and leading to change in the lives of the people it serves. As discussed earlier, evaluation is also a key part of being intentional with the resources that God has provided the church.

5. **Avoid reinventing the wheel by partnering with relevant organizations (those "doing it well").**

The data showed that it is better to partner with an agency or organization doing development or empowerment work well than insist on doing relief-based local mission alone. While the scholarly research does not address this, Louletta-Boushart in her work on partnerships between churches and nonprofits in Sacramento, California, suggests that faith communities and non-profit agencies are both more effective when they combine their financial and manpower resources.

There are certainly reasons why churches have wanted to develop local mission programs on their own: the ability to control the message, the desire to use eager volunteers, and the desire to engage people from their community, among others. These are all good things. However, local mission does not need to be developed organically within the church. Especially for small churches and/or churches with limited financial resources, it may make a lot more sense to partner with a local organization who is already doing development work effectively. This may mean coming alongside an organization by providing volunteers, financial assistance, or in-kind donations to help them be successful in their mission. Most likely, this organization has already done the hard work of studying root causes, evaluating their services, and developing a strategy for long-term change in clients and if they have not done this work, then find another mission partner.

6. **Align mission strategies need with the mission of the church and ensure that the church fully supports the mission program. Local mission is intended to promote life change for those receiving services and those offering services.**

The data from the questionnaires and interviews also indicated the importance of local mission fitting into the overall mission and vision of the church. Local mission

cannot be effective if there is not support and a sense of ownership among the congregation at large. One of the interesting themes that emerged in the data was that local mission and service is critical to affecting life change for those in need in the community but it is also should lead to life transformation in those who are serving. Both pieces are equally important.

Interestingly, in several churches, there was also emphasis placed on life change in those volunteering in mission. Local mission, from their perspective, should not simply change the lives of those being served but should change the hearts of those engaging in service. Growing one's faith and becoming a more committed disciple was an important aspect of local mission. While churches may not often consider both sides of serving, the literature has numerous examples of how life change often occurs just as much for those who serve in mission as it does for those who are clients of the services. This has especially been documented in short-term mission trips (DeVargas et al. 62-65; Trinitapoli and Vasey 138). Shert, Garland, and Wolfer found that engagement in local mission work was a powerful force in the spiritual development of youth (50). Peers contends that engaging congregants in service is an important way of giving meaning to their lives and provides them with a way to live out their vocation as Christ-followers (24).

There is certainly a need for more research in this area. Both quantitative and qualitative designs, with larger sample sizes, looking at the effectiveness of relief vs. development-based mission are in order, as well as larger, cross-denominational studies. Considering most churches across the United States are small, it may also be helpful to research how small churches can effectively engage in development-based mission.

Postscript

Over the course of the four years of this project, my own ministry has changed drastically. I started out this project as an Associate Pastor who spent all her time on missions and outreach. I had time to read books on mission, go to conferences, plan elaborate mission strategies for our church, and truly immerse myself in the field. As our church made transitions, so did my responsibilities. I gradually took on adult discipleship and found many ways to integrate missions and adult spiritual formation. In fact, I learned that the two should not be separated, and I think the findings of this study support that. Gradually, my role shifted again and I was made an Executive Pastor with primary responsibilities of supervising personnel, creating policies and protocol for the church, and oversight of finances. While I still oversee the reach and send (missions) team and the connect and grow (adult discipleship) team, my ability to be hands-on in those areas has diminished greatly. I wonder how many other pastors are in a similar position. While they recognize the importance of mission work in their community, the urgent and pressing needs of running a church often get in the way. Thus, they simply give in to the pressure of doing what is easy, which is usually relief-based mission.

That being said, my prayer is that the short list of best practices generated through this research project will help guide and inform the overwhelmed pastor who knows they want to do something but are not sure where to start. They probably sense that the relief work they are engaged in is not effective but need help in how to restructure their efforts. I hope this will take some of the guesswork out of local mission work and help people make a lasting difference in the lives of those who live in their community. In doing so, they get to participate in God's amazing mission of putting things right again.

APPENDIXES

A. Online Questionnaire

B. Individual Interview Guide

C. Informed Consent for Online Questionnaire

D. Informed Consent for Individual Interview

Appendix A

On-line Questionnaire

1. Which of the following best describes your position?
    a. Senior Pastor/Clergy
    b. Missions Pastor/Clergy
    c. Missions Director/Lay
    d. Other

2. Where are you located?
    a. Florida Conference
    b. Another conference in the Southeastern Jurisdiction
    c. North Central Jurisdiction
    d. Northeastern Jurisdiction
    e. South Central Jurisdiction
    f. Western Jurisdiction

3. From the following list, choose the one that best describes your setting.
    a. Rural church
    b. Suburban church
    c. Urban church

4. Approximately how much money does your church spend on local mission work (in your own community, town, or city)?
    a. Under $5,000/year
    b. $5,000-$10,000/year
    c. $10,000-$20,000/year
    d. $20,000-$30,000/year
    e. $30,000-$40,000/year
    f. Over $40,000/year

5. How would you describe your current local mission work activities?
    a. Mostly relief-based (community work that seeks to provide relief for an immediate need, such as a clothes closet or food pantry; this is usually one-directional, in that it requires nothing from the person who receives it.)
    b. Mostly development-based (community work that seeks to empower people to develop and grow in a way that they can live fuller and more productive lives, such as employment programs, life skills, budgeting, micro-finance, etc.. These programs usually require the person who receives the service to put in time, effort, or money.)
    c. An even mix of the two.

6. How do you decide what kinds of local mission to engage in?

7. What kinds of relief-based local mission activities do you participate in?
8. Approximately how much money do you spend on these programs?
    d. Under $5,000/year
    e. $5,000-$10,000/year
    f. $10,000-$20,000/year
    g. $20,000-$30,000/year
    h. $30,000-$40,000/year
    i. Over $40,000

9. How many volunteer or staff hours does it take to run these programs?
10. Have you ever evaluated your relief-based local mission projects? How did you do this and what was the result?
11. What kinds of development-based local mission activities do you participate in?
12. Approximately how much money do you spend on these programs?
    j. Under $5,000/year
    k. $5,000-$10,000/year
    l. $10,000-$20,000/year
    m. $20,000-$30,000/year
    n. $30,000-$40,000/year

14. How many volunteer or staff hours does it take to run these programs?
15. Have you ever evaluated your development-based local mission projects? How did you do this and what was the result?
16. Have you ever done a community needs assessment?
    a. Yes
    b. No
17. If so, what were the results?
18. Have you met with agencies/organizations in your community?
    a. Yes
    b. No
19. If so, what did you learn/discover?
20. Do you train your volunteers who participate in local mission efforts?
    a. Yes
    b. No

21. If so, what are the important elements in the training?
22. Tell me about the local mission project/initiative that you are most proud of and why.
23. Do you expect to change any of your local mission work in the next year? Why or why not?
24. Are there any specific best practices that you tend to use when deciding what kinds of local mission work to engage in and how to go about it?

Appendix B

Individual Interview Guide

1. Describe your position as this church.

2. Describe your church? For instance, describe your setting, your weekly attendance, budget, and level of need in your community?

3. How much money does your church spend on local mission work (in your own community, town, or city) and how is that decided?

4. How would you describe your current local mission work activities? Probe: What kinds of organizations do you work with? What kinds of activities do you do? Can you describe them?

5. What kind of process does your church go through to decide which local missions to participate in? Probe: Do you decide? Is there a committee or team? What kinds of criteria do you use?

6. Have you ever done a community needs assessment? Probe: Do you meet with the nonprofit agencies/organizations in your community? What kinds of things do you discuss? What has come out of these meetings?

7. What kinds of relief-based local mission activities do you participate in? (Define relief-based if needed.)

8. Approximately how much money do you spend on these programs and how is that decided? Probe: Has this increased or decreased in the past five years and why is that?

9. Who runs these programs and how much time does it take per week?

10. Have you ever evaluated your relief-based local mission projects? How did you do this and what was the result? Probe: What is your general feeling about how effective these mission activities are? Why do you think this?

11. What kinds of development-based local mission activities do you participate in? (Define development-based if needed.)

12. Approximately how much money do you spend on these programs and how is that decided? Probe: Has this increased or decreased in the past five years and why is that?

13. Who runs these and how much time does it take per week?

14. Have you ever evaluated your development-based local mission projects? How did you do this and what was the result? Probe: What is your general feeling about how effective these mission activities are? Why do you think this?

15. Do you have training for your local mission volunteers? What elements does the training entail? What are some of the main ideas you want them to learn?

16. Tell me about the local mission project/initiative that you are most proud of and why. Probe: How is this project yielding fruit? What makes it effective?

17. Do you expect to change any of your local mission work in the next year? Why or why not? Probe: In the past five years, how has your local mission work changed and why?

18. Are there any specific best practices that you tend to use when deciding what kinds of local mission work to engage in and how to go about it?

Appendix C

Informed Consent for Online Questionnaire

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project done by Victoria Harrison from Asbury Theological Seminary. The title of the research is Best Practices for Local Mission: Developing Healthy and Effective Mission in the Church. You are invited because of your involvement in the UMC Large Church Mission Connection.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete this online questionnaire which contains 26 closed and open-ended questions. The questions are regarding your church's local mission work. It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. There is no compensation but your participation will be helpful in expanding the body of knowledge and understanding in the area of healthy local mission.

Your completion of this questionnaire is completely voluntary and completely confidential. Except for the basic demographic data that is collected, I will receive no identifying information about you.

By continuing with the questionnaire, you are agreeing to the terms of this study and agreeing that your participation is voluntary. Please know you can stop the questionnaire at any time and no one will be upset with you for declining to participate.

Thank you!

Victoria Harrison

Appendix D

Informed Consent for Individual Interview

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research project done by Victoria Harrison from Asbury Theological Seminary. The title of the research is Best Practices for Local Mission: Developing Healthy and Effective Mission in the Church. You are invited based on a recommendation by the Office of Missional Engagement of the Florida Conference of the United Methodist Church who identified your church as engaging in healthy, effective local mission.

You are being invited to participate in an individual interview. If you agree to participate, the researcher will ask you 19 open-ended questions regarding your church's local mission work. The entire interview will take approximately 60 minutes to complete. There is no compensation but your participation will be helpful in expanding the body of knowledge and understanding in the area of healthy local mission.

Your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and completely confidential. Only the researcher will be aware of your identity and your interview data will be given a code for analysis purposes. All identifying information will be removed from your responses.

By signing this paper, you are agreeing to the terms of this study and agreeing that your participation is voluntary. You may stop the interview at any time and no one will be upset with you for declining to participate.

_____ _____

Signature of Research Participant Date

WORKS CITED

Allen, Thomas. Child Sponsorships: The Approaches Adopted by Two NGOs in Response to Child Poverty in Guatemala. Thesis, Simon Frasier University, 2014.

Ball, Joseph. Microequity: A New Model for Microfinance in the U.S. Thesis, University of Central Florida, 2012.

Bane, Mary Jo, Brent Coffin, and Ronald Thiemann. *Who Will Provide? The Changing Role of Religion in American Social Welfare.* Westview Press, 2000.

Barnes, Sandra. "Priestly and prophetic influences on black church social services. *Social Problems*, vol. 51, no 2, 2004, pp. 202-221.

Biblical Counseling Database. "Chapter 4: Dealing with Root Causes." *Harvesttime International Network,* http://biblicalcounselingdatabase.net/introduction-to-the-biblical-counseling-database/chapter-four-dealing-with-root-causes/. Accessed 7 January 2020.

Biddle, Jeffrey. "Religious Organizations." In *Who Benefits from the Nonprofit Sector*. Edited by Charles T. Clotfelter. University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 92–133.

Bjork, Bruce. Organizing for Mission: Testing the Impact of Structure, Capacity, and Theology on How a Church Organizes to Serve its Community. Dissertation, Creighton University, 2014.

Brauer, Simon. "How Many Congregations are There? Updating a Survey-Based Estimate." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* vol. 56, no. 2, 2017, pp. 438-448.

Brodman, James. *Charity and Religion in Medieval Europe.* The Catholic University Press, 2009.

Carlson-Thies, Stanley. "Implementing the Faith-based Initiative." *The Public Interest,* no. 155, Spring 2004, pp. 57-74.

Carlton T., and J. Porter. "Habitual Beggars." *The Christian Advocate,* vol. 84, September 1909, pp. 1384-1385.

Carnochan, et al. "Performance Measurement Challenges in Nonprofit Human Service Organizations." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly,* vol. 20, no. 10, 2014, pp. 1-19.

Carrillo, Mario. *Does Child Sponsorship Have a Positive Impact on the Quality of Life and Social Behavior of Sponsored Children? Evidence from Indonesia.* Thesis, University of San Francisco, 2013.

Chaves, Mark, and Alison Eagle. "Congregations and Social Services: An Update from the Third Wave of the National Congregations Study." *Religions,* vol. 7, no. 5:55, 2016, pp. 1-9.

Chaves, Mark, and Alison Eagle. *National Congregations Study: Religious Congregations in 21st Century America 2015*. Duke University, http://www.soc.duke.edu/natcong/Docs/NCSIII_report_final.pdf. Accessed 05 March 2019.

Chaves, Mark, and Lynn Higgins. "Comparing the Community Involvement of Black and White Congregations." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* vol. 31, no. 4, 1992, pp. 425-440.

Chaves, Mark, and W. Tsitsos. "Congregations and Social Services: What They Do, How They Do It, and With Whom." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly,* vol. 30, 2001, pp. 660-683.

Chaves, Mark, and Bob Wineburg. "Did the Faith-based Initiative Change Congregations?" *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly,* vol. 39, no. 2, 2010, pp. 343-355.

Chester, Tim. *Good News for the Poor: Social Involvement and the Gospel.* Kindle Ed., Crossway, 2013.

Circles USA. *Circles USA Impact Report: Results and Progress from 2018.* https://www.circlesusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2018ImpactReport-web.pdf. Accessed 20 October 2018.

Cnaan, Ram. "Our Hidden Safety Net: Social and Community Work by Urban American Religious Congregations." *Brookings Review,* Spring 1999, 50-53.

Cnaan, Ram, and Stephanie Boddie. "Philadelphia Census of Congregations and Their Involvement in Social Service Delivery." *Social Service Review,* vol. 75, no. 4, 2001, 559-580.

Cnaan, Ram, Jill Sinha, and Charlene McGrew. "Congregations as Social Service Providers: Services, Capacity, Culture, and Organizational Behavior." *Administration in Social Work,* vol. 28, no. ¾, 2004, pp. 47-68.

Collaborative for Neighborhood Transformation. "Helping Your Church Become Wholistic and Transformational Workshop." *Neighborhood Transformation for Global CHE Network,* www. https://chenetwork.org/_dvd/NT%20Urban%209-2018/6%20PDF%20Workshops/Helping%20Your%20Church%20Become%20Wholistic%20Transformational.pdf. Accessed 20 October 2018.

Collaborative for Neighborhood Transfomation. "What is Asset-based Community

Development Handout." *The Asset-Based Community Development Institute,* Northwestern University, www.abcdinstitute.org/docs, Accessed 16 February 2017.

Community Toolbox. "Analyzing Root Causes of Problems: The 'But Why' Technique." *Center for Community Health and Development,* University of Kansas. Accessed 17 December 2019, https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/analyze/analyze-community-problems-and-solutions/root-causes/main.

Corbett, Steve, and Brian Fikkert. *When Helping Hurts.* Moody Publishers, 2009.

Cypress, Brigitte. "Rigor or Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research: Perspectives, Strategies, Reconceptualization, and Recommendations." *Dimensions of Critical Care Nursing,* vol. 36, no. 4, 2017, pp. 253-263.

Creswell, John. *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research (4th ed.).* Pearson, 2012.

DeVargas, Rochelle, Drew, Lisa, and James Smith. "Thinking Globally – Trip to Haiti Changes Lives of Patients and Volunteers." *Health Progress,* vol. 88, no. 5, 2007, pp. 62-65.

Dichter, Thomas. *Despite Good Intentions: Why Development Assistance to the Third World has Failed.* Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003.

DiIulio, John. "Supporting black churches: Faith, outreach, and the inner-city poor." *The Brookings Review,* vol. 17, no. 2, 1999, 42-45.

Doggett, A. Mark. "Root Cause Analysis: A Framework for Tool Selection." *Quality Management Journal,* vol. 12, no. 4, 2005, pp. 34-45.

Drewery, Malcolm. *Black Megachurches and Social Services*. Dissertation, American

University, 2008.

Dudley, Carl, and David Roozen. "A Report on Religion in the United States Today." *Faith Communities Today,* March 2001, www.hirr.hartsem.edu, Accessed 15 January 2017.

Duncan, Daniel. "The Classic Duo: Accountability and Community Development can Unlock an Abundance of Resources." *Public Management,* November 2012, pp. 22-23.

Dudley, Carl, and David Roozen. *Faith Communities Today: A Report on Religion in the United States Today.* Hartford Institute for Religion Research, Hartford Seminary, March 2001.

Ehlig, Bill, and Ruby Payne. *What Every Church Member Should Know About Poverty.* Aha Process Inc., 1999.

Faith Communities Today. *2010 National Survey of Congregations.* Hartford Institute for Religious Research, Hartford Seminary, 2010, https://faithcommunitiestoday.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2010FrequenciesV1.pdf. Accessed 10 February 2017.

Fikkert, Brian, and Russell Mask. *From Dependence to Dignity: How to Alleviate Poverty Through Church-Centered Microfinance.* Zondervan, 2015.

Friendship House. *Empowerment Ministry: First Principles and Best Practices.* https://www.friendshiphousede.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Empowerment-Best-Practices.pdf Accessed 15 October 2019.

Garner, Michelle. "Advancing the Discussion of Federal Faith-based Social Service

Policies through Overview and Application of Established Health Services Research Models." *Advances in Social Work,* vol. 13, no. 3, 2012, pp. 484-509.

Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., and B. Chadwick. "Methods of Data Collection in Qualitative Research: Interviews and Focus Groups." *British Dental Journal,* vol. 204, no. 6, 2008, pp. 291-295.

General Conference on Finance and Administration. "The Financial Commitment of the United Methodist Church, 2017-2020." *Discipleship Ministries,* https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/the-financial-commitment-of-the-united-methodist-church-2017-2020 Accessed 20 April 2019.

Greer, Peter. *Stop Helping Us! A Call to Compassionately Move Beyond Charity.* Institute for Faith, Works, and Economics E-book. https://tifwe.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/StopHelpingUs-eBook.pdf. Accessed 16 October 2019.

Gruber, Joanie. "Orphan Care in the Early Church: A Heritage to Recapture." *North American Association of Christians in Social Work Convention 2011,* Pittsburg, PA, October 2011.

Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology*. Zondervan, 1995.

Heitzenrater, Richard. *The Poor and the People Called Methodists.* Abingdon Press, 2002.

Henshaw, Brant. "How Churches Spend Their Money." *PNA Conference,* 2 December 2014. https://www.pnwumc.org/news/how-churches-spend-their-money/ Accessed 20 April 2019.

Hirsch, Alan. *The Forgotten Ways Handbook: A Practical Guide for Developing Missional Churches.* Brazos Press, 2009.

Hopes, Kim, John McKnight, and Howard Lawrence. "Asset-Based Neighborhood Organizing: The Method of the Abundant Community Initiative in Edmonton, Canada." *The Asset-Based Community Development Institute,* Northwestern University, 2015, pp. 1-21.

Karesh, Sara. *The Evolution of American Religious Social Services: A Study of Change in the Methodist, Jewish, and Catholic Communities in the United States.* Dissertation, University of California, 2002.

Keidel, Levi. *Conflict or Connection: Interpersonal Relationships in Cross-Cultural Settings.* Evangelical Mission Service, 1996.

Kreutziger, S. "The Methodist Settlement Movement." In B. Hugens and T.Scales (Eds.), *Christianity and Social Work, 3rd Ed.* NACSW, 2008.

Joyner, F. Belton. *United Methodist Questions, United Methodist Answers.* Westminister John Knox Press, 2007.

Leung, Lawrence. "Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability in Qualitative Research." *Journal of Family Medical Primary Care,* vol. 4, no. 3, 2015.

Levanthal, Emily and Daniel Mears. "Will Churches Respond to the Call? Religion, Civic Resposibility, and Social Service." *The Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare,* vol. 29, no. 2, 2002 pp. 53-76.

Lewis, Charles, and Harold Trulear. "Rethinking the Role of African American Churches as Social Service Providers." *Black Theology: An International Journal,* vol. 6, no. 3, 2008, pp. 343-365.

Livermore, David. *Serving With Eyes Wide Shut: Doing Short-Term Missions With Cultural Intelligence.* Baker Books, 2006.

Louletta-Boushart, Laurie. "Match Made in Heaven." *Comstock's Magazine,* Dec. 1, 2013.

Lupton, Robert. *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help and How to Reverse It.* Harper Collins, 2011.

Marshall, Jennifer, and Robert Rector. "The Unfinished Work of Welfare Reform." *The Heritage Foundation,* 22 January 2013, www.heritagefoundation.org, accessed 15 February 2017.

McClain, Linda. "Unleashing or Harnessing Armies of Compassion? Reflections on the Faith-based Initiative." *Loyola University Chicago Law Journal,* vol. 39, no. 2, 2008, pp. 361-426.

McQuilkin, Robertson. "Stop Sending Money! Breaking the Cycle of Missions Dependency." *Christianity Today*, vol. 43, no. 3, 1999, pp. 57-59.

Metz, Alison. "Why Conduct a Program Evaluation? Five Reasons Why an Evaluation Can Help an Out of School Time Program." *Child Trends: Research to Results,* October 2007, https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/child_trends-2007_10_01_rb_whyprogeval.pdf. Accessed 15 October 2019.

Miller, Peter, and Max Engel. "Forging Linkages in the Public Sphere: School-Church Engagement for Social Justice." *Peabody Journal of Education,* vol. 76, no. 2, 2011, pp. 222-240.

Moyo, Dambisa. *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and Why There is a Better Way for Africa.* Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2009.

Myers, Bryant. *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational*

Development. Orbis Books, 2011.

Neff, James, Clayton Shorkey, and Liliane Windsor. "Contrasting Faith-based and Traditional Substance Abuse Treatment Programs." *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment,* vol. 30, 2006, pp. 49-61.

Nelson, Corey. The Local Church Discerning Faithful and Effective Mission Partners, Dissertation, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, 2014.

New Living Translation. Bible Gateway, www.biblegateway.com. Accessed 10 October 2016.

Nordstokke, Kjell. "Faith-based Organizations (FBOs) and their Distinct Assets." *Swedish Missiological Themes,* vol. 101, 2013, pp. 185-202.

Norris, Kristopher and Sam Speers. "The Hope of the Poor: Ecclesial Practices of Politics, Hope, and Transformation." *Perspectives in Religious Studies,* vol. 43, 2016, pp. 103-114.

Oppenheim, A. *Questionnaire Design, Interviewing, and Attitude Measurement.* Pinter Publishers, 1996.

Owens, Michael, and Raymond Smith. "Congregations in Low-Income Neighborhoods and the Implications for Social Welfare Policy Research." *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly,* vol. 34, no. 3, 2005, pp. 316-339.

Patten, Mildred. *Questionnaire Research: A Practical Guide.* Pyrczak Publishing, 2011.

Peers, Larry. "From Stressed to Blessed: A Conversation for Recomposing Volunteer Service in the Congregation." *Congregations,* vol. 36, no. 4, 2009, pp. 22-26.

Pillay, Jerry. "The Church as a Transformation and Change Agent." *HTS Theological Studies,* vol. 73, 2017.

http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0259-94222017000300025. Accessed 5 March 2019.

Polis Institute. *Seeking the Welfare of the City.* Research Brief, 2009, www.polisinstitute.org/PolisInstitute-Brief_SWC-Research.pdf, Polis Institute. www.polisinstitute.org. Accessed 16 February 2017.

Pritchard, John. *Methodists and their Missionary Societies 1900-1996.* Taylor and Francis, 2016.

Rovai, Alfred, Baker, Jason, and Michael Ponton. *Social Science Research Design and Statistics: A Practitioner's Guide to Research Methods and SPSS Analysis.* Watertree Press, 2013.

Saxon-Harrold et al. *America's Religious Congregations: Measuring Their Contribution to Society.* Independent Sector Research, November 2000. www.independentsector.org. Accessed 15 February 2017.

Sensing, Tim. *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses.* Wipf and Stock, 2011.

Sherman, Amy. *Evaluation 101: Self-assessing Your Ministry.* PCA Mercy Ministries National Conference, April 2005, Atlanta. Accessed on 12 December 2019, https://pcamna.org/urban/EvaluationHandout-Sherman.pdf.

Shert, Michael, Garland, Diana, and Terry Wolfer. "The Role of Community Service in the Faith Development of Adolescents." *The Journal of Youth Ministry,* vol. 6, no. 1, 2007, pp. 43-54.

Snyder, Howard. *Kingdom, Church, and World: Biblical Themes for Today.* Wipf and Stock, 2001.

Shirley D. "Faith-based Organization." *Peabody Journal of Education,* vol. 76, no.2,

2001, pp. 222-240.

Shirley, Jensen. *Congregation Activism in the Community: A Study of Faith-based Leadership.* Dissertation, University of San Diego, 2009.

Sprague, Michael. *Disaster: Betting the Farm on God in Life's Storm.* Xulon Press, 2011.

Stark, Rodney. "Epidemics, Networks, and the Rise of Christianity." *Semeia,* vol. 56, 1991, pp.159-175.

Steber, Colson. "In-depth Interviews: Data Collection Advantages and Disadvantages." *Communications for Research*. https://www.cfrinc.net/cfrblog/in-depth-interviewing. Accessed 10 January 2019.

Thies-Carlson. "Implementing the Faith-based Initiative." *Public Interest,* vol. 155, 2004, pp. 57-74.

Trinitapoli, Jenny and Stephen Vasey. "The Transformative Role of Religious Experience: The Case of Short-Term Missions." *Social Forces,* vol. 88, no. 1, 2009, pp. 121-146.

Van Gelder, Craig. *The Missional Church and Leadership Formation: Helping Congregations Develop Leadership Capacity,* Kindle Ed. Eerdmans, 2009.

Van Voorst, Robert. *World Relg: Introduction to World Religions.* Cambridge Learning, 2017.

Warner, Laceye and Gaston Warner. *From Relief to Empowerment: How Your Church Can Cultivate Sustainable Mission.* Wesley's Foundery Books, 2018.

Wuthnow, Robert, Conrad Hackett, and Becky YangHsu. "The Effectiveness and

Trustworthiness of Faith-based and Other Service Organizations: A Study of Recent Perceptions. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* vol. 43, no. 1, 2004, pp. 1-17.

Wydick, Bruce, Paul Glewwe, and Laine Rutledge. "Does International Child Sponsorship Work? A Six-Country Study of Impacts in Adult Life Outcomes. *Journal of Political Economy,* vol. 121, no. 2, pp. 393-436.