

SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY

JOURNAL OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
OF CHRISTIANS IN SOCIAL WORK

VOLUME 47, NUMBER 3 • FALL 2020



SPECIAL ISSUE: COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY PRACTICE

Guest Editors Kevin J. Brown & Gaynor Yancey

CONCEPTUAL ARTICLES

Sacred Connections: Using Faith-based Narratives to Create Matricentric Empowerment Spaces for Syrian Refugee Women

Reframing the Orphan Mandate

The Community Empowerment Framework: A Benchmark for Christian Social Work

Reducing Police Brutality in African American Communities: Potential Roles for Social Workers in Congregations

PRACTICE ARTICLES

Strengthening Congregational Communities: Social Justice Engagement Through Deliberative Dialogue

Good Neighbor House: Reimagining Settlement Houses for 21st Century Communities

BOOK REVIEWS

Review of *Development on Purpose: Faith & Human Behavior in the Social Environment*

Review of *Mystery and the Adopted Child*

Review of *Listening to Sexual Minorities: A Study of Faith and Sexual Identity on Christian College Campuses*

ISSN 0737-5778

SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Social Work & Christianity (SWC) is a refereed journal published quarterly in March, June, September, and December by the North American Association of Christians in Social Work (NACSW) to support and encourage the growth of social workers in the ethical integration of Christian faith and professional practice. SWC welcomes articles, shorter contributions, book reviews, and letters which deal with issues related to the integration of faith and professional social work practice and other professional concerns which have relevance to Christianity.

Views expressed by authors are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of SWC or NACSW. Membership in NACSW or publication in SWC in no way implies endorsement or certification of the member's or author's qualifications, ability, or proficiency to practice social work. NACSW and SWC do not assume responsibility in any way for readers' efforts to apply or utilize information, suggestions, or recommendations made by NACSW, its publications, conferences, or other resources.

EDITORS

Editor in Chief

Jane Hoyt-Oliver, ACSW, LISW-S, Ph.D., Malone University, Emerita

Guest Editors

Kevin J. Brown, PhD, MSW, MS, Eastern University, PA
Gaynor Yancey, DSW, MSW, MRE, Baylor University, TX

Associate Editors

Dexter Freeman, DSW, Army-University of Kentucky, Army Medical Department
Center and School, TX, Associate Editor of Practice Articles
C. Jean Roberson, DSW, MSW, LCSW, Samford University, AL
Associate Editor of Special Issues
Terry A. Wolfer, Ph.D., University of South Carolina, SC
Associate Editor for Review
James R. Vanderwoerd, Ph.D., MSW, Redeemer University College, Ontario
Associate Editor of Book Reviews

Managing Editor

Rick Chamiec-Case, Ph.D., MSW, MAR, North American Association of
Christians in Social Work

EDITORIAL BOARD

Christson Adedoyin, MSW, Ph.D., Samford University, AL
Gary R. Anderson, Ph.D., Michigan State University, MI
Stephen Baldrige, Ph.D., Abilene Christian University, TX
Stacey L. Barker, Ph.D., MSW, Nyack College, Manhattan, NY
Sandra Bauer, Ph.D., Eastern University, St. Davids, PA
Tenolian Bell, Ph.D., Riviera Beach, FL
Tanya Smith Brice, Ph.D., Bowie State University, Bowie, MD

EDITORIAL BOARD

Bertha Saldana DeJesus, DSW, MSW; Millersville University, PA
Bonnie Cairns-Descoteaux, Ed.D., Asbury College, KY
John Cosgrove, Ph.D., Fordham University, NY, *Emeritus*
Linda Darrell, Ph.D., LCSW-C, Morgan State University, MD
René Drumm, Ph.D., Univ of Southern Mississippi, MS
Ralph W. Eckardt, Jr., DSW, Interserve, USA
Janet E. Furness, Ed.D., MSW, ACSW, Nyack College, NY
Leslie Gregory, MSW, LSW, Eastern University, PA
Stephanie Hamm, Ph.D., MSW, Abilene Christian University, TX
Helen Wilson Harris, Ed.D., LCSW, Baylor University, TX
Peter Hookey, Ph.D., Mennonite Central Committee, PA
Lisa Hosack, Ph.D., Grove City College, PA
Mackenzi Huyser, Ph.D., MSW, Chicago Semester, IL
Edward G. Kuhlmann, D.S.W., Eastern University, PA, *Emeritus*
Joe Kuilema, Ph.D., MSW, Calvin College, MI
Daniel Lee, Ph.D., Loyola University of Chicago, IL, *Emeritus*
Twyla Lee, MSW, LCSW, Indiana Wesleyan University, Marion, IN
Marleen Milner, Ph.D., MSSW, Southeastern University, FL
Mary Ann Poe, MSW, Union University, TN
James C. Raines, Ph.D., California State University Monterey Bay, CA
Lawrence Ressler, Ph.D., Cairn University, PA
Elizabeth Patterson Roe, Ph.D., LISW-S, Malone University, OH
Terry Russell, Ph.D., Frostburg State University, MD
Scott Sanders MSW, Ph.D., Cornerstone University, Grand Rapids, MI
Trina Williams Shanks, Ph.D., University of Michigan, MI
David A. Sherwood, Ph.D., *Emeritus*, Newberg, OR
Kesslyn Brade Stennis, Ph.D., MSW, MDiv, Coppin State University, MD
Curtis VanderWaal, Ph.D., Andrews University, MI
Mary Van Hook, Ph.D., University of Central Florida, FL, *Emeritus*
Charity Samantha Vo, Ph.D., Nashville, TN
Gaynor I. Yancey, DSW, Baylor University, TX
Carrie Yocum, Ph.D., Grace College, IN

INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

Social Work & Christianity publishes four types of articles: a) conceptual articles; b) research articles; c) practice articles; and d) point of view articles. Go to swc.nacs.w.org to check out the criteria used by reviewers to evaluate submissions for each type of article, and to submit a manuscript to SWC.

Submit your manuscript electronically to SWC as a Microsoft Word file which includes the following information: a) the full title of the article; b) an abstract of not more than 150 words; c) the full text of the article (without author identification); d) references and any tables or appendices (please use the current edition of the American Psychological Association Style Manual for in-text references and reference lists); e) keywords or phrases (4–8) to facilitate online searches.

Also, to ensure the integrity of the blind peer-review process, before you submit your manuscript, please delete the name(s) of the author(s) anywhere they appear in the text, and remove the author identification from the “properties” section of your document.

At least three members of the editorial board will anonymously review manuscripts based on: a) relevance of content to major issues concerning the ethical integration of competent social work practice and Christianity; b) potential contribution to social work

scholarship and practice; c) literary merit; d) clarity; and e) freedom from language that conveys devaluation or stereotypes of persons or groups. The editor in chief will make final acceptance decisions.

Authors may correspond with the managing editor by email at rick@nacs.org.

BOOK REVIEWS FOR SWC

Social Work & Christianity welcomes book review manuscripts for the Reviews section of the journal. Book reviews should be relevant to SWC's readership and therefore should include content pertinent to Christians in social work. Book review authors should follow these guidelines:

- To submit a book review to SWC, go to: swc.nacs.org.
- Ordinarily books should be fairly recent (published within two years); if later, reviewers should provide some justification for why an older book has current relevance.
- Reviews should be about 600–800 words in length.
- Reviews should include an overview of the book's main points, especially those pertaining to Christians in social work.
- In addition to a descriptive summary of the book's content, reviews should provide some assessment, critique, and analysis of the book's strengths and weaknesses, and its contribution to the field of social work practice, especially to specific audiences such as subfields of social work practice, students, academics, administrators, and church leaders.
- Reviews should adhere to general guidelines for formatting and writing described in the general Instructions for Authors.

All submitted book review manuscripts, whether invited or not, are subject to editorial review and acceptance by the book review editor, in conjunction with the editor-in-chief, who will make final decisions regarding acceptance for publication.

Reviews submitted for a special topic issue should be clearly marked as such.

Please contact James Vanderwoerd, the Book Review Editor, of *Social Work & Christianity*, at jwoerd@redeemer.ca with any questions or for additional information.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Social Work & Christianity welcomes Letters to the Editor. To submit a Letter to the Editor to SWC, go to: swc.nacs.org.

The purpose of the Letters to the Editor section in *Social Work & Christianity* is to provide creative space for dialogue about complicated topics for Christians in social work. Our hope is that submissions in this form allow for the healthy exchange of ideas and perspectives. The Letters to the Editor section is grounded in our Christian values of humility, mutual respect, and generosity of spirit, as well as our professional values of critical thinking and integrity.

Letters to the Editor should be no more than 500–1,000 words in length and invite conversation as it offers the opportunity for readers to observe an open and civil exchange of ideas and perspectives. Letters which are a response to articles previously published in *Social Work & Christianity* will be shared with the article author(s), who will have the

opportunity to respond to the letter. Such Letters to the Editor are encouraged to ask clarifying questions in a spirit of curiosity (as opposed to a spirit of confrontation), model careful listening, and seek common ground where possible as it shares alternative points of view for readers' consideration. Letters to the Editor which include personal attacks or denigration of individuals or organizations will not be considered.

SUBSCRIPTIONS & INDEXING

Four issues per year of *SWC* are a benefit of membership in NACSW. Membership information may be obtained by contacting NACSW at info@nacs.org or 888.426.4712.

Subscriptions are available for \$130/year for institutions located in the US, \$150/year (US\$) for institutions located in Canada, and \$150/year (US\$) for institutions in all countries outside of North America. This low subscription rate includes both hard print copies as well as on-line access to *Social Work & Christianity*. Please note that on-line access allows access to issues of *SWC* going back to 1974.

Back orders of most issues of *SWC* (formerly *The Paraclete*) are available for \$5 per copy. For more information including a list of contents by issue or questions about advertising in *SWC*, contact NACSW. *SWC* is indexed in *Social Work Abstracts*, *Sociological Abstracts*, *Social Services Abstracts*, *Guide to Social Science and Religion in Periodical Literature*, *PsycINFO*, and *Christian Periodical Index*. Full text articles from *Social Work & Christianity* appear in both ProQuest as well as EBSCO's *SocINDEX with Full Text*, *Academic Search Complete*, and *Social Sciences Full Text* bibliographic research databases.

Individuals and organizations that wish to advertise professional events, resources, and programs that are compatible with the mission of NACSW should contact the NACSW office (info@nacs.org or 888.426.4712) for rates, publishing procedures, and deadlines.

Copyright 2020 by the North American Association of Christians in Social Work, Box 121, Botsford, CT 06404-0121, info@nacs.org, www.nacs.org (Kevin J. Brown, President; Rick Chamicc-Case, Executive Director). Printed in the US by IMAGES PLUS of WI, LLC.

SOCIAL WORK & CHRISTIANITY

JOURNAL OF THE NORTH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
OF CHRISTIANS IN SOCIAL WORK

FALL 2020
VOLUME 47, NUMBER 3
ISSN 0737-5778
DOI: 10.34043/swc.v47i3

CONTENTS

SPECIAL ISSUE: COMMUNITY AND COMMUNITY PRACTICE

Guest Editors: Kevin J. Brown & Gaynor Yancey

Introduction from the Editor in Chief: Communities and the Kingdom

Jane Hoyt-Oliver

DOI: 10.34043/swc.v47i3.172

3–5

Introduction to the Special Issue: Understanding the Importance of Community Practice for Christian Social Workers

Kevin J. Brown, Gaynor Yancey

DOI: 10.34043/swc.v47i3.174

6–15

ARTICLES

Conceptual Articles

Sacred Connections: Using Faith-based Narratives to Create Matricentric Empowerment Spaces for Syrian Refugee Women

Kayte Thomas

DOI: 10.34043/swc.v47i3.79

16–32

Reframing the Orphan Mandate

Bonni Goodwin, Angela B. Pharris, Dallas Pettigrew

DOI: 10.34043/swc.v47i3.111

33–49

The Community Empowerment Framework: A Benchmark for Christian Social Work

Stephen W. Stoeffler, Rigaud Joseph, Ezra Creedon

DOI: 10.34043/swc.v47i3.143

50–65

- Reducing Police Brutality in African American Communities:
Potential Roles for Social Workers in Congregations
Betty L. Wilson, Terry A. Wolfer
DOI: 10.34043/swc.v47i3.153 66–84

Practice Articles

- Strengthening Congregational Communities: Social Justice
Engagement Through Deliberative Dialogue
Amanda Wilson Harper
DOI: 10.34043/swc.v47i3.149 85–99

- Good Neighbor House: Reimagining Settlement Houses for 21st
Century Communities
Edward Polson, T. Laine Scales
DOI: 10.34043/swc.v47i3.144 100–122

BOOK REVIEW

- Review of *Development on Purpose: Faith & Human Behavior in
the Social Environment*
Erin Olson
DOI: 10.34043/swc.v47i3.167 123–125

- Review of *Mystery and the Adopted Child*
Raquel Ellis
DOI: 10.34043/swc.v47i3.134 126–127

- Review of *Listening to Sexual Minorities: A Study of Faith and
Sexual Identity on Christian College Campuses*
Leslie Gregory
DOI: 10.34043/swc.v47i3.136 128–129

PUBLICATION 130

Social Work & Christianity is published quarterly by the North American
Association of Christians in Social Work, Sandy Hook, Connecticut 06482.

ISSN 0737-5778

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NACSW, PO Box 121; Botsford, CT 06404.

Communities and the Kingdom: An Introduction from the Editor-in-Chief

Jane Hoyt-Oliver

Keywords: community, Christian faith, social justice, social work

Social workers know that human beings act within and to their social environment. Christian social workers understand that we have been *created* to do so. We are born into and are shaped by the world around us. Each human being lives in a social environment: we are shaped not only by those who are closest to us, but by the macro context in which we live out our lives. Our personal history is shaped not only by our gifts, our graces and personal development, but by the history of those with whom we identify and how those identifications have been perceived by those who, (at whatever time in history we are living), are shaping the culture. Individual choices, of course, matter: how those choices play out in community can be critically important as well.

Christians are called to reflect Jesus in our lives (John 14:12). We are to both obey the laws of God and live in this world. But we are called to live by a different set of rules than those who do not follow Jesus. We are called to be more generous (2 Cor. 8:1-5), more compassionate (Col. 3:12-17), and to radically love others (Mark 12:30-31) in ways that demonstrate that we are God's people. Humans cannot "do" these commands in isolation. Generosity, compassion, and radical love take place only when they are done faithfully in community.

Kevin Brown and Gaynor Yancey, the editors of this special issue on Communities, have selected articles that reflect a broad range of issues that faith people must grapple with within the context of community. Thomas (2020) presents a model by which Christians can care for Syrian

mothers who are refugees. She argues this is a sacred connection which builds empathy and allows for creative change for those who have often been marginalized. Goodwin et al. (2020) discuss the reality that Christian intervention has not always met the Christian ideal set out above as it relates to Indigenous children in the United States, and asks that consideration of new policies be considered. Stoeffler et al. (2020) provide a conceptual framework by which Christian social workers can empower their clients to navigate the social problems for which those clients are seeking help. Polson and Scales (2020) highlight the history and ongoing work of Good Neighbor House and why such organizations continue to have relevance in the 21 st century. Harper (2020) explores the difficult choices that pastors face as they balance their desire for social justice to be discussed within churches and the reluctance of some parishioners to see that work as important to the overall witness of the church in the world. Wilson and Wolfer (2020) offer research as to how Christian social workers can assist their congregations confront the problem of police brutality in African American communities.

As you read each article, it is my prayer that you will grow in your own understanding of what it means to live in community. May we live the words of St. John when he implored "...Let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth" (1 John 3:18, NIV). ❖

References

- Goodwin, B., Pharris, B. A., & Pettigrew, D. (2020). Reframing the orphan mandate. *Christianity & Social Work, 47* (3) 33-49
<https://doi.org/10.34043/swc.v47i3.111>
- Harper, A.W. (2020). Strengthening congregational communities: Social justice engagement through deliberative dialogue. *Christianity & Social Work, 47* (3) 85-99. <https://doi.org/10.34043/swc.v47i3.149>
- Polson, E., & Scales, T. L. (2020). Good neighbor house: Reimagining settlement houses for 21 st century communities. *Christianity & Social Work, 47* (3) 100-122 <https://doi.org/10.34043/swc.v47i3.144>
- Stoeffler, S.W., Joseph, R., & Creedon, E. (2020). The community empowerment framework: A benchmark

for Christian social work. *Christianity & Social Work*, 47 (3) 50-65 <https://doi.org/10.34043/swc.v47i3.143>

Thomas, K. (2020). Sacred connections: Using faith-based narratives to create matricentric empowerment spaces for Syrian refugee women. *Christianity & Social Work*, 47 (3) 16-32 <https://doi.org/10.34043/swc.v47i3.79>

Wilson, B., & Wolfer, T.W. (2020). Reducing police brutality in african american communities: Potential roles for social workers in congregations. *Christianity & Social Work*, 47 (3) 66-84 <https://doi.org/10.34043/swc.v47i3.153>

Jane Hoyt-Oliver, LISW-S, Ph.D., is Emerita Professor of Social Work at Malone University and Editor-in Chief for *Social Work and Christianity*. 7223 Ashmoore Ave. NW, N. Canton, OH 44720. Phone: 330-497-8109 email: jhoytoliver617@gmail.com

Understanding the Importance of Community Practice for Christian Social Workers

Kevin J. Brown, Gaynor Yancey
Guest Editors, Social Work & Christianity Journal
Special Issue on Community and Community Practice

The start of the early Christian church is recounted in the book of Acts. In Acts 2 (NKJV), the author shares that after the outpouring of the Spirit of God, over 3,000 believers gather themselves together, where they held “everything in common,” shared their resources, and that each person’s needs were met (Acts 2:41-45, The Message).

The following article takes a bird’s eye view that assists us, as social workers, in understanding the importance of community practice. Community calls us to a sense of belonging and inclusion with a group of people. Community also calls us to consider again our shared values and resources. This article grounds us in the Biblical narrative, moves to our social work skills and knowledge base, and then concludes with thoughts that encourage us to address the “wicked problems” by being disruptive forces in the planned change process which is at the heart of community practice.

Keywords: asset mapping, community practice, emergent planning, macro practice, strengths perspective

As we consider the opening article for this special community practice edition of *Social Work and Christianity*, our world and nation are experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic. A new phrase has entered our lexicon, “social distancing,” a concept that requires us to isolate ourselves, physically, from others to avoid the contagion in our midst. There is irony attached to publishing a journal devoted to community practice with such unprecedented isolation amid a world-wide pandemic.

Crabb (1997) points to the salient feature of connection, a healing power that arises when life, and pain, is shared, positing that “the root of all our personal and emotional difficulties is a lack of togetherness, a failure to connect that keeps us from receiving life and prevents the life in us from spilling over into others” (p. 32). The writer of Hebrews notes this power also, calling us to “consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another” (Hebrews 10:24-25, NIV). In fact, scripture is full of passages noting the healing power of community.

Social work is fundamentally rooted in the idea that human behavior, and thus the locus for change, exists in the context of a social environment. Brueggemann (2014) contends that humans need community and cannot attain full realization in isolation, but rather “only as a person is nurtured, guided, and suffused first with family, then groups, and finally with the life of communal social relationships” (p. 142). Kirst-Ashman and Hull (2015) stress that “social workers must view individual clients’ problems in the complex larger environments in which these clients live” (p. 259). From our early history as a profession, social workers have maintained the position that individuals live in community and that communities, therefore, influence the well-being of humanity, either for better or for worse.

Biblical Foundation

Not only is scripture full of passages that note the healing power of community, it also assists us in understanding the importance and necessity of assessment. Understanding our environment is another key aspect of social work practice. Differently than the individual clients in clinical practice, the clients of community practice may be organizations, geographic or functional communities. Hebrew culture saw the individual through a communal lens, and thus envisioned sin as a reflection of a sinful community, rather than as actions of individuals. From this perspective, repentance was more than an individual choice but also the commitment of the entire people to ameliorate sinful conditions impacting the community.

An Example from the Exodus Narrative

In Numbers 13 (NKJV), God tells Moses to send out spies from each of the tribes of Israel to look at Canaan and to bring a report of what they saw (evidence-based practice), to the Israelite community. When Moses sent them out, he gave them the exact geographic boundaries that he wanted them to assess. He wanted them to assess the land, the people, the strength or weakness of the cities, whether there were forests, and he also asked them to return with actual fruit to show the size of the fruit.

When the spies returned, they reported the findings of their assessment, including examples of fruit so lush and heavy that it had to be carried on a pole. Part of their report was that the people were so big that the spies felt like grasshoppers in their midst (NIV; NKJV; The Message). All the spies, except for Caleb, were fearful of the people and what they had assessed. Caleb, on the other hand, had a strengths-perspective view of what they had seen, suggesting the people take possession of the land because they had the ability to conquer it.

However, in the next chapter, the people rebelled against God, Moses and Aaron. A return to the oppressive conditions under which they lived in Egypt appeared superior to the risk of conflict with what they perceived as overwhelming forces arrayed against them in the Promised Land. The consequence was 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

This narrative points to the importance of community in the biblical narrative. While God desires Shalom, a combination of peace and community flourishing, often fear of conflict and change overwhelms a community's desire to risk change, resulting in homeostatic conditions which replicate systemic ills. The courageous vision of those, like Caleb, who embrace a strengths perspective and a hope for Shalom, is required to undo evil conditions restraining communities from becoming places of health and wholeness.

Macro Social Work Practice

Macro social work has existed since long before social work became a profession. Mutual aid practices and societies were created when individuals responded to the needs of others in the community. As some in the community recognized injustices, social movements were formed in order to create equitable treatment for those who were being oppressed, marginalized, or against whom certain biases prevented them from being able to thrive and flourish. The roots of the social work profession are in charitable organization societies and settlement houses. Social justice and equity are at the heart of the social issues addressed by community practitioners. All social workers are trained in micro, mezzo, and macro practice skills, because the profession recognizes the complex interplay between person and environment, a unique feature of social work.

Community practice.

Community practice is one of the practice areas found within macro practice. Community practice may involve any of the following: community organizing, community development, community planning, economic planning, and political and social action. Community practice involves an intentional, planned change process. Instead of interventions

occurring at an individual level, the interventions occur with organizations, communities, and with groups of people. Homan (2016) says, “To promote change in a community, the community must believe in its own ability to change and must take responsibility for its own actions or inactions” (p. 27). Working with the community as the client is always done with people, those who are members of the community.

Types of communities.

Netting et al., (2008, p. 131) suggest that there are, basically, two types of communities. *Geographical, spatial, or territorial communities* are all bounded by some type of geography resulting in being a neighborhood, a city, a state, a nation, or some part of any of these. *Functional communities* are communities of identification and interest. Weil and Gamble (1995, p. 583) posit that when “people share a concern about a common issue,” then functional communities are formed.

Social movements.

Movements such as Black Lives Matter, the Right to Life Movement, the Gay Rights Movement, and the MeToo Movement are more recent examples of responses being made to injustices that are being experienced by certain people groups. With COVID-19, we have been experiencing movements related to going back to work, discontinuing sheltering in place, and how we distance ourselves, and/or wear masks for protection when we are away from our homes. “Heroes work here” is a new phrase being posted outside of hospitals, residential care facilities, and on behalf of first responders.

NASW Code of Ethics.

The NASW *Code of Ethics* reflects the expectation of the social work profession relative to macro and community practice. “Social workers should engage in social and political action that seeks to ensure that all people have equal access to the resources, employment, services and opportunities they require to meet their basic human needs and to develop fully. Social workers should be aware of the impact of the political arena on practice and should advocate for changes in policy and legislation to improve social conditions in order to meet basic human needs and promote social justice” (NASW, 2017, Sec. 6.04).

Community Practice Skills

The Biblical narrative highlights several important practice skills. The following professional practice skills are shared as essential to community practice: assessment, strengths perspective, and emergent planning.

Assessment

An asset-based perspective. In a community, assets are any strengths, talents, skills, abilities, physical spaces, businesses, cultural values, and other informal and formal resources which are positive and help the community flourish. Assets are found in individuals, associations, institutions, infrastructure and physical locations, and economic systems. Every community in the world has assets and strengths to be recognized and celebrated.

Mapping assets. Asset mapping is a process where community members work together to identify and provide information about their community's strengths and resources (in all the categories listed above, as well as any others they think are important). Members of the asset mapping team compile information about the community's assets by driving and walking around the community and taking notes, talking to many community residents, visiting local businesses, institutions, and public spaces, and consulting other data about the community. The finished product of the asset mapping project is an actual, physical map created either with paper or in electronic format online with mapping software such as Google Maps.

Importance of asset mapping

Sometimes, when people notice things they want to change or improve in their communities, it can be easy to get stuck in negative thinking and focus on what is missing. Asset mapping, however, different than conducting a needs assessment, encourages community members to focus on the **strengths** of the community. Focusing on the many positive parts of a community helps bring people together to come up with solutions to challenges and to look inward for those solutions, rather than looking outside the community for help. The assets and strengths of the community become the foundation for new things to be built, partnerships to be formed, and changes to be made.

Background of asset mapping

Asset mapping is a part of a larger framework called Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) which was started in Chicago by John Kretzmann and John McKnight (1996) as a strategy to find and activate what a community already has. ABCD is people-centered, locally focused, and driven by community residents (rather than "outsiders"). Asset mapping is the first step in a longer-term ABCD process. There is no one "right" way to do Asset Based Community Development; every community designs and carries out the work according to its own vision, values, and priorities. After asset mapping, the next stage of work is often asset mobilization, which involves using the findings to shape new partnerships, make connections,

implement projects or programs, or start city-wide initiatives. With a quick online search, one can find dozens of examples of successful Asset Based Community Development efforts that have resulted in meaningful change for communities around the world.

Strengths perspective

As we look at organizations, communities, and the systems within them, including the people, utilizing a strengths perspective is crucial to incorporate instead of utilizing a deficit view of what we are assessing. A strengths-perspective model was created as an alternative framework to problem-solving and medical models in which the strengths of the client are the focus in order to instill hope, empower, and encourage the concept that no matter how harsh the situation, there is always a good and positive avenue from which to view the circumstance (Sheafor et al., 1997). This model works quite well within community practice. It is a basis for working from what already exists and building on those strengths and resources rather than looking primarily at where things are broken.

Emergent planning

Netting et al. (2008) propose an emergent planning process of community that involves four elements: engagement, discovery, sense-making, and unfolding. The wonderful aspect of allowing discoveries to emerge is that the social worker values the voices and expertise of members of the identified community. In this process, the community social worker practices as one of many voices. Honoring and dignifying community residents and leaders is paramount to the ultimate, shared vision of planned change as a result of the process.

Engagement

Community engagement requires the social worker to assure that multiple perspectives are heard and treated as valid. This provides an atmosphere of mutual respect and sets the stage for a relational focus. Furthermore, it assures that the context is understood from the lived perspective of those most affected by the process of change, thus embracing and accounting for the complexity of these foci.

Discovery

Planning for change requires information derived from multiple data sources. The process of collecting information assures that the data are

both valid and are sufficiently robust and complex so as to understand the phenomenon being addressed. It also prepares participants for the next stage of the process—sense-making—by fully equipping participants with multiple perspectives and a broad source of information upon which to build consensus.

Sense-making

The process of decision-making requires the elements of compromise and consensus. It requires that participants respect the unique context of the community and that decisions fit and work for the particulars of the situation. Sense-making assures complexity, sophistication, and validity in decision-making.

Unfolding

Simplistic and reactionary solutions rarely result in sustainable change. The unfolding process assures that the options and possibilities reflect the particulars of the unique situation in which the community is acting. This part of the process builds upon the learning process thus far and assures continual learning. In lieu of reductionistic explanations, the process privileges complexity. Furthermore, it assumes continual revisions to the change process as situations change and new developments occur.

Rather than being a linear process, the emergent planning process recognizes that each stage be revisited periodically. As new issues arise, or when the current one changes, community actors can once again address engagement, discovery, sense-making, and unfolding to continue the sequence. Once learned, it becomes a continuous process of community engagement leading toward community-based empowerment, wholeness, and health.

The Location for Community Practice

The importance of community practice is evidenced by the important flow of humans toward the city. Gorringer (2002) wrote, “The Bible begins in a garden but ends in a city” (p. 119). Indeed, for the first time in human history, over half of all humans now live in cities and by 2050 this number is anticipated to increase to 66% (United Nations, 2014). The flow of humanity into larger metropolises suggest to us that interventions which address social ills, the work of community practice, are more important now than at any time in human history. Furthermore, the impact of the urban culture in suburbia, and even in rural communities, assures that social ills are not unique to more populated places; we are all interconnected. Social workers who identify as Christians would heed well the call of Jeremiah 29:7 (NIV) to seek the Shalom, the peace

and prosperity, of our nation's cities and the accompanying social ills, especially as the city's problems tend to disseminate beyond the metropolis into the countryside.

The Book of Acts and Community Practice

The Acts narrative of the early church has much to teach about community practice. In the first chapter the disciples were isolated in a Jerusalem home, lost without their mentor. In chapter two they were filled with the Spirit and begin telling the Good News to those gathered for the Pentecost festival from around the world in their native tongues, quickly spreading the message to a worldwide audience. In chapter four the first social ministry began as the early believers began to share their possessions with those who had need, thus ameliorating poverty of economically challenged followers. By chapter six, we see this ministry become systematized as a degree of marginalization had infiltrated the ministry, pitting Hebrews against Hellenists.

As with many effective ministries, opposition soon arose, resulting in the stoning of Stephen and the ascendance of Saul, who "made havoc of the church" (Acts 8:7, NKJV). As a result, the early believers dispersed to other places to begin similar ministries in metropolises beyond Jerusalem. Phillip oversaw an amazing transformation throughout Samaria and converted a key Ethiopian bureaucrat with significant influence in an African government, and then spread the work throughout numerous cities.

Saul, who had been vehemently opposed to the Way [of Christ], had a powerful transformative experience and embarked upon urban missionary journeys throughout much of the known world, believing that cities were critical to the spread of Shalom throughout the world. Peter recognized that the message of God was not limited to Jews and thus developed a more inclusive ministry which Paul, in Galatians 2, would broaden by arguing that Gentiles were not required to convert to Judaism before becoming followers of Jesus.

Throughout the narrative, and in the subsequent books of the New Testament, the early church recognized that transformation occurred on two fronts. On one level, personal transformation began when one adopted the teachings of Jesus and joined the movement. On the other, societal transformation occurred as the teachings of Christ and the church began to impact the ways that people lived together both as the church and as members of the places where they lived. The early church made no distinction between personal and social transformation. This presaged the professional stance of modern social work that recognizes the interplay between different practice levels.

Conclusion

In James 1:27, Christians are called to practice their faith on two fronts: developing personal holiness while engaging social ills. Conn and Ortiz (2001) note that Christians have often avoided social problems, especially those that proliferate in urban environments, by creating protective siloes that shield believers from the negative impact of the world as opposed to developing the church's impact and reach into the community. In his book, *Christian Social Innovation*, L. Gregory Jones (2016) suggests that the social issues of the world are “wicked” problems, but he suggests that there must be “disruptive” forces to change these into situations where people thrive and flourish. It is fair to say that social workers are, and may be, seen as such disruptive forces, acting for the common good and equitable treatment of all people groupings, organizations, and communities. Because we are called to “act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly” with God (Micah 6:8, NIV), one could argue that Christian social workers are called to be more disruptive in fostering Shalom than our counterparts.

With our social work skill sets and our knowledge base, we are equipped to work closely with people, organizations, and communities. In this work, we will be disruptive forces for the good and equitable treatment of those experiencing the social ills inherent in our communities. In community practice, with the inclusion of the very people with whom we practice, we will work intentionally with opportunities for planned change that disrupt long-entrenched social ills. ❖

References

- Brueggemann, W. G. (2014). *The practice of macro social work* (4th ed.). Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning.
- Conn, H. M., & Ortiz, M. (2001). *Urban ministry: The kingdom, the city & the people of God*. InterVarsity Press.
- Crabb, L. (1997). *Connecting: A radical new vision*. Word.
- Gorringe, J. T. (2002). *A theology of the built environment: Justice, empowerment, redemption*. Cambridge University Press.
- Homan, M. S. (2016). *Promoting community change: Making it happen in the real world* (6th ed.). Brooks/Cole
- Jones, L. Gregory (2016). *Christian social innovation: Renewing Wesleyan witness*. The United Methodist Publishing House.
- Kirst-Ashman, K. K., & Hull, G. H. (2015). *Generalist practice with organizations and communities*. Brooks/Cole.
- Kretzmann, J., & McKnight, J. P. (1996). Assets based community development. *National Civic Review* 85(4), 23-29. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ncr.4100850405>
- NASW, (2017). *Code of Ethics*. National Association of Social Workers.
- Netting, F. E., O'Connor, M. K., & Fauri, D. P. (2008). *Comparative approaches to program planning*. Wiley.

- Netting, F. E., Kettner, P. M. & McMurtry, S. L. (2008). *Social work practice*. Pearson.
- Sheafor, B. W., Horejsi, C. R., & Horejsi, G. A. (1997). *Techniques and guidelines for social work practice* (4th ed.). Allyn & Bacon.
- United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2014). *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision, Highlights (ST/ESA/SER.A/352)*.
- Weil, M., & Gamble, D. N. (1995). *Community practice models*. In R. L. Edwards & J. G. Hopps (eds.). *The encyclopedia of social Work* (19th ed., (pp. 577-593). NASW Press.

Kevin J. Brown, PhD, MSW, MS serves as the Chair of the Social Work Department at Eastern University, 1300 Eagle Road, St. David's, PA 19087-3696. Phone: 610-341-5800. Email: Kevin.Brown@eastern.edu

Gaynor Yancey, DSW, MSW, MRE serves as Professor of Social Work, Director of the Center for Church and Community Impact (C3I), and the Lake Family Foundation Endowed Chair in Congregational and Community Health at Baylor University's Diana R. Garland School of Social Work and Truett Seminary, One Bear Place #97320, Waco, TX 76798-7320. Phone 254-710-6424 and 254-710-6085. Email: Gaynor_Yancey@baylor.edu

Sacred Connections: Using Faith-based Narratives to Create Matricentric Empowerment Spaces for Syrian Refugee Women

Kayte Thomas

The Syrian conflict has created the largest refugee crisis the world has ever known, and while women and children are extremely vulnerable, the unique needs of refugee mothers are often overlooked in both policy and practice. Great importance is placed on motherhood roles in both Western and Arabic cultures, and providing targeted support to uplift refugee mothers can have significant positive ramifications as Syrian refugees resettle into their new lives. Guided by Brené Brown's insights on empathy and drawing parallels from crossover stories of Biblical women in both Christian and Islamic traditions, the author uses sacred connections to build empathy and enact social change. This paper highlights ways that Christian social workers can adopt a matricentric (mother-focused) approach and provides a recommended interfaith model for intervention with Syrian refugee mothers.

Keywords: interfaith, refugees, social work, Christian, Muslim, Syria, matricentric support, empathy, empowerment

CHRISTIANS ARE CALLED BY FAITH TO WALK WITH THE MOST vulnerable. Jesus came here for the marginalized and guides us to see that pastoral care should be for the benefit of the marginalized as well (Steyn, 2010). There are several instances where the Bible directly

commands us to welcome refugees (Goss-Reaves, et al., 2018), and the concept of forced migration is central to Biblical texts. Perhaps the most recognized Biblically-based migration story is that of Moses and the Exodus from Egypt – detailing how an entire civilization fled the country in search of safety and found protection through God. Some may actually view the Israelites as refugees in this context (Guzman, 1997), but at a minimum this story exemplifies forced migration due to restrictive policies and unjust conditions. While many of the Israelites ultimately returned to their homeland, some did not - much like today's people who are also forced into patterns of migration and unable to return to their homes due to well- founded fear of persecution (Admirand, 2014), which is part of the UNHCR's definition of a refugee.

The Bible provides us with guidance as Christians on how to handle refugees and migrants. In fact, God commands what is arguably the first refugee resettlement policy in Judeo-Christian tradition in Exodus 22:21 by stating: *"You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt"* (NRSV). Here, with unequivocal distinction, we are told to welcome refugees. This instruction extends beyond Biblical times, though, and is still relevant today, as the world continues to see an astonishing number of people forcibly displaced globally. Beyond this directive, the New Testament brings us face to face with refugee resettlement concerns in the very story of Jesus, the central figure of the Christian faith. Matthew 2:13-15 explains that Joseph left Bethlehem with Mary and Jesus and fled to Egypt, where they remained for safety until the death of Herod. Christians addressing refugee resettlement concerns are therefore reminded that Jesus was a refugee. Simultaneously, they are called to welcome refugees through numerous Biblical passages. Christians are also reminded that justice comes through serving and attending to the needs of others, and many would argue that we must strive to see God in all refugees (Lopez Perez, 2012).

The primary message of the gospel is to welcome others, and Christians are called to promote peace on a global scale by following God's directive to love refugees and being a voice for positive change in society. Everyone, without distinction, is included in God's grace, and Romans 15:7 reminds us that we are called to accept others as God has accepted us: *"Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."* (NRSV) This concept of welcome is so central to the message of the gospels that it can be viewed as the theme of Jesus' reconciliation of humanity. Human suffering, violence, and inequality are all signs of our need for communion, which can only be achieved through genuine hospitality of those who are displaced. Being Christian by default means welcoming everyone, because the Christian has been forgiven and reconciled through the Lord, so we too must now welcome others as we were once welcomed as well (Constantineanu, 2018).

Since Christianity holds that all people are God's children, it is therefore incumbent upon the Christian practitioner to welcome everyone in creation. Furthermore, Christians should understand not only that God loves all people, but that He calls us to use our gifts as practitioners to help those in need. Christian social workers must align their values with professional expectations to promote and accept diversity, and this is done through the recognition that God created all people in His image, making them worthy of dignity and love. We are called to love others and protect the marginalized and oppressed and bring positive social change through advocacy, which includes the needs of refugees (Goss-Reaves et al., 2018). As the current Syrian conflict has created the largest refugee crisis ever known (Hassan, 2016), this paper will focus on the Syrian population.

This article is intended to encourage Christian social workers to deepen their support of, and empathy towards, Syrian refugee mothers. While this conversation could be applied to a broader audience of Christians in general and all refugee women, I focus specifically on social workers and Syrians for two reasons. First, as a social worker myself, I am intentionally speaking to my professional colleagues because I recognize the incredible ability of social workers to enact change on both the interpersonal and the societal level. Second, I am directing my intentions towards Syrian refugees with hopes of offsetting the extreme marginalization this population faces in the United States (and much of the Western world) today. I focus specifically on Syrian mothers because I believe that motherhood and mothering play critical roles in all societies, so therefore supporting mothers specifically will also have positive ramifications throughout the community. Finally, I am focusing on the interactions of women-with-women because this is most culturally appropriate for the population being discussed due to cultural norms. For these reasons, I will focus on the intersection of Christian mothers with Syrian refugee mothers to highlight ways that Christian social workers can adopt a matricentric (mother-focused) approach while utilizing sacred connections to build empathy and enact social change.

More specifically, matricentric feminism is defined by its founder Andrea O'Reilly (2019) as follows:

Matricentric feminism emphasizes that the category of mother is distinct from the category of women and that many of the challenges mothers face - social, economic political, cultural, psychological - are specific to women's role and identity as mothers. Matricentric feminism is explicitly matrifocal in its perspective and emphasis - it begins with the mother and takes seriously the work of mothering, and positions mothers' needs and concerns as the starting point for a theory and politic on and for women's empowerment. (p. 13)

This concept is an integral component to understanding the topic of Syrian refugee mothers because addressing their unique needs is important in ensuring their successful integration post-resettlement.

While Syrians are not homogeneously Muslim, a robust 87% of the population is Muslim (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2011), and roughly 98% of Syrians admitted to the United States through the refugee program in FY 2016 and FY 2017 – the years in which the United States accepted the most Syrian refugees - identified as Muslim (Refugee Processing Center, 2019). Therefore, we will discuss the similarities between female narratives in both Christianity and Islam in order to foster connection between the two faiths. Storytelling can be a powerful way to foster connection and recognize that we are all more alike than different. I will utilize the crossover stories of women found in both the Christian and Islamic traditions in order to identify points of shared connection and emphasize ways religion and faith stories can be unifying when used in the context of interfaith social support. First, it is important to understand why this particular demographic is marginalized in our society in order to gain a deeper understanding of the need for the practice methods proposed in this article.

Syrian Marginalization

Anti-Islamic views have been growing in the United States since the 1960s and were worsened by U.S. government policies instituted following the 9/11 attacks. The prevailing narrative became an “us vs. them” dynamic which polarized U.S. society and allowed religious and ethnic stereotypes to perpetuate misconceptions about Muslims. This effectively separated them as “un-American” and made the post-9/11 era in the United States hostile to all Arabs and Muslims (Fadda-Conrey, 2011). Islamic terrorism became a focus of U.S. policy as a national security threat after the 9/11 attacks. The fear of Islamic terrorism has led to a fear of Muslim refugees, which set the stage for the Syrian conflict and the numerous resulting refugees to appear threatening rather than as vulnerable persons impacted by a humanitarian crisis (Scribner, 2017).

The Syrian war is responsible for creating the largest refugee crisis the world has ever known, with approximately half of the entire population fleeing the country by 2016 (Hassan, 2016). Survivors have endured a significant amount of trauma from their experience (George, 2012) and female refugees are at greater risk of gender-based violence, rape, survival sex, forced marriage, and more (Yasmine, 2016). As a result, there is a significant amount of psychological trauma experienced by Syrian refugee women and often Syrian women suffer from toxic stress, which impacts them throughout their lives and into adulthood and motherhood (Acim, 2017).

This stress continues to have an adverse effect after resettlement as well and should be taken into consideration when providing support in order to mitigate the damage from their traumatic experiences.

The increased discrimination from a rise in anti-Islamic views has significantly impacted women and young girls who have borne the brunt of the backlash, as they are often more easily identifiable by their style of dress (Barkdull, et al., 2011). Many report feelings of isolation and changes in their family and social structures after fleeing to a new country as well (Al-Natour, et al., 2019). When Syrian women do not feel integrated with their new society, this can further complicate their displacement (Ozkaleli, 2018). Government policies often do not take into account the needs of mothers or the cultural expectations that refugee women may place on their role of motherhood as the highest priority in their lives. There is often conflict between the expectations placed on these women after resettlement and their own perceptions of their needs, which can cause a significant amount of stress for refugee mothers and limit their choices in their new lives (Vervliet, et al., 2014).

Motherhood Issues

Refugee mothers have different experiences than their immigrant or asylee counterparts as the mere experience of being a refugee brings unique challenges that come only with the refugee experience (Ahmed et al., 2017). While all three classifications of migrants leave their home countries in search of a better life, the circumstances surrounding their moves are different and thus impact their post-arrival outcomes. Immigrants move voluntarily to improve their living circumstances, asylees seek protection from a host country after having already arrived there, whereas refugees are forced to flee their homes to seek safety (Gagnon et al. 2013). Refugees may spend several years in refugee camps before being resettled in a new country. Living in a refugee camp may bring physical or sexual violence, family relationships are disrupted, and resettlement may bring a loss of social identity or status (Ahmed et al., 2017). Social isolation and difficulty integrating into a new culture can worsen symptoms of any adverse mental health effects and negatively impact adjustment post-resettlement (Hassan, 2016). Women may feel particularly alienated and “othered,” whether by religious or cultural preferences or gender expectations which are incongruent with the dominant society, and thus may find themselves existing beneath multiple layers of oppression in their new home community (Ozkaleli, 2018).

Furthermore, many Syrian women may be distrustful of social workers and others offering assistance because of previous negative interactions in the refugee camps with workers exploiting them, being discriminatory,

or behaving in a harassing manner towards them. It is important that interventions for Syrian women are multi-systemic and target change at the greater social pressures impacting these women instead of simply interpersonal interventions, which often places a greater burden upon them (Yasmine, 2016). Therefore, Christian social workers must be particularly mindful of this dynamic and aim to be sensitive to this concern and provide appropriate supports. Research has indicated that social support can have positive ramifications on Syrian mothers in terms of both psychological resilience and parenting efficacy post-resettlement. Emotional support related to receiving empathy from others appears to be particularly important in this dynamic, although further research is still needed to determine the best types of support for Syrian mothers overall. Interestingly, Syrian refugee mothers may have a perception that others have had similar life experiences which may be a barrier to seeking support (Sim, 2019). This means that they may assume that the women in their host country have been through similar traumas and feel pressure to function at similar levels simply by assuming that their backgrounds are congruent. This may be a pertinent point to recognize, as addressing this may break down barriers to both accepting and giving care, and Christian social workers working with this population can and should remain mindful of their specific needs when providing interventions. One way to achieve this is to ensure that Syrian refugee mothers are regularly engaged with mothers from the local population in a supportive and empathetic environment.

So how do Christian social workers supporting Syrian refugees fully embrace this partnership and determine the best way of uplifting these women? Guided by world-renowned social worker Brené Brown's research on empathy, I urge Christian women to see themselves in Syrian refugee women through reflecting on ways in which their lives have similarities and points of shared connection. Brown uses the following definition of empathy: "Empathy is described as the ability to perceive a situation from the other person's perspective—to see, hear, and feel the unique world of the other" (Brown, 2006). In her 2013 RSA video *The Power of Vulnerability*, she notes that empathy drives connection between people. "Empathy is a choice, and it's a vulnerable choice. In order to connect with you, I have to connect with something in myself that knows that feeling" (Brown, 2013b). She further notes in her book *Daring Greatly* that "Empathy is...communicating that incredibly healing message of you're not alone" (Brown, 2013a, p. 81). With this in mind, focusing on empathy can then be the driving force behind connection, healing, and transformative change. Therefore, we turn to what we know of mothers in sacred stories to find that shared connection, a point of recognition where the Christian woman can see something of herself in Syrian woman, so that the two can begin the work of healing through empathy.

Sacred Connections

For the purposes of this article, we will focus only on the women who share crossover stories in each faith tradition or who are mentioned in both the Bible and the Qur'an. This allows for reflexivity between all of the women involved and the recognition of shared connection amongst them. It is important to note that in Islamic culture, a mother is revered as having a strong and salient connection to God. Furthermore, mothers and mothering are considered an intricate part of the fabric of society and, as such, must be both understood and nourished in their unique context in relation to the rest of society. Additionally, both religious traditions focus on the concept of "grace," which can be found specifically amongst mothers (Upal, 2005). For the purpose of this argument, we will focus on three specific stories: those of Hagar, Miriam and Jochebed, and Mary. As we review these stories, it is important to be mindful of Brené Brown's four steps to building empathy: perspective taking (viewing the world through another's experience), staying out of judgment (remaining neutral), recognizing the emotion (identifying a time you have felt similarly), and communication (stating that you relate to the experience) (Brown, 2013b) as these steps will be pertinent to implementing the model recommended in the discussion section. In doing so, we will be able to build empathy towards women in these situations and prepare to utilize this perspective when relating to our Syrian mothers.

Hagar

The story of Hagar has multiple layers of meaning pertaining to our focus. Indeed, the very name Hagar means "flight," and her story is connected to the need to flee twice in the Bible. Likewise, the refugee women in our discussion have also had to flee their homes. Additionally, as an Egyptian, she comes from another culture and is inherently "othered" by nature of being different from the rest of the women around her (Murphy, 2012) and is, similarly to today's refugees, considered a resident alien. She holds spiritual significance for those far from home or separated from family and is strongly associated with those in exile (Sherwood, 2014). However, the surprising aspect of this narrative comes in the intertwined nature of Hagar's story with Sarah's. The Biblical story describes their unique connection as one that transcends race, ethnicity, culture, and social status; Arabic tradition details their relationship as closely connected. With this in mind, Hagar's story provides an example of the type of cross-cultural connection women can have which can literally change the course of world events. Although the relationship is complex, both women are ultimately deeply blessed by God through their interactions (Murphy, 2012). In fact,

it is precisely the conflictual nature of this relationship which reveals the wonder of God, because she suffered greatly at Sarah's hands and was cast out into the wilderness and yet remained unwavering in her faith. The Lord created wonders from her anguish (Pigott, 2018) and it easy to see how her story might give comfort to those seeking refuge.

Called Hajar in Islamic tradition, Hagar holds particular importance for Islamic people. While the Qur'an does not specifically address her story, it is through her that Muhammad's lineage is traced and thus she is the matriarch of the bloodline which provided Islam its prophet. Her story of exile and subsequent search for safety are central to the faith's main pilgrimage, the Hajj, and she provides a salient example of determination and strength in her mothering story (Upal, 2005). In fact, some academics have referred to her as both the "ultimate mother" as the founding mother of an entire nation and yet also the "ultimate other" as an outsider given that she is an Egyptian slave (Pigott, 2018). Her story is one of transformation, survival, and overcoming prescribed social roles (Rosen, 2013). Additionally, according to Islamic hadith, Hagar was saved in part due to the welcome of strangers (Admirand, 2014), which reminds us of the importance of cross-cultural roles in the reception of those who have been displaced.

An integral part of Hagar's story is the fact that she was given promises from God that were ordinarily given only to men, and Hebrew men at that. She, as a woman and an outsider, endured great difficulty but received great blessing as well (Pigott, 2018). Just as she relied on her faith in God to know that she and her son would be safe despite treacherous conditions in unknown lands, so too do our refugee women in their search for better and safer lives. Thus, the shared narrative of Hagar's life in Christian and Qur'anic traditions can become a starting point for recognition and compassion between Western Christian women and Syrian refugee women. Indeed, Hagar's story is often used in the context of promoting interfaith dialogue because it is so recognizable and powerful across multiple cultures (Rosen, 2013).

Miriam and Jochebed

We also look to Miriam, Moses's sister, for guidance. Although she is not identified as a mother in Biblical texts, she still takes on an important role when viewed in the context of refugee resettlement and reception. In fact, it is precisely because she is not identified by her motherhood status that we know she is important because other women mentioned in the Bible are rarely, if ever, discussed outside of marriage or motherhood roles (Reiss, 2010). Both the Bible and Qur'an document her efforts to help Moses by overseeing his journey down the river and ensuring access to a

wet nurse for nourishment. Of course, this is not any wet nurse but his biological mother, Jochebed, and Miriam has used her cleverness to keep her family intact despite the context of forced separations (Wouk, 2013). Many refugee women become surrogate guardians to children due to various circumstances. Some may take over care of a child when their parents have died, some may find children separated from other family temporarily due to displacement, while others may watch over a child while in the refugee camp and have to separate when one or the other is resettled. Regardless of the circumstances, many refugee women are charged with taking care of someone else's child until they reach safety and thus can relate to this story. Conversely, they may also be in the position of being separated from their own child and therefore can relate to this story from that perspective as well.

Miriam's role runs deeper than this though, as she has a transactional role with the women around her and fosters collaboration between them that transcends race and religion through her interaction with the Egyptians (Wouk, 2013). She is credited with leading the Israelite women in praise and worship at Mount Sinai after their initial freedom and is hailed as a prophetess. She is known for maintaining a shared dialogue amongst the people and ushering them into deep spiritual experiences with God (Reiss, 2010). Thus, she can be viewed as a model for Christian women wanting to engage in supportive roles in interfaith settings. What stronger alliance and model of empathy could today's cross-cultural interfaith women make than that which transcends the politics of refugee resettlement?

We cannot look at Miriam's protective role with her brother Moses without also addressing Jochebed, their mother. She too demonstrated strength and trust in God when she listened to Him and heeded the promise that if she sent her son down the river, he would be returned. Qur'anic accounts hold that she had a direct line of communication with God, and was divinely inspired (Ibrahim, 2015). Additionally, her narrative demonstrates a great display of courage in the midst of persecution and her motherhood role is exalted as being in high status because of the importance of her children's roles in religious events. She is known for bravery and a willingness to risk her life for the safety of her child (Zucker, 2017), which surely mirrors the experience of so many refugee women who risk their lives for their own children today. Together, these two women offer profound insights into the dangers women are willing to face in order to keep their loved ones safe despite persecution.

Mary

The story of Mary is particularly relevant to both Christians and Muslims because of her connection as the mother of Jesus, who is considered divine in Christianity and a prophet in Islam. She provides a salient

example of love, faith, and the importance of the mothering role. Through her story, we see significant examples of both joy and loss (Upal, 2005). Indeed, al-Natour et al. (2019) explains that some Syrian Muslim mothers felt connection to Mary in their suffering and expressed their sorrow as wanting to disappear or never having been born in the first place in order to avoid the difficulty of the refugee experience. The Qur'anic version of Jesus's birth tells of Mary (Maryam) wishing that she had died before the experience because of the unbearable pain of labor, and one Syrian mother in a qualitative interview disclosed that she felt the same way about her refugee journey because of the difficulty she endured in the process of migration (al-Natour et al., 2019).

Indeed, Mary's motherhood journey was full of anguish and challenges. She had to accept that her child would have a different life than those around him from the beginning of her path as a mother. She had moments of self-doubt, guilt, and fear just as any modern mother today experiences. Her story reminds us that she was human and makes her experience therefore relatable to mothers throughout time. She shows a great deal of courage and resiliency when dealing with adversity (Barker, 2013), and it is in these traits especially that our Christian and Syrian women can find ways to approach discussions about their journeys and recognize their innate strengths, especially if everyone involved is also a mother.

It is important to pay particular attention to the fact that Mary was both an internally displaced person and a refugee, much like many of our Syrian women. Mary escaped to Egypt with her family because of the threat from King Herod on her son's life (Wright & Măcelaru), 2018). Keep in mind that refugees are given that status because of a "well-founded fear of persecution" as defined by the 1951 Refugee Convention (UNHCR, 2018), and the Holy Family's plight certainly falls within this definition. Additionally, when they are able to return and settle in Nazareth, Mary would still be considered internally displaced as this is not her original home and she is still unable to return due to issues with persecution (Wright, 2018). Christians may be able to understand how Mary felt in this situation as she tried to protect her child, and how they might feel in a similar situation as well. They can then transfer these feelings of empathy when considering the Syrian refugee mothers – moments when they *connect with something in themselves* in order to *connect with them*. It is this type of personal reflection and shared recognition which can truly transform one's viewpoint when addressing issues that may initially seem foreign.

Through these mother figures, we see tangible examples of survival, courage, and selflessness. Each woman we have glimpsed here has been placed in impossible situations and took great lengths to protect their children. Similarly, each narrative is applicable to the refugee experience because of the aspects of separation, isolation, and desperation. Yet in each

story we also see God. Each woman perseveres through her difficulties and finds the promises that God made to them, and with this in mind we should honor the experience of each Syrian refugee woman and trust that she too will receive the blessings promised by God on her journey. Just as God never left the women in our stories, we can be sure He never left our Syrian women, either. It is incumbent upon us as Christian social work practitioners to see the Light of God in those we serve, especially the Syrian refugee women addressed herein so that, going forward, we can build upon the empathy and shared recognition to create a more just society.

Constructing Spaces

These stories assist us with recognizing points of shared – and indeed sacred – connection, and in doing so also underscore the Christian value that we are all one human family because when we recognize sacred connections in those from other cultures, we should no longer accept the boundaries that separate us as valid. Now, we must address how to take action moving forward. Christian social workers are obligated to be welcoming to refugees not only because of these Biblical directives but also because of the NASW Code of Ethics. In fact, NASW released a statement specific to the needs of Syrian refugees in 2015:

The NASW Code of Ethics calls on social workers to act to prevent discrimination based on religion, race culture and other factors. Our Code of Ethics also calls on social workers to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, particularly people who suffer massive displacement due to wars and violent civil conflicts. NASW supports all efforts to provide a safe haven and support services for people fleeing the crisis in Syria (NASW, 2015).

As you can see from the above example, the Christian social worker is bound by both faith directives and professional ethics to support Syrian refugees.

Following scripturally based directives, some may make the mistake of positioning refugees into places of “other” in society: outsider, foreigner, needy, helpless, stranger. Many people in the United States have forgotten that they, too, were once immigrants or strangers in this land, and therefore fail to connect to the plight of the refugee in meaningful ways. Often, the Christian-based focus is not on providing supportive assistance to the refugee but providing salvation for them (McKinnon, 2009). It would be wise to turn away from a Biblical perspective of the “needy alien” which has so often created the framework of organizational supports that place the worker in the role of aid-giver and the refugee in the role of passive recipient.

Instead, the Christian social worker can aim to apply a scripturally based view of women as strong and capable when working with Syrian women. By doing so, we can create egalitarian spaces in which the Christian social worker assists both the Syrian refugee women and women from the host country to co-create new models of support together. This truly holds the power to shift the narrative of refugee resettlement from needy or passive recipients to empowered community members building connections through models of empathy.

Some studies have indicated that just the term “refugee” can have stigmatizing effects, particularly for Syrian women (Alfadhli, 2018; Ozkaleli, 2018). This can create negative social mobility in the host country, but intentional shared social connections can have the opposite effect; that is, these connections can improve social and psychological well-being amongst Syrian refugee women (Alfadhli, 2018). Furthermore, Syrians dislike the international perception of refugees as being weak and needy, and thus it is important to focus on their strengths in order to preserve dignity (Mansour, 2018). This is especially true for women, who are often expected to take on the “traditional” role of stay-at-home mother and family caretaker, which may in turn cause these women to be viewed as uneducated or disempowered. Such a perspective does not take into account an intersectional approach which acknowledges that many Syrian women have good educations, have worked outside the home, and may feel frustrated when resettlement efforts are focused only on their male counterparts (Lokot, 2018). Therefore, interventions provided should focus on providing female-specific support in empowering settings.

As it is most culturally appropriate for Syrian women to receive support from other women, it makes sense for Christians supporting them to provide same-gendered support. With this in mind, Christian social workers can support Syrian refugee mothers by creating groups for Christian mothers to provide direct interaction to their Syrian counterparts. Woman to woman, mother to mother, this shared mothering space built upon a foundation of empathy could just have the power to revitalize both of their worlds. These spaces should focus on cultural exchange, resource sharing, mother-child playgroups, and community engagement. As Arabic social gatherings often revolve around food and hospitality, the groups could regularly schedule potlucks and recipe exchanges but should be mindful not to include food gatherings during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, when the faithful fast from sunup to sundown. Note that this date changes annually, so social workers should be aware of when this time period falls each year specifically. While the faith narratives such as those discussed above do not need to be at the center of the group’s activities, regularly scheduled interfaith discussion meetings can provide opportunities for women to reflect upon their shared sacred connections and continue building empathy and recognition of ways

these stories connect their cultures, values, and experiences. The Christian social worker, as the group facilitator, can use crossover stories such as the ones mentioned above to encourage productive group discussion and should utilize the four steps to building empathy - perspective taking, staying out of judgment, recognizing the emotion, and communication – (Brown, 2013b) to guide talking points.

Christian social workers can emphasize the shared connections between the women based on faith perspectives and can utilize their skills to promote empathy between everyone involved. They can apply the concept of “support circles,” common to both social work and Christian social support, as a model for the foundation of these groups. Support circles engage 5-10 community volunteers around vulnerable individuals or families in need for a one-year period in order to uplift them and provide a social support net. However, the concept should be modified slightly for the purposes discussed herein. I recommend creating groups of no more than five Christian mothers and five Syrian refugee mothers with one social worker as a facilitator, while keeping the timeframe of a one-year commitment. It would be wise to have a bilingual English-Arabic speaking female co-facilitator, also a member of the Syrian community if possible, in order to ensure that translation needs are met as necessary so that language is not a barrier to connection.

It is important to note that the focus of these groups is not on skills training or charity support, but on shared connection and mutual relationship building. The goal is truly to foster a new social paradigm based on sacred connections between women in the community. Brown notes that in her research with women, creating empathy and connection also serves to provide insight into the universality of painful and isolating experiences, which in turn normalizes their feelings and builds resilience (Brown, 2006). These spaces should be matricentric (mother-centered) and focused on the empowerment of the Syrian refugee mothers engaged in them in order to support their full integration into our society. These groups can take place at many locations in the community: refugee resettlement agencies, social work offices, local restaurants with designated meeting space, or local places of worship. The Christian social worker should take great care to address power dynamics, and if a faith community is used as the setting, it would be advisable to rotate between a church and a masjid to ensure that there is not a unilateral and potentially oppressive Christian presence. This will also foster deeper interfaith understanding between both cultures. Meetings should be held weekly or biweekly as participant schedules allow, but no fewer than once monthly in order to maintain regular connection between the participants. Undoubtedly, everyone involved in these groups will benefit greatly because, as Brené Brown notes, empathy moves us all to deeper and more meaningful relationships (Brown, 2007).

It is important for Christian social workers to acknowledge the transformative effect they are able to have on society. By creating these sacred spaces for women to connect, they are revolutionizing the way the world sees many issues: not only refugee resettlement but also interfaith discussions, Arab-U.S. relations, motherhood issues, and the power of women supporting women. All of these aspects are often overlooked in both society and policy, and small changes on the community level can have great impact. Direct action from Christian social workers will have a ripple effect throughout the larger community with regard to supporting Syrian refugee mothers after resettlement, and adopting the practices and considerations contained herein can change perceptions of those most vulnerable on many levels. Sacred connections are not just the dynamics of stories told from long ago, but rather connections that still exist and can continue to be created today, through the intentional building of empathy and strengthening of relationships. Creating these matricentric support circles for Christian women and Syrian refugee women to engage in this manner could indeed create sacred connections that may one day become the narratives which inspire future generations to improve the conditions of their world as well.

It is recommended that beyond the creation of these matricentric support circles, Christian social workers spend time reflecting on the stories of those provided here and share their insights with others in both their faith communities and professional networks in order to create further understanding of the needs of Syrian refugee mothers. Additionally, those adopting the recommendations here should consider formally assessing and disseminating results from their support circles in order to enhance the scholarly knowledge surrounding this area. They can also build upon these ideas by adding their own insights to the discussion, preferably with the inclusion of the voices of Syrian refugee mothers to contain their perspectives as well. When we begin to see God in our struggles, and in the stories of those seeking refuge, and when we notice our shared humanity through our sacred connections and start to build empathy instead of barriers, miracles can happen. And those miracles are formed through our sacred connections and empathy towards one another. As Brené Brown said in *The Gifts of Imperfection*: “I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.” (Brown, 2010, p. 19). This concept can be a guiding force behind the group and its intentions: that those who gather within feel seen, heard, and valued without judgment, and grow stronger from their time together. May the initial connections

established within these pages be the starting point for constructing spaces where empathy builds strength for both Syrian refugee mothers and their Christian counterparts.

Amen/Ameen¹. ❖

References

- Acim, R. (2017). Underage Syrian refugee girls at an impasse. *Journal of Identity and Migration Studies*, 11(2), 121-135.
- Admirand, P. (2014). The ethics of displacement and migration in the Abrahamic faiths: Enlightening believers and aiding public policy. *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies*, 40(4), 671-87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.847360>.
- Ahmed, A., Bowen, A., & Feng, C. X. (2017). Maternal depression in Syrian refugee women recently moved to Canada: A preliminary study. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, 17(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-017-1433-2>
- Alfadhli, K., & Drury, J. (2018). The role of shared social identity in mutual support among refugees of conflict: An ethnographic study of Syrian refugees in Jordan. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 28(3), 142-55. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2346>
- Al-Natour, A., Al-Ostaz, S. M., & Morris, E. J. (2019). Marital violence during war conflict: The lived experience of Syrian refugee women. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 30(1), 32-38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1043659618783842>
- Barkdull, C., Khaja, K., Queiro-Tajalli, I., Swart, A., Cunningham, D., & Dennis, S. (2011). Experiences of Muslims in four western countries post 9/11. *Affilia*, 26(2), 139-153. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109911405491>
- Barker, M. (2013). Mary's motherhood matters most. *Compass* (10369686), 47(1), 33-38.
- Brown, B. (2006). Shame resilience theory: A grounded theory study on women and shame. *Families in Society*, 87(1), 43-52. <https://doi.org/10.1606/1044-3894.3483>.
- Brown, B. (2007, April 17). *Shame & Empathy [video]* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQiFA7KlF0>
- Brown, B. (2010). *The gifts of imperfection: Let go of who you think you're supposed to be and embrace who you are*. Hazelden Publishing.
- Brown B. (2013a). *How the courage to be vulnerable transforms the way we live, love, parent and lead*. Portfolio Penguin.
- Brown, B. (2013b, December 10). *Brené Brown on Empathy*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>
- Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. (2011). Syria. 2010 International Religious Freedom Report. https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2010_5/168276.htm
- Constantineanu, C. (2018). Hospitality and welcome as Christian imperatives

1 The final two sentences in this article are intended by the author to be a form of interfaith prayer, as an acknowledgement that both research and social work can prayerfully contribute to improving interfaith relations. Utilizing both Amen and Ameen is inclusive of Christian and Islamic prayer in English and in Arabic.

- in relation to 'the other.' *Transformation*, 35(2), 109–116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265378818782271>
- Fadda-Conrey, C. (2011). Arab American citizenship in crisis: Destabilizing representations of Arabs and Muslims in the US after 9/11. *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, 57(3), 532–555. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.2011.0068>
- Gagnon, A. J., Dougherty, G., Wahoush, O., Saucier, J., Dennis, C., Stanger, E., Palmer, B., Merry, L., & Stewart, D. E. (2013). International migration to Canada: The post-birth health of mothers and infants by immigration class. *Social Science & Medicine*, 76, 197–207. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2012.11.001>
- Goss-Reaves, L., Crouso, L. S., & Lefdahl-Davis, E. (2018). Bearing god's image to all people: A social worker's response to the sojourner. *Social Work and Christianity*, 45(3), 10-18.
- Guzman, E. D. (1997). What the Bible says on doing refugee work. *Migration World Magazine*, 25(5), 30+.
- Hagues, R. J., & Patterson Roe, E. (2018). Introduction to welcoming the sojourner. *Social Work & Christianity*, 45(3), 3–9.
- Ibrahim, M. Z. (2015). Ibn Ḥazm's theory of prophecy of women: Literalism, logic, and perfection. *Intellectual Discourse*, 23(1), 75–100.
- Lokot, M. (2018). Syrian refugees: Thinking beyond gender stereotypes. *Forced Migration Review*, (57), 33-35. López Pérez, E., & Haers, J. (2012). JRS: Faith doing justice: Discernment from and with refugees. *Gregorianum*, 93(3), 549–72.
- Mansour, K. (2018). Protecting the dignity of displaced Syrians. *Forced Migration Review*, (57), 5-6.
- McKinnon, S. L. (2009). 'Bringing new hope and new life': The rhetoric of faith-based refugee resettlement agencies. *Howard Journal of Communications*, 20(4), 313–332. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646170903300747>
- Murphy, R. F. T. (2012). Sista-hoods: revealing the meaning in Hagar's narrative. *Black Theology*, 10(1), 77–92. <https://doi.org/10.1558/blth.v10i1.77>
- National Association of Social Workers(2015, November 23). <https://www.socialworkers.org/News/News-Releases/ID/172/NASW-statement-on-Syrian-refugee-crisis>.NASW Press.
- O'Reilly, A. (2019). Matricentric feminism: A feminism for mothers. *Journal of the Motherhood Initiative*, 10(1-2), 13-26.
- Ozkaleli, U. (2018). Displaced selves, dislocated emotions and transforming identities: Syrian refugee women reinventing selves. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 70, 17–23. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2018.07.010>
- Pigott, S. M. (2018). Hagar: The M/Other patriarch. *Review & Expositor*, 115(4), 513–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034637318803073>
- Refugee Processing Center. Interactive Reporting. Accessed October 27, 2019. <http://ireports.wrapsnet.org/>
- Reiss, M. (2010). Miriam rediscovered. *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, 38(3).
- Rosen, A. (2013) Changing the family portrait: Hagar and Sarah in art and interfaith dialogue. *Religion Compass*, 7(5), 179–89. <https://doi.org/10.1111/rec3.12040>
- Scribner, T. (2017). You are not welcome here anymore: Restoring support for refugee resettlement in the age of Trump. *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 5(2), 263-284. <https://doi.org/10.1177/233150241700500203>

- Sherwood, Y. (2014). Hagar and Ishmael: The reception of expulsion. *Interpretation*, 68(3), 286-304. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020964314535544>
- Sim, A., Bowes, L., & Gardner, F. (2019). The promotive effects of social support for parental resilience in a refugee context: A cross-sectional study with Syrian mothers in Lebanon. *Prevention Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-019-0983-0>
- Steyn, J., & Yousaf, A. (2010). Jesus and the marginalized: Attaching pastoral meaning to Luke 4:14-30. *Acta Theologica*, 30(2), 152-170. United Nations. (n.d.). What is a refugee? Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/what-is-a-refugee.html>
- Upal, H. M. (2005). A celebration of mothering in the Qur'an. *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*, 7(1), 86-97.
- Vervliet, M., De Mol, J., Broekaert, E., & Derluyn, I. (2014). 'That I live, that's because of her': Intersectionality as framework for unaccompanied refugee mothers. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 44(7), 2023-2041. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bct060>
- Wouk, J. M. (2013). Re-Calling our HerStory: Miriam the prophetess. *Canadian Woman Studies*, 30(2-3), 90-97.
- Wright, C. J. H., & Măcelaru, M.V. (2018). The refugee crisis – A shared human condition: An old testament perspective. *Transformation*, 35(2), 91-101. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265378818802698>
- Zucker, D. J. (2017). Viewing Yokheved (Jochebed). *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 14(1), 1-22.

Kayte Thomas, MSW, LCSW, is a PhD Candidate and Adjunct Professor at Baylor University, Diana R. Garland School of Social Work, One Bear Place, #97320. Phone: 919-633-3372. Email: kayte_thomas1@baylor.edu

Reframing the Orphan Mandate

Bonni Goodwin, Angela B. Pharris, Dallas Pettigrew

Caring for the orphan is a biblical mandate for those who follow the Christian faith tradition. Yet, far too often, this charge has led to coercion and exploitation of marginalized populations. This manuscript will examine this phenomenon through the adoption of Indigenous people starting in colonial America, when Christian missionaries from Europe believed it was their spiritual obligation to “save” young Indigenous children from their “heathen” culture. This belief still shapes many adoption practices today. The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is presented as a step towards legal reparations for the harm done to Indigenous people during this time period. The idea of reparations is discussed as a vital step towards another Christian biblical mandate calling for active repair of broken relationships. Ultimately, this manuscript concludes with an application of the model of praxis from liberation theology to reframe how Christian social workers may approach caring for the orphan.

Keywords: adoption, ICWA, child welfare, social work, Christian, reparation

MAKING THE DECISION TO ADOPT A CHILD IS A complex and emotionally dynamic process. It is a profoundly important decision, often supported by days or even years of thinking and discussing with others. For some, there is an additional weight in the decision-making process that comes from the desire to adhere to the strongly held spiritual belief that Christians should care for those who are in need, particularly vulnerable children.

In the Christian faith, the charge to care for the orphan or “fatherless” is specifically mentioned in the Bible numerous times as a command for believers (Cruver et al., 2011). These biblical terms – “orphans” and “fatherless” – have become synonymous with children who have been deemed as not having active or adequate parental care, including those removed from their families of origin by the government, therefore bringing

the concepts of adoption and orphan as mutually exclusive (Smolin, 2011). From the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible, James 1:27 states, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress..." This is one of six statements calling faithful believers to care for the orphan. Other verses portray the relationship of God with His followers through the lens of adoption (Cruver et al., 2011): "I will not leave you as orphans: I will come to you" (John 14:15-21). As Smolin (2011, p. 271) states, "When Christians truly appreciate how helpless, needy, and without hope they were apart from their adoption, in Jesus Christ, by God the Father, they are moved to seek out and adopt the helpless, needy, orphan children of the world, and bring them into their own families through legal adoption." Additionally, other biblical narratives that do not directly reference adoption are read as adoption narratives, such as the prodigal son (Cruver et al., 2011). These biblical references and popular Christian interpretations foster an acutely intrinsic spiritual motivation leading Christians to be active in the pursuit of finding permanent families for vulnerable children. Yet, who is responsible for deciding what characteristics make a child vulnerable and in need of parental care rather than different? Often this decision is made by the leadership of the majority who commonly view other religions and spiritual practices as pagan and dangerous for children (Sargent, 2017; Smolin, 2011). This perspective, combined with another Christian mandate of evangelism, has been understood to be the justification behind numerous egregious removals of children from marginalized communities in the effort to save souls (Sargent, 2017; Smith, 2014; Smolin, 2011).

This manuscript will explore how the Christian calling to adopt children of different faiths to "save" them has led to coercion and exploitation of marginalized populations. Specifically, this phenomenon will be explored in the historical assimilation of Indigenous people beginning in colonial America when white Christians viewed the eradication of Indigenous culture as in the best interest of all. The enactment of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in 1978 will be presented as an attempt to make amends for the loss of Indigenous children from their homes and culture (George, 1997). Recently there have been aggressive legal efforts to repeal the ICWA, asserting it is a policy supporting racism (Flynn, 2018). These arguments will be examined through the lens of Christianity, specifically through the biblical charge for believers to be active in seeking reparation for any perceived wrongdoing to a neighbor. In conclusion, the approach to the Christian mandate of caring for the orphan will be reframed using the model of praxis from liberation theology, a process for intentionally integrating faith and the professional work of responding to the needs of the vulnerable (De La Torre, 2004; Gutierrez, 1988; Singletary, 2005).

The “Salvation” of Indigenous Children

There is a complex and traumatic history in the relationship of Christianity and Indigenous people in the United States. As the young nation continued to push West and claim territory for its families and communities, it was considered necessary, even heroic for a new family to charge into Indian Territory and fight for a piece of land (Sargent, 2017). As more families settled and began forming communities, they brought with them their culture and religious beliefs. The majority of early American immigrants identified as members of a denomination within the Christian faith (Smith, 2014). Once people who identified as Indigenous were controlled and corralled to designated pieces of land, or reservations, white missionaries began what they believed to be God's work, “bringing the Indigenous people to salvation,” assimilating them to white Christian culture (Smith, 2014). Manifest Destiny, or the pervasive myth that early Americans were destined by God to inhabit North America and claim it as a white Christian nation, was a powerful narrative underscoring this mission work (Sargent, 2017). Ultimately, the first American immigrants deeply believed that conversion and assimilation of the “heathen” natives to Euro-American culture and religion were in the Indigenous peoples’ best interests (Smith, 2014).

Not only did church missionaries believe Indigenous people should learn how to speak, believe, and behave as the white culture that invaded their lands, but so did early federal policymakers (George, 1997). Education policy was a mechanism to reform Indigenous people and instill the knowledge, values, mores and habits of Christian civilization (Adams, 1995). Government boarding schools and Christian mission schools began to be built across the nation with the goal of solving the “Indian problem,” referring to their culture, religion, and way of life (George, 1997). Parents were presented with the placement of their children into boarding schools; if they would not willingly send their children, the federal government would engage in “kid catching,” or forcibly removing the children by declaring the parents as unfit (Coolidge, 1977). The expressed goal of these schools was to educate the Indigenous children to essentially adopt white Christian culture (George, 1997; Poupart, 2002). Eventually, not only were the children forced to live at the boarding schools during the academic year, but they were also kept over holidays and through the summer due to white missionaries’ belief and fear that sending them home to the reservations would cause them to turn back to their old ways (George, 1997). Since the primary goal of the boarding school was to force assimilation, sending children to their families would interrupt assimilation efforts (Adams, 1995). Several strategies were imposed to prevent the loss of forced assimilation, including ending school vacations, constructing large fences so students could not leave and return

to their tribes, or to relocate the boarding school to a distant place. For those schools that remained near the tribe, the strategy for forced assimilation when the schools were not in session was to place the children in white homes to continue their assimilation into white culture, despite the protest and desires of the families (Adams, 1995; George, 1997).

The Indian Boarding Schools were a planned tool of federal policy to sever relationships, force assimilation, and end the existence of tribes by eliminating customs and traditions for future generations. This was part of a complex system of government policies aimed at erasure of American Indian tribes. Historians have categorized this boarding and mission school system as “one of the most destructive agents of the heavy-handed and clumsy federal policy of forced assimilation” (Burich, 2007, p. 93). Accounts of the Indigenous child’s life within the boarding and mission schools have been described as regimented days full of harsh discipline and rigid caretaking (George, 1997; Poupart, 2002). Children were punished if they questioned the white authorities in charge of them and were forced to speak only English (George, 1997). They endured severe physical punishments if any rules were broken, such as being required to spend an exorbitant amount of time in prayer and devotion or standing still by their bedside (George, 1997). Often, after a childhood of growing up in a strict institutional environment often miles away from their reservation home, the children would be released but unable to locate their families (Burich, 2007). Due to poverty, disease, and other societal challenges, the children’s families had fragmented and were either completely estranged from the child who had been gone for so many years, or displaced (Burich, 2007).

One boarding school, the Thomas Indian School, was founded in 1855 as a Quaker mission to provide refuge for orphaned or displaced Indigenous children (Burich, 2007). However, the school has since become notorious for its role in the destruction of the language, culture, and family connection of its children (Burich, 2007). The school began as a response to an immediate and sudden need to provide a home, food, and clothing to several children who lost their parents in a typhoid epidemic that ravaged the Seneca reservation in the 1850s (Burich, 2007). Opening its doors first to 35 children, the school quickly grew to caring for over 100 children, requiring it to be taken over by the State Board of Charities in 1875 (Burich, 2007). This shift signaled the loss of the school being run with the original intent of providing refuge for orphaned children; instead it assumed the role of forced assimilation by way of educating children in the Euro-American way of life (Burich, 2007). Images captured of this era in the Thomas Indian School reveal the school’s emphasis on individualism, the Protestant work ethic, and the ideology of hard work and submission (Montez de Oca & Prado, 2014).

After this change, the school continued to grow until 1942 when the New York Department of Child Welfare Services sent a social worker to review the policies and practices of the school (Burich, 2007). The social worker reported a scathing evaluation, citing numerous ways in which the school failed to meet the needs of the children as well as their families (Burich, 2007). She described the administration of the school as highly unregulated, allowing the children's daily and future needs to be ignored (Burich, 2007). Furthermore, Indigenous parents were led to believe they were relinquishing their parental rights to the school when they signed enrollment paperwork (Burich, 2007). These parents made the decision out of desperate need and desire to provide for their children, leaving the parents feeling trapped with no choice and their children left for years to grapple with the pain and anger of abandonment (Burich, 2007). Many parents fought the placement of their children to the boarding schools but were punished by officials withholding rations or using police to round up children in the entire tribe to force school enrollment (Adams, 1995). The Thomas School, originally intended to offer hope and service by faithful followers of Christ, was eventually closed in 1957, leaving behind a legacy of separated and lost Indigenous children who entered adulthood without any permanent connections available to assist them with life's challenges (Burich, 2007).

Indian Adoption Project

Beginning in the 1950s, as the boarding and mission schools continued to close across the nation, and the second wave of assimilation policy began (George, 1997). The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) began to discuss formalized placement of Indigenous children for adoption. Together with the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA), the BIA formalized a process for finding homes for Indigenous children called the Indian Adoption Project (George, 1997). This Project was charged with the responsibility of preserving each child's family connection and cultural heritage; yet the historical practice of assimilation and prejudiced views against the Indigenous community and culture were more powerful motivators in the goal of finding placement.

The Native American family ranked on the lowest rung of any social welfare ladder, while the Caucasian middle-class family held a valued position in society, supported by the economic-ideological philosophy of assimilation: the conscience of the adoption system was cloaked in the Christian zeal of 'saving God's forgotten children' and economically supported by assimilationist policy. (George, 1997, p. 170)

The CWLA capitalized on the values of the nation's religious majority, broadcasting the need for the faithful to respond to the need of the "fatherless," successfully promoting placement of Indigenous children in white Christian homes (EchoHawk, 2001; George, 1997). For example, the CWLA placed an essay titled, "God's Forgotten Children" in a 1966 issue of the *Lutheran Witness* (George, 1997). The biblical mandate to care for the orphan became a blind fuel, perpetuating the historical pattern of stripping Indigenous people of their children and future generations. The process of deliberately removing Indian children into boarding schools had left a long-standing stereotype and bias. The CWLA's adoption standards that set the 'best interest of the child' interpreted from a cultural assimilation perspective, therefore the removal of the child from the family and culture (CWLA, 1958; George, 1997). As a result of these policy practices of forced assimilation, Native ways of parenting have been historically misrepresented as harmful and negligent and unfortunately, this bias persists (Cross, et al., 2000).

The Passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act

In 1923, the Association on American Indian Affairs (AAIA) was founded in New York to advocate for the rights of American Indians and Alaskan Natives (Mannes, 1995; Rosier, 2006). The AAIA was a powerful stimulating force in the beginning of the chain of events leading to the development and passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). The AAIA worked to conduct a series of studies to present to the United States Senate intended to shed light on the oppressive adoption and child removal policies of the Indigenous people (Mannes, 1995). Outcomes of these studies revealed that by the 1970's, 25% to 35% of Indigenous children were separated from their families and culture and the rates for out-of-home placement were 19 times higher than for non-Indigenous children (Mannes, 1995, p. 267). In 16 states in 1969, 85 percent of the Indian children were placed in non-Indian families (Linger, 1977). Bolstered by this information, tribes began to advocate for their rights and address the loss of their children by passing resolutions in the 1970s, calling for an end to removal practices, especially those placing Indigenous children in white homes (George, 1997; Mannes, 1995). The federal government responded by instructing state child welfare agencies to follow tribal directives when decisions were being made regarding Indigenous children on reservations (Mannes, 1995). Unfortunately, these efforts endured many challenges, including a pervasive sense of disrespect for the tribal courts and Indigenous culture (Mannes, 1995).

In 1974, the United States Senate called for oversight hearings to address the Indigenous child placement concerns (Mannes, 1995). The South Dakota Senator, James Abourezk, assumed the position of the

Chairman of the Subcommittee on Indian Affairs and ran the oversight hearings. Several Indigenous parents and children attended the hearings and addressed the senators, sharing their personal stories of how their family and tribe had been affected by the removal practices (Mannes, 1995). The Indigenous speakers explained how they felt a deep sense of helplessness and stark lack of empowerment, not knowing how to respond when a child welfare worker requested that they place their children for adoption (Mannes, 1995). Additionally, mental health professionals shared the emotional loss and grief a child experiences when separated from their family and culture (Mannes, 1995).

The AAIA followed up with a set of recommendations to Congress which Senator Abourezk introduced to the Senate on August 27, 1976 (Mannes, 1995). This bill was the first version of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and it failed the first time it was introduced. Senator Abourezk reintroduced the bill less than a year later on April 1, 1977, with few changes (Mannes, 1995). Testimonies were heard on the floor reiterating the issues heard the previous year, highlighting the continued pervasiveness of the problems and how they remained unsolved (Mannes, 1995).

There were three main sources of opposition to the ICWA bill – the federal Departments of the Interior and of Health, Education and Welfare, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS; Mannes, 1995). The federal government departments were opposed because of their awareness of the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act the Carter Administration was planning to propose soon (Mannes, 1995). The LDS Church's opposition was fueled by a fear that their ministry, the LDS Indian Student Placement Program, would be eliminated by the ICWA bill (Mannes, 1995). This ministry program placed Indigenous children between the ages of eight and 18 in an Anglo-Mormon home for at least one school year to receive an education and experience that the children would otherwise be “unable” to receive on the reservations (Mannes, 1995). Members of the church strongly believed this ministry served the Indigenous people and future generations, yet other Indigenous child welfare studies questioned these potential benefits (Mannes, 1995).

On November 3, 1977, the ICWA was amended and ultimately passed by the Senate and sent to the House for review. The same testimonies and comments were presented in written form to the House of Representatives along with a set of additional recommendations provided by the American Indian Policy Review Commission (AIPRC) task force who had been studying the removal issues since 1976 (Mannes, 1995). The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) became Public Law 95-608 on November 8, 1978 (P25 U.S.C § 902, Supp. II, 1978). The ICWA was established under Congress's authority inherent in the “special relationship between the United States and the Indian tribes and their members and the Federal responsibility to the

Indian people...” (25 U.S.C. ss 1901 Congressional Findings. Para 1). This special relationship points to the sovereignty of Indian tribes, as recognized in the Constitution of the United States in Article 1, Section 2 and Section 8, as well as the Fourteenth Amendment. Congressional action was taken to fulfill their responsibility to protect and preserve Indian tribes and their resources (25 U.S.C. ss 1901.3)., Congress recognized the child’s political relationship to the tribe as “members of or are eligible for membership in an Indian tribe...” (25 U.S.C. ss 1901.3). Membership is tantamount to citizenship of a sovereign nation. The ICWA is clear in its intent to ensure the sovereignty of tribes, and part of that sovereignty is to govern their own proceedings of child welfare for future generations. ICWA applies to any unmarried person under the age of 18 who is a member of a federally recognized tribe or Native Alaskan Village and is eligible for membership, or a child of a member, of a tribe. ICWA applies in all proceedings for foster care, guardianships, foster placement, pre-adoption and adoptions (25 U.S.C. 1901 et seq).

The first section of the Act, Title I, assures the tribe’s authority over child custody placement proceedings when involving children from the reservation (Mannes, 1995). Furthermore, state courts are required to transfer jurisdiction over tribal children living off-reservation (Mannes, 1995). Titles II – IV appropriate funding for tribal governments and off-reservation Indigenous organizations for child welfare programs and set recordkeeping and information procedures (Mannes, 1995). The ICWA establishes child placement preferences or hierarchy for Indian children for foster care, pre-adoptive, and adoption proceedings to be: “1) A member of the child’s extended family; 2) Other members of the Indian child’s tribe; or 3) other Indian families” (25 U.S.C. 1915[a]). The primary goals of the ICWA had been established to ensure the best interest of the child and the survival and stability of Indian families and tribes.

Opposition to the ICWA

From the moment the ICWA became public law, there have been arguments suggesting the law emphasizes tribal parental rights over child safety (Mannes, 1995). As implementation of the new law was inconsistent across the states, the federal government has continued to lack direct leadership and oversight, increasing the strength of those who have opposed the ICWA (Turner, 2016). In October of 2018, U.S. District Judge Reed O’Connor, a federal judge in Texas, struck down the ICWA as unconstitutional, declaring that the law gives Indigenous families preferential treatment in adoption proceedings purely based on their racial identity (Flynn, 2018). He states this promotion of racial preference is in violation of the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution (Flynn, 2018).

Several public voices have joined in the current argument against the constitutionality of the ICWA. One such group is the Christian Alliance for Indian Child Welfare (CAICW), a faith-based organization whose mission is to defend “the rights of the poor and needy, as instructed in Proverbs 31:8-9” (“Who We Are,” 2018., para. 1). The CAICW was formed in 2004 as an advocacy group for families “who have lost or are at risk of losing children due to application of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)” (“Who We Are,” 2018, para. 4). They describe their advocacy as being judicial, educational, and spiritual for families who are impacted by the ICWA. The CAICW’s public website offers numerous stories of children who have been removed from homes due to tribal intervention (“Who We Are,” 2018). The founding member, Roland Morris, Sr., a member of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe, began the group in protest against laws such as the ICWA because he believed they infringe on an individual’s freedom of religion (In Memoriam, 2018). As an adult, Morris became a Christian and began to view the reservation system and tribal government as harmful and corrupt (In Memoriam, 2018). He alleged that Indigenous people were dying on the reservations due to corruption and expressed a desire for the future generations of his tribe to leave and become Christ-followers (In Memoriam, 2018). Interestingly, these beliefs and the advocacy work of the CAICW against the ICWA sound strikingly similar to the historic mindset that previously drove the assimilation efforts and removal of Indigenous children from their families and culture.

Despite the opposition, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals published a decision in *Brackeen v. Bernhardt* in August 2019 (Zschach, 2019) re-affirming the constitutionality of the ICWA. The protection of tribal sovereignty and the inherent right of tribes to make decisions about the well-being of their children have been preserved. The ICWA remains the standard for child welfare adoption policy with regard to Indian children. The Fifth Circuit’s decision goes so far as to potentially end all future challenges to the ICWA that arise from allegations of racism, as it makes clear that the law is based on political affiliation, not a race-based one (*Brackeen v. Bernhardt*, 2019). The decision goes further, referencing a previous decision that federal laws regarding members of tribes are not race-based and “disadvantages to non-Indians...were an intentional and desirable feature...” (*Morton v. Mancari*, 1974, as cited in *Brackeen v. Bernhardt*, 2019 p. 21).

Reparations as a Biblical Mandate

Reparations, or the attempt to redress a myriad of wrongs committed against a people, began in the international legal system after World War II (Graham, 2001). In a legal brief, Smith (2004) outlined an argument

on why both the United States government and Christian churches who actively oppose Native sovereignty should be required to make reparations to the Indigenous communities due to the abuses that occurred during the boarding school era. She explained the support for the enforcement of required reparations is appropriate due to the evidence that Indigenous people are still suffering the devastating effects of these removal policies and practices (Smith, 2004). Many view the ICWA as a step in this process of reparations to the Indigenous people for the egregious and massive displacement of their children (Graham, 2001). Therefore, the repeal of the ICWA would have a devastating effect on its efforts to both reverse the assimilative policies and practices from history as well as recognize, value, and respect the cultural traditions of the Indigenous people (Graham, 2001). The promotion of Indigenous self-determination in the area of child welfare could be profoundly affected by the loss of the ICWA (Graham, 2001).

While removal of indigenous children is no longer the official policy of the U.S., the effects of removal on Indian children, their families, and communities has been profoundly disruptive. ICWA, while not a perfect law, is an important first step toward meeting our obligations under international law to make reparations for these violations. (Graham, 2001, p. 639-640)

In December of 2007, the Episcopal Church held an oversight hearing on the Congressional Committee on the Judiciary discussing a formal endorsement to create a commission to study the ongoing effects of slavery and discrimination on African Americans (Harvey, 2011). Although this committee conducted research focused on African American people instead of Indigenous people, it is important in this discussion because it is one of the most significant public actions toward reparations that a United States Protestant denomination has taken (Harvey, 2011). The Presbyterian Church created a Task Force to Study Reparations, stating that discussions on reparations were being held in several mainline Protestant denominations and receiving positive attention (Harvey, 2011). Although these discussions and studies were focused on reparations for the harm done to people identified as African American, the push towards a faith understanding of this type of racial redemption is a powerful concept. Harvey (2011) states "White people have been the most responsible for the maintenance and persistence of racism," therefore the application of reparations is the most appropriate in taking steps towards mending what harm began from the policies and practices in the past (Harvey, 2011, p. 58).

What is important about the idea of reparations being the most appropriate response to the harm committed against Indigenous people in the past is that the goal of reparations is to make amends and attempt to find healing from these actions, not just find unity in the present (Harvey,

2011). As Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV) states, “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.” These verses express an urgency in the *active* repairing of the broken relationship. Harvey (2011) applies this to the outcomes of racial oppression and disparity as a “view toward repair as the solution to the problem of exploitation” (p. 64). To adequately address the brokenness that has come as a result of these racial and exploitive actions, the perpetrator(s) and specific harms must be identified, then the perpetrator(s) must come forward and actively participate in the actions of reparation (Harvey, 2011). Therefore, to achieve the exactness of this biblical mandate of redemption and repair of broken relationships, the United States government and churches must acknowledge their agency in the harmful actions as well as ongoing agency in the process of future repair (Harvey, 2011).

Reframing the Orphan Mandate

Christianity has played a significant role in the realm of child welfare in the United States since the country began (Schreiber, 2011). Several agencies and service providers who work alongside child welfare systems have grown from faith-based roots (i.e., Catholic Charities). The Christian values and biblical mandates mentioned above have been the springboard for many legal and policy decisions (Schreiber, 2011). Indeed, the Christian Church is a fertile ground to find many willing volunteers intrinsically motivated to offer their time, support, and resources to assist those deemed as vulnerable children.

In light of this close relationship between the Christian faith and the American child welfare system (Schreiber, 2011), a few glaring questions emerge from the historical treatment of the Indigenous people: what responsibility do Christ-followers have in the aftermath of such harmful and destructive treatment of an entire cultural group? Furthermore, how did the interpretation of the biblical mandate to care for the most vulnerable members of humanity lead to these outcomes? And finally, what roles do Christian social workers in child welfare take to assure this level of negative unintended consequences is no longer the result of Christianity’s efforts to intercede on the child’s behalf?

In response to these questions, Christians in the United States would benefit from entering into a process of honest self-reflection and confession followed by active efforts towards reparation and future commitments to interact with diverse groups of people in a more respectful, ethical, and compassionate way. This process can be understood through a model of praxis founded on liberation theology (De La Torre, 2004; Gutierrez,

1988; Singletary, 2005). *Praxis*, in this instance, indicates more than just the practice of an individual's profession (Markey, 1995; Singletary, 2005). Praxis is spending time in thoughtful reflection on the meaning and intersection of the individual's professional duties with the rest of humanity and his or her own spiritual beliefs (Singletary, 2005). It is a call for Christians to assess their current engagement in transformative processes in their communities and adjust as needed if this self-reflection identifies areas of incongruence (Boff, 1985). This model of praxis, "whereby faith informs practice and practice informs faith," can be used to reframe the biblical mandate of caring for the orphan, guiding the Christian social worker into a more wholistic Christ-like practice of caring for the most vulnerable (Singletary, 2005, p. 57).

In the specific model of praxis suggested by Singletary (2005) in "The Praxis of Social Work: A Model of How Faith Informs Practice Informs Faith," the first step is to start with the action of professional practice. The appropriate questions would be: What is the current practice with Indigenous children in child welfare and adoption and how it is understood by their Indigenous families? How do I as a Christian social worker understand it? How can I support the preservation of Indigenous sovereignty? How do the children and families I serve understand what I am doing? And, what is its value to me and to them (Singletary, 2005)?

These questions bring the conversation back to the ICWA and how Indigenous children are being treated by the United States child welfare system. Current practice is attempting to participate in legal reparations to the Indigenous people for the decades of harm the United States government and churches inflicted upon them. Yet, these legal reparations were under argument by different groups across the nation, including groups who have used the Christian faith as a justification to repeal the ICWA law. ICWA is an ethical and biblical decision to actively seek repair for harm that has been done to my neighbor, and challenges to the policy seem to be against the morals and values of the Christian faith. It is our hope that Indigenous children and families served through child welfare can clearly see that responsibility is accepted by the Christian religion and white race to actively work to repair the harm they have endured over the last several years.

The second step in Singletary's (2005) praxis model is to critically reflect on what work is done by a Christian social worker. The appropriate questions in this step are: What has God called me to do? What is my vision of serving God in child welfare? And, how do I evaluate my faith and integrate my commitment to both the biblical mandates of caring for the orphan as well as actively participating in the reparation of damaged relationships (Singletary, 2005)?

It is clear in the biblical verses mentioned earlier, God's calling includes responding to the needs of vulnerable children. It is also clear from the Bible

to prioritize repairing broken relationships, especially those in which we are culpable for the breaking (either intentionally or due to passive inaction, and as a proxy for historical actions), above even acts of worship. Additionally, Proverbs 31:8-9 (NIV) urges Christians to, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute." The testimonies recorded in the initial Senate hearings leading to the passage of the ICWA portrayed a people who were so overwhelmed and felt that they could not speak up for themselves (Mannes, 1995). Christian social workers are called to be a continued support for the voice of this marginalized group of people, empowering their voices to be clearly heard during decision-making processes regarding the welfare of their own children. And, to be an active participant in the legal reparations towards the Indigenous people, we can seek opportunities to be an advocate supporting the efforts of the ICWA. Christian social workers are also called to continue responding to the needs of vulnerable children, but this response when working with Indigenous children becomes a piece of a much broader puzzle. Most arguments for adoption focus on the best interest of the child and individual rights, whereas the best interest of Indigenous children includes their connection to Indigenous community, tribal traditions, and collective rights. What does the integration of honoring cultural heritage and maintaining connection to tribal traditions look like when an Indigenous child is adopted by a non-Native family?

Praxis then urges us to the next step, in which the critical reflections from both step one and step two are brought into a decision of how to take action (Singletary, 2005). How does what we are currently doing as Christian social workers in child welfare relate to all that God has called us to do? What does a Christian social worker need to be more actively stepping into in this current fight over the legitimacy of the ICWA? What more can we do to promote God's desire for justice? These questions assist the Christian social worker in bringing the reflections and critical evaluations into an improved action (Singletary, 2005).

We might express opinions publicly and develop reasonable and evidence-informed responses to the arguments in favor of the repeal of the ICWA, especially when the dissenters are fellow believers. We can seek opportunities to enter into discussions with those who disagree with us, approaching them gently with these biblical callings that support the continuation of the ICWA. We may also continue to respond to the needs of all vulnerable children who come in contact with child welfare. If a child of Indigenous heritage comes on a worker's caseload, that worker can seek to ensure that the regulations and the intent of the ICWA are followed carefully. The improved actions based on this praxis experience thus far leads to increased advocacy for the ICWA while simultaneously intentionally engaging in self-reflection and assessment to increase

awareness of how every worker is interacting with the Indigenous children on their own caseload.

This model of praxis can also be applied to social work practice with all children who have been or are going to be adopted. The orphan mandate and its integration with the call to adopt can motivate Christians to actively respond to defend and protect the most vulnerable members of humanity. But, to mitigate the risk of causing some exceedingly negative unintended consequences in future work with these children, Christian social workers ought to continue to practice this reflective process of praxis, keeping in mind the equally important biblical mandates of caring and advocating for the marginalized as well as the social work professional ethics and values. As Christian social workers, we should continually and honestly reflect and prioritize thoughtful integration of faith and social work practice, simultaneously committing to be a voice sounding the alarm if and when the child welfare system appears to be heading towards a decision furthering the harm or isolation of any marginalized community. Marginalization occurs on the basis of race, religion, sexual orientation, and other specific aspects of human diversity and identity. These are the groups for whom we are called to advocate, actively joining any chance to participate in the process of reparations for harm caused by those who have or are currently acting under the banner of Christ.

Conclusion

For over a century, Christianity and social work have struggled to find common ground (Warkentin & Sawatsky, 2018). Christianity has indisputably played a significant role in the formation of social work and child welfare practices in the United States (Vanderwoerd, 2011). With a growing number of voices from the field guiding Christian social workers towards ethical integration of faith and practice, not all social workers have fully explored this valuable process (Vanderwoerd, 2011; Warkentin & Sawatsky, 2018). Furthermore, the church has often found itself in the role of facilitating oppression rather than equality and liberation of all people, exacerbating the issue of separation between social work and Christianity.

Through this model of praxis and a commitment from a believing social worker to engage in honest self-reflection on a regular basis, there is a very real potential for true reparation for harmful practices in the past. As Warkentin and Sawatsky (2018) suggest, if a social worker is willing to remain open to the transformation that can follow these efforts to integrate faith and social work, there may be space discovered for a deeper transformative experience of understanding what it means to be a Christian in the field of social work in the 21st century – “we create new avenues to explore how social work with the marginalized can deepen our faith and

how our social work in turn can be strengthened by that depth” (p. 65). These actions will not only benefit those we serve but offer us a path to engage in wholistic social work practice. ❖

References

- Adams, D. W. (1995). *Education for extinction: American Indians and the boarding school experience, 1875-1928*. University Press of Kansas.
- Boff, C. (1987). Theology and praxis: Epistemological foundations. Orbis.
- Brackeen v. Bernhardt, 18-11479 (2019). <http://www.ca5.uscourts.gov/opinions/pub/18/18-11479-CV0.pdf>
- Burich, K. R. (2007). “No place to go”: the Thomas Indian School and the “forgotten” Indian children of New York. *Wicazo Sa Review*, 22(2), 93-110.
- Child Welfare League of American Standards for Adoption Service* (1958). Child Welfare League of America.
- Coolidge, D., (1977). “Kid catching” on the Navajo Reservation: 1930 in S. Unger (Ed.), *The Destruction of American Indian Families* (pp. 18-21). Association of American Indian Affairs.
- Cross, T. A., Earle, K. A., & Simmons, D. (2000). Child abuse and neglect in Indian country: Policy issues. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services*, 81(1), 49-58.
- Cruver, D., Piper, J., & Smith, S. (2011). *Reclaiming adoption: Missional living through the rediscovery of Abba Father*. Cruciform Press.
- De La Torre, Miguel A. (2004). *Doing Christian ethics from the margins*. Orbis Books.
- EchoHawk, L., (2001). Child sexual abuse in Indian country: Is the guardian keeping in mind the seventh generation? NYUJ Legis. & Pub. Pol’y, 5, 83.
- Flynn, Megan. (2018, October 10). Court strikes down Native American adoption law, saying it discriminates against non-Native Americans - The Washington Post. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2018/10/10/court-strikes-down-native-american-adoption-law-saying-it-discriminates-against-non-native-americans/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.b97f4a03ae1c
- George, L. (1997). Why the need for the Indian Child Welfare Act? *Journal of Multicultural Social Work*, 5(3-4), 165-175. https://doi.org/10.1300/J285v05n03_04
- Graham, L. (2001). Indigenous peoples: Reparations and the Indian Child Welfare Act. *The Legal Studies Forum*, 25, 619-665.
- Gutiérrez, G. (1988). *A theology of liberation: History, politics, and salvation*. Orbis Books.
- Harvey, J. (2011). Which way to justice? Reconciliation, reparations, and the problem of Whiteness in US Protestantism. *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 31(1), 57-77.
- In Memoriam – Roland J. Morris, Sr. (2018). Retrieved April 13, 2019, from <https://caicw.org/who-we-are/in-memoriam-roland-j-morris-sr/>
- Linger, S. (1977). *The destruction of American Indian families*. Association on American Indian Affairs.
- Mannes, M. (1995). Factors and events leading to the passage of the Indian Child

- Welfare Act. *Child Welfare*, 74(1), 264–282.
- Markey, J. J., OP (1995). Praxis in liberation theology: Some clarifications. *Missiology: An International Review*, 23, 2. 179-195.
- Montez de Oca, J. & Prado, Jose (2014). Visualizing humanitarian colonialism: Photographs from the Thomas Indian School. *American Behavioral Scientists*, 58(1), 145-170.
- Poupart, L. M. (2002). Crime and justice in American Indian communities. *Social Justice*, 29 (1/2), 87-88.
- Policy Update, NICWA. (2019, March). Retrieved April 13, 2019, from <https://www.nicwa.org/policy-update/>
- Pub. L. No. 95-608, 92 Stat. 3069 Indian Child Welfare Act. (1978).
- Rosier, P. C. (2006). The Association on American Indian Affairs and the Struggle for Native American Rights, 1948–1955. *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 67(2), 366-391.
- Sargent, S. (2017). Truth and consequences: Law, myth and metaphor in American Indian contested adoption. *Liverpool Law Review*, 38(1), 47–61. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10991-017-9193-7>
- Schreiber, J. C. (2011). Parenting, policies, and practice: Christian influence on child welfare in America. *Social Work & Christianity*, 38(3), 293–314.
- Singletary, J. E. (2005). The praxis of social work: A model of how faith informs practice informs faith. *Social Work & Christianity*, 32(1), 56-72.
- Smith, A. (2004). Boarding school abuses, human rights, and reparations. *Social Justice*, 31(4 (98)), 89–102.
- Smith, T. (2014). *Capture these Indians for the lord: Indians, Methodists, and Oklahomans, 1844-1939*. University of Arizona Press.
- Smolin, D. M. (2011). Of orphans and adoption, parents and the poor, exploitation and rescue: A scriptural and theological critique of the Evangelical Christian adoption and orphan care movement. *Regent Journal of International Law*, (2), 267–324.
- Turner, C. M. (2016). Implementing and defending the Indian Child Welfare Act through revised state requirements. *Columbia Journal of Law and Social Problems; New York*, 49(4), 501–549.
- Vanderwoerd, J. R. (2011). Reconsidering secularization and recovering Christianity in social work history. *Social Work and Christianity*, 38(3), 244–266.
- Warkentin, B., & Sawatsky, A. (2018). Points of discourse: Reconciling Christianity and social work through critical theory. *Social Work & Christianity*, 45(2), 57–67.
- Who We Are. (2018). Retrieved April 13, 2019, from <https://caicw.org/who-we-are/>
- Zschach, A. (2019). Fifth circuit court of appeals reaffirms the constitutionality of ICWA. National Indian Child Welfare Association. August 9, 2019 retrieved from [nicwa.org/fifth-circuit-court-of-appeals-reaffirms-the-constitutionality-of-icwa/](https://www.nicwa.org/fifth-circuit-court-of-appeals-reaffirms-the-constitutionality-of-icwa/)

Bonni Goodwin, MSW, LCSW, is Project Manager for the Center for Child Welfare Training & Simulation at the Anne & Henry Zarrow School of Social Work, University of Oklahoma, 700 Elm Ave, Norman, OK, 73069. Phone: (405) 325-6274. Email: bgoodwin@ou.edu

Angela Pharris, Ph.D, LAPSW, is Assistant Professor at the Anne & Henry Zarrow School of Social Work, University of Oklahoma, 700 Elm Ave, Norman, OK, 73069. Phone: (405) 325-7193. Email: angela.b.pharris-1@ou.edu

The Community Empowerment Framework: A Benchmark for Christian Social Work

Stephen W. Stoeffler, Rigaud Joseph, Ezra Creedon

Despite being a key concept in social work practice, community empowerment has been infrequently featured in the Christian social work literature. One potential explanation for the paucity of publication is arguably a lack of theoretical guidance from scholars who embrace both Christianity and social work. This paper proposes the Community Empowerment Framework (CEF) for understanding empowerment within the Christian social work realm. The CEF contains the following nine principles with related assumptions: unit, purpose, power dynamics, needs assessment, inductive reasoning, solidarity, legacy, accountability, democracy, and identity. Each principle is discussed and related to Christian perspectives and Biblical passages.

Keywords: contemporary social problems, community empowerment, Christian social work, community practice, community empowerment framework

A CROSS THE GLOBE, INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES HAVE FACED a broad range of contemporary social problems in the shape of loneliness and divorce, social isolation and homelessness, poverty and income inequality, crime and incarceration, illiteracy, and human trafficking to name a few. These social issues have plagued communities in both developed and underdeveloped countries. Christian social workers carry a dual mission with ethical responsibilities emanating from the professional world as well as the religious environment. Both their profession and religion compel them to transform the world into a peaceful and inclusive living place for all human beings, regardless of their ethno-racial backgrounds. To do so, Christian social workers would benefit from

empowerment: a concept that not only bears the hallmarks of social work but also parallels the teachings of the Lord Jesus-Christ.

The Christian Church is a central institution in almost every community. Many scholars have established a positive connection between Christianity and community empowerment. Churches have become a source of support, economic development, and social change for various ethnic groups, primarily the African American community (Barnes, 2011; Boyd-Franklin, Smith Morris, & Bry, 1997; DeVore, 2007; Evans, 1992; Moore, 1991; Morris & Robinson, 1996; Wilson, 1996). Notwithstanding its importance for religious communities, empowerment has not received considerable attention in the Christian social work literature. For example, over a 45-year period, the journal *Social Work and Christianity* published only 20 articles related to empowerment. After scrutinizing the articles by hand for any variant of the term empowerment in their titles and/or abstracts, six articles contained little to no content on empowerment and thus were excluded. Of the remaining 14 articles, only three of them associated a definition with empowerment. The lack of attention to empowerment is not significantly different for the *Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Social Work*, formerly known as *Social Thought*.

Outside the Christian social work literature, though, empowerment is a buzzword. A simple search of the term on Google Scholar generates about two million hits. Yet, there is still a lack of clarity in terms of proceedings (Joseph, 2020). To help address this problem, scholars have made various recommendations; however, existing models are mostly related to community empowerment as an end product rather than a process. In addition, these models are not primarily related to Christian social work. This paper highlights the historical connection between empowerment and the religious world, describes empowerment and its usefulness for community practice, and proposes the Community Empowerment Framework (CEF) to provide a process-oriented understanding of empowerment in Christian social work.

Understanding Empowerment Historical Development

Christian influence of the 19th and early 20th centuries was instrumental in the development of social work and is rightly cited in nearly all historical accounts (Vanderwoerd, 2011). The profession is seen as coming from an empowerment tradition that evolved from evangelical Christian theology and the Social Gospel Movement (Simon, 1994; Warkentin & Sawatsky, 2018). However, the path to professionalization of social work led to secularization. Social agencies and government widely adopted the functions previously led by Christian institutions.

The Civil Rights Movement led by the Black church and growing feminist movements of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s centered on overcoming oppression through micro to macro level empowerment. Rothman (1968) constructed three models of community intervention, which provided a framework for social work community practice, and included locality development, social planning, and social action. It was during this time that liberation theology, especially as espoused by Paulo Freire (1970), Gustavo Gutierrez (1973), and other Latin Americans, was gaining influence in North America and around the World. Liberation theology, much like the earlier Social Gospel Movement, focused on addressing poverty and oppression through collaborations with the Christian church and other helping institutions (Evans, 1992). The conglomeration of religious, social, and political influences, paired with more defined community practices, led to a practical methodology in the groundbreaking work *Black Empowerment: Social Work in Oppressed Communities* by Barbara Solomon (1976). Since that time there has been much development within social work empowerment practice, most notably the work of Lorraine Gutierrez (Gutierrez, 1995; Gutierrez, 2001; Gutierrez & Lewis, 1999). This brief historical review bears witness to the importance of empowerment in Christianity and social work. The article connects those histories in a conceptual process-oriented framework that can serve as a benchmark for Christian social work.

Definition of Empowerment

Empowerment is rarely defined within the Christian social work literature. This brief overview attempts to address that issue. Empowerment is both a process and product of social work community practice and occurs along a continuum from personal to social and collective actions (Stoeffler, 2018). However, empowerment lacks a universal definition, which has contributed to misunderstandings and over-simplifications in discussions of the topic (Stoeffler, 2018). Empowerment requires multiple levels of analysis. Perkins and Zimmerman (1995) offer one of the most complete definitions of empowerment:

An intentional ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources (Cornell Empowerment Group, 1989) or simply a process by which people gain control over their lives, democratic participation in the life of their community (Rappaport, 1987), and a critical understanding of their environment (Zimmerman, Israel, Schulz, & Checkoway, 1992, p. 570).

Most descriptions of empowerment begin with the personal level, but, as it is a continuum, the starting point can be at any level, such as a social movement inspiring individual empowerment or a small support group leading to a community organization (Stoeffler, 2018).

Personal and Relational Empowerment

Oppression inhibits self-determination. Personal empowerment, by contrast, builds an individual's control over their and enriches their awareness. Rowlands (1997) wrote that personal empowerment relates to “developing a sense of self and individual confidence and capacity, and undoing the effects of internalized oppression” (p. 15). This dimension of empowerment also correlates with critical consciousness, a theory proposed by Freire (1970). According to Freire (1970), critical consciousness is an increased awareness of marginalization and oppression that motivates the oppressed to act. Critical consciousness is typically inspired by personal interactions; nevertheless, it is a force that can be harnessed towards social, relational, community, and policy change.

Between personal empowerment and community-level change lies relational empowerment. Emphasizing the importance of relational empowerment, Russell, Muraco, Subramaniam, and Laub (2009) determine that self-empowerment and self-affirmation depend upon social relations and group membership. Relational empowerment builds upon the goals and ideas that originate in personal empowerment. For instance, relational empowerment better enables the acquisition of tangible skills and resources (Lee, 2001), while offering social support and sense of belonging. Both personal and relational empowerment are vital for community members to develop progressive and practical goals.

Collective and Community Empowerment

Taking action on the immediate, interpersonal level is often the initial focus of empowerment. While such efforts are valuable, as Itzhaky and York (2000) point out, “there is clearly a branch [of empowerment] that focuses more on the wider community and sociopolitical empowerment” (p. 407). According to Rowlands (1997), collective action enables advocates to “achieve a more extensive impact than each could have had alone” in helping marginalized groups and correcting unjust power dynamics (p. 15). In other words, individuals may discuss goals and develop plans with one another, forming organizations which may eventually become coalitions, all of which can further the goal of empowerment more than a single person acting alone.

Thus, the formation of organizations, whether they are social protest groups, volunteer agencies, or specific task groups, is significant in achieving empowerment across a greater area and with a more extensive understanding of the oppressed group's needs and interests. Organizations, furthermore, can network with one another and build coalitions that greatly increase the daily well-being of oppressed groups. Coalitions come together for a specific purpose (Himmelman, 2001), focusing the efforts and ideas of individuals and organizations towards the collective goals of a disenfranchised group. Coalitions allow for the greatest flow of ideas, information, and resources in ways that aim to support disenfranchised individuals and communities. This macro-level application of empowerment increases "commitment to sustaining activities long term," and allows for an impact "beyond individual lifestyle change by collectively influencing key decision makers and social policy within the community" (McMillan, Florin, Stevenson, Kerman, & Mitchell, 1995, p. 700).

Previous Community Empowerment Models

Scholars have developed and put forth numerous models of community empowerment. Laverack and Labonte (2000) and Laverack and Wallerstein (2001) advocated for a community empowerment framework in healthcare environments. According to Laverack and Wallerstein (2001), measuring community empowerment in health promotion starts with a sound theoretical framework. Laverack and Labonte (2000), meanwhile, proposed a planning framework for achieving community empowerment goals that relies on a bottom-up leadership style.

Fawcett et al. (1995) recommended 33 different activities for community health and development. These activities sought to promote empowerment by enhancing experience and competence, enhancing group structure and capacity, removing social and environmental barriers, and enhancing environmental support and resources. Laverack (2001) identified nine domains of community empowerment. All of these domains—participation, leadership, organizational structures, problem assessment, resource mobilization, asking questions, links with other people and organizations, role of outside agents, and program management—are significant to the organizational aspects of community empowerment. Elsewhere, Weil and Gamble (1995, 2010) presented a model of community practice that included eight sections: neighborhood and community organizing, organizing functional communities, community social and economic development, social planning, program development and community liaison, political and social action, coalitions, and social movements. Meanwhile, Boehm and Cnaan's (2012) 12-element model brought some originality to the literature by explaining community practice based on opposing positions.

Limitations of Previous Work

Fawcett et al.'s (1995) framework was just a set of activities for empowerment practice. There were no stated assumptions. Similarly, the domains in Laverack's (2001) model were not formulated around principles. The two aforementioned models were roughly related to empowerment as a goal (outcome) rather than a process. The work of Boehm and Cnaan (2012) and that of Weil and Gamble (1995, 2010) can be subjected to the same criticism by failing to postulate assumptions.

Whitmore (1988) and Rappaport (1987) were among the first researchers to develop philosophical assumptions of the theory of empowerment (Joseph, 2020). However, Whitmore's (1988) four-assumption framework described empowerment at the individual/personal level. That is, Whitmore's (1988) work totally neglected the concept of community empowerment. Rappaport (1987) presented a more complete framework than the one developed by Whitmore in 1988. Through 11 assumptions, Rappaport (1987) provided a roadmap for understanding empowerment as not only an individual process but also as a community one.

The Community Empowerment Framework

This paper builds on the strengths of previous work (Boehm & Cnaan, 2012; Rappaport, 1987; Weil & Gamble, 1995, 2010; Whitmore, 1988) by featuring empowerment as a process-oriented framework for community practice that is based upon principles and assumptions found in the academic literature and also applicable within the Christian social work realm through Biblical support. The ultimate goal is to demonstrate how Christian social workers can cultivate the spirit of empowerment as they assist people in their quest to bring shalom into broken communities. From these principles and assumptions Christian social work professionals will be able to develop specific practice models and activities. Table 1 below presents the principles and assumptions of the proposed framework. A complete description of each of them is provided.

Table 1. Principles and Assumptions of the Community Empowerment Framework	
Empowerment Framework	
Principles	Assumptions
The Unit Principle	Any given community is greater than the sum of its individual parts.
The Purpose or Mission Principle	Social well-being is the ultimate goal of community empowerment.

The Power Dynamics Principle	Power imbalances create the potential for entropy within communities.
The Needs Assessment Principle	Inductive reasoning (grounded theory) is the best suited methodology for assessing needs in a community.
The Solidarity Principle	Many hands make light work in a community.
The Legacy Principle	The spirit of community empowerment is transferrable from one generation to another, but not automatically.
The Accountability Principle	Advocacy is critical for the welfare of a community.
The Democracy Principle	When undergirded by fairness, democracy is the glue that holds elements of a community together.
The Identity Principle	Awareness of internalized discrimination can lead to a new identity that is transformative in nature.

The Unit Principle

Community empowerment is consistent with systems theory. Aristotle is attributed as saying, “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” This axiom directly relates to the modern general systems theory concept of synergy (Carter, 2011). Communities can achieve much more being organized together than the individual members can by themselves. While there are over 80 distinct sociological definitions for community (Hardcastle, Powers, & Wenocur, 2011), they all hold the feature of togetherness. Programs that seek to increase empowerment on the individual level must still address the community and its cultural values. Empowerment involves both removing barriers and facilitating cooperation. Tew’s notion of “power together” (2006) explains the horizontal nature of empowerment and reiterates that empowerment is distinct from charity or the vague notion of equality; it is instead an ongoing process involving cooperation and mutual respect. All components are necessary, according to Tengelnd (2008), to increase “control over the determinants of one’s quality of life” (p. 77).

In the Christian context people are interconnected to one another as a community. The Bible says the following:

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all others. We have different gifts, according to

the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 5: 4-10, New International Version).

While each subsystem is valued and distinctive, the community as a whole is regarded as the primary unit for healthy living. It is incumbent upon the community to pursue empowerment to realize its potential.

The Purpose/Mission Principle

Community empowerment exists to help individuals, groups, and communities meet their own needs. This purpose runs parallel to both Biblical principles and the expressed mission of the social work profession as described in the NASW Code of Ethics (2017). While charity may be part of solution, it is by no means an end unto itself (Wolterstorff, 2006). Empowerment enables the individuals to make decisions concerning the improvement of conditions and resources (Stoeffler, 2018). God's plans are for peace and prosperity for the community (Jeremiah 29:11). When God enabled Moses to lead the people of Israel out of captivity in Egypt, he did not just give them manna from Heaven (charity) but also community in Canaan where there was prosperity and abundance. According to the first sentence in the NASW Code of Ethics (2017), "The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet the basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (preamble). This mission represents a profession that was birthed out of Christian values and heritage. In Matthew 25, Jesus claims that whatever is done to the vulnerable, oppressed, and poor is done to Him directly and indifference towards these groups leads to judgment. As a result, the well-being of the community is paramount and the importance of food, healthcare, shelter, security, savings and other social welfare programs is magnified.

The Power Dynamics Principle

A meaningful definition of empowerment depends upon a clear definition of power itself. Classically, power is the ability to realize one's will, whether as an individual or collective (Parsons, 1960; Weber, 1968). Empowerment theory views distinct groups in society as having unequal

levels of power and control (Gutierrez, 2001). Power is both vicious and virtuous. When power is used viciously, it can be oppressive and collusive in a manner to limit and exploit others (Tew, 2006). When power is used virtuously it can be protective and cooperative in a manner to safeguard vulnerable people and provide mutual support (Tew, 2006). Power is multi-dimensional and can be reflected by the actions of the individual, but is sustained by the widespread beliefs of the surrounding community and society. Rowlands (1997) emphasized the importance of acknowledging power's many layers by separating the power of privileged groups to coerce and subjugate marginalized groups from the power of decision-making and self-determination.

The Bible makes it clear that a primary source of suffering for the poor and marginalized is oppression and exploitation by those who are powerful in wealth and government (American Bible Society, 2008). "You are doomed! You make unjust laws that oppress my people. That is how you keep the poor from having their rights and from getting justice. That is how you take the property that belongs to widows and orphans" (Isaiah 10:1-2, Good News Translation). The misuse of power greatly displeases God (Sider, 1999). Yet, power is indispensable for both faith and social action. Power enables Christians to resist and act against oppressive forces (John 1:12; Matthew 16:18).

The Needs Assessment Principle

Community leaders need to listen to community members. It is very easy to have top-down assessments and interventions within a community. All this does is replicate the power dynamics that already exist and contribute to community suffering. Stoeffler (2018) theorized, "Empowerment cannot be achieved if the methods used in its pursuit are not also empowering" (pp. 278-279). How can policymakers act on behalf of the community without listening to them in the first place? Listening to community members, accepting what they see as needs, and moving towards action on behalf of those needs is necessary if community empowerment is to take place. Jesus performed many miracles. Most of the time, he asked those who sought his help: "What do you want from me?" Then he met their expressed needs. That built a trustable relationship in which future development and activity could take place. Community empowerment interventions develop through specific community discussions concerning central community issues and conditions (Boehm & Cnaan, 2012).

The Solidarity Principle

It is necessary for all members to contribute in the process and product

of community empowerment. Contributions include both philanthropy and volunteerism. Funding is needed to address challenges faced by the community. In the tax system, everyone contributes. Since taxes are levied automatically through the government, lack of funding or cuts to social programs is a betrayal of the community. In this case, advocacy and activism is needed so that proper representation can occur. Beyond taxes, personal giving and fundraising support community causes. James (2:15-16, New International Version) states, “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?” Action is required. In fact, if there is no action, it calls into question whether the love of God exists in the Christian community (1 John 3:17-18). It is important to note that it is not the amount that is given that is important (See Mark 12:44); rather the principle is that everyone needs to contribute something.

The Legacy Principle

In order for community empowerment to last, it must be emphasized on a consistent basis by socializing marginalized groups on how to sustain power. This is a way to transfer the spirit to the next generation. The forces of injustice are ever present and the community must remain diligent. As an example, one can see how the empowered Black church in America was instrumental in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s (Frazier, 1963). Real gains were made in communities in the areas of employment, education, and political participation. The Civil Rights Act and the Equal Opportunity Act were large legislative gains that would not have happened apart from widespread empowering community practices. However, the War on Drugs and its counterpart—mass incarceration—have been disproportionately devastating to the African American community in recent decades (Alexander, 2010). Empowerment is not a one-and-done activity. It is a continuous process that must be maintained. The Black church is still strong and is a tremendous asset that can organize community efforts.

In Scripture, we see that Jesus taught his disciples during his final three and a half years on Earth. He instructed them on a variety of social issues of the time. Many times, He asked them to take part in serving others. Upon ascension, He gave instructions to them in how to carry out the work that He had begun. The disciples continued living the words and deeds of Jesus to shape a moral tradition and establish the early church (Verhey, 1984). Likewise, community empowerment must be taught. Social work macro practices are very important as a mechanism to ensure empowerment is transmitted over time.

The Accountability Principle

Advocacy is critical for the welfare of a community. The NASW Code of Ethics (2017) directs social workers to advocate with and on behalf of those experiencing difficulties. Advocacy is a component in all of Weil and Gamble's (1995, 2010) eight models of community practice discussed earlier. As advocates, organizations and social movement groups must prioritize the voices of the oppressed. According to Mondros and Wilson (1994), marginalized groups often feel that "their opinions aren't heard, their needs aren't recognized, they are made to feel small and insignificant" (p. 244). Listening to such groups is important for effective policy on the micro level for its own sake, but community goals then shape the nature of coalitions, which in turn influence social movements. Roe and Bushnell (2018) write that Christian social workers have both uplifted oppressed groups and served as oppressors themselves. Ethnocentric "values and beliefs can be a barrier creating unintentional oppression and impede empowerment" (Roe & Bushnell, 2018, p. 37). By contrast, principles of peace and universal love and respect can be assets in increasing understanding and creating positive change. Those with the power to influence social movements that sway public opinion, create social change, and affect public policy must ensure they are listening to and highlighting the voices of the oppressed, rather than speaking for them. As Tilly and Castenada (2007) state, social action movements exist for the purpose of transforming power dynamics and social structures. To transform structures and norms for the better, the biases and assumptions of the oppressive group must be checked. The micro-level interactions between community leaders, including individual social workers, and marginalized populations influence later macro-level social justice advocacy and, potentially, political and legal decisions as a result.

Scripture also stresses the importance of being a voice for the marginalized; "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy" (Proverbs 31:8-9, New International Version). Moses advocated for the people of Israel when God vowed to destroy the community due to idolatry and was able to intervene (Exodus 32: 11-33). A vital objective of the gospel is the directive to offer good news to the poor, release to the captives, and liberty to the oppressed (Mott, 1982). This is not accomplished apart from advocacy.

The Democracy Principle

Marginalization and oppression are more likely to occur when there is inequality in policymaking. Community empowerment is a practice

that is grounded in democratic participation, enabling members to play active roles in decisions affecting them (Stoeffler, 2018). There is no mention of democracy in the Bible. However, there are Biblical principles of leadership that can be applied. One is that those in authority must protect the vulnerable, which is stated repeatedly throughout scripture. Another concept is that leaders should be humble servants. Jesus Christ had all authority but modeled himself as a servant and instructed his followers in saying,

The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. Luke 22: 25-27, New International Version.

Here we see clearly that the interests of the people are to be put ahead of the interests of the leader. Administration is to care for the marginalized and for its common members. Community empowerment is only possible when democratic principles are fairly administered. For example, if community members' desires are blocked by a select group of powerful moneyed interests, then democracy is compromised.

The Identity Principle

Self-awareness is paramount in empowerment work. If one is an object of oppression, it can prevent the individual from self-determined action or reflection (Freire, 1970). They experience both alienation and lack of awareness, which causes social isolation and leads to internalized oppression (Dominelli, 2016; Rowlands, 1997). Becoming aware of the various forms of oppression that affect them can lead to transformative action. This relates to the process of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) that can further be accelerated through questioning and dialogue with other community members experiencing related circumstances. Stoeffler (2018) contended, "Critical consciousness exists as an ongoing practice at all levels of empowerment, but may be most salient at the personal level as it offers a spark that illuminates the empowerment process" (p. 270). The outcome of this process is a new identity in which they have increased capacity to enact change in their own life.

The Biblical principle of transformation relates to the notion of a new identity. Romans 12:2, New International Version states, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your

mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.” Oppression is a pattern of this world that is not to be conformed to; rather true identity will be found in God's will. The old is gone and the new has come (1 Corinthians 5:17). Having a new identity that is not based in oppression but in liberation is itself empowering and can lead to collective change.

Conclusion

In this paper, the term empowerment takes center stage as its definition, historical development and usefulness for macro social work practice were highlighted. This paper also exposes the gap between the notoriety of the concept and its applicability within the Christian social work community. There is, indeed, a penury of scholarly work on community empowerment with respect to the Christian social work literature. Furthermore, this paper expands the existing literature by proposing the CEF, which contains nine principles: Unit, Purpose or Mission, Power Dynamics, Needs Assessment, Solidarity, Legacy, Accountability, Democracy, and Identity. Each of these principles is grounded in the literature as well as in Scripture, namely with regard to the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The CEF is not goal-oriented as is the case for most of the existing community empowerment models. In other words, the CEF is not a practice model. Rather, it is process-oriented community empowerment framework. That is, the CEF primarily explains behaviors within the Christian social work world. It is a framework that guides Christian social workers as they help their clients navigate social problems. The guidance comes in terms of how Christian social workers can use the CEF to ensure that their work has consistency not only with the ethical guidelines of the profession, but also with recommendations from the Bible.

For example, the Purpose Principle “Social well-being is the ultimate goal of community empowerment” will help Christian social workers understand that social welfare is a goal pursued by both the profession of social work and the Bible. As a result, these workers would be more likely to go the extra mile in their professional encounters with clients. The same can be said for all the other principles of the framework.

The CEF has its shortcomings. The principles and assumptions proposed were not empirically tested. They are merely tenets for understanding how to link the theoretical aspect of community empowerment into practice. Future research should attempt to fill this void. ❖

References

Alexander, M. (2010). *The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of*

- colorblindness. The New Press.
- American Bible Society. (1976). *Good news Bible: The Bible in today's English version*. American Bible Society.
- American Bible Society (2008). *Poverty and the poor in the Bible*. Author.
- Barnes, S. L. (2011). Black megachurches: Social gospel usage and community empowerment. *Journal of African American Studies*, 15(2), 177-198.
- Boehm, A., & Cnaan, R. (2012). Towards a practice-based model for community practice: Linking theory and practice. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 39(1), 141-168.
- Boyd-Franklin, N., Smith Morris, T., & Bry, B. H. (1997). Parent and family support groups with African American families: The process of family and community empowerment. *Cultural Diversity and Mental Health*, 3(2), 83.
- Carter, I. (2011). *Human behavior in the social environment: A social systems approach* (6th ed.). Aldine Transaction.
- Cornell Empowerment Group (1989). Empowerment and family support. *Networking Bulletin*, 1(2), 1-23.
- DeVore, D. E. (2007). Water in sacred places: rebuilding New Orleans black churches as sites of community empowerment. *The Journal of American History*, 94(3), 762-769.
- Dominelli, L. (2016). Differences in positional status impact upon social exclusion. *International Social Work*, 59(2), 173-176.
- Evans, E. N. (1992). Liberation theology, empowerment theory and social work practice with the oppressed. *International Social Work*, 35(2), 135-147.
- Fawcett, S.B., Paine-Andrews, A., Francisco, V.T., Schultz, J.A., Richter, K.P., Lewis, R.K., Williams, E.L., Harris, K.J., Berkley, J.Y., Fisher, J.L., & Lopez, C.M. (1995). Using empowerment theory in collaborative partnerships for community health and development. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 23(5), 677-698.
- Frazier, E. F. (1963). *The Negro Church in America*. Schocken Books.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Seabury Press.
- Gamble, D., & Weil, M. (2010). Conceptual frameworks and models for community practice. In D. Gamble & M. Weil, *Community practice skills: Local to global perspectives* (pp. 24-46). Columbia University Press.
- Gutierrez, G. (1973). *A theology of liberation*. Orbis.
- Gutierrez, L. M. (1995). Understanding the empowerment process: Does consciousness make a difference? *Social Work Research*, 19(4), 229-237.
- Gutierrez, L.M. (2001). Working with women of color: An empowerment perspective. In J. Rothman, J. L. Erlich, & J. E. Tropman, (eds.). *Strategies of community intervention* (6th ed.). p. 209-217. FE. Peacock Publishers, Inc.
- Gutierrez, L., & Lewis, E. (1999). *Empowering women of color*. Columbia University Press.
- Hardcastle, D., Powers, P., & Wenocur, S. (2011). *Community practice: Theories and skills for social workers* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Himmelman, A.T. (2001). On coalitions and the transformation of power relations: Collaborative betterment and collaborative empowerment. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 29(2), 277-284.
- Itzhaky, H., & York, A.H. (2000). Sociopolitical control and empowerment: An extended replication. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 28(4), 407-415.

- Joseph, R. (2020). The theory of empowerment: A critical analysis with the theory evaluation scale. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 30(2), 138-157, DOI: 10.1080/10911359.2019.1660294
- Laverack, G. (2001). An identification and interpretation of the organizational aspects of community empowerment. *Community Development Journal*, 36(2), 134-145.
- Laverack, G., & Labonte, R. (2000). A planning framework for community empowerment goals within health promotion. *Health Policy and Planning*, 15(3), 255-262.
- Laverack, G., & Wallerstein, N. (2001). Measuring community empowerment: A fresh look at organizational domains. *Health Promotion International*, 16(2), 179-185.
- Lee, J.B. (2001). *The empowerment approach to social work practice: Building the beloved community* (2nd ed.). Columbia University Press.
- McMillan, B., Florin, P., Stevenson, J., Kerman, B., & Mitchell, R.E. (1995). Empowerment praxis in community coalitions. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 23(5), 699-727.
- Mondros, J.B., & Wilson, S.M. (1994). *Organizing for power and empowerment*. Columbia University Press.
- Moore, T. (1991). The African-American church: A source of empowerment, mutual help, and social change. *Prevention in Human Services*, 10(1), 147-167.
- Morris, J. R., & Robinson, D. T. (1996). Community and Christianity in the Black church. *Counseling and Values*, 41(1), 59-69.
- Mott, S. C. (1982). *Biblical ethics and social change*. Oxford University Press.
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (2017). *Code of ethics of the National Association of Social Workers (Approved by the 1996 NASW Delegate Assembly and revised by the 2017 NASW Delegate Assembly)*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Parsons, T. (1960). *Structure and process in modern society*. Free Press of Glencoe.
- Perkins, D. D., & Zimmerman, M.A. (1995). Empowerment theory, research, and application. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 23(5), 569-579.
- Rappaport, J. (1987). Terms of empowerment/exemplars of prevention: Toward a theory for community psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 15(2), 121-148.
- Roe, E. P. & Bushnell, J. (2018). Refugee empowerment and faith communities: A qualitative study. *Social Work & Christianity*, 45(2), 35-54.
- Rothman, J. (1968). *Three models of community organization practice*. Columbia University Press.
- Rowlands, J. (1997). *Questioning empowerment: Working with women in Honduras*. Oxfam.
- Russell, S. T., Muraco, A., Subramaniam, A., & Laub, C. (2009). Youth empowerment and high school gay-straight alliances. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 38(7), 891-903.
- Sider, R. J. (1999). *Just generosity: A new vision for overcoming poverty in America*. Baker Books.
- Simon, B. L. (1994). *The empowerment tradition in American social work*. Columbia University Press.
- Solomon, B. H. (1976). *Black empowerment: Social work in oppressed communities*.

Columbia University Press.

- Stoeffler, S.W. (2018). Community empowerment. In R. A. Cnaan and C. Milofsky (Eds.) *Handbook of community movements and local organizations in the 21st century, Handbooks of Sociology and Social Research*. Springer International Publishing, DOI: 10.1007/978-3-319-77416-9_16
- Tengland, P. A. (2008). Empowerment: A conceptual discussion. *Health Care Analysis*, 16(2), 77-96.
- Tew, J. (2006). Understanding power and powerlessness: Towards a framework for emancipatory practice in social work. *Journal of Social Work*, 6(1), 33-51.
- The Holy Bible, new international version*. (1984). Zondervan Publishing House.
- Tilly, C., & Castenada, E. (2007). Contentious politics class slides and notes. Columbia University.
- Vanderwoerd, J. R. (2011). Reconsidering secularization and recovering Christianity in social work history. *Social Work & Christianity*, 38(3), 244-266.
- Verhey, A. (1984). *The great reversal: Ethics and the New Testament*. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
- Warkentin, B., & Sawatsky, A. (2018). Points of discourse: Reconciling Christianity and social work through critical theory. *Social Work & Christianity*, 45(2), 57-67.
- Weber, M. (1968). *Economy and society (vol. 1)*. Bedminster Press.
- Weil, M. O., & Gamble, D. N. (1995). Community practice models. In R.L. Edwards & J.G. Hoppes (Eds.) *Encyclopedia of Social Work* (19th ed., p.577-593). NASW.
- Whitmore, E. (1988). Empowerment and the process of inquiry. A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Association of Schools of Social Work, Windsor, Ontario.
- Wilson, P. A. (1996). Empowerment: Community economic development from the inside out. *Urban Studies*, 33(4-5), 617-630.
- Wolterstorff, N. (2006). Justice, not charity: Social work through the eyes of faith. *Social Work & Christianity*, 33(2), 123-140.
- Zimmerman, M. A., Israel, B. A., Schulz, A., & Checkoway, B. (1992). Further explorations in empowerment theory: An empirical analysis of psychological empowerment. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 20, 707-727.

Stephen W. Stoeffler, PhD, LSW, is an Assistant Professor of Social Work at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, 334 Old Main, PO Box 730, Kutztown, PA 19530. Phone: (610) 683-4361. Email: Stoeffler@kutztown.edu

Rigaud Joseph, MSW, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Social Work at California State University San Bernardino, 5500 University Parkway, SB 409, San Bernardino, CA 92407. Phone: (909) 537-5507. Email: rigaud.joseph@csusb.edu

Ezra Creedon is an undergraduate psychology student at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania. Email: ecree945@live.kutztown.edu

Reducing Police Brutality in African American Communities: Potential Roles for Social Workers in Congregations

Betty L. Wilson, Terry A. Wolfer

In the last decade, there have been a shocking number of police killings of unarmed African Americans, and advancements in technology have made these incidents more visible to the general public. The increasing public awareness of police brutality or police violence in African American communities creates a critical and urgent need to understand and improve police-community relationships. Congregational social workers (and other social workers who are part of religious congregations) can play a potentially significant role in addressing the problem of police brutality. This manuscript explores and describes possible contributions by social workers, with differential consideration for those in predominantly Black or White congregations.

“But let justice roll on like a river; righteousness like a never-failing stream!” (Amos 5:24; NIV)

Keywords: congregational social work, police brutality, police violence, excessive use of force, African American males, unarmed, racism, racial trauma

IN THE LAST DECADE, THE UNITED STATES HAS WITNESSED A STRING of police killings of unarmed African Americans—with the deaths of Michael Brown, Walter Scott, Sandra Bland, and Eric Garner being only the tip of the iceberg. These incidents have sparked unprecedented mass protests, debates, and social

movements regarding police brutality (Robinson et al., 2018). Research shows that African Americans, especially males, are disproportionately subject to racial profiling, stop and frisk, and police brutality (English et al., 2017; McGregor, 2016; Sewell et al., 2016). The increasing public awareness of disproportionate police brutality in African American communities creates a critical and urgent need to understand and improve police-community relationships. Are there roles for religious congregations, and for social workers in congregations?

Police Brutality in African American Communities

African Americans have long known about elevated rates of police brutality in their communities and cautioned their children accordingly. But official statistics to substantiate these claims have been hard to find: the United States government does not maintain a comprehensive record of people killed by law enforcement (Swaine, n.d.). Increased media attention on several high-profile incidents, however, has prompted new efforts to document the occurrence of police brutality.

Staggering statistics from The Counted, a crowd-sourced database used to report and track police killings in 2015 and 2016, indicated that African American boys and men in the United States between the ages 15-34 were nine times more likely than other Americans to be killed by police officers (The Guardian, 2017). Say Her Name, a campaign launched in 2014 by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to bring attention to African American girls and women killed by police, shockingly revealed that “Black women and girls as young as 7 and as old as 93 have been killed by the police” (AAPF, n.d.). This claim is evident in the recent police killing of 28-year old Atatiana Jefferson, an unarmed African American woman who was shot and killed on October 12, 2019 by a Fort Worth, Texas police officer while playing video games with her nephew. The police chief of Fort Worth stated in a press conference that officers should be trained to “act and react with a servant’s heart instead of a warrior’s heart” (Dart, 2019).

While police killings of unarmed African Americans have become a salient problem across the nation, some scholars contend that the problem of police brutality in African American communities is not a new phenomenon. Instead, they argue it is a continuation of unchecked and unabated violence against African Americans at the hands of police (Gilbert & Ray, 2016; Moore et al., 2018). In fact, scholars in recent years have argued that countless deaths of unarmed African Americans in the United States at the hands of police are strikingly akin to violence perpetrated by slave patrols during American slavery (Cooper, 2015; Moore et al., 2018; Robinson, 2017). Durr (2015) poses a provocative question: “How is police

behavior in the 21st century different from that of slave patrollers?” (p. 2). Slave patrols, also referred to as paddy rollers and night watchers, are considered the original institution of policing in the United States (Moore et al., 2016). Established in 1704, slave patrols grew especially prevalent throughout Southern slave-holding states. Composed mainly of adult White males, slave patrols functioned—virtually unchecked—to capture runaway slaves, police the movement of enslaved Africans, prevent slave revolts and escapes, and essentially protect the institution of slavery (Cooper, 2015; Moore et al., 2018). Given that American policing has its roots in the system of slavery and racialized violence, it's perhaps less surprising that we continue to witness present-day police brutality against African Americans.

Against this backdrop, however, advancements in technology—smart phones, video recordings and live streaming, and social media websites—have made this issue more visible to the general public and thus undeniable (Alang et al., 2017). Perhaps more than anything else, advancements in technology have exposed injustice, forcing police brutality into broader public consciousness. And wider, more rapid dissemination of information—by victims, onlookers, family members, friends, neighbors as well as people at a distance—has generated increasingly negative effects. More people are being exposed to stories, images, and videos of police brutality, which research suggests can generate trauma responses in African Americans and their communities (Grills et al., 2016) as well as escalate tensions between police and these communities (Correll et al., 2007).

Furthermore, research suggests that repeated exposure to incidents of police brutality against unarmed African Americans can increase risks of psychological harm and traumatic stress, which can manifest in the form of racial trauma (Polanco-Roman et al., 2016). The term racial trauma refers to a complex psychological phenomenon resulting from exposure to racism and discrimination for racial and ethnic minority individuals like African Americans, their neighborhoods and congregations. Racial trauma can be severely distressing and lead to a range of adverse mental health outcomes such as anxiety, hypervigilance, nightmares, depression, and avoidance/numbing (Carter, 2006). In addition, ample research shows that repeated exposure to racialized events like police brutality, combined with existing racial disparities in social institutions such as employment, healthcare, and the criminal justice system, make African Americans more vulnerable to the effects of racial trauma (Hemmings & Evans, 2018; Polanco-Roman et al., 2016).

Why the Church?

Religious congregations provide a unique platform for community intervention. To begin, congregations represent potential repositories

of social capital: social networks that promote trust, reciprocity, and meaning. Because clergy often establish trusting relationships at the street-level—with congregation participants and neighbors—and at the professional-level—with law enforcement, city officials, and others—they have a platform from which to address issues like police brutality. Social workers in congregations can partner with clergy to leverage clergy credibility, connections, and leadership in the community to improve police-citizen interactions and reduce instances of police brutality in African American communities.

Congregations have a long history of meeting the physical, social, and emotional needs in addition to the spiritual needs of people. Furthermore, they have often provided encouragement, support, and leadership for their members participating in civic and political activities, ranging from voting to community organizing. Indeed, at times, congregations have birthed or contributed to major social movements.

In the African American community, the church has long been one of the most influential and valued institutions in the community (Swain, 2008). Historically, given that African Americans were largely excluded from many public spaces in the larger society (including schools, dining areas, and other White congregations) (PBS, n.d.), the Black church became a safe place where African Americans felt welcomed and achieved a sense of belonging. The Black church also established a vanguard for promoting social, economic, and political activism and encouraged its members to be involved in local activism as well (Billingsley, 2003; Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Swain, 2008).

The Civil Rights Movement marked a monumental era, particularly for Christian pastors and churchgoers, in efforts to seek equal rights and freedoms (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Tisby, 2019). Emerging as one of the most well-known Christian leaders and civil rights activists, Dr. Martin Luther King bravely spoke out against the racial injustices waged against African Americans. Yet, while our remembrance of King is dominated by his calls for racial and economic equality, peace, and nonviolence (The King Center, 2020), a significant part of King's activism has been sanitized or erased from our memory — his struggle against police brutality toward African Americans (Lockhart, 2019). In his iconic 1963 “I Have a Dream Speech” delivered to a massive crowd from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, King powerfully stated, “There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, when will you be satisfied? We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality” (King, 1963). Yet, we must question, why has King's outright condemnation of police brutality been overlooked or ignored in national commemorations and public discourse (Lockhart, 2019).

In these racially tense times, congregations may find renewed resonance and urgency in King's call to action against police brutality. Moreover, congregations can be inspired by King's efforts not just as a prominent civil rights leader, but as a Christian of deep faith, standing on the side of justice and peace.

Where is the Church?

Despite these reasons for involvement, clergy and their congregations have often hesitated or failed to confront police brutality. In his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," also written in 1963, King penned a searing note critiquing the complicity and failure of White Christian moderates and evangelicals to challenge the status quo of American racism, including police brutality (Brown, 2018). King wrote in response to a letter by eight clergymen—representing Episcopal, Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Jewish congregations—calling for respect for law and order and discouraging use of even peaceful demonstrations (Carpenter et al., 1963). In his letter, King explicitly addressed the problem of police violence and brutality. Billy Graham, a prominent and highly regarded evangelical leader initially played it safe, not openly advocating for the equal rights of African Americans (Tisby, 2019). Although Graham eventually became a vocal opponent of racism and racial segregation, like many White evangelicals during the civil rights movement, he avoided speaking out against racist sanctions and brutality disproportionately inflicted upon African American communities. Yet, passivity was not just a stance taken by White clergy—it was also the posture assumed by many Black clergy and congregations—who initially acted with extreme caution, dissociating themselves from King and the civil rights movement (Tisby, 2019).

Currently, with mounting racial tensions in the aftermath of repeated police brutality against unarmed African Americans, a few religious leaders have responded in various ways. Some are speaking out. For example, following the fatal shooting of Michael Brown by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, evangelical Pastor Matt Chandler of the Village Church, a Texas megachurch, addressed his congregation and social media followers about the racial injustices experienced by African Americans at the hands of police (Clay, 2014). In Cleveland, an interdenominational coalition of 40 congregations joined forces to address police brutality and police reform more broadly (Ondrey, 2015). More dramatically, leaders at the First Congregational Church of Oakland urged congregants to refrain from calling the police on African Americans in the wake of repeated police shootings and news reports of White people racially profiling and calling the police on African Americans (Dirks, 2018; Gabriel, 2018). Yet,

despite these notable efforts, there remains a troubling silence in many congregations regarding police interactions and relations with African American communities (Hill, 2016). Has the church abdicated its role to speak out against the oppression of others?

Today, because most congregations remain segregated by race, it's not surprising that Black and White congregations often respond differently to the problem of police brutality in their communities. Thus, our discussion will apply differently for social workers from predominantly white, black, or multi-ethnic congregations.

Congregational Social Work

Stepping into this vacuum, congregational social workers (and other social workers who are part of religious congregations) can play a potentially significant role in addressing the problem of police brutality. A few social workers are employed by congregations, either full or part-time, to provide leadership for social ministries (Garland & Yancey, 2014). In these congregations, congregational social workers have unique opportunities, even responsibilities, to address issues in their communities such as police brutality. Possible efforts range from assisting and supporting clergy to initiating and leading broader congregational activities. Many other social workers are simply members of congregations. Without official or paid roles, they can nevertheless play a significant part in assisting clergy and organizing activities related to police brutality.

In the next section, we use a basic model of generalist social work practice to identify a variety of roles social workers could play in their own congregations, regardless of whether they have paid staff positions. We intend the following discussion to suggest and inspire diverse types of social worker involvement in congregations. While social workers may collaborate with and organize other congregations, we recommend they prioritize efforts within their own congregations, using their interpersonal relationships, credibility, and professional expertise to lead congregations in loving their neighbors.

Application of Generalist Social Work Perspective

Generalist social workers often wear many hats. Miley et al. (2016) have distinguished three broad functions, or operations, of generalist social workers: consultancy, resource management, and education. Under each of these three functions they delineate four social work roles corresponding to each of four practice levels. These levels of practice are commonly referred to as "micro" (i.e., working with individuals, families, and small groups),

“mezzo” (i.e., working within organizations to connect individuals and programs), “macro” (i.e., working with communities), and “social work profession” (i.e., working with professional colleagues). In the following paragraphs, we apply their framework to propose twelve social work roles in the context of social workers in congregations.

Consultancy Function

As consultants, social workers operate as a direct resource to clients, who in this context may be congregation members, neighborhood residents, or both. A social worker can perform the function of a consultant at the micro, mid, macro and systems levels. The roles at each of these levels, respectively, are direct services, facilitator, planner, and colleague/monitor (see Table 1).

Level	Micro	Mezzo	Macro	SW System
Role	Direct service	Facilitator	Planner	Colleague/ Mentor
Strategies	Empower clients in <i>finding solutions</i>	Foster <i>organizational development</i>	Coordinate program development through <i>research and planning</i>	Mentor, guide, and support <i>professional acculturation</i>
Examples	Presence, touch, active listening, emotional support; Clinical services for congregants and neighbors (e.g., individual and group counseling); Provide culturally-relevant services for African Americans dealing with traumas of police brutality (e.g., emotional emancipation circles)	Work with congregation leaders to connect services to individuals; Facilitate conversations with members of the congregation and community on issues of race and police brutality; Equip congregation as community	Plan and implement police-community programs to discuss police brutality in African American communities (e.g., public forums, panels)	Serve as a congregation-based field instructor

In general, social workers may provide **direct services** (micro) as they work with individuals, families, and small groups to provide psycho-social support, perhaps during times of high anxiety, grief, or trauma resulting

from police brutality involving a family member, friend, or neighbor. Although congregants and neighbors will often turn first to clergy for help, not all clergy possess direct practice skills for adequate responding. If so, social workers with trauma-informed direct practice skills can serve as familiar, accessible referral resources for clergy. Social workers can assist congregants or their neighbors to address mental health needs by providing direct services such as individual or group counseling or by knowing where to access such services.

Furthermore, social workers in predominately African American congregations have opportunity to provide culturally relevant services to better respond to the traumas of African Americans resulting from exposure to police brutality. For example, emotional emancipation circles represent a unique resource which social workers in congregations could help develop and lead in response to police brutality. Originally a self-help approach emerging from grassroots community efforts, emotional emancipation circles are culturally-specific, intra-racial support groups that help foster safe spaces where African Americans can “share stories, deepen understanding of the impact of historical forces, and learn essential emotional wellness skills to help improve lives” (Crowell et al., 2017, p. 9). For our purposes, emotional emancipation circles represent a promising intervention for use by congregational social workers to help African Americans traumatized by police brutality and other racial injustices. The group can be therapeutic and effective by helping African Americans voice their stories and process experiences related to police brutality (Bryant-Davis et al., 2017; Staggers-Hakim, 2016). Because congregations are often considered safe spaces, they provide an attractive and accessible venue for offering such activities.

According to Grills et al. (2016), emotional emancipation circles address five key issues to help African Americans overcome and heal from police brutality:

1. Powerlessness - by building dignity and self-worth
2. Exploitation - by promoting self-determination
3. Marginalization- by highlighting agency and responsibility of disenfranchised individuals and helping them participate in positive community action
4. Systemic violence against African Americans and communities - by enhancing cultural cohesion/closeness and promoting organized community efforts to fight oppression

5. Cultural imperialism - by promoting and restoring cultural heritage of historically disenfranchised populations

Aware of these five issues, social workers in African American congregations, in particular, can use emotional emancipation circles to promote emotional healing and support empowerment and justice against police brutality (Community Healing Network, 2018; Grills et al., 2016).

A **facilitator** (mezzo) consults with clergy and other leaders of a congregation to make the connections between services and individuals more easily accessible. A social worker would also operate as a facilitator by bringing together members of the congregation and local neighborhood for prayer and courageous conversations around issues of race and police brutality. Inspired by the efforts of Hamilton Park United Methodist Church that convened a panel of congregation members and police to discuss strategies to reduce police brutality, a congregational social worker might also facilitate discussions between clergy and law enforcement to brainstorm long-term solutions that address police brutality (The Park, 2019).

A **planner** (macro) works to help develop and enhance programs based on research and best-practices. As a planner, a congregational social worker might coordinate public forums and panels in the community that allow congregation members, neighborhood residents, and police officers to engage in healthy and effective dialogue on police-community relations.

A **colleague/mentor** (profession) may guide novices and monitor their professional development. A congregational social worker could connect with a local university to become a field instructor to a student to mentor, guide and support professional acculturation as a colleague/monitor. For instance, a social worker could introduce students in congregations to work with the police or survivors of police brutality and assist in developing their skills in such programs. Social workers working in congregations—whether to establish treatment services or emotional emancipation circles—have opportunity to enlist BSW or MSW students in grassroots program or community development. Besides the educational benefit to students, students may contribute to the innovation, spread, and success of these initiatives.

Resource Management Function

A resource manager operates as a linking agent by referring clients to other people or agencies for services and resources. Once again, a social worker may function as a resource manager at the micro, mid, macro and professional levels. These resources may be human labor, material, financial, or other types of services. The roles at each of these levels are

broker/advocate, convener/mediator, activist, and catalyst, respectively (see Table 2).

Table 2: Resource Management				
Level	Micro	Mezzo	Macro	SW System
Role	Broker/ Advocate	Convener/ Mediator	Activist	Catalyst
Strategies	Link clients with resources through <i>case management</i>	Assemble groups and organizations to <i>network</i> for resource development	Initiate and sustain social change through <i>social action</i>	Stimulate <i>community service</i> through interdisciplinary activities
Examples	Case management; Help identify culturally sensitive and supportive resources for African American victims and families; Assist in the referral process (e.g., linking clients to clinical agencies and services in the community)	Chair steering committee (e.g., police-community relations); Recruit and supervise volunteers from congregation and local community; Increase collaboration between clergy, community residents, and police	Organize community coalition; Lead advocacy efforts (e.g., peaceful protests, marches); Promote long-term solutions to reduce police brutality (e.g., community policing); Empower clergy and congregants to engage in social movements on police issues	Build working partnerships between clergy, social workers, and police departments

The role of *broker/advocate* (micro) may include case management (i.e., helping individuals and families to assess their needs and assets, and provide referrals to access resources and services that would help them operate better in daily life). As a broker/advocate, a congregational social worker may use their skills in case management to link congregation members with external resources. Given the nature of trauma, it will be especially important to identify culturally sensitive and supportive resources. If social workers themselves do not possess the knowledge and skills or have the capacity to provide clinical services for survivors of police brutality, they can usually identify appropriate clinical resources in the community. For clergy with less awareness of local resources, this can be very helpful. Furthermore, social workers can assist with the referral process by making introductions and addressing client reservations about accepting services from community agencies.

A *convener/mediator* (mid) helps organizations connect their programs/services to the individuals and families they wish to serve with their resources. In congregational settings, networking and development of resources often occur in group meetings. Thus, the social worker would likely be a convener/mediator of groups, such as police-community steering committees or coalitions to establish constructive working relationships or rebuild trust. Social workers may be instrumental in promoting congregational initiatives among neighborhood residents, recruiting and encouraging their participation.

In a time of deep division between law enforcement and African American communities, there is great opportunity for congregational social workers to encourage both Black and White clergy to help bridge this chasm. For example, social workers can encourage clergy to volunteer their time to participate on Citizen Advisory Boards, which are comprised of a diverse group of community volunteers who serve as a liaison between police departments and the public. Members not only work with police departments to review citizen concerns, but also engage in proactive measures to build positive relationships between police and community through outreach initiatives and open dialogue (IACP, 2019). In fact, in some communities, clergy serve on these boards (e.g., Columbia, South Carolina; Arlington, Texas; Lowell, Massachusetts; IACP, 2018). Moreover, we recognize these police-community efforts among others as a way for social workers to engage congregations in the intervention of police brutality against African Americans.

A related model to prevent and reduce instances of police brutality is Civilian Review Boards, composed of community members (e.g., local residents, activists, and religious leaders), that provide citizen oversight, investigate complaints of police misconduct, and recommend improvements in officer trainings (Finn, 2001). As one of the leading institutional responses to improve police-community relations and increase transparency and officer accountability (McGregor, 2016), civilian review boards are a unique way for congregations to get involved in efforts to combat police brutality against African Americans. Thus, in communities where civilian review boards do exist, congregational social workers can encourage clergy to get involved. Alternately, in communities where these boards are not present, social workers can help to lead the development of one.

An *activist* (macro) may work to encourage social action around resource allocation and development. A congregational social worker could work as an activist by participating in or assisting with community organizing and social activism and collaborating with residents, community leaders, and local policy makers. More specifically, congregational social workers might organize and lead peaceful protests and marches in the community, empowering churchgoers to step on the front lines in the fight for racial justice and unite their voices in speaking out against police brutality (Coates, 2014). In these and other ways, congregational social workers can involve both Black and White clergy and congregations in

social change efforts that challenge the alarming disparities in policing faced by African American communities. In some situations, social workers can follow the lead of clergy involved in activism and provide social work know-how and assistance to broaden and deepen the impact of clergy efforts.

As a *catalyst* (system), a social worker provides the stimulation to change resource distribution in the whole system, e.g., promote increased use of community policing to build positive relationships between police and African American communities. Toward this end, as a catalyst in a congregation, a social worker might recruit congregation members to get involved in their communities related to police issues. More concretely, social workers can help build working partnerships between clergy and law enforcement, which may in turn help improve police-citizen interactions, restore broken trust in communities, and reduce instances of police brutality (Robinson et al., 2018).

Education Function

An educator operates as one who imparts knowledge to others. A social worker may also function as an educator. The roles at each of these levels are teacher, trainer, outreach specialist, and researcher/evaluator, respectively (see Table 3).

Table 3: Education				
Level	Micro	Mezzo	Macro	SW System
Role	Teacher	Trainer	Outreach	Researcher/ Scholar
Strategies	<i>Educational programs for congregants and neighbors</i>	<i>Staff/volunteer development</i>	<i>Congregation and community education to reduce police brutality</i>	<i>Professional knowledge development</i>
Examples	Educate congregants on ways to discuss police brutality with its members and community (e.g., critical dialogues, "teach-ins"); Educate congregants on how to reduce risk of trauma from police violence	Train congregation staff, program volunteers, and congregation members on principles of trauma-informed care (TIC); Provide information on racial trauma (e.g., recognizing signs and symptoms, ways to help, referrals to clinical services in the community)	Psycho-education workshops for congregants, community members, or both; Trainings for police officers on TIC	Contribute professional literature; Research, implement, and evaluate interventions to reduce police brutality (e.g., community policing, Community Action Teams, trauma-informed programs)

A **teacher** (micro) obviously teaches via direct information-sharing with individuals and groups. Congregational social workers often find themselves in the role of teacher when providing or facilitating educational programming for members and neighbors. Specifically, congregational social workers in mostly White congregations can educate congregations on how to engage in critical dialogues with their members and the community on social issues such as police brutality in African American communities. For example, following the shooting death of an unarmed African American teen, Tamir Rice, by police officers in 2014, a religious coalition from Cleveland, Ohio began facilitating “teach-ins” as a way to discuss and provide recommendations on police reform (Ondrey, 2015). Following in the footsteps of this religious coalition, congregational social workers could coordinate teach-ins to help stimulate conversations in congregations surrounding ways to reduce incidents of police brutality in African American communities.

In an effort to promote critical consciousness—an awakening and deeper understanding that enables us to deconstruct and transform hegemonic systems of oppression existent in the world around us (Freire & Macedo, 2000)—social workers in predominately White congregations might consider implementing Freedom Schools to teach members about racial injustices such as police brutality against African Americans (Tisby, 2019). Though historically, Freedom Schools were used by civil rights activists and Black churches to provide African American youth with the social, political, and economic tools to combat systematic racism and protest for change, Tisby (2019) argues that new Freedom School programs offer a unique opportunity for Christian adults, particularly those from white congregations, to learn about structural problems impacting African American communities (i.e., police brutality) and ways to get involved in movements for justice. For example, over the period of a few days or a week, social workers can facilitate Freedom School workshops inside the church with clergy, congregants, and members of the local community on police brutality or bring in guest speakers to share information (Tisby, 2019). Also, educational workshops could focus on the scope of the local problem with police brutality or how to participate effectively in social activism on this issue. Social workers often have or can find information not widely known among their congregations and communities.

As a **trainer** (mezzo), a social worker could offer an educational program in a larger group setting such as a workshop or class. As trainers in congregations, social workers may provide staff development for volunteers or congregation staff, including clergy. Congregational social workers are uniquely positioned to train lay people and staff in congregations on (TIC), a perspective to help lay or professional helpers understand, identify, and respond to signs of trauma by taking account of a person’s history and

experiences of trauma exposure (SAMHSA, n.d). TIC is also used to identify positive ways of coping with traumas and facilitate avenues for healing. Using TIC, congregational social workers can train lay people and staff in congregations to recognize trauma responses associated with exposure to police brutality, especially for victims of police brutality, their families, and for local by-standers who witness the event (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Given the repeated incidents of police brutality in African Americans communities and elevated risks for racial trauma from such incidents (Polanco-Roman et al., 2016), this role is especially relevant to social workers in predominately African American congregations, where they can equip clergy with information on racial trauma and provide referrals to clinical services in the community. In addition, because both Black and White congregations may include police officers among their members, it is critical for social workers to also attend to traumas of exposure to violence that police officers experience (Galovski et al., 2016).

Social workers can provide **outreach** (macro) as they offer educational programs beyond the congregation setting. Looking beyond the congregation, the social worker could conduct outreach to educate local police departments on TIC and on the effects of trauma—particularly for historically marginalized populations like African Americans—to help officers understand how people respond to police and to improve police encounters with residents of these communities.

Finally, as a **researcher/evaluator** (system), the social worker can assist with evaluating initiatives or teach others to evaluate their programs and practices. While practicing social workers often have limited expertise in the role of researcher/evaluator, there is growing demand for evaluative information. As a researcher/evaluator, the congregational social worker can contribute to knowledge and local advocacy by collecting information about police-citizen interactions. Social workers can also seek evidence-supported interventions and policies that help reduce incidents of police brutality in African American communities. For example, a congregational social worker can collaborate with police departments to put community interventions, such as community policing or Community Action Teams, in place and then help evaluate whether these efforts build positive relationships and trust between African American communities and the police. Another example would be for congregational social workers to implement trauma-informed programs in police departments, and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of such programs on improving police-citizen interactions (SAMHSA, 2015). Importantly, in this role, a social worker in a congregation could engage in discovery for knowledge development, something we hope to spur with this paper.

While we can distinguish these social work functions and roles (summarized in the tables above), they are rarely performed separately

by a generalist social worker in the real world. Rather, they are integrated seamlessly as social workers move throughout their daily tasks. Our primary purpose for discussing these roles separately was to stimulate readers' thinking about possible ways to get involved using their professional knowledge and skills. As noted previously, the appeal and need for particular social work roles will vary across Black and White congregations and will vary in the extent to which congregants or their neighbors have been threatened or harmed by police brutality.

Conclusion

While there have been scattered efforts made by some clergy and congregations to address incidents of police brutality in African American communities, there remains an eerie silence in U. S. congregations on this issue. In this paper, we used a social work role framework to brainstorm a variety of ways that social workers in congregations could address the issue at multiple levels and for various purposes. Whether they attend predominantly Black or White congregations, Christian social workers can exercise solidarity with and provide support to professional colleagues from other congregations when seeking to address police brutality. That itself may foster understanding and promote constructive change.

As Christians in social work, we are reminded of a passage from the Hebrew prophet Jeremiah: "Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you shall have peace" (Jeremiah 29:7; New Heart English Bible). Working from their base in congregations, social workers can seek peace in frightened, frustrated, and grieving communities. ❖

References

- African American Policy Forum. (n.d.). *Say her name*. <http://aapf.org/about-the-campaign>
- Alang, S., McAlpine, D., McCreedy, E., & Hardeman, R. (2017). Police brutality and Black health: Setting the agenda for public health scholars. *American Journal of Public Health, 107*(5), 662–665. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2017.303691>
- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th edition). American Psychiatric Publishing.
- Billingsley, A. (2003). *Mighty like a river: The Black church and social reform*. Oxford University Press.
- Brown, D. L. (2018, January 15). Martin Luther King Jr.'s scorn for 'white moderates' in his Birmingham jail letter. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2018/01/15/martin-luther-king-jr-s-scathing-critique-of-white-moderates-from-the-birmingham-jail/>
- Bryant-Davis, T., Adams, T., Alejandre, A., & Gray, A. A. (2017). The trauma lens of police violence against racial and ethnic minorities: Trauma lens of police

- violence against ethnic minorities. *Journal of Social Issues*, 73(4), 852–871. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12251>
- Carpenter, C. C. J., Durick, J. A., Grafman, H. J., Hardin, P., Harmon, H. B., Murray, G. M., Ramsage, E. V., & Stallings, E. (1963, April 12). *Alabama clergymen's letter to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.* https://ibs.cru.org/files/7814/9063/9009/Letter_Birmingham_Jail.pdf
- Carter, R. (2006). Race-based traumatic stress. *Psychiatric Times*, 23(14), 37–38.
- Clay, K. (2014, October 6). The White church should not be silent on the killing of Black men by police. *The Root*. <https://www.theroot.com/the-white-church-should-not-be-silent-on-the-killing-of-1790877247>
- Coates, T. R. D. (2014, December 7.). After Ferguson and Staten Island, Black churches remain committed to the fight for justice. *The Root*. <https://www.theroot.com/after-ferguson-and-staten-island-black-churches-remain-1790877958>
- Community Healing Network. (2018). Emotional Emancipation Circles. <https://www.communityhealingnet.org/emotional-emancipation-circle/>
- Cooper, H. (2015). War on drugs policing and police brutality. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 50(8–9), 1188–1194. <https://doi.org/10.3109/10826084.2015.1007669>
- Correll, J., Park, B., Judd, C. M., Wittenbrink, B., Sadler, M. S., & Keesee, T. (2007). Across the thin blue line: Police officers and racial bias in the decision to shoot. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 92(6), 1006–1023. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.92.6.1006>
- Crowell, C., Mosley, D., Falconer, J., Faloughi, R., Singh, A., Stevens-Watkins, D., & Cokley, K. (2017). Black Lives Matter: A call to action for counseling psychology leaders. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 45(6), 873–901. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000017733048>
- Dart, T. (2019, October 15). Fort Worth officer who killed Black woman in her home charged with murder. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/oct/14/fort-worth-police-shooting-atatiana-jefferson-killed>
- Dirks, S. (2018, June 26). Oakland church steps out on faith and pledges to stop calling police. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2018/06/26/623312638/oakland-church-steps-out-on-faith-and-pledges-to-stop-calling-police>
- Durr, M. (2015). What is the difference between slave patrols and modern day policing? Institutional violence in a community of color. *Critical Sociology*, 41(6), 873–879. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920515594766>
- English, D., Bowleg, L., del Rio-González, A. M., Tschann, J. M., Agans, R. P., & Malebranche, D. J. (2017). Measuring Black men's police-based discrimination experiences: Development and validation of the Police and Law Enforcement (PLE) Scale. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 23(2), 185–199. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000137>
- Finn, P. (2001, March). *Citizen review of police: Approaches and implementation*. National Institute of Justice. <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/184430.pdf>
- Freire, P., & Macedo, D. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th Anniversary ed.). Continuum.
- Gabriel, D. (2018, July 18). *Retraining ourselves: How this church is divesting from calling the police*. Sojourners. <https://sojo.net/articles/retraining-ourselves-how-church-divesting-calling-police>
- Galovski, T. E., Peterson, Z. D., Beagley, M. C., Strasshofer, D. R., Held, P., & Fletcher,

- T. D. (2016). Exposure to violence during Ferguson protests: Mental health effects for law enforcement and community members. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 29*(4), 283–292. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.22105>
- Garland, D. R., & Yancey, G. I. (2014). *Congregational social work: Christian perspectives*. North American Association of Christians in Social Work.
- Gilbert, K. L., & Ray, R. (2016). Why police kill Black males with impunity: Applying public health critical race praxis (PHCRP) to address the determinants of policing behaviors and “justifiable” homicides in the USA. *Journal of Urban Health, 93*(S1), 122–140. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-015-0005-x>
- Grills, C. N., Aird, E. G., & Rowe, D. (2016). Breathe, baby, breathe: Clearing the way for the emotional emancipation of Black people. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies, 16*(3), 333–343. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708616634839>
- Hemmings, C., & Evans, A. M. (2018). Identifying and treating race-based trauma in counseling. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 46*(1), 20–39. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jmcd.12090>
- Hill, T. E. (2016, July 12). The church at its racial turning point. *Christianity Today*. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/july-web-only/church-at-its-racial-turning-point.html>
- International Association of Chiefs of Police. (2018). Community participation and leadership. practices in modern policing. https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/IACP_PMP_Community%20Leadership.pdf
- International Association of Chiefs of Police. (2019, May 6). Promoting community involvement in law enforcement: Community advisory boards. <https://www.theiacp.org/news/blog-post/promoting-community-involvement-in-law-enforcement-community-advisory-boards>
- King, M. L., Jr. (1963, August 28). *I have a dream speech*. American Rhetoric. <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkihavedream.htm>
- Lincoln, C. E., & Mamiya, L. H. (1990). *The Black church in the African American experience*. Duke University Press.
- Lockhart, P. R. (2019, January 21). The sanctification—and sanitization—of Martin Luther King, Jr. *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/identities/2018/4/4/17193286/martin-luther-king-assassination-50th-anniversary-jeanne-theoharis>
- McGregor, A. (2016). Politics, police accountability, and public health: Civilian review in Newark, New Jersey. *Journal of Urban Health, 93*(S1), 141–153. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-015-9998-4>
- Miley, K. K., O’Melia, M. W., & DuBois, B. L. (2016). *Generalist social work practice: An empowering approach*. (8th ed.). Pearson.
- Moore, S., A. Robinson, M. M. Clayton, D., Adedoyin, A. C., A. Boamah, D., Kyere, E., & Harmon, D. (2018). A critical race perspective of police shooting of unharmed Black males in the United States: Implications for social work. *Urban Social Work, 2*, 33–47. <https://doi.org/10.1891/2474-8684.2.1.33>
- Moore, S., Robinson, M. A., Adedoyin, A. C., Brooks, M., Harmon, D. K., & Boamah, D. (2016). Hands up—Don’t shoot: Police shooting of young Black males: Implications for social work and human services. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 26*(3–4), 254–266. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2015.1125202>
- Ondrey, T. (2015, January 14). Congregations map campaign for police reform. Popular Resistance. <https://popularresistance.org/greater-cleveland->

- congregations-maps-campaign-for-police-reform/
 PBS. (n.d.). *Race-based legislation in the North*. PBS. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2957.html>
- Polanco-Roman, L., Danies, A., & Anglin, D. M. (2016). Racial discrimination as race-based trauma, coping strategies and dissociative symptoms among emerging adults. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice and Policy*, 8(5), 609–617. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000125>
- Robinson, M. A. (2017). Black bodies on the ground: Policing disparities in the African American community—An analysis of newsprint from January 1, 2015, through December 31, 2015. *Journal of Black Studies*, 48(6), 551–571. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934717702134>
- Robinson, M., Jones-Eversley, S., Moore, S., Ravenell, J., & Adedoyin, A. C. (2018). Black male mental health and the Black church: Advancing a collaborative partnership and research agenda. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 57. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-018-0570-x>
- Sewell, A. A., Jefferson, K. A., & Lee, H. (2016). Living under surveillance: Gender, psychological distress, and stop-question-and-frisk policing in New York City. *Social Science & Medicine* (1982), 159, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2016.04.024>
- Staggers-Hakim, R. (2016). The nation's unprotected children and the ghost of Mike Brown, or the impact of national police killings on the health and social development of African American boys. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 26(3–4), 390–399. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2015.1132864>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (n.d.). Trauma. https://www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/trauma#trauma_informed_care
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2015, August 19) Trauma-informed response training. <https://www.samhsa.gov/gains-center/trauma-training-criminal-justice-professionals>
- Swain, R. D. (2008). “Standing on the promises that cannot fail”: Evaluating the Black church’s ability to promote community activism among African-Americans in the present day context. *Journal of African American Studies*, 12(4), 401–413. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-008-9058-1>
- Swaine, J., Laughland, O., Lartey, J., Davis, K., Harris, R., Popovich, N., & Powell, K. (n.d.). The counted: People killed by police in the United States. *The Guardian*. <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/ng-interactive/2015/jun/01/the-counted-police-killings-us-database>
- The Guardian. (2017). Young Black men again faced highest rate of US police killings in 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/08/the-counted-police-killings-2016-young-black-men>
- The King Center. (2020). The King philosophy. <https://thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy/>
- The Park. (2019, June 22). Police brutality and the church’s response—A community conversation: June 27, 2018. <https://www.theparkumc.org/2018/police-brutality-and-the-churchs-response-a-community-conversation-june-27-2018/>
- Tisby, J. (2019). *The color of compromise: The truth about the American church’s complicity in racism*. Zondervan.

Betty L. Wilson, MSW, LCSW, is a Doctoral Candidate of Social Work, University of South Carolina, 1512 Pendleton Street, Columbia, SC, 29208. Phone: (803) 383-5399. Email: wilso479@email.sc.edu

Terry A. Wolfer, MSW, PhD, is a Professor and Interim Associate Dean for Curriculum, College of Social Work, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, 29208. Phone: (803) 777-9486. E-mail: terry.wolfer@sc.edu

Strengthening Congregational Communities: Social Justice Engagement Through Deliberative Dialogue

Amanda Wilson Harper

Christianity and social work have a longstanding history of social justice engagement. However, given our current politically charged society, discussion and engagement in social justice issues are often avoided in congregations because they are often seen as partisan or potentially divisive. This article discusses the potential impact of implementing public deliberation with pastors and congregations through the lens of two pastors' experiences, one who was equipped with deliberative dialogue skills and one who was not. Deliberative dialogue values can positively impact congregational health as the process allows others to share with honesty and vulnerability. Implementing the process of deliberative dialogue into congregational communities increases the potential for civic capacity when people can trust each other to share their stories, principles, and goals. Social workers have a unique opportunity to walk alongside communities and congregations as they navigate social justice issues.

Keywords: congregational social work, congregational communities, social justice engagement, deliberative dialogue

I HE SOCIAL WORK PROFESSION HAS STRONG ROOTS IN CONGREGATIONS and religious practices (Northern, 2009; Yancey & Garland, 2014). For generations, both congregations and the profession of social work

have played an important role in social justice issues. However, as the world, and even the church, has become increasingly more polarized, it is understandable that some congregational communities are hesitant to engage or dialogue about social justice issues in which they may disagree. Historic social justice issues are now seen through a partisan and political lens that can create tension within communities. This manuscript will provide a brief history of the Christian church concerning social justice engagement, case studies of pastors navigating social justice engagement in these modern polarized times, an introduction to the tool of deliberative dialogue to promote healthy conversation in congregational communities engaging in social justice issues, and encouragement for social workers to use their unique skill set to work alongside congregational communities. Specific examples of a successful process will challenge congregations and social workers to work toward healthy dialogue concerning social justice issues, and ultimately healthier communities.

Case Example #1: Reverend Sarah and the Ethics of Jesus

Reverend Sarah, a middle-aged female pastor, sat down at her desk on a Monday morning to begin the workday. She was quickly overwhelmed with emails and voicemails that expressed great concern (and some anger) about her sermon the day prior. Rev. Sarah learned that her sermon about the ethics of Jesus was perceived as “too political” and that she should “leave politics out of the pulpit or leave the pulpit.” While she had engaged with some grateful parishioners thanking her for the courageous sermon, she struggled with the concerned emails and pleas to not engage topics that could bring more tension. She was disheartened that her message of Jesus caring for the marginalized and valuing justice for all of God’s children was now seen as political or partisan by many church members. Since the 2016 election, the culture of the congregation had shifted, and Rev. Sarah wondered why many of her parishioners were unwilling to accept the connection between the gospel and having concern for modern social issues. She conducted a town hall meeting on a Wednesday night to discuss the concern as a congregation. The meeting included parishioners with a wide range of beliefs; parishioners who had generational connections and typically referred to each other as “church family.” Yet there was palpable tension and anxiety as many felt unheard or were unwilling to hear other perspectives. Some used polarizing language, resorted to name calling, and even threatened to leave the church or withhold their financial resources. Others sat silently, not willing to offer their point of view to the larger group. While Rev. Sarah was theologically trained, she felt ill-equipped to navigate conversations about current issues and social justice engagement with her congregation. She wanted to minister to her entire congregation, the parishioners who encouraged social justice engagement, others who started attending because of the congregation’s community involvement, and

even the parishioners who disagreed and felt they had to defend the president. However, seminary had not prepared her for hard conversations about justice issues and justice engagement, and certainly not in these polarized times.

Congregational Communities and a Biblical Responsibility to Social Justice

Reverend Sarah's church faithfully hosted a food pantry in the community for over twenty years. There were faithful church members dedicated to volunteering and meeting the specific need of food scarcity in the community. Some of the members were hesitant to talk about the connection to systemic social issues such as why there was childhood hunger or poverty in their community. Other members felt it was not the place of the church to talk about such things. Some congregations have understood that call to faith to include charity work and advocating for justice in the social and political realm. Many understand scripture to include God calling "us to protect and seek justice for those who are poor and vulnerable, ... 'oppressed,' 'strangers,' 'outsiders,' or otherwise considered 'marginal,'" (Wallis, 2019, p. 286).

Christian churches have a wide-ranging history in responding to social need (Bedford, 2016; Turner, 2010). More recently, the Abolitionist Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Catholic Worker Movement are several examples of churches and leaders understanding their faith as a compelling force to work for social change (Janzen et al., 2016). Just as many Christian congregations saw providing social services as an expression of their faith (Bedford, 2016), today many Christians see the work of social justice advocacy as interwoven with their faith. Pastors are not only "engaging their congregants in charity or benevolence ministries... They are engaging their congregations beyond charity by creating changes in the systems that create the knotty problems of school failure, poverty, and family and community violence" (Garland, 2012, p. 89).

Many Christians believe that the church has a responsibility to help heal systemic injustices (Duty, 2014), as they understand that God's call to faith includes a call to justice, and that God invites all to help establish a world where justice is sought and love abounds (Douglas Brown, 2015; Migliore, 2004). This charge is outlined in the Old Testament in which prophets held Israel's leaders accountable for the injustice of their policies and decisions. "The old testament spoke of righteousness, justice, mercy, and love while the New Testament, through the teachings of Christ and His followers, demonstrated the context of Christian social justice as the cornerstone of practical Christianity" (Watkins, 1994, p. vii).

Congregational Communities and their Involvement in Political and Social Issues

Throughout the history of Christianity, politics were often so intertwined that it was hard to ascertain if certain convictions were religious or political (Kaufman, 1990). The church has been a service provider for marginalized groups through various programs such as: emergency aid, housing, adoption, and care for the elderly (Chaves & Tsitsos, 2001; Conradson, 2008; Reken, 1999). The church also contributed to providing order outside of their communities as they participated more in civic life (Najar, 2008, p. 2). However, the contributions by churches and faith-based entities were often overlooked once the government assumed the primary role of caring for the poor in the twentieth century (Vanderwoerd, 2002; Poe, 2016).

Harris and Yancey (2017) report that over the years, some congregations have expanded and distinguished their role to include advocating for social justice issues in addition to their ministries that provide benevolence and service. Chaves (2011) states that in recent years a church member's attendance is more connected to key social issues, as the issues of today's time are inescapable for congregations, issues of "violence, poverty, and injustice" (Hull, 2016, p. 85). Today, congregations are active in many areas of social and political life including, "social ministry, community development, community organizing, public policy advocacy, advocating for social responsibility, movements for social justice, and other strategies of political action that may arise out of moral deliberation" (Duty, 2014, p. 47). However, whether or not a congregation decides to participate in social justice issues can be impacted by many factors including the interests of the congregants, the clergy, the denomination, and the political context of the congregation (Audette & Weaver, 2016, p. 245; McDaniel, 2008;).

Divisive Culture Impacts Social Justice Dialogue and Engagement

Numerous congregations have distanced themselves from the role of advocate for social justice and human rights, as they navigate an altering church and societal landscape (Mammanna-Lupo et al., 2014). The 2016 U.S election caused unprecedented division across the nation, including division in churches (Stetzer, 2017, para. 1). With the division of the twenty-first century, even churches have become more polarized (Allen et al., 2013). The church has a long history of advocating on behalf of social and political justice issues, yet today's pastors and church leaders are often met with criticism or avoidance when introducing current issues within their congregations. In a world that is described as increasingly more divisive and culturally and politically polarizing, social justice

issues are often seen as partisan or political. Social justice issues can seem controversial, divisive, and as with Rev. Sarah, many issues Jesus references in the gospels are even misinterpreted as partisan. This is due in part to the intertwined nature of religiosity and a small number of social issues since the 1980s (Putnam & Campbell, 2010). “What parishioners mean by the phrase ‘too political’ depends, of course, on the person making the accusation, their theology, ecclesiology, personal politics, and their relationship with the preacher” (Schade, 2019, p. 29-30). Each interpretation of what constitutes as controversial or political social justice issues “varies greatly for each congregation as members’ experiences, current social situations, and the history of their congregation impact each conversation” (Bloomquist & Duty, 1999, p. 2). Schade (2019) explained that congregations have experienced a deterioration in civility in the last few decades around justice issues:

Our country’s history has been marked with periods of deep divides during the Civil War, the Vietnam Era, and the Civil Rights Movement, for example. In fact, the challenge of addressing controversial issues from the pulpit is one that pastors have faced since the very beginnings of the church when early Christians debated about the inclusion of Gentiles within the faith community. Since that time, the church has experienced major splits to minor splinters, from the Protestant Reformation to the local church breaking up over seemingly minor disputes. In my time as an ordained pastor, however, I have observed a deterioration of civil relationships and an alarming rise in animosity over the past twenty years that warrants attention (p. 2).

The 2016 election brought further social and political division that also impacted churches. Polarization included a “rhetoric of superiority, exclusivism, and separation” (Allen et al., 2013, p. xvi). Polarized groups observe the world in terms of “us and them, right and wrong... and seldom take the perspectives of others into account, and typically claim to have the answers for the larger world” (Allen, 2018, p. 52). “Religious voices that had historically been heard in public debates over issues such as slavery, civil rights, and the Vietnam War had become more reticent to advocate for progressive social change” (Day, 2001; Schade, 2019, p. 4). Subsequently, the Church can often appear silent on social justice concerns as Christians are unsure how to participate in mutual dialogue about topics that may seem polarizing within their congregation. Currently, there are few religious voices speaking out about modern social issues such as income inequality, welfare reform, military budgets, gun

control, or immigration (Day, 2001). “Resistance to enter into dialogue about controversial social issues has resulted in the disengagement of the church and its individual members from public deliberation...we have lost the capacity to talk to each other in significant ways” (Day, 2001, p. 5; Schade, 2019).

Navigating Congregational Social Justice Engagement

Each generation of pastors and churches must make the decision of whether to engage in social issues. “Every generation finds itself in a unique confluence of cultural, political, societal, and economic forces” (Schade, 2019, p. 5). There are a myriad of reasons pastors and church leaders do not engage in dialogue or engagement around social justice issues. For instance, many clergy do not talk about political or social injustices to avoid dissension in their congregations (Djupe & Neiheisel, 2008). “Some people fear that disagreement on an issue will divide a congregation and threaten relationships in the congregation as well as in the wider community” (Bloomquist & Duty, 1999, p. 2). The undeniable concern of denominational or congregational schisms impacting church attendance grows when difficult conversations take place (Djupe & Olson, 2013). Often, “clergy are not going to wade into territory where they feel uncomfortable, especially if it could undermine the health of their congregations,” (Djupe & Olson, 2013, p. 15). Further, several scholars link the membership and financial declines in mainline Protestant churches to lay disagreements with their clergy taking progressive and public positions on racial inequality, poverty, and activism (Steensland et al., 2000 Brown, et al., 2016, p. 309).

Pastoral Hesitancy to Navigate Social Justice Issues

Reverend Dr. Leah Schade (2019), ordained pastor and preaching professor, surveyed over 1200 pastors after the 2016 election to explore how mainline Protestant tradition pastors were addressing controversial social issues in their congregations. The results were telling, as pastors explained their challenges, fears, concerns, and success in navigating tough social issues in their churches. Similar to Rev. Sarah, most pastors felt a deep sense of call to ministry yet did not feel adequately prepared to facilitate or engage in dialogue about current social issues (Schade, 2019). Many pastors cited separation of church and state as the reason they did not navigate potentially controversial social and political justice issues. However, Schade (2019) explains that the gospel talks about how contemporary issues and preaching a sermon that addresses modern social issues is not violating church and state laws if it does not endorse partisan politics. Other pastors doubted whether preaching about the issues “even makes a difference in

the lives of parishioners or the larger community” (Schade, 2019, p. 6). The pastors listed four main fears about addressing social justice issues: “fear about hurting or dividing their congregation, fear about compromising their ability to effectively minister in their church, fear about receiving negative pushback for being too political, fear about loss--loss of members, money and their own positions” (Schade, 2019, p. 21). “Clergy have been at the forefront in dealing with these issues, especially in terms of tending to parishioner reaction and fallout” (Calfano & Neiheisel, 2009, p. 573).

Rev. Sarah’s story illustrates the thin line pastors must walk while balancing fear of congregational fallout with the call to their congregation and to advocate for social justice in their community. Clergy and lay activists meet resistance from congregants who prefer comfortable cultures in church life. Some church members believe the work is too political, or not the kind of work the church should be doing (Delehanty, 2016). “The pastor is not alone in the concern that addressing controversial justice issues in the pulpit can have serious consequences...the blowback is real and has concrete effects on clergy and their congregations” (Schade, 2019, p. 23). The fear of denominational or congregational schisms impacting attendance when deliberative, difficult conversations take place in congregations is undeniable (Djupe & Olson, 2013). “Threats, intimidation, withholding of relational and financial support—it’s no wonder some clergy in certain congregations are afraid to preach about justice issues” (Schade, 2019, p. 24). “The negative fallout that can result from preaching about controversial justice issues can affect a clergyperson’s relationships with their parishioners, relationships among members of the church, and even the pastor’s own position within the congregation” (Schade, 2019, p. 22).

Pastors justify addressing social justice issues by looking to scripture, the life of Jesus, and their own discernment (Schade, 2019). Like many pastors, Rev. Sarah believes she is called, as a pastor and Christian, to care about social justice issues, that it is a mandate of her faith. Despite potential dissonance, some churches are navigating important conversations about social and political issues, and Carcasson (2018) states that public discourse efforts have been effective in understanding current socio-political issues, improving relationships, and helping communities to advocate and mobilize.

The Process and Principles of Deliberative Dialogue

Conversations about potentially divisive justice topics have proven challenging for congregations to navigate as differences of opinion may occur among otherwise like-minded people, yet “discourse is a central element of religious practice within congregations” (Adler et al., 2014, p.

556). One method of civil discourse is called deliberative dialogue that helps identify common values among diverse church members (Schade, 2019). While, “religious communities have been found to be critical incubators of political deliberation” (Calfano & Neihsel, 2009, p. 569), deliberative dialogue helps people to feel heard and empowered to engage in conversations and action around difficult social issues.

The deliberative process has the potential to impact congregations during a divisive time in history because it is a tool that seeks to bring all voices to the table, where people come together to discuss and listen to other viewpoints. Typically, an issue guide helps to frame the conversation so participants can understand the benefits and tradeoffs of all options. It is a values-driven model as it gives equal time to all three options in the issues guide in determining what values are driving the decisions participants are making. What is unique about deliberative dialogue strategies is the requirement that participants explain their stake in the issue and why the issue is important to them. “Deliberation requires people to offer personal and experiential reasons for what they think ought to be, and not just take positions; so inevitable disagreements over what should be are not as prone to end in uncompromising conflict” (Mathews, 2012, p. 71). “During deliberative discussions, participants consider different perspectives on a social problem, identify and work through tensions related to different approaches to addressing the problem, and attempt to arrive at reasoned judgment together” (Molnar-Main, 2017, p. 13). All options are shared critically, reflectively, and every concern is heard. The facilitator is mindful to be as neutral as possible to promote the process and not a specific personal agenda. At the end of the gathering, they are asked about their decision. It typically does not change someone’s position on a social issue; however, forum members are able to see the perspective of their neighbor and understand more clearly how they arrived at their decision. The goal is not to persuade others or “reach unanimous agreement or to convince others about the rightness or wrongness of the positions presented. Rather it is about finding shared values and... looking for common direction, or at least next steps which the group might take together” (Schade, 2019, p. 98).

Church and the Potential Impact of Deliberative Dialogue

Churches can be conducive sites for helping engage social issues and change systems through deliberative dialogue because it can promote “higher levels of public engagement, foster a more broadened outlook, offer new ways to take part in groups, and provide an enhanced sense of empowerment for making a difference” (Schade, 2019, p. 101). Current social and political areas that churches are impacting through dialogue and advocacy include: racial reconciliation, LGBTQ rights, sexual harassment

(i.e., #metoo, #churchtoo movement), prison reform, immigration, economic disparity, predatory lending, public education, environmental protection, gun reform, marriage equality, women's rights, and many more.

Deliberative work has become increasingly important given the sorry state of political discourse these days. Whether at the federal, state, or local levels, policy making has become an arena of deadlock and dysfunction. Ordinary citizens often feel marginalized when it comes to political decision making, as issues get framed in the media and by elected officials in a way that leads to divisiveness, so that elected officials and even voters make poor decisions because they are not allowed the time to discuss the options together. Deliberative forums are a tool that churches can use to help communities think better as they grapple with these issues (Horrell, 2018).

Knowing others' stories builds community and healthy communities can create change. The town hall meeting Rev. Sarah hosted could have looked very different had the congregation and pastor been equipped with deliberative tools and a process to navigate the deep emotion and fears that were present in the room.

Deliberative dialogue helps others leave with a better perspective of the issue and a better understanding of their neighbor's point of view. That could be transformative for the life of a church. Congregational dialogue can be spiritually transforming for the church family as "moral deliberation is a practice of corporate spiritual discernment for the whole body" (Duty, 2006, p. 338). A congregation could transform from "a culture of divisiveness or avoidance (fight or flight) to one of healthy engagement with the social issue that matters to them and their community" (Schade, 2019, p. 98). Some of Rev. Sarah's members were ready to leave, a few were indifferent, and others wanted to avoid the issue altogether; deliberative dialogue could have aided in transforming the culture and dialogue of the church through building understanding of other perspectives.

Congregations can provide a safe space to navigate hard conversations about social justice issues using deliberative dialogue. The values of deliberative dialogue connect with the values of most churches as they include

uplifting the gifts and experiences of individuals to build and strengthen the community (1 Corinthians chapter 12, NRSV)...and helping congregations discern how they can best respond to the needs and concerns of their communities, thereby answering Jesus' call to care for the least of these (Matthew 25:40, NRSV; Schade, 2019, p. 99).

Congregations can offer diverse perspectives concerning deliberative dialogue in terms of age, gender, education, ethnicity, race, and professions.

History shows that churches have not always been great promoters of dialogue about controversial social justice issues; many churches have fractured when faced with making decisions about social justice issues. The church, however, can utilize deliberative dialogue resources and tools to learn a new way and to impact their community in a meaningful way. They can wade the waters of social justice issues together, hearing the stories of their community members, instead of approaching topics with polarizing fear, anger, or avoidance.

Case Example #2: Impact of Deliberative Dialogue with a Small Church in the Midwest

Reverend Sarah's story illustrates how pastors and congregations experience dialogue when they are not equipped to have conversations about controversial social justice issues. However, Pastor Mike leads a small church of almost one hundred members in the Midwest and experienced a much different reaction as he introduced social justice issues using deliberative dialogue tools. Pastor Mike was trained by Dr. Leah Schade in the deliberative process and he shared his lived experience with social justice dialogue and engagement in his congregation.

Mike explained that prior to the 2016 election, he did not have a pulse for where his congregation was politically regarding current social issues. There appeared to be a sense of divisiveness and unrest after the election and it was not around one issue. The church members identified fracturing in their community and a brokenness that was bigger than any one particular social issue. In general, the church members voiced that they did not want politics in the church, but the pastor felt personally frustrated that the messages being taught in sermons and lessons seemed to contradict the candidate for whom most members voted. He said that individual conversations led to a realization that his members seemed to vote out of fear and anger; the pastor questioned if any of his work mattered and he eventually felt reminded of God's work, not just his own. He was their pastor, he would meet them where they were, and he was there to show God's love for them. However, as a church they needed tools and resources to navigate the shifting culture. He was given deliberative dialogue tools that allowed their church to engage in open, honest dialogue to understand other's values and stakes in several social issues. They were able to talk about immigration, the opioid crisis, creation care, and gun control in a deliberative process that perhaps did not change people's minds but allowed for understanding of multiple perspectives. Social issues such as these previously would have caused discord and dissention when they were discussed.

The outcome of the deliberative dialogue process for Pastor Mike's church

was a shift in church culture. There is a spirit of healthy curiosity instead of defensiveness about seemingly polarizing topics. There has been a change in culture around their missions program as they have shifted to doing ministry in their community that will impact systems and institutional change as well. The deliberative tools allowed the church to begin to talk about social justice issues in a way that was helpful and that did not tear one another down; they can now come together at the table and listen to each other. He explained that while his members may still disagree about how to solve an issue, they have been able to start with acknowledgement that there is an issue worth discussing as a community. He described the process as tools that chisel away at their inability to see their neighbor. The process allowed his congregation to live in healthy community together rather than living in tension and anger.

Building Bridges and Meeting the Community Where They Are

“Congregations have the unique potential to...build ‘bridges’ within communities” (Beyerlein & Hipp, 2006, p. 98). Meeting people where they are through deliberative dialogue values allows others to share with honesty and vulnerability and explain their stake in the issue. This increases civic capacity when people can trust each other to share their stories, principles, and goals. “Disagreement will not devolve into exclusion, intolerance, mistrust, or dislike when a group operates explicitly under norms that encourage trust, tolerance, and mutual respect” (Djupe & Olson, 2013, p. 4). Rev. Sarah received objections for preaching about the ethics of Jesus and contemporary social justice issues, so she conducted many individual conversations to understand her parishioners’ concerns. The pastor displayed a willingness to engage in and model civil discussion as she built mutual trust with her community. She met others where they were by listening with respect, despite her personal ideological beliefs. Pastor Mike discussed the importance of meeting people where they were as well, noting that given his location in the Midwest, there were certain issues that were more important to his congregation than others. He explained that at times, that meant starting somewhere differently than his personal leanings. Deliberative dialogue is just one example of one process that can aid in building bridges within the church and in the community to address the issues of our time, cultivate congregational and community health, and continue generations of congregational involvement in social justice issues.

A Unique Opportunity for Social Workers

Congregations continue to be vital organizations within most communities, and “have been settings for social work practice since the beginning of the profession” (Garland & Yancey, 2014, p. 25). Many

congregations' mission and purpose regarding social justice engagement aligns with social work values. During these often-polarized times, social workers ought to consider the unique training and skill set in which they are equipped (Garland, 2012), and how they may collaborate with all aspects of the community, including congregations. Social workers may be employed as congregational social workers, or they may have other titles or hold other unpaid or volunteer roles within a congregation. Practitioners should explore how they can support healthy cooperation and social justice engagement in their own community. Collaboration with congregations around shared work could be an important way to build community relationships and partnerships (Yancey & Garland, 2014). Effective community practice necessitates that social workers know their context. It will be important for social workers to understand the mission and vision of the congregations they are collaborating with (Yancey & Garland, 2014), so that they may speak a language of shared values and goals. Their practice expertise can be a tremendous asset to community collaboration, community health, creating healthy processes for community dialogue around difficult issues, and helping congregations achieve their objectives for social justice engagement in the community.

Conclusion

Congregations are vital institutions within communities, and to overlook them when considering justice engagement would be to overlook institutions capable of great advocacy, mobilization efforts, and change. Social workers should consider how their local congregations are involved in social justice dialogue and engagement and what barriers they may face. Clergy and congregational communities are discussing social justice issues (Miller & Polson, 2019), although most leaders do not feel equipped to navigate the process in a divisive culture (Schade, 2019). Churches are ready for thoughtful, meaningful engagement that is effective and externally focused (Garland, 2012). Deliberative dialogue is just one tool to train leaders and encourage healthy dialogue and engagement among community members. Social workers have a unique skill set to walk alongside congregations and communities as they navigate and engage social justice issues. Pastors, church members, educators, and Christian social work practitioners can support their local congregations in fostering healthy processes for dialogue about social justice issues, and ultimately promoting healthier communities. One cannot see the church without seeing the community, and one cannot see the community without seeing the church. ❖

References

- Adler, G., Hoegeman, C., & West, A. J. (2014). Congregational political activity and same-sex marriage: Social movement theory and evidence for contextual influence. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 55(3), 555-586. doi:10.1111/tsq.12060
- Allen, R. (2018). Building bridges: Pastoral care for the world in a prophetic mode. In *Preaching prophetic care: Building bridges to justice. Essays in honor of Dale P. Andrews*. P. Sheppard, D. Ottoni-Wilhelm, & R. Allen, Eds. Pickwick/Wipf and Stock.
- Allen, R., McClure, S., Welsey Allen, O. (2013). *Under the oak tree: The church as community of conversation in a conflicted and pluralistic world*. Cascade Books.
- Audette, A., & Weaver, C. (2016). Filling pews and voting booths: The role of politicization in congregational growth. *Political Research Quarterly*, 69(2), 245-257.
- Bedford, I. (2016). Maintaining the connection: Strategic approaches to keeping the link between initiating congregations and their social service off-spring. *Religions*, 7(9), 111-125.
- Beyerlein, K., & Hipp, J. (2006). From pews to participation: The effect of congregation activity and context on bridging civic engagement. *Social Problems*, 53(1), 97-117. doi:10.1525/sp.2006.53.1.97
- Bloomquist, K., & Duty, R. (1999). *Talking together as Christians about tough social issues*. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.
- Brown, R. E., Brown, R. K., Phoenix, D., & Jackson, J. S. (2016). Race, religion, and anti-poverty policy attitudes. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 55, 308-323. doi:10.1111/jssr.12258
- Calfano, B. R., & Neiheisel, J. R. (2009). Forums for controversy: Understanding clergy-led deliberation among the faithful. *Journal of Church and State*, 51(4), 569-586.
- Carcasson, M. (2018). Why process matters: Democracy and human nature. *National Civic Review*, 107(1), 36-39. doi:10.1002/ncr.21353
- Chaves, M., & Tsitsos, W. (2001). Congregations and social services: What they do, how they do it, and with whom. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 30(4), 660-683. doi.org/10.1177/0899764001304003
- Chaves, M. (2011). Religious trends in America. *Social Work and Christianity*, 38(2), 119-132.
- Conradson, D. (2008). Expressions of charity and action towards justice: Faith-based welfare provision in urban New Zealand. *Urban Studies*, 45(10), 2117-2141.
- Day, K. (2001). *Difficult conversations: Taking risks, acting with integrity*. Alban Institute.
- Delehanty, J. D. (2016). Prophets of resistance: Social justice activists contesting comfortable church culture. *Sociology of Religion*, 77(1), 37-58. doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srv054
- Djupe, P. A., & Neiheisel, J. R. (2008). Clergy deliberation on gay rights and homosexuality. *Polity*, 40(4), 411-435.
- Djupe, P., & Olson, L. (2013). Public deliberation about gay rights in religious contexts: Commitment to deliberative norms and practice in ELCA congregations. *Journal of Public Deliberation*, 9(1), 1-27.
- Douglas Brown, K. (2015). *Stand your ground, black bodies and the justice of God*. Orbis Publishing.

- Duty, R. W. (2014). Doing Christian ethics on the ground polycentrically: Cross-cultural moral deliberation on ethical and social issues. *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 34(1), 41-63.
- Duty, R. (2006). Moral Deliberation in a Public Lutheran Church. *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*; 45(4), p. 338-355.
- Garland, D. R. (2012). Is that Church on Fire? A Unique Moment of Opportunity for Social Work Leadership. *Social Work and Christianity*, 39(1), 88-99.
- Garland, D. R., & Yancey, G. I. (2014). Moving mountains: Congregations as settings for social work practice. In T. L. Scales & M. Kelly (Eds.), *Christianity and social work: Readings in the integration of Christian faith and social work* (4th ed., pp. 311-336). North American Association of Christians in Social Work.
- Harris, H. W., & Yancey, G. (2017). Values, dissonance, and rainbows: Practice tips for Christian social workers in a polarized world. *Social Work & Christianity*, 44(1/2), 123-142.
- Horrell, D. (March 24, 2018). "Holding a Forum on a Difficult Public Issue." Faithful Citizen (blog). Retrieved from <http://faithfulcitizen.net/holding-a-forum-on-a-difficult-public-issue>.
- Hull, J. M. (2016). Come back, Christianity – all is forgiven: Public theology and the prophetic church. *Theology*, 119(2), 83–90. doi.org/10.1177/0040571X15615318
- Janzen, R., Hoef, S., Van de Stobbe, A., Carr, A., Harris, J., Kuipers, R. A., & Ferrer, H. A. (2016). Just faith? A national survey connecting faith and justice within the Christian reformed church. *Review of Religious Research*, 58(2), 229–247. doi.org/10.1007/s13644-015-0245-y
- Kaufman, P. (1990). *Redeeming politics*. Princeton University Press. Retrieved from www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7zvz1b
- Mammana-Lupo, V., Todd, N. R., & Houston, J. D. (2014). The role of sense of community and conflict in predicting congregational belonging. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 42(1), 99–118. doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21596
- Mathews, D. (2012) ...Afterthoughts. In R. Kingston, *Citizens, Deliberation, and the Practice of Democracy* (pp. 66-73). Kettering Foundation Press.
- McDaniel, E. (2008). *Politics in the pews: The political mobilization of black churches*. University of Michigan Press.
- Migliore, D. (2004). *Faith seeking understanding*. Eerdmans Publishing.
- Miller, K., & Polson, C. (2019). Exploring the social justice beliefs of Baptist Christians. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, 38(3), 239-258.
- Molnar-Main, S. (2017). *Deliberation in the classroom: Fostering critical thinking, community and citizenship in schools*. Kettering Foundation Press.
- Najar, M. (2008). On a scale of justice. In *Evangelizing the south: A social history of church and state in early America*. Oxford University Press.
- Northern, V. M. (2009). Social workers in congregational contexts. *Social Work & Christianity*, 36(3), 265–285.
- Poe, M. A. (2016). Good news for the poor: Christian influences on social welfare. In T. L. Scales & M. S. Kelly, *Christianity and Social Work* (5th ed., 7-20). NACSW.
- Putnam, R. D., & Campbell, D. E. (2010). *American Grace: How religion divides and unites us*. Simon & Schuster.

- Reken, C. P. V. (1999). The church's role in social justice. *Calvin Theological Journal*, 34(1), 198.
- Schade, L. (2019). *Preaching in the purple zone: Ministry in the red-blue divide*. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers.
- Stetzer, E. (2017, October 25). The great divide (in the church) in 2016, and why it still matters. *Christianity Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/august/great-divide-in-church-in-2016-and-why-it-still-matters.html>
- Steensland, B., Park, J. Z., Regnerus, M.D., Robinson, L.D., Wilcox, W. B., & Woodberry, R.D. (2000). The measure of American religion: Toward improving the state of the art. *Social Forces*, 79, 291-318.
- Turner, J. (2010). Seeing the poor and moving toward justice: An interactive activity. *Social Work & Christianity*, 37(2), 142-160.
- Vanderwoerd, J. R. (2002). Is the newer deal a better deal? Government funding of faith-based social services. *Christian Scholar's Review*, 31(3), 301-308.
- Wallis, J. (2019). *Christ in crisis: Why we need to reclaim Jesus*. HarperCollins.
- Watkins, D. R. (1994). *Christian social ministry*. Broadman & Holman Publishers.
- Yancey, G. I., & Garland, D. (2014). Christian congregations as contexts for social work. *Social Work & Christianity*, 41(4), 279-307.

Amanda Wilson Harper, Ph.D. is a graduate of the Diana R. Garland School of Social Work at Baylor University, One Bear Place #97320, Waco TX, 76798-7320. Phone: (478) 456-6219. Email: M_Wilson@baylor.edu

Good Neighbor House: Reimagining Settlement Houses for 21st Century Communities¹

Edward Polson, T. Laine Scales

Scholars have documented many challenges facing communities in the 21st century, including increasing inter-group conflict, declining levels of social trust, growing skepticism of institutions, and diminishing public resources. Such challenges threaten to weaken social ties and undermine relationships at the local level. We contend that there is a significant opportunity and a need for the development of innovative models of community practice which emphasize bringing residents together and strengthening mutually beneficial relationships in neighborhoods and communities. Moreover, we believe Christian community practitioners and faith-based organizations have unique contributions to make. In this paper, we propose one faith-based model, a reimagining for 21st century communities: the settlement house model that first emerged in the late 19th century. Drawing on the history of the settlement house movement and the experiences of one faith-based house in Texas, the Good Neighbor House, we highlight lessons learned and suggest potential strategies for Christian community practitioners in 21st century communities.

Keywords: community practice, settlement house, community, faith-based organizations

1 "Good Neighbor House: Reimagining Settlement Houses for 21st Century Communities" by Edward Polson & T. Laine Scales first published in *Christianity & Social Work: Readings on the Integration of Christian Faith and Social Work Practice* 6th Edition pp. 43-63. © 2020. Reprinted with permission of North American Association of Christians in Social Work.

OVER THE LAST SEVERAL DECADES, A NUMBER OF SCHOLARS AND community leaders have lamented publicly the decline of community in American society (Carney, 2019; Cortright, 2015; Putnam, 2000; Putnam & Campbell, 2010; Wuthnow, 1998). Observers have noted that bonds of trust and reciprocity that once could be counted on to facilitate and strengthen social life in communities seem to be weakening and that the fabric of social life itself has begun to unravel in many communities (Cortright, 2015; Paxton, 1999; Putnam, 2000). Neighbors interact with one another less, trust each other less, and are less likely to collaborate to address community concerns than they were in the past. In addition to declining trust and social capital, communities must deal with issues related to increasing diversity and inter-group conflict, continuing economic and racial segregation, increasing economic inequality, a growing skepticism towards social institutions, and diminishing public resources. Such challenges pose a real threat to the health and well-being of many communities as well as the individuals and families that live in them. In this landscape of social disconnection and community estrangement, Christian community practitioners and faith-based organizations have important contributions to make.

Christian faith emphasizes the values of stewardship, responsibility for the wider community, and hospitality to neighbor and stranger, all of which may be important antidotes to current trends in community life. Still, Christian community practitioners and faith-based organizations must be prepared to draw from and utilize a variety of practice models and strategies in their work. Contemporary approaches to community development, organizing, and social action abound and provide invaluable direction in this regard (Gamble and Weil, 2009; Weil, Reisch, & Ohmer, 2012). In this article, we highlight a unique model for empowering community residents and building social capital, one that draws on the roots of the social work profession itself: the settlement house. Settlement houses, proliferating at the turn of the 20th century, combatted challenges in urban communities that were similar, in some regards, to the challenges that communities face today (e.g., low levels of trust, intergroup conflict, increasing segregation). Moreover, many early houses and settlement workers were motivated by religious convictions to reform and strengthen urban communities experiencing drastic social change (Scales, 2000; Scales & Kelly 2011; Williams & Maclean, 2015). As such, we suggest that the legacy of the settlement house can provide Christian community practitioners and faith-based organizations an additional model of practice that emphasizes the empowerment of community residents and the strengthening of social ties in neighborhoods and communities while providing opportunities to practice Christian values such as hospitality and stewardship.

After reviewing the history and key aspects of the settlement house movement as well as its relationship with Christian community ministry at the turn of the 20th century, we present a case example of one contemporary faith-based settlement in Waco, Texas, the Good Neighbor House. Drawing on experiences of the Good Neighbor model, we highlight lessons learned and potential strategies for community social work practice in 21st century communities.

The Settlement House Experiment

The profession of social work generally connects its evolution to two social welfare movements: the Charity Organization Society (COS) movement and the Settlement House (SH) movement. Often recounted in an over-simplified narrative, histories of social work may neglect other important threads in the story. Child welfare providers and church-related organizations were also important building blocks of professional social work (Garland, 1994; Scales & Kelly, 2011). In some cases, the narrative is distorted to portray COS workers as religiously motivated caseworkers over against the SH workers who are portrayed as secular humanists leading community change. More accurately, many social workers in both COS and SH movements were motivated by their faith, just like today. Moreover, while many settlement houses evolved into what Davis (1984) called “spearheads for reform,” some houses were not focused on social activism but instead provided social services and educational activities. Historical interest in the most famous and most thoroughly documented settlement houses, such as Jane Addams’ Hull House of Chicago, has sometimes led observers to overlook the diverse motivations and activities of settlement houses, including settlement houses with religious affiliations.

Emerging in the latter quarter of the nineteenth century, both the COS and SH movements were rooted in London, England, where dire poverty of the Victorian era inspired Protestant clergy to suggest new solutions. One group, the COS followers, held three key assumptions: that moral deficiencies of poor people caused urban poverty, that correcting these moral deficiencies would eliminate poverty, and that a network of charity organizations would need to cooperate and document their home investigations of poor people in order to address poverty and prevent duplication of services to the poor (Ginzberg, 1990). In contrast, the SH movement, also initiated by Protestant clergy, experimented with a different method which emphasized not individual reform, but a neighborly approach to establishing communication and relationship between well-to-do volunteer “settlers” and lower-income neighbors. The first experimental SH was Toynbee Hall, founded in London by a Protestant minister,

Samuel Barnett, and his wife Henrietta Barnett. Renting or purchasing a large building, settlers invited neighbors into a common space designed for education, recreation, art, or other types of enrichment previously unavailable in the area. Settlers, often college students or well-educated men and women of means, lived in or near the settlement house as volunteers (Johnson, 2001).

At the forefront of the SH philosophy was a democratic ideal or, as Jane Addams expressed it, settlements were based “on the theory that the dependence of classes on each other is reciprocal” (Davis, 1984, p.19). Settlements focused their energies not on reforming individuals but on addressing social problems and improving neighborhoods. In fact, settlements carried out some of the first sociological studies of immigrant communities, using their insights to initiate reforms in the area of child labor, sanitation, and women’s working conditions (Williams & Mclean, 2015). Education and recreation were important activities of the settlement to improve neighbors’ lives. A network of college extension courses, English language classes, vocational training, and the teaching of domestic skills prepared neighbors for work in the United States while kindergartens and playgrounds enriched the lives of children (Davis, 1984).

Mutuality and Reciprocity

One of the most important foundations of the settlement house movement was that of mutuality. Offering an alternative to charity organizations and churches who participated in almsgiving or sometimes judged the worthiness of an individual to receive aid, the settlement workers took a stance of mutual aid. Settlers saw themselves, not as community saviors, but as learners and recipients. As Toynbee Hall founder, Samuel Barnett emphasized that every resident volunteer must learn as well as teach, and must receive as well as give (Johnson, 2001). Encouraging neighbors to give back to the settlement fostered a sense of community. For example, a child who came to take a bath once a week (a common service offered by settlement houses) might be asked to pay a nickel or to sweep the floor. As Johnson explains,

The importance of the mutuality of the relationship between people from different backgrounds within the settlement framework cannot be overstated: Through direct personal encounter people were enabled to go beyond appearances and preconceptions and to get to know and value the individuality and humanity of each other, thus leading to greater respect for others and for themselves while building a stronger sense of community. (Johnson, 2001, p.73)

This element of settlement house philosophy may be misunderstood in our twenty-first century world of philanthropy and donation. However, the early settlers believed that the feeling of community and mutual uplift that a neighborhood may experience comes from every member contributing in line with what he or she can afford.

University Partnerships

Universities were an integral part of the settlement house model and exposing college students to working class neighbors was an important part of the process. Toynbee Hall recruited Oxford University ministerial students to live among London's poor during school breaks. Oxford faculty members like John Ruskin offered lectures in the neighborhood and inspired student residents with their egalitarian ideals (Horowitz, 1974; Johnson, 2001).

American settlements imitated the Toynbee Hall approach, and U.S. settlement leaders such as Stanton Coit and Jane Addams visited London to learn about the model, including the synergistic relationship between settlements and their local universities. Settlement leaders invited faculty to lecture and to volunteer while drawing upon university research in disciplines such as education and sociology (Williams & McLean, 2015). John Dewey provides an excellent example of a fruitful partnership with university faculty. Dewey visited Hull House a few years before joining the faculty at the University of Chicago. He and Addams became good colleagues and discussion partners as each forged new experiments in exploring how people learn. Dewey became a regular lecturer at Hull House where neighbors could learn from his insights. He was a lifetime supporter of the Chicago settlement and served on the advisory board for many years (Vorsino, 2015). Other settlements even carried the word "university" in their name, such as the University Settlements in Boston and New York, indicating a strong partnership with students and faculty (Williams & Mclean, 2015).

Serving Immigrant Communities

Settlement houses proliferated on American soil in numbers far greater than their English counterparts did. At the peak of the movement, over 400 settlement houses had been opened in the U.S., mostly in urban areas (Davis, 1977). Large waves of immigrants moving into U.S. cities shaped the agenda of urban settlement houses, particularly in the early twentieth century. In 1889, when Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr opened Hull House in one of Chicago's most densely populated neighborhoods they were joining recently-arrived European immigrants including Poles, Italians,

Russians, Jews from Eastern Europe, Germans, and Irish. Many were in poverty upon arrival and found severe economic and health challenges in their new American lives (Linn, 1935). As in times past, contemporary settlement houses have the potential to serve today's immigrants. However, due to increasingly strict enforcement of immigration policy in recent years, many immigrants fear deportation and avoid seeking social and government services (Amuedo-Dorantes, C. et al., 2013). Contemporary settlement houses can offer a safe place for recreation, learning, and worship for these individuals and families.

Segregated by Race and Sex

The earliest settlement houses were racially segregated. In her important study of African Americans in the settlement movement, Lasch-Quinn (1993) explains that the mainstream settlement movement ignored African American neighbors in spite of its rhetoric of inclusion. In an era of Jim Crow laws, African American volunteers established their own settlements and community centers, often connected to churches and church-related organizations. Early settlement houses also were sex-segregated in terms of their residents, although services were offered to men, women, and children. Toynbee Hall, for example, was for Oxford men and Hull House was a women's community. Interestingly, while both England and the U.S. had houses for male and female workers, England's movement remained primarily masculine, while the U.S. model involved many women seeking opportunities for learning and leadership denied to them in other contexts. In a time when single women did not live alone but stayed with families, in boarding houses, or in religious housing organizations such as the YWCA, the settlement offered to women a perfect opportunity to combine living in a socially acceptable women's community while learning and serving at the same time (Horowitz, 1974; Vorsino, 2015). Much has been written about the empowerment of women residents and leaders.

Religiously Motivated Settlers

Social welfare historian Allen Davis indicates that the majority of American settlement workers were religious. In 1905, a poll of 339 settlement workers showed that 88 percent were active church members and nearly all stated that religion had been a major influence on their lives (Davis, 1984). In fact, some religious groups opened settlement houses for explicitly religious purposes. For example, Methodist women established Wesley Houses with an evangelistic purpose: "The work is evangelical and seeks not only to instruct but to regenerate" (Woods & Kennedy, 1911, p.89). Southern Baptist women of Louisville, Kentucky founded the Baptist

Settlement House in 1912 as a means “to give Christ to the neighborhood,” and a group of Catholic women in Chicago created the Madonna Center to provide Catholic immigrants a place to receive the sacraments, “to minister to and protect the Catholic traditions” of some of the same neighbors served by Hull House (Scales & Kelly, 2011, pp.364, 366).

As the settlement experiment evolved, religious workers continued discussions and debates about the place of religion within settlement work. For example, in a paper entitled “Problems of Religion,” Arthur Holden (1922) advised that settlements did not need to talk about religion or attempt to teach it. He argued that by simply living a life in service to others, the settlement worker embodied Christian principles. Graham Taylor, Protestant pastor and founder of a settlement house called Chicago Commons, noted that while religious individuals may be involved in settlements, the church and the settlement have two very different purposes. Taylor believed that a church must press the tenets of its faith, and if it does not, it ceases to be a church of that faith. A settlement, on the other hand, may not embrace any cult or creed lest it forfeit its place as being a common ground for all (Taylor, 1950).

Formation of Resident Settlers

An important part of the settlement house experience was the opportunity for settlers to learn by doing. In some settlements, like Hull House, the “curriculum” for graduate students and young professionals was ad hoc and informal, as women like Alice Hamilton or Florence Kelley practiced their medical and legal skills while helping neighbors. In other cases, the settlement house may have offered a more formal internship experience as students in social work, missions, or ministry worked with neighbors and tried out the skills they were learning in the classroom. For example, Baptist women of the Woman’s Missionary Union Training School at Louisville, Kentucky volunteered in their own settlement house called Good Will Center. They offered educational and recreational activities as well as Bible study for immigrant women and children. The pedagogical benefits of working “hands on” and receiving immediate feedback from teachers contributed to the students’ learning (Scales & Kelly, 2011). As volunteers turned into paid professional social workers throughout the 20th century, these Baptist women became a part of the workforce. Alumni were hired by churches around the Southern United States to establish Good Will Centers in cities like Birmingham or Atlanta (Maxwell, 2011). These settlement workers were precursors to “church social workers,” a label that would enter the vocabulary of Baptists later, during the 1960s and 1970s.

Good Neighbor House: A 21st Century Settlement

The Good Neighbor model draws on many of the classic principles of the settlement house movement described above while also incorporating new elements intended to meet the 21st century needs of both neighbors and settlers in a particular context. Below, we provide a brief history of the Good Neighbor House and discuss key aspects of the model.

History of Good Neighbor House

In 2011, when a vacant 90-year-old home in the Sanger Heights neighborhood of Waco, Texas was determined to be unsafe for occupancy, one neighboring homeowner recognized an opportunity to make an impact in her community (Smith, 2012). A professor of education and social work, Dr. Laine Scales had long been a student of the 19th century settlement house movement and wondered if a contemporary version of the settlement house might be beneficial or even possible in the Sanger Heights neighborhood. Dr. Scales' initial idea led to the purchase of the vacant home in 2011 and five years later the establishment of the Good Neighbor Settlement House and Worship Center, a faith-based, nonprofit organization that exists to strengthen and support community among residents in the Sanger Heights neighborhood. Soon after establishment, board members and settlers began referring to the house simply as the Good Neighbor House.

Home to prominent Waco families in the early 1900s, the Sanger Heights neighborhood is today one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the city. In 2010, over half of neighborhood residents identified as Hispanic or Latino, approximately 23 percent identified as white, and 20 percent identified as African American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Moreover, there is significant diversity in income, age, and life experience represented among households in the neighborhood. Sanger Heights is home to young professionals, college educators, blue collar and service workers, as well as a significant number of families that fall below the poverty level. While residents are proud of the diversity that exists in the neighborhood, demographic change and population churn over the past several decades have left many residents feeling disconnected from their neighbors and other community members. The Good Neighbor House seeks to address this issue and strengthen neighborhood social ties by following many of the principles of the early settlement house movement in the U.S. and Europe.

After the initial purchase of the house in 2011, Dr. Scales set out to establish the Good Neighbor House as a nonprofit organization and to put together a board of directors to guide the organization's development. She partnered with a dynamic and engaged MSW student living in the

neighborhood, Morgan Caruthers, to brainstorm and share tasks. Together they learned about the neighborhood and the process of applying for 501(c)(3) or nonprofit status. To maximize visibility and community involvement, Scales and Caruthers created an executive board to meet weekly and an advisory board to meet monthly. Advisors included community representatives from organizations and churches: Habitat for Humanity, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Baylor University, Texas State Technical College, a volunteer fundraising expert, along with several neighbors and an elected city council representative. The executive board was composed of five members including both neighborhood residents and faculty and students from local universities.

During the first three years, the executive board and advisory board focused primarily on applying for 501(c)(3) status which drove efforts to develop a specific and clear mission for the organization. In this phase, board members read historical documents about settlement houses, visited the Hull House museum and the Birmingham Settlement in England, and explored questions about what made a settlement successful and why the movement peaked in the 1920s but was greatly diminished by the 1940s. They also researched modern settlement houses through the International Federation of Settlements and Neighborhood Centers (<https://ifsnetwork.org>). This was an important time of learning and teaching.

Board members also engaged in discussion about the particularities of faith-based settlement houses and the complex relationship between local churches and neighborhood residents who embody many faiths. In this phase, board members created statements in the organization's by-laws emphasizing hospitality over the impulse to evangelize. Drawing on social work scholar David Sherwood's essay on the dangers of evangelizing vulnerable populations, board members determined to emphasize the virtues of inclusion and hospitality as primary faith expressions of the Good Neighbor House (Sherwood, 2002).

After two years, once 501(c)(3) status was granted, the advisory board was dissolved, and the executive board was transformed into the board of directors. During this time, board members worked diligently to engage neighbors in creating a vision for GNH. They held informal meetings in neighbors' homes, spoke at churches, engaged the Sanger Heights Neighborhood Association, and held individual meetings with non-profits in the area. Board members discovered that the phrase "settlement house" was unfamiliar to many neighbors. Some incorrectly believed it would be a place for homeless people to "settle." This idea upset some neighbors, and much of the board's energy was spent explaining and correcting misunderstandings about the purpose of the house. This provided further opportunities for board members to gather input from neighbors about what they wanted to see in the house. This process revealed that while

homeowners in the area often preferred that the home remain a single-family residence, many were open to the idea of a settlement house. The perception among many was that having residents living and working in the house would be preferable to the house remaining vacant, as it had been for two years before Scales purchased it.

Between 2011 and 2016, board members and volunteers worked diligently to raise funds, rehabilitate the house, develop a community garden in the previously rock-filled back yard, and continue engaging residents in the neighborhood through planned events. Refurbishing the house was the most urgent matter as the City of Waco had placed the building on a list to be demolished, or “red tagged.” Multiple meetings with city planners and inspectors, resulting in extensions, provided reprieve long enough for the board to raise money for refurbishment. While the majority of funds came from one donor, smaller amounts raised from neighbors and local groups provided a tangible buy-in from community members. For example, two sisters, ages seven and nine living a few blocks away, hosted a lemonade stand, bringing a profit of \$5 dollars. Their gift moved and inspired board members to continue fundraising, even in challenging times.

Another motivator for the board was the decision to move forward and begin using the grounds, even while the house itself was red tagged. Board members and volunteers hosted outdoor concerts, a community garage sale, and Halloween and Cinco de Mayo festivities on the premises. These events helped the Good Neighbor House to establish and nurture important relationships with neighbors. In 2014 and 2015, the board rented a neighboring house allowing three settlers to move in next door into a building known as “the cottage” to start building social capital in the neighborhood. Settlers walked around the neighborhood, engaged neighbors in conversation, asked for community input on the vision, and helped with fundraising and hosting outdoor events. These years allowed the board to focus on settler formation and learn about the joys and struggles of supervising young people as they establish community life together with a specific purpose of neighborhood improvement.

After five years of work and significant preparation, Good Neighbor House opened in 2016 with three live-in settlers. Since then, the organization has sought to fulfill a unique mission in the Sanger Heights neighborhood and in Waco, Texas:

Building on the Christian mandate to love our neighbors and on the ideals of the early settlement houses, Good Neighbor House facilitates social integration and worship among diverse Wacoans as we invest our knowledge, faith, and experiences in community life together.

We:

*Create and maintain a safe and welcoming community space for all neighbors: individuals, families, and groups.

*Organize minimal, flexible programming to build community among neighbors (e.g. gardening, worship, arts, lending library).

*Host non-profit community groups aligning with our mission (e.g. language classes, worship groups, arts and crafts groups, 12-step programs).

*Participate in the spiritual, intellectual and social formation of settlers and other volunteers as they experience the joys and challenges of daily life in a diverse neighborhood.

*Honor the traditional settlement idea by partnering with Waco's churches, college and university groups, businesses, and others in support of our mission (Good Neighbor House, n.d.).

The Good Neighbor Model

Community space. One of the most significant contributions that settlement houses made in urban neighborhoods of the 19th century was the provision of community space where residents from diverse backgrounds, many of whom were immigrants, could come together to learn, socialize, and address common problems (Davis, 1984). The need for organizations and spaces that foster such social connection and integration continues to exist in contemporary communities (Putnam 2000; Putnam et al., 2003). A central component of Good Neighbor House's mission in the Sanger Heights neighborhood is to provide community space where neighbors come together in ways that strengthen social connection and contribute to the development of social capital in the neighborhood. The house serves as a place in the community where bridges can be built between residents, and where neighbors can come together to address shared needs and community issues. The organization welcomes community members and groups to use the common spaces of the house and the grounds to host community events and programming. The common spaces include a living room, library, multi-purpose room, and kitchen. The board of directors has developed specific building use policies and a process for reserving space

that ensures that facilities are both accessible and safe for visitors and settlers alike. Over the past four years, a wide range of community groups have utilized space in the house and yard to host activities such as reading groups, Girl Scout troop meetings, tai-chi classes, Spanish language classes, Bible studies, and music and arts events. These events, made possible through the simple provision of space and hospitality, have begun to nurture new and meaningful connections in the neighborhood and community.

Settlers. It is impossible to understand the Good Neighbor model without a discussion of the key role of settlers. Similar to the way that early settlement houses were organized (Johnson, 2001), a team of settlers lies at the heart of the work of Good Neighbor House. Indeed, the settlers are the actors that bring the vision and mission of the organization to life. Settlers may be adult women, men, or couples who volunteer to live and work at the house for a period of at least 12 months. Settlers live on site, in living quarters that are separate from the house's common spaces. In return for reduced rent, each settler volunteers seven to 10 hours of his or her time per week to carry out the day-to-day operations of the house. Settler responsibilities include such things as planning and managing events, tending the community garden, cleaning, providing basic maintenance, publicizing events, fundraising, producing a newsletter, and other daily administrative tasks. Settlers interact regularly with board members by serving on a "cluster," a committee group that leads various functions such as community engagement, fundraising, and maintenance of the house and grounds. Through the volunteer work of the board, the settlers, and other community volunteers, Good Neighbor House is able to serve its neighborhood with no paid staff members. This arrangement keeps the organization agile and cost-effective with utilities and house maintenance being the primary expenses. It also mirrors the 19th century model, a pre-professional model when settlers were unpaid volunteers. In essence, settlers are the staff and the public face of Good Neighbor.

In addition to house management, settlers have opportunities to interact with neighbors as they serve as hosts to each event. Just as with early settlements, Good Neighbor House seeks to be a place where settlers and neighborhood residents enjoy a relationship of reciprocity, learning from one another (Johnson, 2001). The Good Neighbor model also taps into some of the early traditions of religious settlement houses as discussed above (Scales & Kelly, 2011). Settler training and orientation emphasizes the Christian virtue of hospitality, and settlers are able to form relationships with neighbors who frequent the building. Settlers are encouraged to walk the neighborhood and attend neighborhood events so that they may become acquainted with and invest directly in the lives of neighbors and community members while they are serving at Good Neighbor House.

These characteristics, drawn from early settlement houses, makes the Good Neighbor model distinct from other community service agencies in the neighborhood. In contrast to traditional models of community service, where outsiders enter the community for short periods, settlers are expected to become a part of the neighborhood in which they are serving. They are encouraged to view their role as that of a “good neighbor” working alongside others to enhance and strengthen the life of the community around them. What settlers’ investment looks like differs for each cohort of settlers that serve at the house. Some have invested through their work in the community garden. Others have invested by offering art classes to neighborhood youth or inviting neighbors into the house for shared meals and fellowship. What has been consistent across cohorts is that, drawing on the concept of Christian hospitality, settlers have found creative and meaningful ways to build relationships with the diverse individuals and families living in the neighborhood. Because the mission of Good Neighbor House is centered in a commitment to Christian ideals of hospitality and inclusion, settlers are expected to identify as Christian and to be a part of a local congregation. In addition to supporting the mission of the organization, this requirement fosters mutually beneficial relationships between Good Neighbor House and congregations in the community. Settlers are able to share with their local congregations what is happening at the settlement house, and congregations are invited to utilize the space. Several settlers’ congregations have begun to use space at the house in recent years because of their personal connection to the work of Good Neighbor House.

Over the past five years, 19 settlers have volunteered their time and gifts at Good Neighbor House. Each spring, prospective settlers go through an application and interview process facilitated by the board of directors. Depending on current house needs and the qualifications of applicants, the board typically selects several new settlers each year to serve terms of 12 months. Settlers may continue serving beyond this initial term if the board is supportive. Each year, the board strives to form a team of settlers that is composed of some new and some experienced settlers. Settlers attend a half-day training at the beginning of their service in August and participate in a mid-year retreat with members of the board. In the first years, three settlers served at a time. However, as the organization has grown and the workload increased, so has the number of settlers needed to carry out the work of the house. Today, there are six settlers living and working at Good Neighbor House.

In addition to serving in the house and serving the neighborhood, settlers are required to contribute to each other’s well-being in specific ways. Settlers participate in weekly team meetings as well as activities focused on personal and spiritual formation. They also agree to work together

to manage shared living space, agree to treat settlers and neighbors with respect as equals, and contribute to the various projects of Good Neighbor House. Initially, the board planned to identify a lead settler in each cohort who would be responsible for coordinating the work of the settlers and overseeing the functioning of the house. However, early on, board members determined this would be a significant responsibility to place on a volunteer settler. Instead, the board identifies a board member to fulfill this role each year. The designated board member meets with settlers weekly and coordinates both the work and the formation of the team of settlers. In the past, this board member has been someone with ministry and/or social work training. The board has also developed a Settler Handbook that provides information which settlers may need for carrying out the work of the Good Neighbor House on a daily basis.

A distinctive element of the Good Neighbor model is an emphasis on the personal and spiritual formation of settlers. This was characteristic of some of the early religious settlement houses in the U.S. (Scales & Kelly, 2011). Recognizing that most settlers will serve for a limited period, the goal of this aspect of the Good Neighbor model is to support settlers' personal development and to have a lasting impact on the way that they understand their responsibility as neighbors and community members when they leave Good Neighbor House. In addition to their commitment to carrying out the work of the house, settlers are required to participate in weekly formation activities with other settlers and board members. In the past, formation activities have included opportunities for Bible study, worship, team building, fostering self-awareness, learning more about community development, and meeting members of the neighborhood. These events typically occur at Good Neighbor House or in the home of a neighbor or supporter in the community. Settlers are also expected to develop specific learning goals for their year, to engage a local congregation, and to grow in how they live with other settlers in community and how they engage the neighborhood.

In contrast to many of the early settlement houses that were segregated by sex, the most famous of which relied on the volunteer labor of young white women who were studying at university, in this 21st century model, men and women serve together as settlers while living on separate floors or in different buildings. Good Neighbor House also welcomes married couples, which was rare in the 19th century settlements (although Toynbee Hall's Samuel and Henrietta Barnett provide an early example). Settlers also represent a diversity of ages and personal backgrounds. Settlers have ranged in age from 20s to 50s and come from a variety of different socioeconomic and educational backgrounds. The application asks that all settlers be at least 21, but it notes that exceptions can be made in some circumstances. While most settlers have been full-time students at one of the nearby universities, a few have been working in other fields while serving. The

synergy of an intergenerational community of both men and women, single and married serves Good Neighbor well in its daily life. Importantly, settlers are socialized as an egalitarian community in terms of gender roles. Both men and women do a variety of domestic chores and yard work; men and women serve in leadership roles, without discrimination.

Empowering neighbors. Another unique aspect of the settlement house tradition was its emphasis on the empowerment of neighborhood residents. While many houses did provide direct services to the community, they also sought to develop grassroots leaders and to encourage a sense of ownership of the programs and services offered. As discussed above, a sense of reciprocity was encouraged between settlers and residents (Johnson, 2001). In addition to providing services for neighbors, early settlers learned from neighborhood residents. Drawing on this idea, the Good Neighbor model emphasizes the value of creating space and opportunity for neighbors and community members to come together to develop new and innovative programs and events to enhance the community. In contrast to more traditional community organizations, Good Neighbor House offers little in the way of direct programming or services. Rather, community members have led the majority of events occurring at the house since it opened in 2016. If a group of neighbors determines there is a need for education on nutrition or healthy living, a weekly Bible study, or a bi-weekly grief group, Good Neighbor House provides an accessible, safe environment within which community members can pursue such ends. Settlers are available to help to schedule events, ensure that spaces are clean and set up appropriately, and provide assistance for groups using the house. They may participate in such groups if invited. Leadership, however, remains in the hands of neighbors and community members. In essence, neighbors are both teachers and learners. They develop valuable transferable civic skills as they plan and organize such events. In this way, Good Neighbor House is a catalyst for the development of grassroots leadership and programming.

In addition to serving as a space for community-led programming, Good Neighbor House does provide minimal programming each year to engage the surrounding community. Over the past five years, board members and settlers have held back-yard concerts, arts events, and open houses to raise financial support for the organization and to showcase the facilities. In recent years, settlers have organized and managed a community garden that provides fresh produce for community members and organizations. Each fall, settlers and board members participate in a community-wide Halloween block party to support neighborhood families and children.

University relationships. Many early settlement houses enjoyed a close relationship with educational institutions and universities (Williams

& Maclean, 2015). As described above, settlers were often female university students who worked and lived in the houses while pursuing education. Settlement houses provided affordable housing in exchange for these women's investment in the surrounding neighborhoods. In the same way, Good Neighbor House has sought to leverage connections with local colleges and universities to recruit both settlers and community supporters. While settlers come from diverse backgrounds and ages, the majority have been students attending nearby colleges and universities. The Sanger Heights neighborhood is fortunate to be in close proximity to several institutions of higher education including McLennan Community College, Texas State Technical College, and Baylor University, a large religiously-affiliated university. Additionally, the organization's founder and early board members included faculty, students, and alumni of these institutions. Over the past five years, students studying in programs as varied as social work, visual arts, business, environmental science, law, and theology have served as settlers at Good Neighbor House. Each of these settlers brings with them a unique vocational perspective and set of skills that contribute to the work of the house. For instance, one settler studying environmental science volunteered to install rain barrels for water harvesting and a drip irrigation system for the garden. Another settler with a background in arts and music planned opportunities for local artists and musicians to gather and share their work.

Another way that the organization has leveraged its unique connection to colleges and universities is through the mentoring of interns and service-learning students from various academic programs. For example, an intern from one university's English department worked with board members to improve the organization's public communications and social media presence. Likewise, students in business and communications have helped the organizations to strengthen its fundraising strategy, and a doctoral student in sociology helped the board of directors develop a community profile of the Sanger Heights neighborhood using census data. Colleges and university organizations such as sororities, fraternities, and service clubs have donated volunteer time for building projects, cleaning, and fundraising. In 2017, as a part of a class assignment, a group of philanthropy students was instrumental in helping Good Neighbor House obtain grant funding to build a new outdoor patio for staging community concerts and events. In these ways and more, the connections that the organization has fostered with faculty, students, and alumni of local educational institutions benefit the organization and the neighborhood. These relationships contribute to the development of social capital in the community and create avenues through which students and faculty share their valuable knowledge and resources with the wider community.

Practicing Christian hospitality. While early settlement houses had roots in 19th century religious reform movements, many of the houses that emerged did not have specifically religious missions or affiliations. In this way, the Good Neighbor model is somewhat distinct from many of the early settlement houses. While Good Neighbor House does not affiliate with any specific religious body or institution, the organization has chosen to root its mission in a distinctively Christian understanding of hospitality and responsibility for the community. Indeed, Good Neighbor House views the creation of space where neighbors and community members come together informally and where community connections are strengthened as an important way of practicing the Christian virtue of hospitality. In essence, Good Neighbor House and the settlers who live there open up their home to be used by the wider community. Settlers and board members do not engage in proselytization or evangelism but welcome all community groups, irrespective of religious belief or practice, to use the space. Moreover, since the house opened, groups from several different religious groups including Baptists, Mennonites, and Quakers have used the house for hosting religious meetings or worship services.

In addition to being a space for Christian hospitality in the neighborhood, the Good Neighbor model emphasizes developing relationships with the diverse religious congregations that are present and active in the Sanger Heights community. Over the past several decades, the neighborhood has experienced an influx of new religious congregations including ethnic Christian congregations, charismatic and Pentecostal churches, and non-Christian religious groups. Settlers and board members have sought to engage and build supportive relationships with these groups by inviting them to use space at Good Neighbor House and by offering to speak about Good Neighbor House in their congregations. Additionally, one of the board's goals has been to increase support for the organization by inviting neighborhood congregations to collaborate with Good Neighbor House and support it through both funding and service. This has been a challenging area of work but one that is central to Good Neighbor House's mission. Local congregations have been supportive of Good Neighbor House in many ways - providing volunteers to help with construction projects, utilizing space for meetings, and publicizing Good Neighbor events. However, commitments of financial support from congregations have been less common.

Lessons for Christians in Social Work

As we stated in the opening of this article, Christian community practitioners and faith-based organizations must be prepared to draw from and utilize a variety of practice models and strategies in order to help neighborhoods and communities address the many challenges they face

in the 21st century. Moreover, we suggest that Christians in social work have much to learn from history. While standard narratives of social work history may ignore or distort the influence of Christian volunteers on social welfare history, sharing these rich stories not only corrects our historical record, but also provides inspiration for practice today. Our professional grandmothers and grandfathers were not perfect human beings and, like us, they made mistakes. Social workers of the 21st century have the benefit of historical lenses to examine and evaluate the pros and cons of models like the settlement house experiment. Using these models and improving upon them, Christian community practitioners may find much about the settlement house model to imitate while at the same time revising the model for 21st century communities. We suggest that the following summary of lessons learned from the experiences of those instrumental in establishing Good Neighbor House may be helpful for Christian community social work practitioners seeking to utilize the settlement house model and to integrate a Christian perspective in their work:

1. *Choose your location carefully while examining census data.* Good Neighbor House board members chose a residential community that was unusually diverse for a city comprised of mostly segregated neighborhoods. The location can easily be reached by many neighbors by walking or biking and has many churches nearby that may be engaged in the work of the organization. A strong neighborhood association already established enhanced the settlement's work and offered a starting point for developing partnerships. Location and proximity to neighbors, resources, and local churches can have an important effect on facility use and support.

2. *Meet with neighbors early and let them drive the agenda.* Early supporters and board members solicited ideas in neighborhood meetings and in informal conversations with neighbors. Though they planned to refurbish the run-down building more quickly, it turned out to be an advantage to have had two years of settlement operations with settlers living in a neighboring building. This time of preparation provided an opportunity for continuing neighborhood conversations and ensuring that neighbors had plenty of time to express their desires for the house. When Good Neighbor House opened, board members were able to invite groups that already existed to use the space, rather than having to plan new uses. This basic principle of listening to neighbors and facilitating activities they have already determined they want is a hallmark of community organizing. Further, it allowed settlers and board members to demonstrate in concrete ways the organization's commitment to the Christian principles of hospitality and incarnational service in the community. Seeking to accomplish organizational priorities first would have been an error and perhaps would have undermined an important principle of Christian community practice.

3. *Immigrant populations are still important neighbors for settlement houses.* Settlement houses arose at a time when industrialization, immigration, and urbanization coalesced in the United States. While marginalization of immigrants was common then as now, today's immigrant populations face unprecedented threat. A safe space for neighbors, native born or immigrant, is essential in the 21st century. Drawing on the rich Biblical tradition of God's concern for immigrants and strangers (Deuteronomy 10:19; Matthew 25:35), faith-based settlements like Good Neighbor House can reclaim this role of providing a non-government sponsored place of hospitality, learning, and recreation. As America's communities grow increasingly diverse, this is a vital role for faith-based and religiously-affiliated organizations to play. According to census data, the block in which Good Neighbor House is located is 50 percent Latinx, which often indicates a hidden immigrant population that may benefit from traditional settlement house services for immigrants. In 2016, one month after Good Neighbor House opened its doors, the settlement began to provide office space to an immigration lawyer from American Gateways, a Christian organization providing free legal assistance to immigrants. Families in crisis discreetly and safely entered through an unmarked door to seek help and advice. The organization soon outgrew its offices in the house. However, the partnership inspired an immediate tie to immigrant families in the community.

4. *Connect with local universities and colleges, while still maintaining a separate identity.* The Good Neighbor House has striven to establish meaningful connections with faculty and staff of local universities. Unfortunately, universities often have histories of discrimination and elitism in college towns, which can color neighbors' impressions of college-sponsored programs. While many board members and settlers have formal connections to a large, Christian university in town, they determined early on that the settlement must be community-owned, not university-owned. As a result, the board chose as their first partners the local technical college. An architecture class helped design Good Neighbor House's refurbishment. Intentionally steering away from the impression that the house is a university-owned effort, the board made sure to include settlers who attended local community or technical colleges as well. As Good Neighbor House became more established and its approach to community-ownership more well known, the organization embraced university partnerships more fully, particularly with student groups that wanted to connect with communities outside the university bubble. Many student groups enjoy using the house's meeting space for retreats and off-campus projects while also attending concerts and events. Board members observed that facilitating an off-campus link between students and a diverse community was a worthy learning experience for university

students, just as it was 125 years ago for the privileged men of Toynbee Hall. As a faith-based organization, Good Neighbor House also recognized that partnerships with student groups offered many students of faith an important opportunity to demonstrate their religious commitments to service and justice in new and formative ways.

5. *A building is both an asset and a liability.* Operation of a settlement house is not possible without a house. In the case of Good Neighbor House, choosing a red-tagged building scheduled for demolition made the property purchase affordable, yet this decision also created many challenges. An old building with many problems required many hours of labor and much expense to refurbish. An unanticipated increase in property taxes and insurance due to the city's recent growth brought unanticipated financial challenges for the organization. Despite such challenges, board members feel the Good Neighbor House and its adjacent cottage for settlers has been a fruitful location. Still, settlement leaders and board members must be realistic about the costs of maintaining a building, both financially and in terms of energy from the board and settlers.

6. *Establish a culture of mutuality and reciprocity.* A settlement house must be egalitarian. This means that every neighbor, whatever their advantages or disadvantages have been, has something to give and something to receive. Settlers and board members must maintain a stance of generosity, while also being willing to receive gifts. This model of reciprocity and "buy in" from neighbors provides funding for utilities and operations without over taxing lower income neighbors. Neighbors participating in the settlement house activities may receive services or entertainment, but they are also expected to contribute something, whether it be a small amount of money, an art piece to hang on the wall, or an afternoon mowing the lawn. This stance of reciprocity preserves the dignity and worth of neighbors and settlers as they work together on community improvement. At Good Neighbor House, formal fundraising and grant writing is reserved for special projects. For example, the board applied for and received a grant to build an outdoor stage and deck, which accommodates outdoor theatre, concerts, and a "Porch Tales" storytelling event. This emphasis on mutuality permeates the settlement house culture and is designed to instill a sense that one group does not own Good Neighbor House, but it belongs to the neighborhood.

7. *Carefully decide the role of religion in a settlement house.* Traditional settlement houses maintained many different stances in terms of their explicit ties to religion. Some, like the Baptist Good Will Center were places of missionary zeal with a goal to convert all visitors to the center while others practiced religion quietly and separately from their settlement work. Varieties of possibilities are legitimate ways of Christian service. The key lesson is that all participants, board members, settlers, volunteers, and

neighbors must understand the intent. This takes a great deal of discussion, training, and media messaging. At Good Neighbor House, all board members and settlers declare their Christian faith at the application stage. Christian affiliation is made clear in the organization's by-laws and on the website as well as in the daily life of the organization. At the same time, board members and settlers strive to be clear that any person of any faith or no faith will be included and accepted at the settlement house. Inspired by the social gospel pastor and Christian sociologist Graham Taylor, Good Neighbor House maintains that the functions of a settlement house and a congregation are different. At times, this means that a particular settler or volunteer may not be a good fit for Good Neighbor House if they wish to use the house as a home base for proselytizing. While evangelism may be an important role of Christian congregations, conversion is not the primary goal of the Good Neighbor House. Maintaining this stance requires much discussion, training, and prayer as the board and settlers work together to provide a safe space that is welcoming for all.

8. *Plans and Prayers for settler formation.* The role of forming a person who chooses to spend a year in the settlement house is a holy privilege. Settlers are not simply volunteer laborers; rather they are learners who have a tremendous opportunity for experiential learning about their faith, their neighbors, and Christ's incarnation. The historical record is very thin in terms of what formal activities early settlement houses may have conducted to promote learning for the settlers. Early settlers and their supervisors had a tendency to look outward, toward their clients in their essays and other writings. Diaries and other records they left behind have little reflection on how the settler may have been transformed by the experience. However, Good Neighbor House board members recognized that contemporary settlers, many of whom are students in social work, ministry, or education, are stepping into roles with daily opportunities for learning. Settlers are asked to articulate their learning goals for the year during the application process as well as in their initial orientation. Intentionality and planning for settler formation ensures they have time for training, reading, and reflection. For example, when settlers read together Christine Pohl's (2012) *Living into Community: Cultivating Practices that Sustain Us*, they have weekly opportunities to discuss the inward and outward communities they are creating. In other words, the book opened up discussion about life together as settlers while also challenging the group to look outward at the Good Neighbor community they were creating. Some settlers have journaled about their experiences, reflecting a variety of transformations over time. In the busyness of daily tasks, board members and settlers may be tempted to neglect being intentional about the learning opportunity. However, settlement house leaders must take seriously their role in settler formation.

Conclusion

In summary, we suggest that the legacy of the settlement house movement provides Christian community practitioners and faith-based organizations a unique model of practice that has the potential to address some of the most pressing challenges facing 21st century communities (i.e., social isolation, declining trust, etc.). Indeed, the settlement house model emphasizes the empowerment of community residents and the strengthening of social ties in neighborhoods and communities, and it corresponds well with Christian ideals of stewardship, community responsibility, and inclusiveness. Establishing a settlement in 21st century communities is not without its challenges, as is seen in the experience of the Good Neighbor House. Nevertheless, this classic model, central to the development of the social work profession, has much to offer neighborhoods, communities, and the community practitioners that serve them. ❖

References

- Amuedo-Dorantes, C., Puttitanum, T., & Martinez-Donate, A. P. (2013). How do tougher immigration measures affect unauthorized immigrants? *Demography* 50, 1067-1091..
- Carney, T. P. (2019). *Alienated America: Why Some Places Thrive While Others Collapse*. Harper Collins.
- Cortright, J. (2015). *Less in Common*. City Observatory.
- Davis, A. F. (1977). Settlements: History. In J. B. Turner (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Social Work* (pp. 1266-1271). National Association of Social Workers.
- Davis, A. F. (1984). *Spearheads for reform: The social settlements and the progressive Movement 1890-1914*. Rutgers University Press.
- Gamble, D. N., & Weil, M. (2009). *Community Practice Skills: Local to Global Perspectives*. Columbia University Press.
- Garland, D. S. R. (1994). *Church agencies: Caring for children and families in crisis*. : Child Welfare League of America.
- Ginzberg, L. (1990). *Women and the work of benevolence: Morality, politics, and class in the nineteenth century united states*. Yale University Press.
- Good Neighbor House. (n.d.) *What We Do*. <http://goodneighborwaco.org/>
- Holden, A.C. (1922). *The settlement idea: A vision of social justice*. New York, MacMillan, 132-144.
- Horowitz, H.L. (1974). Varieties of cultural experience in Jane Addams' Chicago, *History of Education Quarterly*, 14(1), 69-86. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ100196>
- Johnson, C. (2001). Strength in community: Historical development of settlements internationally In R. Gilchrist and T. Jeffs (Eds.), *Settlements, social change, and community action: Good neighbours* (pp. 69-90). Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Lasch-Quinn, E. (1993). *Black neighbors: race and the limits of reform in the merican settlement house movement, 1890-1945*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Linn, J. W. (1935). *Jane Addams: A biography*. Appleton-Century Publishing.

- Maxwell, M. (2011). "We are happy to Co-operate": The institutionalization and control of Birmingham's Baptist Good Will Center, 1909–1928, *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 38(3), 249–65.
- Paxton, P. (1999). Is social capital declining in the United States? A multiple indicator assessment, *American Journal of Sociology*, 105(1), 88-127. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ628636>
- Pohl, C. (2012) *Living into community: Cultivating practices that sustain us*. William B. Eerdmans.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon and Schuster.
- Putnam, R. D., & Campbell, D. E. (2010). *American grace: How religion divides and unites us*. Simon and Schuster.
- Putnam, R. D., Feldstein, L. M., & Cohen, D. (2003). *Better together: Restoring the American community*. Simon & Schuster.
- Scales, T. L. (2000). "All that fits a woman": *Training Southern Baptist women for charity and mission, 1907-1926*. Mercer University Press.
- Scales, T. L., & Kelly, M. S. (2011). To give Christ to the neighborhood: A corrective look at the settlement movement and early Christian social workers, *Social Work and Christianity*, 38(3), 356-376.
- Sherwood, D. A. (2002). Ethical integration of faith and social work practice: Evangelism, *Social Work & Christianity*, 29(1), 1-12.
- Smith, J. B. (2012, February 20). Baylor professor hopes to turn Colcord Avenue eyesore into neighborhood hub. *Waco Tribune Herald*. https://www.wacotrib.com/news/baylor-professor-hopes-to-turn-colcord-avenue-eyesore-into-neighborhood/article_79ddcdf3-5711-5597-8768-a0fc434643c7.html
- Taylor, G. (1950). The Settlement's Distinctive Future, in L.M. Pacey (Ed.). *Readings in the development of settlement work*. Association Press.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2010). *2010 American Community Survey, 5-year Estimates, Census Tract 10, McLennan County*. https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?t=Race%20and%20Ethnicity&table=B03002&tid=ACSDT5Y2010.B03002&q=&g=1400000US48309001000&y=2010&d=ACS%205-Year%20Estimates%20Detailed%20Tables&hidePreview=true&vintage=2010&layer=state&cid=B01001A_001E&lastDisplayedRow=20
- Vorsino, M. (2015). Re-reading Dewey through a feminist lens, *Educational Perspectives*, 47(1-2), 50-54. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1088345.pdf>
- Weil, M., Reisch, M., & Ohmer, M. L. (2012). *The handbook of community practice*, 2nd ed. Sage Publications.
- Williams, J. E., & Maclean, V.M. (2015). *Settlement sociology in the progressive years: Faith, science, and reform*. Leiden, Brill.
- Woods, R.A., and Kennedy, A. J. (1911). *Handbook of settlements*. Charity Publication Committee.
- Wuthnow, R. (1998). *Loose connections: Joining together in America's fragmented communities*. Harvard University Press.

Edward C. Polson, LMSW, MDiv, PhD, is Associate Professor in the Diana R. Garland School of Social Work at Baylor University, One Bear Place #97320, Waco, TX 76798. Phone: (254) 710-4483. Email: Clay_Polson@baylor.edu

Development on Purpose: Faith & Human Behavior in the Social Environment

Lisa Hosack. (2019). Botsford, CT: NACSW

Lisa Hosack's *Development on Purpose: Faith & Human Behavior in the Social Environment* arrived in my office mailbox just as I was in the planning stages for my recently developed HBSE (human behavior in the social environment) II course. This book has proven to be a valuable and useful companion to my main HBSE book and has brought a challenging in-depth Christian perspective to my HBSE classroom. Hosack's purpose in writing the book provides valuable insights into why we study HBSE. The book is appropriately named as its purpose is to demonstrate how development happens for a reason and not just because, inviting readers to delve into the why in a way that I have not previously seen done in a HBSE book. Part One of the book lays the ground work of Biblical themes, social work perspectives, and a theological model for how we can view human behavior in the social environment. The next three chapters offer a Christian perspective on the three dimensions of human development covered in a typical social work assessment—the bio-psycho-social assessment.

The themes highlighted in the first chapter resonate with the Reformed perspective identified in the preface. The pervasive fall of creation and human kind along with creation's need for restoration and redemption clearly fit within this perspective. The author also sets the stage for themes she will continue to revisit in her later chapters when she discusses how the embodiment of humans is an important aspect of human reality and the role of agency (or choice) in human development. On the topic of embodiment, Hosack states "a proper understanding of embodiment provides guidance in understanding HBSE. The physical world was created and declared "good", highlighting the value of all that God made. As part of the creation, our bodies are good—in fact, they are holy and sacred" (p. 21). We are not just spiritual beings, but our bodies and what happens to them is important as God created us to be embodied creatures.

Part Two moves into the specific developmental stages that occur throughout the lifespan. Starting with infancy, the author highlights how during this stage humans experience early growth that moves them toward God and also toward others. Hosack again presents one of the main theses of her book when she says, "it is important to recognize that persons at every stage are developing toward something" (p. 123). Social workers who work with infants and toddlers should be guiding their development toward

“God, themselves, and other people” (p. 123). The book also provides a case example in each of the last six chapters to help exemplify specific challenges unique to that stage of development. The case examples help the reader to apply the Biblical foundations from Part One of the book to each case. In each of the developmental stage chapters, the author starts with some introductory comments, then introduces the case example. This is followed by more in-depth biological, psychological, and sociological considerations specific to that developmental stage and then she revisits the case study to provide specific examples of these considerations as they apply to the case example.

In a chapter on old age, for example, we read of William, an 82-year-old African American widower. William’s upbringing and family life are described in the opening section along with highlights of struggles William has faced and is facing in terms of his bio-psycho-social development. The case examples found throughout the last six chapters, while kept relatively brief, provide the reader with significant insight into the individual’s life with current challenges, opportunities, and strengths. These case examples were especially helpful to my students in my HBSE class this semester. Applying the foundational concepts from Part One of the book along with the developmental concepts included in each chapter of Part Two was much more engaging when they had a client (fictitious though he or she may be) to which they could apply them.

One of the major strengths of this book was the chapter on a fairly new developmental stage now called Emerging Adulthood. Sociologists and social psychologists have recently hypothesized a lengthening adolescence in our new post-modern world as many individuals seem to be delaying adulthood as long as possible. Emerging adulthood is defined as “a formative life stage situated between the early and middle adolescent years and ‘full’ adult years” (p. 179). Development on Purpose provides research-based hypotheses and new insights on why this new stage developed. My students, most of whom fall in this age category, really appreciated this chapter and the nuanced way the author explored this unique developmental stage. Here too, Hosack used a thorough case study to provide the reader with one example of what emerging adulthood might look like.

While unapologetically writing from a Reformed perspective, Hosack’s Christian perspective on HBSE is accessible to and important for all Christian students, educators, and practitioners alike. As someone with varied practice experience and now years of experience as an educator, the author demonstrates her expertise on HBSE and yet leaves the reader with more resources for further reading and exploration. Her use of the book *The Reciprocating Self* (Balswick et al., 2016), and other theoretical and philosophical sources provide firm and broad foundations for her own thinking. Anyone teaching HBSE at a Christian college or university, should

read *Development on Purpose* for themselves and consider how they can use it to further discussion with their students on a Christian perspective on HBSE. ❖

Reviewed by **Erin Olson**, PhD, MSW, LISW, Professor of Social Work, Program Director, Dordt University. Email: erin.olson@dordt.edu.

Reference

Balswick, J.O., Ebstyn King, P., & Reimer, K.S. (2016). *The reciprocating self: Human development in theological perspective*, 2nd Ed. InterVarsity Press.

Mystery and the Adopted Child

Renée Henning. (2018). Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform

Written by an adoptive mother, the book shares stories from dozens of American parents who adopted children from various countries. The book is a compilation of articles published by the author over the past 24 years. The central focus of the stories in the articles is the “mysterious” behaviors the adopted children demonstrate while adjusting to their new family and home environment in the U.S.

The author introduces the book as one that provide answers to the mysteries relating to international adoption. The book is organized by specific topics that highlight common areas where adopted children may demonstrate “mysterious” behaviors such as sleep and eating patterns and level of comfortability with touch. While sharing specific family experiences, the author details ways that the adoptive parents have sought to address the behaviors and help their children to adjust. The book also includes chapters on social justice-related issues such as the experiences of families having to deal with prejudices about internationally adopted children and the racism and classism experienced by adopted children who are ethnic minorities.

Throughout the book, the author provides words of encouragement for current and prospective adoptive parents and their children and offers some guidance on how to approach important tasks as supporting a healthy, respectful transition from the adopted child’s old life to their new one. Lastly, the author provides a stern warning to prospective adoptive parents not to proceed with adoption if they are not willing to accept the “mysteries” or uncertainties that come with this experience. The information provided during the process of adoption about a child’s past may be limited or incomplete. Thus, accepting this reality is important.

A strength of the book is that the author not only educates the reader about potential challenges families may experience in helping an adopted child adjust to a new environment but also the victories that occur along the way. The book discusses many examples of cases where young adopted children who initially demonstrate challenging behaviors eventually adjust to and thrive in their new family environments.

Another strength is the author’s incorporation of discussions around social justice issues. For example, there is a discussion about how problematic it is to assess the developmental level of these children using American “playthings”. The author also points out that in some cases, demonstrated developmental delays are due to lack of opportunity and highlights examples of adopted children who were subsequently found to have an above average IQ or physical ability.

A major concern with the book is the lack of reliable sources used to support statements made. Woven into the case examples described throughout the book are the author's attempts to explain common behaviors and experiences of adopted children. However, the author's generalizations are presented without sources. Additionally, there are ample areas in the book where the author reports research findings but does not identify the sources of the research. In one section of her book, the author reports that many of her conclusions are based not only on her experiences of being an adoptive mother but also the knowledge she has gained as an adoptive aunt, an attorney, a volunteer in neonatal and pediatric wards of a major hospital since the late 1980s, and an author of many adoption-related articles. Given her ample experiences in writing articles on adoption, it would seem easy enough to utilize scholarly literature to support and expand on her statements.

There is also a concern with the author's choice of language at certain points in the book. For example, she shared a story about a child she calls the "Wild Beast Girl". The term was given to the child based on her unkempt appearance and her tendency to attack anyone who approached her. It is unclear if the author is simply repeating a term that originated from the individual who shared the story with her. Nonetheless, the author's use of the term in describing the child is dehumanizing. No child, or anyone for that matter, should be identified in name by their challenges. In another area of the book, the author uses the term "the Blacks" to refer to a group of Black individuals. Using "the" in front of a group's name is offensive to many as it emphasizes the group's otherness from the person using the term.

Although the book is not recommended for academic and professional social work audiences, it can be beneficial for prospective and current adoptive parents to read. The stories shared can provide some comfort to the parents in normalizing the challenges that can occur during the adjustment phase and be an encouragement to them in demonstrating that with time, unconditional love, patience, and a sense of humor, adopted children can eventually adjust to their new home and family. ❖

*Reviewed by **Raquel Ellis** MSW, PhD, Assistant Field Director and Assistant Professor of Social Work, College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, California Baptist University, 8432 Magnolia Ave, Riverside, CA 92504. Phone: 951.552.8366. Email: raellis@calbaptist.edu.*

Listening to Sexual Minorities: A Study of Faith and Sexual Identity on Christian College Campuses

Mark A. Yarhouse, Janet B. Dean, Stephen P. Stratton, and Michael Lastoria. (2018). Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

This book explores the journey of sexual minority students at Christian colleges and is focused on examining the intersection between faith and sexual identity at this critical time of development. The authors define a sexual minority as, “a person who experiences same-sex attraction independent of identity label (such as, say, ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’ or queer’) or sexual behavior” (p. 11). The behavioral reference reflects the fact that the students do not publically and often do not privately embrace these labels or participate in same-sex behavior.

The beauty of the book is found in the poignant and diverse stories shared by LGB+ students, which adds a richness and depth to the text. Student narratives are interspersed with quantitative research, recommendations, and conclusions drawn from three studies of sexual minorities conducted by the authors. The third study, which is most referenced in the book, was undertaken with the assistance of the Association for Christians in Student Development (ACSD). It is the only longitudinal study of the three studies. It was conducted with Christian college sexual minority students at two points in time, approximately a year apart. Fifteen schools, representing ten states from all regions of the United States, participated in the third study.

This work holds value for students, faculty, staff, and administration on Christian campuses and should be shared as a way to enlarge campus discussions and provide guidance in supporting students who are sexual minorities. Interestingly, the students interviewed reported experiencing more support around their sexuality from faculty than from peers, which highlights one area of growth for Christian colleges and universities to consider. The book would similarly benefit clinical social workers to better understand the needs and hear the voices of sexual minority college students at this key stage of identity formation. As the authors note, it could also act as a valuable guide to the church as a way to engage the larger Christian community, which is facing similar tensions.

The book is organized around the research conducted by the authors. It begins by exploring the intersection between sexuality and faith. The authors then examine the population of focus and discuss them as unique individuals balancing life as people of faith with same-sex attraction. There is a brief overview of suggested terms to avoid as well as terms to utilize when referencing the LGB+ community. As the authors note, words are important and can further feelings of isolation or foster feelings of safety and acceptance.

Critical topics are explored such as causation, sexual identity

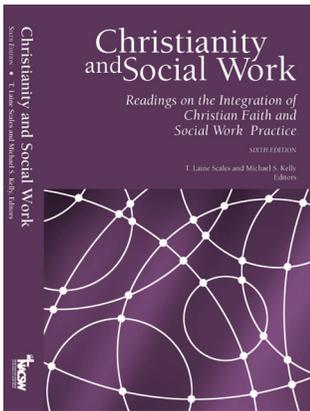
development, coming out, sexual attraction/behavior, celibacy, Christian identity, psychological well-being, attitudes toward campus policies, need for safe/supportive/welcoming campuses, campus resources, and intentional communities. One interesting conclusion is that a student's identity as a Christian was often more significant than their sexual identity. Yet, this can raise many questions for students around how to be a Christian who is also a sexual minority. Students interviewed wanted to be treated as whole people. They wanted to feel safe and heard. They wanted to feel valued as unique individuals and not as a statistic or stereotyped person to be feared or avoided. Students wanted to be seen, known, and fully accepted, even when interacting with individuals or systems espousing diverse views.

There is a call to student self-care, creation of an intentional culture on campuses, and a need for support in finding a balance between faith and sexuality. There are many themes that unfold and resonate with social work practice and values such as upholding the dignity and worth of the individual, operating from a holistic or person-in-environment perspective, employing empathic listening, and exploring the strengths as well as the needs of sexual minorities. This study includes both micro and macro levels of inquiry related to individual relationships on campuses and macro-level policies and doctrine.

A takeaway that likely will resonate with social work educators and professionals interacting with Christian students who are sexual minorities is to listen to their stories and thereby meet them where they are. Attentive listening connects well with a thoughtful discussion around cultural humility, which is contrasted from cultural awareness. Cultural humility is a call to listening well and valuing the person and perspectives of the person you are listening to.

If you do not have time to fully digest this comprehensive work, you can glean much from reading the takeaways at the end of each chapter and chapter 8, which focuses on the summary, recommendations, and conclusions. Sprinkled throughout the book are graphs and charts in addition to the aforementioned narratives, which highlight the authors' research and make the content come alive for the reader. ❖

*Reviewed by **Leslie Gregory**, MSW, LSW, Senior Lecturer of Social Work, Field Education Director, Social Work Department, Eastern University. Email: lgregory@eastern.edu.*



THE SIXTH EDITION OF CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIAL WORK

(2019) by Lisa Hosack, MSW, Ph.D..

NACSW is pleased to announce the publication of the 6th Edition of *Christianity and Social Work: Readings on the Integration of Christian Faith and Social Work Practice* (2020) edited by T. Laine Scales and Michael Kelly. *Christianity and Social Work* is written for social workers whose motivations to enter the profession as well as their approaches to helping have been inspired and informed by their Christian faith.

The 19 chapters and over 400 pages of *Christianity and Social Work* address social welfare history, human behavior and the social environment, social policy, and social work practice from a faith perspective at micro, mezzo, and macro levels. Especially useful in the classroom or social work trainings, CSW6 is organized into four units to promote integration of these chapters throughout the social work curriculum.

1. Christian Roots of the Social Work Profession
2. Christians Called to Social Work: Scriptural Basis, Worldviews and Ethics
3. Human Behavior and Spiritual Development in a Diverse World
4. Christians Social Workers and Practice Issues

NACSW has also developed an extensive electronic resource tool, *Instructor's Resources for Christianity and Social Work: Sixth Edition* (2020) by Tammy Patton to support the use of the *Christianity and Social Work* in classroom and trainings environments.

CSW6 (ISBN # 978-0-9897581-6-1) costs \$64.95, or only \$51.96 for NACSW members or for orders of 12 or more copies (plus shipping). To purchase a copy, go to: <https://www.nacsw.org/sw/bookstore>. To request an exam copy, email NACSW at info@nacsw.org.



*North American Association
of Christians in Social Work*

NACSW Member Services & Benefits

- Publications with an Integrative Focus
- Chapters and Small Fellowship Groups
- Quarterly Newsletter
- Monthly eNewsletters
- Three-Day NACSW Annual Convention
- Connection to Liability Insurance
- Website Links and Resources page
- Local Workshops and Regional Conferences
- Online Membership Directory
- Multiple Listservs
- Member Interest Groups
- Internet Job Postings
- Members' Section on the NACSW Website
- Connections with Christian Social Service Organizations
- Online Bibliography
- Monthly Podcasts & Access to Podcast Archives Free to Members
- Quarterly Webinars Free to Members
- Access to NACSW Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Other Social Media Accounts

For additional information

Visit NACSW's website at: www.NACSW.org
Contact the NACSW Office Tollfree at: 888-426-4712
Email NACSW at: info@nacs.org

NACSW JOBNET

**The Christian
Career Connection**

Looking to fill
an open position?

Visit NACSW's website
or call/fax at 888-426-4712

Searching for
a new job?

visit <http://www.nacs.org>
and click on the
JobNet Career Center link



FAITH BASED SERVICES PROVIDED IN NORTHWEST OHIO

- ~Mental Health Counseling
- ~Treatment for Substance Abuse
- ~Diagnosis and Treatment for Fetal Alcohol Exposure

Visit ARenewedMindServices.org to Learn More or to Join our Team of Professionals
1-877-515-5505



Integrated Wholistic Authentic

For more than 160 years, we've been helping people just like you **use** their training and **professional skills to serve** where few have ever met a follower of **Jesus**.
Ask us how **God can use you.**

www.interserveusa.org/socialwork

 **Interserve** USA

North American Association of
Christians in Social Work
P.O. Box 121, Botsford, CT 06404-0121

Change Service Requested

NORTH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CHRISTIANS IN SOCIAL WORK

NACSW's mission is to equip its members to integrate Christian faith and professional social work practice.

Its goals include:

- Supporting and encouraging members in the integration of Christian faith and professional practice through fellowship, education, and service opportunities.
- Articulating an informed Christian voice on social welfare practice and policies to the social work profession.
- Providing professional understanding and help for the social ministry of the church.
- Promoting social welfare services and policies in society which bring about greater justice and meet basic human needs.

