LET THE COMMUNITY SAY, “AMEN”:
2020 VISION FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHEAST CENTRAL DURHAM, NC.

By
Madison Keith Daniel

Date:________________________

Approved:

_________________________________________
Dr. Curtis Freeman, Supervisor

_________________________________________
Dr. William C. Turner, Second Reader

_________________________________________
Dr. Warren A. Smith, D. Min. Director

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in the Divinity School of Duke University

2016
ABSTRACT

LET THE COMMUNITY SAY, “AMEN”: 2020 VISION FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHEAST CENTRAL DURHAM, NC.

By
Madison Keith Daniel

Date:____________________

Approved:

_________________________________________
Dr. Curtis Freeman, Supervisor

_________________________________________
Dr. William C. Turner, Second Reader

_________________________________________
Dr. Warren A. Smith, D. Min. Director

An abstract of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in the Divinity School of Duke University

2016
Abstract

Christian community development (CCD) practitioners are a growing body of contemporary Christian servant-leaders, who are committed to building beloved community in neighborhoods labeled as “under-resourced” across the country. In September 2014, nearly 3,000 CCD proponents, pastors, practitioners, and students from all across the U.S. and oversees gathered for the 26th Annual Christian Community Development Association National Conference in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina. The theme for the conference was “flourishing.”

During the 12 months preceding the 4-day conference event, local church, and community leaders from Raleigh-Durham and vicinity gathered monthly to build relationships, plan, and coordinate the logistics. The conference provided a fresh opportunity for the Durham community to examine and consider the state of relations between the local church and the community. Local conference organizers comprised of clergy, lay persons, CEOs, executive directors of non-profit organizations, government workers, and independent residents promised to continue to meet to build upon learnings, strategize community initiatives, and seek to unify the Body of Christ in Durham.

This thesis draws upon the principles and practices espoused by CCDA and deals specifically with the lived experiences of Christian servants, churches, and institutions seeking to do good in Northeast Central Durham. The questions explored and claims made in this thesis deal with whether there is sufficient historical evidence for real community flourishing in NECD through holistic church-based community engagement. The period from 1994 – 2014 serves as the historical frame of this project while the project’s sociological scope is conscribed within a specific, 4 square-mile area of NECD.
Theologically, this thesis is grounded in the leadership concept of priestly listening and faithful Christian witness inspired by prophetic hope and practical models of church and community mutual enrichment. The core claim and final move of this thesis is that faithful and effective works of love are bound to emerge in NECD either through one or several local churches with the right catalysts. This final project illumines the embers of hope in the midst of painful realities whereby independent Christian efforts and congregational activities have and have yet to be the most powerful agents of change in ways that politicians and city governments cannot fathom. DurhamCares, Inc., a Christian non-profit organization emerges to work strategically for church-based mobilization initiatives collaborating with the community toward collective action in cooperation with government, businesses, and area non-profit organizations. There is a heightened sense of urgency in the city as tragedies in other cities draw nationwide lament and protest for justice.

Through a humble posture of listening to the community and responding faithfully to calls to action, local churches can lead the way to holistic solutions in action that address their community’s most pressing problems and highest aspirations. NECD is a vibrant playground for just such consideration and hope.
Dedication

On December 11, 1993 I made the biggest community development commitment of my life. I married Lorna Golden at New Life Christian Center (NLCC), an independent, non-denominational church located at the intersection of Main and Goley Streets in Northeast Central Durham, NC. The community that is the focus of this project. I dedicate this work to my family and friends, and the many servant leaders, who live and work in Northeast Central Durham, and who inspire me to live out our Christian faith through acts of radical love and intentional community with courage, humility, and openness to transformation.

I thank DurhamCares’ co-founder, Henry Kaestner and Justin Straight, former Executive Director of DurhamCares, Inc. for creating and hiring me for the role of Officer for Church Mobilization; my pastors at CityWell Church (UMC), Rev. Gloria Winston-Harris and Rev. Cleve May, who are always affirming and fervent in prayers and presence with me and my family; the Rev. Canon Sam Wells former Dean of Duke University Chapel and my Chapel colleagues and Congregation members (too many to name), who informed and inspired my pursuit of community ministry in Durham; Dr. William Turner for his pastoral support, mentorship, and embodiment of Christian leadership, sacrifice, and bold prophetic voice for the common good; Dr. Curtis Freeman, who has guided my growth through seminary, ordination in the American Baptist Church, and on-going vocational discernment.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract 4

1. Introduction 9
   1.1 Context, Thesis Scope, and Goal 10
   1.2 Chapter Summaries 11
   1.3 Christian Community Development: Powerful Principles for Gospel Transformation 14
   1.4 The Biblically-inspired Story of DurhamCares, Inc. 17
   1.5 The Local Church, Community Engagement, and Transformation 24
   1.6 Truth-Telling: Poverty, Transportation, Neighborhood Health, and Safety, Church Engagement in Northeast Central Durham 30
   1.7 Truthful-Witnessing: The Growth Potential for Christian Community Development in Northeast Central Durham 39

2. Priestly Listening: An Asset-Based Approach to Local Church Community Engagement in Northeast Central Durham. 46
   2.1 Embodying Christ’s Greatest Commandment: An Interpretive Task 51
   2.2 Priestly Listening Path 1: United House of Prayer for All People to Antioch Baptist Church 54
   2.3 Priestly Listening Path 2: Antioch Baptist Church to Angier Avenue Baptist Church 64
   2.4 Priestly Listening Path 3: Refiner’s Fire Community Church to Greater Emmanuel Temple of Grace 68
   2.5 Priestly Listening Path 4: New Creation UMC to Salvation Army 74

3. Priestly Witnessing: Assessing Local Churches for Transformative Potential in NECD. 77
   3.1 Witnessing Churches “IN” the Community 83

Appendix  

Bibliography
1. INTRODUCTION

God’s instruction and promise to Israel spoken through the prophet Jeremiah prevails for a contemporary view of Christian community development, “But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jer. 29:7). Living in exile is living under oppressive conditions. It is living in a place not created for humans to live. It is living in a marginalized state. There is no such thing as “living” in exile. “Existing” is the more appropriate term for persons in exile. Life in exile is the farthest from flourishing. In its most wretched form, living in exile is living with a deep sense that your life does not matter and there is no reason to hope for a better future.

Through the 1960s right up until today conditions in Northeast Central Durham (NECD) have maintained a distinct appearance of exilic conditions. Despite government grants and local tax dollars being poured in to create affordable housing areas, “streetscape” projects and other project-based initiatives including a celebrated model of cradle to career programs for poor NECD families, and the implementation of a multi-million-dollar city-operated facility, sections of NECD remain blighted by poverty, high crime, dilapidated housing, drugs, and prostitution. Such is the case that Durham’s esteemed Mayor William “Bill” Bell, in office for six consecutive terms beginning in 2001, has declared in this his final term a virtual war on poverty neighborhood-by-neighborhood beginning with census tract 10.01 in NECD.

In the 10.01 census tract which serves as the broad contextual scope of this thesis project there are five neighborhoods with a total population of 3,466 with a median household income in the 12 months prior to 2012 (in 2012 inflation-adjusted dollars) of $22,585. 61.4% of families living in the 10.01 census tract are living below the Federal poverty level. 27% are without

1 Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Scripture are taken from the New Revised Standard Version. The NKJV uses the word peace instead of welfare; NIV uses peace and prosperity.
health insurance coverage and 39% of residents 25 or older have not attained a high school degree.\textsuperscript{2} According to a 2013 study conducted by the UNC Poverty Center, poverty affects approximately 20 percent of Durham residents. That essentially translates to nearly one in every five individuals as being homeless or living in inadequate housing, hungry or malnourished, lacking proper health care, and unemployed or underemployed. And, sections or census tracts within the NECD corridor rank among the lowest of the 100 counties in North Carolina.

In the midst of these exilic conditions there are 76 churches located within or in immediate vicinity of NECD. 19 of these congregations located in the 10.01 tract are within a four square-mile area. It is these congregations that this project is most focused upon in terms of prospects for Christian community development that leads to holistic community flourish spreading neighborhood to neighborhood. The aim is far more than the matter of material poverty. The real war is the life and relevance of local churches in relationship with the life of the community. Ultimately, it’s a matter of serious, sustained collaborative local church engagement and genuine love for the welfare of their neighbors and generations to follow. The telos is to turn neighboring churches from solely looking in to more fully look out for the welfare of the city—especially a gritty city like Durham that holds as its motto, “where great things happen.”

1.1 Context, Thesis Scope, and Goal

This project is a contextual exegesis of a specific place and a particular people facing real poverty, blight, and barriers to human flourishing. The central focus is upon the immediate past histories of 19 NECD churches in close proximity to one another. This project covers significant

\textsuperscript{2} American Community Survey 2008-2012; U.S. Decennial Census 2010; Durham PD/Sheriff 2012.
historical markers of church engagement or lack thereof from 1994 to 2014 while envisioning the prospects for church and community flourishing from 2015 to 2020. It involves assessing local church, para-church, non-profit, business, and government engagement efforts impacting the NECD community. Particular attention is directed toward the activity and unfortunate inactivity of the 19 local churches in terms of sustained, strategic community engagement or development work. A local church may choose to address neighborhood concerns “single-handedly” or in partnership with local government, non-profit organizations, associations or businesses or they may choose to ignore wider social justice concerns altogether. Denominational histories and identities are considerable factors. This project points to opportunities for pastors to lead their congregations to advance a more peaceable and prosperous community through contextualized historical interpretative work, stoking the theological imagination through Scripture, asset-based/Christian community development principles, and practices that have the power to effectively counter exilic conditions (i.e., of poverty, institutional racism, classism, and contemporary forms of marginalization, isolation, and oppression) that stymie communities and prevent them from fully flourishing.

1.2 Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1 presents the history of Christian community development inspired by the live and work of the principle founder of the Christian Community Development Association, Dr. John M. Perkins and the more recent story of the creation of DurhamCares a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation inspired by the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10. Initially focusing on increasing volunteerism, communications around issue-based institutional collaboration, and encouraging neighborly love in Durham, DurhamCares made a determined shift in 2014 to take
up the work of Christian community development more strategically by mobilizing local
churches in the principles and practices of CCD for the shalom of Durham. The organization
looks out upon the people and institutions in Durham with a hope and belief in the level of care
and concern for a better future for Durham citizens inspired by the promise of God to Israel in
Jeremiah 29. People in parts of Durham are existing in exile-like conditions.

Following the story of DurhamCares, under the heading of The Local Church,
Community Engagement, and Biblically-inspired Transformation, is a recounting of an NECD
church that chose to leave the community without ever listening to or viewing the community as
a place to love and remain. The church’s departure sets the tone that drives the core concern of
this project. Can NECD churches given the history and reality of life in the community be
mobilized for the common good and the glory of God?

The section entitled, Truth-telling: Generational Poverty, Neighborhood Health and
Safety, and Employment in NECD, provides data on the community and the Mayor’s 2014 State
of the City declaration to reduce poverty neighborhood by neighborhood. The current story of
Durham and the situation of nearly 11,000 residents, who live in Northeast Central Durham
(NECD) is one of pain and promise. NECD is a beautiful community with wonderful examples
of neighbors loving neighbors, but material poverty continues to define its basic reality. There
are nearly 80 churches in this one section of Durham that draws most of the City of Durham’s
policing and government intervention for its high crime, poor housing conditions, poverty and
unemployment. The prevailing question is whether and which NECD churches will remain and
engage with the community for the generational flourishing every Durham resident should enjoy.

Chapter 2 opens and zooms in on the subject of perceiving NECD theological for the beauty that
abides in all creation. Osmer’s practical theology of priestly listening offers the traction for a
kind of listening that is able to transform human life and living conditions, because it is listening that seeks to fulfill the Greatest Commandments—making it holy and holistic. This is truly the task of the local church—to listen, love, and act for the betterment of its neighbor as the fulfillment of God’s creation and call of the church. As God called Adam in the Garden of Eden with the question, “Where are you?” The question of where is the local church in relationship to the community is of primary concern to DurhamCares on behalf of the community. Priestly leadership begins with a careful listening to God desires and human needs. The priest petitions for both and has a special role to fulfill in both divine and human interaction. The underlying question is where will the priests be found? Will they come from the local churches? Or, will the priest be “outsiders?” Outsiders are like the Samaritans; they are not a part of the accepted religious establishment. The chapter concludes with thick descriptions of four specific paths (streets) in NECD from one church corner to another, wondering where are the priests in the snapshots of pain and promise of community.

Chapter 3 zooms back out to exposit the larger conditions and players in the open field of Christians community development in Durham with a view of the many organizations and institutions, who seek the shalom of Durham. Groups such as End Poverty Durham, Durham Congregations in Action, and Durham Congregations, Neighborhoods, and Associations (Durham CAN), to name three, have been gathering for decades and fulfil important work of building awareness, relationships, supporting, and launching new initiatives, and in the case of Durham CAN influencing politicians and employers to improve the conditions of the working poor and poor families. These groups offer important convening space for church leaders, however, there have only been two of the nearly 80 churches in NECD participating in these organizations. There are many reasons for this. And, DurhamCares’ mission is to reconcile the
reasons and aid in the removal of the barriers for mobilizing NECD churches. This effort began in earnest in summer 2014 with the work and intentional time to become more knowledgeable about NECD church history and community engagement. Chapter 4 offers a final report of the findings, a few proposals, and prophetic hope for the next five years of intentional engagement in NECD toward church mobilization using Christian Community Development principles.

1.3 Christian Community Development: Powerful Principles for Gospel Transformation

It must be indicated here that this thesis is not about a set of principles, but about a people and a specific community. The goal is not to claim that well applied principles and practices will guarantee transformation and new creation. It is about Christians striving be and believe in the church overflowing with love in the community, and even when churches fail the people tarry on looking for Jesus in their midst bearing their pain and fulfilling the Scriptures. The life and ministry of Dr. John M. Perkins, founder of Mendenhall Ministries, Voice of Calvary Ministries and the Harambee Christian Family Center and Preparatory School, and cofounder of the Christian Community Development Association is the epitome of living a people-centered life and what one discovers by closely following Jesus into community life. Not only was Dr. Perkins’ brother Clyde, a decorated army veteran, killed in 1946 at the age of 28 by a white police officer, Perkins nearly died the same death after being brutal beaten and tortured by white police officers in 1970 for his leadership in voting rights efforts. His salvation story of reconciliation and redemption is told in his autobiography Let Justice Roll Down.

Dr. Perkins’ began visiting Durham on nearly an annual basis in 2007 a couple of years after the establishment of the Center for Reconciliation at Duke Divinity School, co-directed by
his dear friend Chris Rice, who served in the Voice of Calvary Ministries. Dr. Perkins’ became a living epistle and evangelist for a movement focused on reconciliation, relocation, and redistribution as redemptive acts of Christ on the hearts of his disciples. The community that Dr. Perkins was born into in New Hebron, Mississippi in 1930 was steeped in poverty and racism. After the killing of his brother, he moved west to California vowing never to return to Mississippi. God’s providence would prove otherwise, and Perkins returned to Mississippi in the 1960s with Gospel message in his heart to teach his people discipline and dependence on the power of Scripture. Time in community, however, would reveal that people need more than Gospel words to live. People need training, jobs, and justice in order to fully flourish.

In 1989, Dr. Perkins gathered leaders from around the country, who had committed their lives to living and serving in materially poorer communities. From this gathering the Christian Community Development Association was formed. These leaders began to reflect more carefully about their experiences in their respective communities and from that came another five principles integral to Dr. Perkins’ “three Rs,”—church-based, listening to the community, holistic, leadership development, and empowerment. The mission of the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) is to inspire, train, and connect Christians, who seek to bear witness to the Kingdom of God by reclaiming and restoring under-resourced communities. CCDA’s vision is “Holistically restored communities with Christians fully engaged in the process of transformation.”

CCDA defines Christian community development as “reconciled Christians working together to mobilize spiritual and physical resources in and for communities of need through the church in a community-determined way that is redemptive.” CCDA is a network of Christians

---

4 Ibid.
committed to seeing people and communities holistically restored. In October 1992, CCDA was comprised of 175 ministries and churches active among the poor in 75 cities and 30 states. One of the ministries listed was based in Raleigh, North Carolina. The state of Illinois had the highest number of ministries at twenty-five (25), the majority located in Chicago, CCDA’s headquarters. Today there are 342 ministries listed as affiliates or partners with a total of eight ministries in North Carolina; three in Raleigh, three in Durham, one each in Cary and Rocky Mount. In September 2014, approximately 2,500 people from all over the country and internationally attended the National Christian Community Development Conference in Raleigh-Durham, NC. A team of 40 individuals representing churches, businesses, and non-profit organizations met as the National Conference Host Team on a monthly basis for the 12 months leading up to the event. Host team subcommittees were created to manage a plethora of conference logistics from housing participants, coordinating transportation, selecting and facilitating the local Go & See experiences. The National Conference surge of energy and inspiration renewed hope and action toward church-based opportunities and initiatives. The communities and neighborhoods in Durham began seeing and hearing stories of promise and transformation of lives through church and community engagement as conference organizers shared local stories of transformation to conference attendees from all around the country and abroad. And the action revealed how much more work has yet to be accomplished. There were few church-based initiatives featured as bright spots in Durham. This reality opened up the opportunity to reflect and consider how may Durham churches become more engaged building beloved community in Durham through health

---

5 Sharlene Privolus of the Alexander YMCA, Raleigh, NC and I co-chaired the sub-committee responsible for selecting, coordinating, and facilitating the local “Go and See” learning experiences for conference attendees. A variety of Go & See experiences provide conference attendees the opportunity to visit neighborhoods and communities to learn from local practitioners and partners. “Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds among mortals” (Psalm 66:5).
CCD principles and practices. Durham is a proud city with caring people seeking to make great things happen.6

1.4 The Biblically-inspired Story of DurhamCares, Inc. – Love Your Neighbor

Jesus replied, ‘A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.’7

DurhamCares, Inc., a 501c3 organization, was established in 2008 with a mission to raise greater awareness of community concerns, increase volunteerism, and inspire collective action to eradicate oppressive realities in Durham via supporting and collaborating with a broad range of local non-profit organizations addressing critical community issues.8 Its impact has been significant, however, the original founders’ main vision of inspiring local churches or the Body of Christ in Durham to come together across denominations to transform the city for the glory of God and the rejoicing of every neighbor has yet to be realized.

Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan inspired the creation of DurhamCares, Inc. And, the Samaritan prevails in the consciences of DurhamCares board, staff, volunteers and CCD partners. It is important to understand this Biblical motivation and the type of Christian leadership development necessary to achieve long-term systemic change and individual and community transformation. The Samaritan’s movement toward the victim is the fulcrum of the story, and it was during a small group study of Christians, who met regularly over a four or five-

---

6 Durham’s City Motto is “Where Great Things Happen.”
8 The mission of DurhamCares is to mobilize Durham residents and institutions to love their neighbors. We do this by partnering with communities as they identify their assets and meet their needs, cultivating a landscape for Christian community development through informing, inspiring, and connecting individuals and institutions across the city of Durham; see http://www.durhamcares.org/about.
month period exploring the subject of calling that the force of the Samaritan’s actions fell heavily upon the heart of Henry Kaestner. In the months after the study, Kaestner, a highly successful entrepreneur, felt God’s call to impact his hometown of Durham, NC, by leveraging the substantial profit and business successes he had accomplished in leading his company, Bandwidth.com, with his partner David Morken. In growing Bandwidth.com, David and Henry learned a number of valuable lessons. First, a superior website could be used to disseminate information in a scalable fashion; second, a neutral intermediary that could give critical insight on carriers like ATT, Verizon, Sprint, and others was well received; third, if customers encountered a site with trustworthy accountability and transparency, they would be inclined to buy more services; and fourth, their investors liked Bandwidth.com’s clear, reasonable objectives—especially when they were accomplished.9

DurhamCares, Inc. was conceived out of a process of vocational discernment in intentional Christian community. It has been sustained and expanded through superior marketing and communication strategies, collective impact initiatives with multi-sector leaders and institutions. The organization has also advanced via a spirit of generosity, collaboration, and integrity in ways affirmed and unpacked by Christine Pohl in her chapter on living truth-filled lives.10 DurhamCares borrowed liberally from Bandwidth.com. The success of the organization is in fact due to the delivery of a superior web-based marketing and media communication channeling strategies, earned trust, a track record of accountability and transparency with partner organizations, and measurable results. The organization cultivates trust and builds relationships

---

9 Durham Cares ([www.durhamcares.org](http://www.durhamcares.org)) is an essential medium for story telling; as a neutral intermediary, DurhamCares is a highly respected convener of organizations, drawing together individuals and entities with similar missions. DurhamCares has earned trust and substantial social capital through trustworthy staff. Winning outcomes not simply inputs remain the focus of the organization. “A desire realized is sweet to the soul…” (Prov. 13: 19a).

10 Christine D. Pohl, *Living into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012). Right language nourishes imagination, courage, and creativity. Pohl’s unraveling of the four practices for sustaining community through gratitude, keeping promises, living truthfully, and practicing hospitality is rich in substance for healthy church and community relationships.
across industry sectors, sets and achieves mission-centered goals, and is present when Christians and churches gather in the public square to make the love of God known throughout Durham.

DurhamCares’ stakeholders include active and caring Durham residents, non-profit organizations, local churches, city and county government, educational institutions, socially engaged local businesses, board directors and financial supporters, addressing nine research-based, critical issue areas. The organization celebrates wins in the form of raised public awareness, increased donations, inspired collective action, and mobilized community and church-based partnerships. The job of the Officer for Church Mobilization is to inspire and form a nucleus of local churches into an ordered (via Christian community development principles and practices) and teeming environment spawning collective action for holistic community-driven transformation. As Andy Crouch has written,

True shalom, comprehensive flourishing, mirrors the pattern of the Trinity itself in which there is both unity and diversity. The choice between teeming and order is a false choice. True abundant life is found where ‘the one’ and the ‘many’ meet in ‘the three.’ Healthy institutions provide the ordered context in which surprise and diversity can flourish, but they also provide the diverse and varied environment that makes order healthy rather than repressive.

DurhamCares seeks the shalom of Durham through healthy Christian community development led by local churches creatively and relentlessly grappling with the complex issues of urban life (including racial disparities, poverty and homelessness, abuse and neglect, crime and economic injustice). The organization envisions all Durham residents and institutions flourishing in the outpouring of God’s love for humanity. DurhamCares rallied and gained inspiration from the Christian Community Development Association’s National Conference that

---

11 The nine areas are: affordable housing, disconnected youth, education, healthcare access, homelessness, refugees, senior care, substance abuse, and workforce development.
12 See Officer for Church Mobilization job description, Appendix A.
took place in Raleigh-Durham in September 2014. The conference theme was *flourishing*: to grow or develop in a healthy or vigorous way, especially as the result of a particularly favorable environment. Yet, the question remains today, how may Durham churches flourish by embracing the life-giving principles and practices of the CCD movement?

On February 3, 2014, Durham Mayor William Bell delivered his annual “State of the City” address with the theme, “Reducing Poverty Neighborhood by Neighborhood, Year by Year starting 2014.” This was a timely considering DurhamCares’ synchronous launching of its church mobilization mission. Mayor Bell was keen to engage the entire community and especially desired for the neighborhood churches to be at the table throughout the strategic planning and implementation processes. DurhamCares, along with numerous other organizations, was officially invited to participate in the Mayor’s Poverty Reduction Initiative (PRI). As DurhamCares’ Officer for Church Mobilization, I reached out and worked explicitly with local ministers, a small cohort of Christian servant-leaders and neighborhood residents in Northeast Central Durham. These community leaderships profiles appear in Chapter 2. They maintain an enduring belief in God’s promise for a good future and hope that Durham residents living in material poverty can experience spiritual and material flourishing even if only two local churches are mobilized for the common good. These local servant leaders helped survey, review, analyze, and reflect on the presence and history of local church engagement in NECD. They helped in witnessing inspiring forms of Christian loving action outside the walls of the church. Witnessing and working with devoted Christian leaders brought the definition of CCD as Christians led by the Holy Spirit, mobilizing spiritual and material resources in a community-driven way that is

---

redemptive into real view in NECD. These Godly companions literally walked and prayed earnestly for the shalom of Durham.\textsuperscript{15}

Indeed, Godly servant-leaders in Durham deepened my sense of God’s call to the practice and ministry of Christian community development (CCD). Numerous community members invited me to join in their lives to listen and witness God caring hands and footprints in the community. NECD community members welcomed me into their playground and offered overflowing hospitality to eat with, worship, learn, labor, and to be transformed by their love of God and life in community. The notion of seeing a city as a playground versus a battleground is wonderfully portrayed in Hillis’ telling of the 50-year history of the Leadership Foundation.\textsuperscript{16}

The church can never run out of life-giving metaphors and imagery to advance the building of beloved community. Language is also key to framing our interpretations that lead to healthy action. The local church is built for relationships of enjoyment and wonder. A playground is a wonderful place of beginning. However, a playground is only as good as it is safe for children to gather, play, and become friends on a journey of discovery, growth, and joyous wonder.

In \textit{God’s Companions}, Sam Wells speaks passionately about the local church being a community of imagination where God’s people are schooled in sharing food, worshipping together and forging loving friendships that overcome poverty and display God’s radiant abundance. CCD is all about reimagining community in light of an abundance of gifts.

Therefore, CCD is a broad, diverse playing field of ministry focused primarily on urban

\textsuperscript{15} The notion of Godly companionship (or friendship in the fullest sense) undergirds the Spirit of Christian community engagement. Wells writes, “Christian ethics finally depends for its quality not on well-chosen words, but on holy lives, on faithful communities, and on the abundance of God’s grace. And it will not rest until all God’s people, from every tribe and denomination, eat with him as his table companions” (Sam Wells, \textit{Godly Companions: Reimagining Christian Ethics} [Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006], 12).

communities with high concentrations of people living in material poverty and its associated costs (including poor health, low performing schools, high unemployment, crime, and violence).

CCD practitioners pray and act with a prophetic vision and hope, inspired and motivated by the biblical prophets such as Jeremiah, Zechariah, and Ezekiel. They cling to the understanding that our most faithful social justice work is deeply spiritual, theologically rooted, and best advanced through intentional church-based engagement located within and working alongside caring community residents. Through a humble posture of listening to the community and responding faithfully to the concerns of their neighbors living in economic poverty, congregations have been instrumental in stemming waves of oppression and injustice. In fact, the most critical aspect of this project involves assessing local church devotion and capacity for listening and responding to the community. Richard Osmer’s practical theology of priestly listening is the primary anchor that grounds this critical assessment of church-based community engagement past, present, and future.

Christians today in the fast changing, globalized world are called to greater intentionality, creativity, and strategic action to defend the poor and dismantle oppression. Old, emerging, and widening sociological problems of oppression and injustice place real demands on local churches to drive holistic solutions that are theologically robust. Christians cannot simply bemoan social issues, ignore or pity the materially poor and pass by without faithful responses. Local churches have the joy of proclaiming the Good News for the materially and spiritual poor. However, with

17 “Listening to the Community” is one of the eight key principles of CCD as described in Wayne Gordon and John M. Perkins’ Making Neighborhoods Whole: A Handbook for Christian Community Development (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013).
18 Richard R. Osmer, Practical Theology: An Introduction (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 4, defines priestly listening as the descriptive-empirical task of gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics in particular episodes, situations, or contexts. I describe this aspect more fully in Chapter 2 as the core theological methodology enlivening this project.
this joyful proclamation comes the responsibility of being the incarnation of the truth that truly sets people free from worldly oppression.

Jesus’ first sermon in Luke 4, delivered in his hometown of Nazareth on a Sabbath day, declared the words of the prophet Isaiah of the fulfillment of good news to the poor, healing, release from oppression, and the promise of the Father’s favor upon humanity. Yet, the Scripture reveals that the cost of this joyful Gospel was too high for many in Jesus’ hometown. The Messiah is rejected for pointing out how “outsiders” were more faithful in receiving and faithfully responding to the Messiah’s coming than his own people. So, instead of saying, “Amen” to Jesus, his own community rejected him and sought to violently take his life by hurling him off the very hill upon which Nazareth was built. Suddenly, in the proclamation of a challenging message of deliverance for God’s people, Nazareth becomes a battleground.

Local congregations have the potential to carry out Jesus’ message, however, it will come at great cost given that the local community are used to seeing churches come and go or function like closed societies. Sadly, churches are reaching fewer and fewer people. Millennials don’t view the church as relevant. Church to them is Habitat for Humanity in the sense that they more apt to commit to building a home or serving meals than listen to sermons that bypass real human pain, needs and communal aspirations. The national statistics continue to reveal the story of growing skepticism and cynicism toward institutional religion. Churches must be transformed into faithful listeners and first responders on the front lines of interventions and prevention of harmful human conditions. The local church is created to be the actual the good news of liberation and justice for the downtrodden. There are somewhere between 400-500 congregations

---

19 Luke 4:16ff: “When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.”

that gather for weekly worship in Durham. The number of congregations can be a testament of God’s beauty and diversity or a humiliating circumstance of a body divided by tensions and insatiable consumer tastes for the “best” way to know God and make God known in the world. The general public is perplexed by and suspicious of the veracity and relevance of a church virtually on every corner in low income neighborhoods. This is especially the case in NECD and vicinity where there are 76 churches –19 of them inside a one square mile radius of each other. DurhamCares has been taken up the suspicion of relevance as its call to action. The organization believes local churches can function as one Church despite some disturbing historical evidence to the contrary.

1.5 The Local Church, Community Engagement, and Biblically-inspired Transformation

In late 1980s/early 1990s, New Life Christian Center (NLCC), an independent, charismatic church began worshipping in a mobile home unit in the Hayestown neighborhood in east Durham.\textsuperscript{21} The congregation was entirely African-American, mostly low-income families who lived in the city. In 1991, NLCC moved into a building vacated by another church on the corner lot of Goley and East Main Streets in NECD. By 1996 NLCC’s growth became stagnant, topping out at approximately 50 families or 150 members including children in regular Sunday morning worship. The congregation remained homogenous in terms of class and ethnicity attracting members mostly from familial relationships. During the early 1990s, the “prosperity gospel” was booming and NLCC became fully consumed by it. NLCC became enthralled by the

\textsuperscript{21} I was invited to visit NLCC in the summer of 1989 by a couple of local entrepreneurs. The mobile home unit serving as the church worship facility so happened to be located across the street from my maternal grandmother’s home at 3021 Angier Avenue.
“prosperity gospel.”²² Personal wealth became the topic of nearly every sermon. Scripture proof texts were preached encouraging members to give their “not enough” in order to attain “more than enough.”²³ Today, the building that once served as NLCC’s worship location in Northeast Central Durham is now a tall grassy hill. The building was demolished shortly after NLCC moved out the community. The ground was used for several years as a construction zone staging area as the housing projects across the street were razed and federal government grants created new affordable housing units to be built. Through mostly membership offerings and pledges NLCC purchased a large plot of land, 12 miles south of the E. Main St location in southern Durham county and built a worship center and adjoining facility that includes a gymnasium, bowling alley, fitness space, and childcare center.

The grassy hill where NLCC was located is a sour witness of a Christian congregation, who did not see the wider community and neighbors as gifts to embrace, but as problems from which to move away. If this were the case for only this small church, that would be enough cause for alarm on the disruption of flourishing community. But the health and wealth gospel was spreading throughout poor communities nationwide and abroad. In his book, God’s Economy, John Wilson-Hartgrove pulls the figurative fire alarm in referencing a 2006 Time magazine poll where 61 percent of Christians in America said they believe God wants them to be prosperous with nearly a third of the survey participants agreeing that if you give your money to God, God will bless you with more money.²⁴

²² Prosperity theology (sometimes referred to as the prosperity gospel, the health and wealth gospel, or the gospel of success) is a religious doctrine that financial blessing is the will of God for Christians, and that faith, positive speech, and donations to Christian ministries will increase one’s material wealth. Based on non-traditional interpretations of the Bible, often with an emphasis on the Book of Malachi, the doctrine views the Bible as a contract between God and humans: if humans have faith in God, he will deliver his promises of security and prosperity. Confessing these promises to be true is perceived as an act of faith, which God will honor.

²³ For example, the story of the widow at Zeraphath (1 Kgs. 17:8-15).

Tragically, NLCC and the NECD community suffered when the church became seduced by the prosperity gospel. The community moans and cannot say “Amen” when churches are co-opted by the American dream instead of being coauthors of God’s dream for full human flourishing. This type tragedy is virtually indecipherable to the casual bystander or someone simply passing through the community. This makes Jesus’ telling of the parable of the Good Samaritan all the more essential for the local church. The priest and the Levite saw the “community” was ailing, but they apparently had more important matters of the “church” to attend. They both chose to avoid the glaring needs of the assaulted. They failed to be Godly neighbors. NECD residents have seen this scenario play out as churches have come, gone, and ignored life in community. People are asking why aren’t our local churches more involved in community life? Do churches not see the needs, gifts, and potential in the community? CCD calls local churches to forge a different kind of witness by remaining and engaging in agape love in communities like Northeast Central Durham. Could NLCC have lived into a transformative narrative by remaining and embracing CCD principles and practices in NECD? It would have been worth the effort of discovery. However, the truth is real transformation outside the walls of a church requires multiple, diverse agents of change working intentionally and committing to a period of years before expecting to see any real fruit.

DurhamCares takes Samaritan story and the NECD community’s questions seriously, investigates it and commits to honestly reporting the findings to the community and outsiders. Local government has attempted to offer its own answers to NECD issues and ailments. However, government officials are asking the very same questions about the lack of church

---

God in the first instance in this gospel is the local church and/or the pastor/prophet/evangelist, while the second instance is the God present in the heavenly realm.

25 It is critical to read this text in a communal sense that includes the victim, the victim’s family, his victimizers, the priests, the Samaritan, the hotel owner and the broken systems that make violence more appealing to some rather than building beloved community.
engagement and prospects of generating new and sustained congregational commitments. What role might the churches fulfill in reducing poverty neighborhood by neighborhood? A few pastors of NECD churches and vicinity are conscious of the relationship between the life and relevance of local churches and the flourishing life of the community. NECD has drawn increasing attention for its systemic poverty, dilapidated housing, food-desert status, high crime, and disconnected youth. Pastors, politicians, police officers, neighborhood residential leaders and executive directors of non-profit organizations clamor for space and seek the presence and influence of churches to address perennial problems plaguing the community. Yet, congregational representation does not reflect the quantity of churches in NECD in terms of neighborhood level, community or city-wide engagement.

During the 14 months (January 2014 – April 2015) of DurhamCares’ church mobilization efforts, the literal calls of the community for greater church impact and involvement to address systemic poverty and it correlates were constantly coming in. The Officer for Church Mobilization (OCM) position offered a unique opportunity to listen, learn, and serve as a priest and a shepherd inspiring Durham pastors and their congregations to greater acts of kindness, mercy, humility, generosity, and dignity by celebrating and uplifting the gifts of their neighbors, who are most vulnerable to violence, oppression, and systemic poverty. This work continues and involves informing, inspiring theologically, and connecting with pastors, their congregations, and faith-based institutional leaders to initiate, support, and advance a vision, language, and practice of healthy Christian community development. It involves building relationships with pastors working with their congregations across denominations, serving and engaging with community

---

26 My work as Director of Community and Campus Engagement and Director of the PathWays program at Duke Chapel positioned me to walk closely and listen attentively to servant-leaders in Durham, who simultaneously take pride in calling Durham home while decrying the deplorable conditions that plague several inner-city neighborhoods.
groups, local grass roots leaders, executive directors, and the Durham citizenry from all walks of life. The work is multi-faceted in terms of the types of calls and concerns seeking a priestly presence and faithful participation, formally and informally.

Durham is a city surging with promise for liberty and justice for all its residents, because it is a city is filled with caring and courageous people serving their community and in institutions committed to ending poverty and homelessness, addressing race and health disparities, feeding the hungry, creating affordable housing, closing income and education gaps and addressing a plethora of human predicaments such as domestic violence, citizen re-entry, refugee resettlement, disconnected youth, and neglected senior citizens. Like the biblical stories of the Good Samaritan or the Samaritan woman, who encounters Jesus at the well in John 4, Durham’s contemporary Samaritan stories must be told and retold to remind churches who their neighbors are and that Christ calls local churches to be the fulfillment of the greatest commandments.

The role of the Officer for Church Mobilization is grounded in priestly listening and attending carefully to community life. Like the Good Shepherd, who cares desperately for the one lost sheep out of 99 or the widow, who furiously sweeps her home in search of her one precious coin, the priestly witness sees the value in every human life and its significance to the community as a whole. Every life in the city is precious in the eyes of God. This essential truth is best discovered while sitting on a neighbor’s front porch, walking the neighborhood listening to other life stories in community, and during contemplative times of Sabbath, prayer and reflective-action. The opportunities to connect with others, who genuinely care in Durham are

---

27 According to the North Carolina Department of the Secretary of State website (http://www.sosnc.gov/search/corpchanges?nonprofit=true) there are 4,650 registered non-profit organizations in Durham county. https://www.sosnc.gov/corporations/nonprofitcounty.aspx. DurhamCares joined the ReCity Collaborative Network in January 2016. The ReCity network was created to serve as a youth employment incubator. There are 400 youth service providers in Durham seeking to connect youth to opportunities to thrive and to alleviate the 400 youth on average who drop out of high school in Durham.

plentiful. And, virtually all the long standing community groups see congregational participation in community life as vital, several groups such as End Poverty Durham, REAL (Relationships Equipping Allies and Leaders) Durham, DurhamCAN (Congregations, Associations, and Neighborhoods), the Religious Coalition for a Non-Violent Durham (RCND), Durham Congregations in Action (DCIA), Northeast Central Durham United Servants in Christ were started by or comprise a core group of progressive local pastors. These organizations strive to keep the community connected to the church and the churches connected to the community.

Another local “witnessing” organization is the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Durham and Vicinity (IMA) is an historically African-American association of Christian churches dedicated to the uplift, support, and clergy engagement in local socio-political issues and opportunities for the advancement of the common good. The IMA founded in 1944 meets weekly on Mondays in the education building on the campus of Mt. Vernon Missionary Baptist Church, Durham, NC to listen to community concerns, conduct business, and to encourage the membership in the Gospel teaching. The IMA hosts city-wide sponsored events such as the Durham Emancipation Day, the Durham City Wide Revival, and the Seven Last Sayings of Christ services. The 33 IMA churches are historic, mainline African-American congregations. With the exception of Antioch Baptist Church, no other NECD churches hold membership in the IMA.

The volume and matrix of institutional systems of care and engagement is a vital measure for the promise of community flourishing. This is an essential starting point toward a holistic vision of community development. However, if individuals, agencies, and churches work in silos and ignore existing and emerging community assets, the gaps in equity, access, and opportunity

---

29 The Northeast Central Durham United Servants in Christ is comprised of seven Christian servant-leaders, who live and work in the community coordinated by the Officer for Church Mobilization in the spring of 2014.
are prone to widen. Peter Block argues rightly when he refers to John McKnight’s three decades of studying communities and discovering that community is built most powerfully by its “associational life.” The Godly priest is concerned with humanly encounters and relationships being good, strong, and wholesome not exclusively with any particular economic gain that may be leveraged and most often drained out of marginalized communities.

Chapter 4 includes a spreadsheet of churches identified and assessed on a basic level of engagement readiness in NECD. DurhamCares identified church-based, internal and external community based activities and engagement and began a basic assessment in terms of potential for long-term community impact and transformational aspirations for the community over the next five years. The guiding measure are the eight CCD principles as defined by the Christian Community Development Association elaborated in more detail in chapter 4.

1.6 Truth-telling: Poverty, Transportation, Neighborhood Health and Safety, and Church Engagement in Northeast Central Durham.

Mayor Bill Bell revealed in his 2014 annual state-of-the-city address, his neighborhood-level Poverty Reduction Initiative (PRI) focusing on a portion of NECD reaching northwest to southeast, from East End Park past Durham Technical Community College. A recent analysis commissioned by the North Carolina Metropolitan Mayors Coalition revealed several neighborhoods in the district were listed among the 162 most economically “distressed” census tracts in the state. An area is considered distressed if its unemployment rate is 50 percent higher.

---

30 Peter Block, Community: The Structure of Belonging (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2008), 44. Block explicates the term “associational life” as the myriad ways citizens come together to do good work and serve the public interest. Whether in clubs, associations, informal gatherings, special events, or just on the street or at breakfast, neighborly contact constitutes an uncounted and unnoticed glue and connection that makes good communities work.
than the state’s, its per capita income is at least a third lower than the state’s, and its poverty rate half as much again as the state’s.

The section of Northeast Central Durham the mayor targeted is home to approximately 3,466 people. It has 61.4 percent poverty rate, annual incomes there average $10,005 per person. Although general public awareness has risen in regard to pernicious problems plaguing the city, serious inequities and disparities prevail. In 2011, 19,696 students (6:10) in Durham public schools qualified for reduced or free lunch. The qualifying income for reduced lunch subsidy is between $29,005 - $41,348 for a family of four. Twenty-five percent of children in Durham live in poverty while downtown businesses flourish and a prosperous university sprawls through the city and expands globally. A sizeable income and wealth gap persists and much fear is growing in Durham. Residents are voicing their displeasure over neighborhood gentrification and the displacement of the poor, mostly African American and Hispanic families.

Mayor Bell devoted city personnel, appointed county commissioners to develop the poverty reduction strategies. Several task force committees were established to develop comprehensive strategies addressing public safety, housing, jobs, health, education, finance, and community engagement. From May through June 2014, five Community Listening Sessions were held in various NECD locations to gather data, hear concerns, articulate problems, and explore solutions. Pastors or church representatives were eerily absent from the Mayor’s community listening sessions. The former Executive Director of DurhamCares, Justin Straight, attended two of the five sessions. The Durham Rescue Mission served as the host venue for two listening sessions.  

31 The Durham Rescue Mission, established in 1975, is a faith-based non-profit organization and shelter helping the addicted and homeless men, women, and children in the greater Triangle.
One major technological concern involves the implementation of a light rail transit system for the Triangle region. The proposed Durham-Orange Light Rail Transit (D-O LRT) Project is a 17.1-mile light rail transit line which extends from UNC (UNC Hospitals Station) to east Durham (Alston Avenue Station). The D-O LRT alignment connects a range of educational, medical, employment, and other important activity centers, park-and-ride lots, transfer centers, the Durham Amtrak Station, and the Durham Station.\textsuperscript{32} Citizens are fearful that this seemingly progressive transportation technology is a modern day version of the construction of the Durham Freeway that tore straight through the prosperous historical district of Hayti, a vibrant community of black business stability and flourishing family and community life. This is an important historical reality that haunts and burdens already overstressed neighborhoods and communities making people less trusting of political and economic power brokers.

In light of the pervasiveness global and domestic violence from ISIS beheadings to the killing of unarmed black and brown people by police officers in cities across the country to mass public shootings at schools and places of worship, peoples’ fears for personal safety are escalating far beyond the reaches of families and institutions. While in Durham in 2015 saw the highest number of murder victims, 48, in 20 years. Violent crimes such as homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault increased by 22\% during the first quarter of 2015 compared to the same quarter in 2014.\textsuperscript{33} The fight for more sensible gun legislation and community responsibility has been a significant concern drawing DurhamCares into community conversations and public protests. Any potential for effective efforts advancing peace in a city requires compassionate awareness, deep understanding of the root causes and challenges for


marginalized communities, and a willingness to make some significant sacrifices for the welfare of others. Other critical realities must be factored and prepared for as well. For example, approximately 700 individuals reenter Durham each year from incarceration.\(^{34}\) Also, there are surmounting public protests for raising minimum wages in Durham to $12.42 - $15/hour; heated public meetings condemning the actions of the Durham police chief and officer-involved killings; racial profiling and widely disproportionate traffic stops and searches of black drivers and their vehicles; lectures on the topics of mass incarceration and the school to prison pipeline are happening on a regular basis. The Durham Police Department is employing new tactics and seeking increased community engagement as well as clergy participation in community canvassing efforts through their FaithActs and Project Safe Neighborhoods Partnership Initiatives. On March 11, 2015, Mosaic Church Durham hosted a public forum with the Durham Police Chief and all five of the District Command Captains to build community relations, understand policing activities as well as to pray for the officers and their families.

On a state-wide level, local clergy and concerned citizens are warring against another form of violence toward poor individuals, families and communities. This war is against laws that constrict voting rights, cut off health care to poor individuals and families, and cripple community economic stability and development.\(^{35}\) Not all is well with all forms of “progress” on the local, state or national level. Yet, there is more awareness, information, and charitable outreach. However, there is a desperate need for creative and collective action that goes deeper and further than raising awareness and money.

\(^{35}\) The “Moral Monday” civil disobedient protests against laws passed by a majority Republican legislature began in the spring of 2013. The organized rallies and occupations that have led to numerous arrests are coordinated by the North Carolina chapter of the NAACP led by president Rev. Dr. William Barber.
In July 2014, DurhamCares invited 76 churches in the NECD corridor and vicinity to a breakfast meeting with the Mayor to raise awareness and start a discussion of how churches may support the goal of more effectively reducing poverty neighborhood by neighborhood.  

A pastor or leader of six churches attended the meeting held at Joe’s Diner in Northeast Central Durham. One or two other churches indicated they would attend, but did not appear. The low attendance was a sign of the challenge to gather neighborhood churches to establish relationships, begin building a common language and vision for the community. However, the Mayor’s presentation and subsequent discussion was vibrant and invigorating in terms of the expressed desire for increase collaboration and respect for the unique focus and diverse missions of the congregations represented.

DurhamCares has the privileged role of witnessing beyond the veil community life and publicizing how people are experiencing God’s love in and through the lives of grace-driven men and women, who are committed to systemic change for the common good in Durham. These women and men are working within the Christian community development (CCD) paradigm of engagement and mutually empowering efforts. These individuals and several of the institutions they represent make Durham a city ripe for flourishing. Durham is primed to become as famous for holistic health and healing as it is the city of medicine. However, this project claims that though the soil of Durham is sufficient for community flourishing, coordinated laborers, a shared common language, and a strategic vision for generational flourishing have yet to be experienced. Therefore, far too many people and community assets are left to languish and die like our victim

36 Our summer 2014 church mobilization intern canvassed the community, conducted a mass mailing and phoned church offices.

37 In addition to the nickname “Bull City”—so-called after its historic tobacco industry—Durham is known as the City of Medicine for the internationally acclaimed Duke University Health System. Duke Medicine is currently rebranding its name and identity from Duke Medicine to Duke Health.
along the road to Jericho. This reality presents an opportunity for CCD practitioners and pastors to write a new story of hope and healing in NECD.

In NECD there is currently no great congregational story like Bethel New Life. The story of Bethel New Life Church in Chicago is one of CCDA’s shining examples. According to Mary Nelson, retired founder and CEO of Bethel New Life, “the church is the gas, the guts, and the glue that holds the community development ministries of Bethel New Life Church together.”

Looking at the cohort of churches in NECD, DurhamCares’ church mobilization efforts operates with Nelson’s assertion and anticipates that the community will come to know their neighborhood churches by the love that overflows unconditionally into the community. Is this a real possibility for one or more of NECD churches to live into? It warrants a closer look at immediate recent history and current state of NECD churches. Two mainline NECD churches, Angier Avenue Baptist Church and Shepherd’s House United Methodist Church offer contrasting insight.

Angier Avenue Baptist Church (AABC) located at 2101 Angier Avenue after over 100 years of existence closed and sold the building to Self-Help Credit Union in 2014. According to a 2009 article published in the Durham Voice, former Pastor Clarence Parrish, who grew up in the neighborhood explained that the church’s missionary calling is in Northeast Central Durham. He described the neighborhood as Jerusalem. “This neighborhood needs Jesus as much as anywhere,” asserted Pastor Parrish. “We want to see people get a better chance . . . Make a

---

difference in one little life and, who knows what will happen."\(^{39}\) In 2009, the historically predominantly white church reported an average attendance of 100 for Sunday morning worship. The church gave away donated clothing and housed a food pantry that served up to 35 families weekly. Church members visited the families, shared the gospel, and prayed for God’s blessing. Third Saturdays were “feed the neighborhood” day; church members served hot dogs, grilled cheese sandwiches, cakes, and other goodies for the community as a way of connecting and giving back. Pastor Parrish served as an advisor to the city concerning the revitalization or street scape project along the Driver and Angier St. corridor section of the church’s location. He prayed to see a change in the community. “You don’t want to drive from Alice in Wonderland and 100 yards down the road you’re back in the ghetto,” he said. “You can’t fix the corner. You have to fix the lives.”\(^ {40} \) The philosophy of “fixing” others is not uncommon for Christian missionary efforts. However, it did not prove effective for the long term sustainability of the church as evidenced by the sale of the building to Self-Help Credit Union. Angier Avenue Baptist failed to adapt to the changing realities, needs, and assets of the neighborhood. Sadly, they ran out of gas. Could the inception of CCD philosophy and practices have been their glue? CCDA has about a thousand member organizations. Only a small percentage of these are churches, but most are connected in some way with a local church. Angier Avenue Baptist did not have this essential advantage. The East Durham Children’s Initiative recently moved into the Angier Avenue Baptist building from Shepherd’s House.

Within two blocks of either direction of Angier Avenue Baptist are five other churches. Shepherd’s House United Methodist Church, 107 N. Driver St., has the longest history in NECD. Shepherd’s House is a small congregation (40-50 members) of mostly Zimbabwean immigrants.

\(^{39}\) Angier Ave. Baptist has a storied past; see The Durham Voice (www.durhamvoice.org) community newspaper for Northeast Central Durham, November 6, 2009.

\(^{40}\) Ibid.
led by Pastor Johannes (John) Gumbo (pronounced, “goom-bo”). This energetic and openly hospitable congregation moved into the 1949 sanctuary and annex of Carr United Methodist Church in 2008. As reported in Duke Divinity’s *Faith & Leadership*, prior to the arrival of this new group of believers, church membership was steadily declining. Neighbors in the community thought the church was closed and long abandoned. One longtime resident explained that the church didn’t do much of anything in the community. The story began to change with the arrival of the effervescent Pastor Gumbo and a joyfully hospitable flock. The church’s previous aging mostly white, middle-class congregation, who lived outside the community, succumbed to the constant sounds of gunfire in the neighborhood and the church soon became a fortress.

Today, Shepherd’s House is a welcoming space for community engagement, and is maintaining important vital signs despite its cultural hegemony as a delimiting factor for church growth. In addition to the five nonprofits that rent office space from the church, the congregation has helped build a neighborhood playground and planted trees as symbols of beauty for the value of community. They also offer after-school programming. In 2014, Pastor Gumbo joined the Board of Durham Congregations in Action, a cooperative, multi-faith network offering care and support for the most vulnerable and forgotten in our community, and planting seeds in new initiatives to change lives in Durham. Pastor Gumbo is well aware of the challenges of shepherding the flock outside the walls and into the neighborhood. The majority of the congregation as well as Pastor Gumbo live outside the community. However, having a welcoming spirit toward the neighborhood, unlocking its doors to the community and committed faith-based and non-profit organizations such as the East Durham Children’s Initiative (EDCI) and the Religious Coalition for a Non-Violent Durham (RCND), Shepherd’s House is a fortress

---

42 See Durham Congregations In Action at http://www.dcia.org/
no longer. EDCI and RCND are heavily engaged with individuals and families in the community and are delighted to have the spiritual support of Pastor Gumbo and the Shepherd’s House congregation. Pastor Gumbo aspires for further community and church engagement, but struggles to commit the congregation since so few members live in the community.

The health of the local church is central to the promise of healthy Christian community development. There are between 400-500 churches in Durham. Churches have resources, capacity, and influence inspired by the life and lessons of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to preach Good News to the poor, heal broken hearts, and proclaim liberation to the oppressed. Gospel preaching and teaching is essential. Reaching the community at the relevant intersections of spiritual and felt needs is the greater works Christ calls the local church to perform.

By the sheer volume of churches, outreach ministries, and faith-based initiatives located in the Northeast Central Durham, Christians are capable of transforming the community by moral example, righteous stewardship, sharing and redistribution of community assets, generosity, service, and holistic support systems. Local churches can be the central catalysts for neighborhood transformation. However, local churches need trusted friendships, strategic partnerships, and coordinated efforts in order to advance true transformation. Unfortunately, not all churches care as deeply about seeking the prosperity of the city. Many function like fortresses and refuse to budge or create a budget for holistic community engagement. They focus instead on what former Corridor District Superintendent, North Carolina Conference of the United

---

43 In 2015 RCND recently celebrated its twenty-year anniversary. The RCND story of compassionate social engagement is told by Rev. Canon Sam Wells and RCND Executive Director Marcia Owen in *Living Without Enemies* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2011). RCND is devoted to healing relationships through public prayer vigils in response to homicides and proactively seeking to end violence in Durham. RCND offers monthly community lunch roundtables, reconciliation and faith reentry teams from local churches supporting individuals recently released from prison.

44 John 14:12: “Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.”
Methodist Church Reverend Donna Banks described as a fixation on the ABCs of ministry: attendance, buildings, and cash. However, there is a rich alphabet to be discovered that begins with understanding and empowering with such actions as relocation, redistribution, reconciliation, listening, leadership development and more.

1.7  Truthful Witnessing: The Growth Potential for Christian Community Development in Northeast Central Durham

Dr. John Perkins, the founder of the Christian Community Development Association, asserts there is a greater love that moves beyond basic charity. He acknowledges that charity extended in the gifts of clothes, food and water to the poor always has a place, especially in times of immediate crisis. CCD practitioners agree whole-heartedly with Dr. Perkins. And, the community yearns to experience Christian ministry that co-creates and leverages their gifts in day-to-day life. CCD practitioners believe in the creative power and potential of the community to work with churches for God’s vision for a city as witnessed by the prophet Isaiah.

See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy...

Local churches need this prophetic vision to act faithfully on behalf of and in concert with the well-being of their neighbors. There is enormous potential in the collision of ideas, vision, and solutions in action carried out by reconciled Christians leading transformation through local church-based community development initiatives. However, new language and emerging local models are in barely emerging stages. An essential aspect of Christian

---

45 Sermon preached by Reverend Donna Bass, CityWell Church, Durham, NC. April 23, 2015
47 Isaiah 65:17-25. This pericope is a beautiful vision of human flourishing and serves as a foundational passage for working in Christian community.
community development is deep knowledge of and love for cities, especially economically impoverished or abandoned neighborhoods. CCD promotes curiosity and being deeply educated about neighborhood history, geography, sociology, and economic impacts in order to move toward holistic common gains.

Since 2014 in NECD there has been a surge of interest in collective action through honest dialogue and discussions of strategic engagement in church-based community partnerships or collaborations. Community members have been talking mostly among themselves for years with no serious dialogue with local churches neither has there been inter-congregational conversation or interaction. To the community it appears that local churches simply don’t care about them. DurhamCares has been invited into the community’s circle of concern to mobilize local churches from simply existing in the community to humbly working with the community for holistic flourishing. The vitality and relevance of local churches are at stake, and the community is conscious of the power of mutual interdependence. The alternative of watching churches flounder and die is unacceptable. Worse still is to watch churches move out of the community having never experienced transformative impact for the good of the church, the welfare of the community, and for the sake of the Gospel. Many NECD residents are frustrated and pessimistic about local churches not persisting, participating, and favorably prevailing upon the daily hopes and struggles of the community. As Elder Roy, pastor of Refiner’s Fire Community Church in NECD has committed his congregation to “stand in the gap” according to the word of the Lord spoken through the prophet Ezekiel, so it is the mission of DurhamCares to pray and believe in several NECD churches coming together outside the walls of the church in relationship,

---

48 Appendix A is a comprehensive, alphabetical listing of local organizations and church-based CCD oriented initiatives in NECD, 2005–2014.
reflection and deliberate actions for the flourishing of the community. Unfortunately, Ezekiel’s prophesy in chapter 22 is framed as the Bloody City. A company of priests are once again implicated with the shedding of blood.

When local churches take initiative and work together, true human flourishing is attainable. When churches partner with one another and neighboring organizations to love and serve individuals and communities in holistic ways real systemic change is possible. This power was fully evident in the role churches played in the fight for civil rights that defeated Jim Crow laws, won voting rights for African Americans and ended segregated and unequal schools. Today, the very same or similar justice issues have resurfaced in North Carolina and other states through draconian legislation that create barriers to accessible health care, employment, and voting rights. Local churches remain idle to their own demise. This is a crucial time for local churches to be relevant again. CCD principles offer a viable way forward.

It is possible for churches to innovate while maintaining their vast and rich traditions and denominational identities and affiliations. They key is to become more relevant in relationship to neighborhood concerns and community-driven aspirations for the common good. Local churches hold unique positional power to address the physical (recognition and redistribution of material assets), spiritual (transcending time, space, and human capacity for knowing), emotional and socio-psychological needs of individuals within family systems, while checking the destructive institutional and political power structures that obstruct communities from fully flourishing. Full human flourishing begins when congregations commit to engage outside their walls in active listening, acts of compassionate distribution and redistribution of material wealth and social capital, innovative cooperative effort that dignify human beings in community and does not

---

49 Ezekiel 22:30: “And I sought for anyone among them who would repair the wall and stand in the breach before me on behalf of the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.”
objectify individuals or typecast the community as hopeless and beyond repair. The real question becomes a matter of how committed and grounded are churches in faithful models of social justice and urban renewal efforts. The proof is in the readiness and the disposition of the congregations in closest proximity to the felt needs of the community. For this I’ll now describe three distinct forms of church and community engagement models and their dispositions toward community outside the walls of the church.

Robert Linthicum uses the term “fortress” to describe churches that do not participate in the life of the community whatsoever. These churches can be likened to the priest and the Levite, who are in close proximity to the oppressive road conditions along Jericho and choose to move away from the victimized. According to Linthicum, a fortress church does not desire community stakeholders to impact it nor does it desire to engage or impact the community. A fortress church restricts its investment entirely to its own members, and even that is often very limited. The “fortress” church is physically located in the community, but it exists at a material and spiritual distance with firm boundaries between local residents. This image depicts Christ as against culture, and the church as all about the business of “soul-winning” and rescuing the lost from culture. Church members engage in street evangelism, but not with the intent to build genuine friendships. The goal is membership growth without so much as a glance at the human condition and systems grinding folks down outside the doors of the church.

Another basic form of church-based community engagement that Linthicum describes is a church that functions like a fortress but desires to impact the community on its own terms. Such churches offer varying degrees of charity or interaction between the congregation’s life and the community, yet firm boundaries limit the opportunity for the community stakeholders to

---

impact planning or evaluation processes. These churches assume they know what is best for the community. The image here is Christ over against culture and the church’s role is to make everything “Christian.”

A third form of church-based community engagement that aligns with the Christian community development principles is the church that welcomes and lives in the dynamic tension of influencing and being influenced by the community. This type of church pays close attention and welcomes the voice and interests of community stakeholders and willingly offers its resources between the congregation and the community. Decisions are made by church members and community leaders. This type of church embodies a Christ, who is of the culture and the transformer of that same culture. What form and levels of transformation are possible when Christians respond like the Samaritan by remaining and committing their lives to loving their neighbors, strangers, even enemies in collaborative and life giving ways? Refiner’s Fire Community Church mentioned above is a bright and promising sign in NECD.

Another inspiring sign from an international context is the “regeneration” initiative Reverend Dr. Sam Wells describes in, “Community-Led Regeneration and the Local Church.” Wells, serving as Priest-in-Charge of St. Mark’s, Newnham, Cambridge was intimately involved in the New Deal for Communities program and its establishment in North Earlham, Larkman, and Marlpit Development Trust, the first such organization in the East of England.\(^51\) Wells states, “The local church should continue to offer examples that demonstrate that the goal of regeneration is not good buildings, good government, good services, good jobs, or good incomes—important as each of these are—but good people, pouring out their lives in the service of one another.”\(^52\)

---


\(^52\) Ibid., 19.
Flourishing in NECD requires much more than the implementation of federal grants dollars that go to building new houses on top of land where the poor already reside. Flourishing in NECD is Christians engaging with the community imagining ways to cultivate the land without demolishing and displacing the people, who live there. In the Baptist tradition the minister proclaims at the conclusion of the sermon, “the doors of the church are open.” It is now time to experience the pull of the Holy Spirit into the community, and for the people of God to listen to their neighbors saying, “our doors are open as well.” The real irony is while churches can and may be core agents of community change and transformation, that transformation must first begin with churches being open to the work of God going on in the community before, during and in some instances long after a church leaves the community. It is clear to many in the community that resources and opportunities abound in NECD for increased engagement in more holistic ways. Even if the signs of hope are only visible to the priestly witnessing eye, this further compels local churches to take on a humble posture of listening to the community. A constant refrain of the CCD community is taken from a Chinese poem undergirds this view for churches, “Go to the people. Live among them. Love them. Start with what they know. Build on what they have. But of the best leaders when their task is done, the people will remark: ‘We have done it ourselves.’”

One measure of flourishing is the volume and physical presence of the gathered people of God in a particular spatial context. Yet, numbers alone do not make a flourishing community. The critical witness are the people persistently engaged in compassionate justice work in the community through collaboration and collective action? Members of local churches should be at the front of the engagement line. Often times communities become neglected as residents grow weary of meetings that lead to nowhere, broken promises by politicians, transience, and lack of
equitable economic investment. This leads to apathy and retrenchment. People need constant tangible reminders that they are valued; they belong to a community and that the community belongs to them. Everyone has something worthwhile they can offer their neighbor—even if it’s only a smile or a warm embrace. Chapter 2 expounds on a most powerful form of affirming the humanity and dignity of others through the theology of priestly listening that opens up paths to community transformation.
Chapter 2


The First Testament offices of prophet, priest, and king offer windows into powerful paradigms for contemporary pastoral identity, character, and righteous action. Intentional community observation and participation along with contextual exegesis of the community form the backbone of this project. The priestly leadership identity and character is most crucial in this respect. The priest moves carefully in and out of the community serving as a mediator, arbitrator, and advocate for the life and health of the community before a compassionate, all-powerful God. The priest watchfully abides and perceives the community as a good place, even a holy and sacred space, for the tangible presence of a Holy God and the revelation of God’s new creation yet to be discerned and fully experienced on earth. This chapter delves deeply in gaining understanding and priestly wisdom from community life in NECD and the servants that may powerfully influence local churches to behold the beauty of getting involved with God in new and co-creative ways outside the walls of the church. The research is informed by personal narrative, public data, scenarios from specific streets, community meeting reflections, personal interviews, and descriptions of church engagement and religious activities occurring in NECD.

Richard Osmer offers a sound theological framework guided by four key questions: What is going on in a given context? Why is this going on? What ought to be going on? And, how might the leader shape the context to better embody Christian witness and mission? Through rich examples and case studies, Osmer draws attention to the interdisciplinary issues and the ways that theological reflection forms the spirituality of leaders. In addition to the guiding questions, Osmer offer four tasks of practical theology: (1) the Descriptive-Empirical Task: Priestly Listening; (2) the Interpretive Task: Sagely Wisdom; (3) The Normative Task: Prophetic
Discernment; and (4) the Pragmatic Task: Servant Leadership. This chapter presents an approach of priestly listening in the context of NECD. The story of Jacob’s slow awakening in Genesis is a powerful, illuminating metaphor and serves as a way of viewing NECD theologically.

Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely the Lord is in this place—and I did not know it!” And he was afraid, and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

The practice of priestly listening with a holistic lens is purposeful. The goal is to view a community, in this instance, Northeast Central Durham as a sacred, luminal space akin to that which Jacob saw in a dream of angels ascending and descending at Luz. One’s ability to see a place in a different light is not simply putting on proverbial rose colored eyeglasses. Seeing in a priestly manner demands taking on a specific identity and being trained to see people before problems. It demands a patient and vigorous inquiry of a specific terrain trusting that God is already present though it may be very difficult to perceive the Trinity where there is great lament and fear. The goal is to discover God’s tangible presence and work within the community from multiple angles including knowing, “the-word-on-the-street;” the names of the dope dealers, elders, and gatekeepers. It also requires knowledge of what’s being reported or ignored by local media and news outlets. How are non-profit and government agencies defining and engaging the community? What types of business development is underway or being planned? What are the policing practices? These are just some of the questions that inform the role of priest and practitioners seeking flourishing in community. More questions than answers emerge as CCD practitioners sink more deeply into the complex soil and soul of community life in “under-resourced” neighborhoods. Priestly listening requires one’s entire being, not simply physical

2 Genesis 28:16.
hearing, but spiritual perception. It is exhausting work requiring the five senses as well as biblical faith that seeks understanding.³

Osmer explains, “Gathering information that helps us discern patterns and dynamics is the descriptive-empirical task of practical theological interpretation.”⁴ According to Osmer, “the descriptive-empirical task of practical theological interpretation is grounded in a spirituality of presence. It is a matter of attending to what is going on in the lives of individuals, families, and communities.”⁵ Priestly listening involves faith seeking understanding and honest attestation to what truly is and has gone on in a place and with a people. The local church is created and called to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the neighborhood. These hands and feet are bound to become soiled by the messiness of community life. Priestly leadership requires a faithful agrarian-type devotion and discernment that is inconceivable to other institutions. Touching, tasting, seeing and perceiving the material and the spiritual gifts as well as the depravity in the community is a distinct and unique call of the local church that cannot be overstated.

Like so many U.S. urban communities in the 1960s, urban renewal was a disruptive force of housing and economic decline for NECD residents. Blacks were forced out of their more prosperous neighborhoods—most notably the nearby historic Hayti—torn apart by the construction of state highway 147 in 1962. Whites and upwardly mobile middle class African Americans moved out to the suburbs leaving behind poorer residents to fend for themselves. This kind of history is often hard to hear, but this is the critical contextual analysis and important understanding for the task of priestly listening that can lead to faithful action.

³ Hebrews 11:1: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” ⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:9-10: “But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him’—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.”
⁵ Osmer, Practical Theology, 5.
⁶ Ibid, 34.
Listening to the community is the most challenging Christian community development principle as it runs counter to our Western cultural sense of enlightenment, independence, and self-preservationist’s habits and attitudes. Nevertheless, as Wayne “Coach” Gordon writes, “as an act of caring, listening can be viewed as an end in itself.” Yet, the most powerful form of listening manifests in caring enough to allow the resolve and resourcefulness of our more marginalized neighbors to set their own goals, dreams, and visions while waiting and walking patiently with them. A practice that proponents of asset-based community development call for is the “listening conversation” where community members respond to questions such as, what do you like most about living in this community? Or, if you could change one thing in the community, what would it be? Or, more personal questions such as, tell me about a time in your family or community life when you experienced a deep connection with another person’s pain or hopefulness. When have you felt like you most belonged to a community? Most estranged?

The NECD community offers a rich diversity of platforms to participate and experience the problems and promises of flourishing life together. The empirical priestly listening work advancing this project involves a comprehensive battery of activities and data sources dating back to 1994: (1) neighborhood association and community meetings; (2) community festivals and block parties, neighborhood prayer walks, police ride-a-longs, community suppers, church outreach initiatives; (3) summer reading groups; (4) careful observation of commerce and

---


7 Listening Conversations (also described as learning conversations) are an active approach to gain understanding from local residents via one to one dialogue or in small group conversations. The goal is to discover motivation and inspire participation in community building. The ideal is personal encounter, but forms, surveys and asset-maps are useful tools in the process. For more see, Asset-Based Community Development Training Group at www.abcdtraining.org
policing activities; (5) one-on-one meetings with neighbors (those with and without formal position or institutional roles); and (6) close reading of local and community news reports.\(^8\)

There was and continues to be substantial activity and attention directed toward the streets and neighborhoods that make up NECD. In 2007, The City of Durham’s departments of Neighborhood Improvement Services (NIS) and Community Development (DCD) partnered to conduct a series of focus groups comprised of NECD residents, workers, and business owners to gather data on the quality of life in the community, assess the community’s needs, and improve citizen awareness of services provided in Northeast Central Durham (NECD). The questions covered a wide range of topics from crime and policing, social services, economic development, education, health, housing, and blight. Though most residents and business owners were satisfied with their neighborhood, they expressed the need for increased job and economic growth as well as safer streets or reduction in crime.\(^9\)

In a 2012 project entitled, the NECD Livability Initiative, neighborhood community leaders with the support of local government and federal agencies devised four “community schemes” that reflected the hope and promise of community flourishing. The four areas included transportation, workforce and economic development, multifunctional community green spaces, and safe and healthy environment.\(^10\) There are many active leaders and residents, who value their neighbors and the neighborhood. Through organizations such as the Northeast Central Durham


Leadership Council, Uplift East Durham, Communities in Partnership, Partners Against Crime, The East Durham Children’s Initiative and the Religious Coalition there are places and spaces for caring residents to interact, listen, and voice their concerns for positive change, equity, and development. There is no dearth of people and things to pay careful attention to in NECD. However, as with all communities the stories of pain, hope, and opportunities are complex and there simply are no quick fixes to community-based challenges rooted in diverse individual stories and family histories. Below is a process toward an embodiment of priestly listening via walking four particular paths revealing troubling NECD scenarios, Samaritan stories, and opportunities for local churches to participate in community-driven transformation guided by CCD principles.

2.1 Embodying Christ’s Greatest Commandment: An Interpretive Task

Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan inspired the creation of DurhamCares, Inc. and the vision for the role of an Officer for Church Mobilization position in 2014.\(^\text{11}\) The biblical narrative could alternatively be titled, “The Story of the Bad Priests.” However, that would negate the good priestly actions of the Samaritan. The Samaritan saw and moved toward the victim of violence, acting with compassion and without hesitation. The Samaritan not only saw the victim but one can imagine he heard his painful groans also. He didn’t see the victim as unworthy or as an unclean dead animal to be left to be devoured by vultures. His act of carefully pouring oil on the wounds of the wounded is a profound priestly act of mercy. Yet, the Samaritan’s loving kindness didn’t end there. He went further by putting the man on his donkey, ensuring the victim had safe shelter and sufficient sustenance for a good recovery. The fact that

\(^{11}\) Luke 10:25-37. Also, see Officer for Church Mobilization job description in appendices.
Jesus offers this story in response to a lawyer’s—notably, though not a priest, a knowledgeable representative of the religious establishment— inquiry concerning the prerequisite for eternal life magnifies the priestly role. The Samaritan embodies the character of God’s priest. As Nelson aptly describes, priests were fundamental to the flourishing of Hebrew life in community. “As proclaimers of the divine word, as teachers of the religious and cultural norms, and as civic sanctuary administrators, priests were a binding force in Israelite society… They were the catalysts of community, both vertically between Yahweh and Israel and horizontally among the people themselves.”

Local churches now have these priestly rites to uphold and fulfill. And, in classic biblical paradox, it’s the “outsider,” who proves to be more faithful. The priest and the Levite in the story were strictly adhering to institutionalized, legal boundaries by neither touching nor even going near the “unclean” body. Jesus, however, fingers the Samaritan as the fulfillment of how flourishing eternal life springs forth in community.

NECD churches have the opportunity to offer good priestly Samaritan responses six days a week working with the community. Unfortunately, these opportunities abound on several streets in Northeast Central Durham where acts of violence, such as the assault Jesus describes in the Samaritan parable occur. The answer to the question as to “Who is my neighbor?” seen through the lens of the parable, appears simple, but the material and spiritual poverty [that in and of itself is violent] creates the conditions whereby physical violence toward others is more complex. Band-Aid approaches and short-term responses are insufficient. The local church needs to attend more carefully to the dangerous roadways. What, then, does a faithful response by the institutional church look like? How may the church effectively aim to prevent and cure the disease of violence in the NECD community?

---

The beginning step is priestly observation with a sound theological interpretation and imagination that leads to courageous acts of love and mercy. It demands a biblical imagination and vision that becomes a real burden of the local church. Pastors and leaders ought to make it their goal to end injustice, victimization, and oppression neighborhood by neighborhood by 2020. This is the church in relentless pursuit of more than this worldly happiness but a genuine shalom for the city. Amy Sherman writes of true shalom fully manifest in a consummated kingdom forged by the righteous bringing justice into a three-dimensional reality: rescue, equity and restoration.13 “In the consummated kingdom the poor, the innocent and the helpless will be rescued from all the grim realities they face at the hands of the violent oppressors.14 Consequently, the goal of the descriptive empirical task of priestly listening is not an end in and of itself. There is great hope and active expectation attached to this life-giving task.

One ample witness to the fulfillment of shalom in a city just shy of 90 miles southeast of Durham is the story of Greenleaf Christian Church (GCC), a small congregation in Goldsboro, North Carolina where Rev. Dr. William Barber II was called to in 1993. In his book, The Third Reconstruction, Barber describes how this small congregation began listening and looking around the neighborhood while asking what good news might look like to the poor. “After a few years, we established Rebuilding Broken Places, a community development corporation that could bring members of the church together with members of the community to seek the peace of our city and build up justice for all.”15 In collaboration with the community, GCC established an academy, built senior housing and provided affordable housing to low-income families, and offered reentry program classes for men and women returning to the community from prison.

14 Ibid., 28.
GCC would go on to invest $1.5 million of its own money in the community. DurhamCares is inspired by this type church-based witness and action and pursues a peculiar approach by going church door to church door in NECD posing the same questions and dreams for transformative impact. What follows is the articulation of this descriptive empirical work along four NECD paths covering a four-square mile area listening and witnessing life in the community, the posture of churches, and the potential for transformation through CCD practices.

2.2 Priestly Listening Path 1: The United House of Prayer for All People to Antioch Baptist Church

The first critical action in the practice of priestly listening involves understanding what’s going on in the community. Ultimately, it is seeing people as created in the image of God, who came in human form and walked among us for our salvation. This section takes the Samaritan story not as hypothetical parable, but as a creative exploratory model for a continuum of care led by local churches working together with the community. Priestly listening sees the assets first while not denying the problems and barriers to flourishing. Therefore, this section walks carefully through the struggles and conditions of NECD. Visionary servant-leadership can be very difficult when urban neighborhoods are defined by economic poverty, exploited politically, and become gang battlegrounds. Priestly listening may lead churches out of these painful realities and into new models of transformation.

Traveling east from the United House of Prayer Church, 505 Holloway, to Antioch Baptist Church, 1415 Holloway, is exactly one mile. It includes six churches, Longmeadow City Park, a bed and breakfast inn, one gas station, three convenience stores, two auto repair shops, a police sub-station, a non-profit organization, a Laundromat, a new college preparatory
elementary school, Agape Corner Christian Boarding School (currently closed), an internet café/community center (former a Christian outreach ministry facility), and the Dove House—a transitional home for women recovering from drug addiction.\textsuperscript{16} Despite these myriad assets and concerned citizens, who are outspoken against violence, Holloway Street remains most known for high crime, drug traffic, and prostitution.

The Holloway Street corridor stretching east of downtown Durham is a bustling thoroughfare. Unfortunately, the bustle is too often violent, some of it deadly. On February 25, 2014, Kourtney Krista Dawson became a victim of such violence on Holloway St. She was shot in front of Antioch Baptist Church. When authorities arrived, Kourtney was lying on the sidewalk. She was declared dead at the scene. A neighbor reported hearing four to six gunshots. Antioch’s evening services had ended around 7:30 pm. The shooting occurred around 9:00 pm. Antioch Pastor—and Durham County Commissioner—Rev. Michael Page, said, “We have had a history of problems in this community. It could’ve happened when parishioners were leaving the church. We’re working with law enforcement to really reduce crime.”\textsuperscript{17}

Efforts to reduce crime along Holloway have been made through the initiative of the Durham Police Department (DPD) District 1 Command Center, 921 Holloway—a few blocks down from Antioch. The command center was set up in 2009. There is regular police presence along Holloway Street, and it is not uncommon to see police cars patrolling the community. In terms of church engagement with law enforcement, the FaithActs initiative was launched by the DPD’s Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) led by Jennifer Synder, PSN Coordinator. Until 2014, new initiatives have been developed every January to educate and engage churches with the

\textsuperscript{16} United House of Prayer, The Shepherd’s Flock Church, New Aggressive Church of Deliverance, Hope Church International, Progressive Holiness Church, and Antioch Baptist Church. The Agape Corner school is currently closed and the home is unoccupied. In 2014, a local pastor was selected as the executive director and hopes to resurrect the once thriving school. The successful non-profit organization, Crayons2Calculators at 1005 Holloway St. was started in 2006 by Duke students in the Entrepreneurial Leadership Initiative.

\textsuperscript{17} “Woman shot, killed near Durham Church” \textit{The Herald-Sun}, Durham, NC, February 26, 2014.
police department’s community engagement initiatives. The initiatives included such programs as Safety in Numbers, Celebratory Gun Fire Campaign, Hispanic-Latino Outreach, Juvenile Call-Ins, gang workshops, youth programs in Durham Housing Authority communities and the Global Scholars Academy started by Union Baptist Church. According to Synder, the FaithActs initiative was originally set to run for one year. However, the more active congregations asked to continue in 2013.

In 2012, PSN provided ready-to-print bulletin inserts in English and Spanish for thirty congregations. Pastors received a monthly crime update for their respective district in order to educate congregants and direct potential outreach efforts, and a breakfast kick-off program and worship service was held at Duke Chapel to conclude the year. Additionally, pastors were invited to participate in ride-a-ongs with district officers and PSN Community Responses (following homicides), Citizens Police Academy, and Crime Victims’ Rights Week activities. Churches are no doubt aware of the problems that tend to lead to violence. Presence, protests in the aftermath and voiced concerns have not been enough to bring full shalom to Holloway Street and other streets in NECD. The opportunity for collective action on the part of churches fuels DurhamCares’ mission.

In 2014 DurhamCares identified and gathered bi-weekly with several concerned NECD neighbors. In total there were seven men and women, who fit the description of being beloved community builders or Good Samaritans. These Samaritans with compassion and courage walked the streets at various times of the day, evenings, and weekends showing love to their neighbors seeking to inspire a chorus of “amen corners” where there has been mostly a chorus of lament due to lives like Kortney’s being violently stolen from the community. Even with a sense of foolishness and futility, these modern day Samaritans cling to the belief that there are good

---

18 See Appendices for a list of participating FaithActs partner churches in 2014.
priestly NECD pastors and church members, who care enough to want to do more, but need affirmation and someone persistently holding vigil on their church doorsteps and praying for church to join the campaign to end violence in the neighborhood.19

Reverend Allen Jones is one of the United Servants, who exemplifies the priestly character of the Good Samaritan. Allen’s home is directly across the street from Antioch Baptist Church on Guthrie Street. A mortician by trade, Allen knows life on the street very well. He shared his story of deliverance from immoral living to being transformed as a new man in Christ on a mission to love and serve the prostitutes and drug addicts, who regularly pass his porch and do business on the corner in front of Antioch. Reverend Allen acknowledges his past, and empathizes with those trapped in the cycle of self-hate as he once was. His love for others comes from a deep abiding empathy transformed into passionate love and support whether the people change or not. Like the Samaritan, he sees those being victimized and oppressed by destructive systems and the collision of forces that demean, dehumanize, and disenfranchise people to make choices to which they believe there are no viable alternatives. Reverend Allen hasn’t found a neighborhood church to nurture and advance his compassionate ministry. While he receives encouragement and support from Mosaic Church of Durham where he regularly worships (and became a member in 2014), he boldly reaches out to touch his downtrodden neighbors, and provides food, clothing and resources primarily out of his own pocket. Formerly a member of Antioch Baptist, Jones expresses frustration toward the limited incarnational engagement of churches where the need is so glaring and grievous.

Another beloved Samaritan, who lives in the neighborhood is Reverend Tammy Rodman. Her ministry for women and children suffering from abuse or neglect sprung forth out of her heart in 2012 as she completed her Doctoral dissertation Walking Wounded, Sexual Abuse and

19 Only one of the servants was attending an NECD church during the time of this project.
Molestation, Women Finding Their Healing through Gods Word. She started Sanctuary Outreach Ministries and in 2014 she opened Hosanna House, a ministry—operating out of her home on Ashe St. in NECD—of healing and refuge for women desiring to no longer be victims but victors. Ordained in 2009 under Rev. Dr. Michael Page of Antioch Baptist Church and through the Yates Baptist Association, Reverend Tammy has a deep compassion for women and children, who are relegated to the fringes of society. Through her porch ministry, summer feeding programs and house parties, she embodies priestly hope through God’s love in the tensions and stressors of life in NECD. In 2015 there were three homicides on Ashe Street. Yet, Reverend Tammy refuses to budge from her porch, and from gathering children into her house of refuge. Like Reverend Jones she used to attend Antioch. She now worship at the Garden Church in Morrisville, NC. She has gained some modest support from a few churches, but has had to figure her way forward by faith without an anchor church supporting Hosanna House. She has visions to serve more neighbors and children, who live in the community. She labors day and night loving and serving her community, because she sees everyone as having value and beloved in the eyes of God despite imperfections. Children in the community flock to be in her presence. In 2016 in response to a dream, Reverend Tammy led hundreds of women wearing all black in a silent procession through Durham city streets as a public, prophetic display of God’s heart for victims of violence.\textsuperscript{20} Reverend Tammy’s priestly witness has not gone unnoticed by DurhamCares. The organization has connected her to the neighboring Victory at Calvary Church on Driver St. And, continues to advocate for the Hosanna House ministry as a sign of God’s dream of flourishing in NECD.

\textsuperscript{20} Colin Warren Hicks, “Women in Black: Silent marchers demonstrate against violence” Durham Herald Sun, August 20, 2016. Reverend Tammy’s daughter stated, “When my mother expounded on the idea of a silent march, something struck me -- silence. Its power, its danger, its usefulness, the symbolism of it…”
Another NECD servant-leader actively fulfilling Christ’s command to love and serve her neighbors is Mrs. Ruthy Jones. Ruthy serves as the Vigil Coordinator for the Religious Coalition for a Non-Violent Durham. A devoted Christian and loving community servant for much of her life, Ruthy has worshipped and worked in the NECD community since the 1980s. She shared about her days of church outreach and evangelism efforts as a member of the Gospel Center church that once gathered in the location now occupied by Victory at Calvary (VCC). She spoke of a period of mass salvation and conversion experiences that broke out in the late 1940s-50s. In the 1990’s what came to be called the Evangelism Explosion initiative was highly effective in reaching the “unsaved” and “un-churched” people in the neighborhood for salvation and Christian discipleship. However, eventually the felt needs of her neighbors would often overwhelm and diminish their sustained participation in Bible study and on-going discipleship.\footnote{I had the pleasure of listening to Ruthy’s personal faith story on multiple occasions through 2014-2015 as we served, walked, and prayed together in the community. We also corresponded extensively via email.}

Life stress and demands led to great attrition. It was disheartening for Ruthy to observe. As a white woman, who experienced privilege growing up, she was drawn toward the tensions and the precipices upon which her NECD neighbors stood every day of their lives. As a case worker for the Durham County Cooperative Extension Center (DCCEC), Ruthy was inside many NECD homes keeping her in close proximity to the needs and challenges of the majority African American population that the DCCEC served.\footnote{Durham County Cooperative Extension creates opportunities for lifelong learning and connects residents with resources to improve quality of life through research-based education and other services to the community such as workshops and trainings, as well as customized education based on community needs and interests. DCCE programs are free or low-cost.} Her heart broke open for the depth of under-resourced realities that her brothers and sisters faced on a daily basis. She became troubled by the absence of local church involvement in addressing the challenges of her neighbors. Her trouble intensified when in 1988 a Gospel Center parishioner was fatally shot after a weeknight service in the church parking lot. This violent act stoked increasing fear in the community and
the church decided to move out of the community. They found a new location several miles east in Durham county and is now Grove Park Chapel on Sheron Rd. Another critical occurrence for Ruthy and perhaps the more profound and life changing involved a celestial vision she had of an African American woman figure looming like a priest in the community serving the needs of her neighbors and bridging the unfulfilled gaps left by the local church. Like Jacob’s dream found in Genesis 28, Ruthy’s vision was so very real that it fuels her love to this very day. The angelic image of an African American woman with her strong hands and feet active and firmly rooted in the work of reconciliation and restorative justice in the lives of her NECD neighbors has inspired Ruthy to remain in NECD for nearly 40 years. Though she now worships at Life Giving Church, International in Morrisville, NC, Ruthy feels inextricably connected and active love with her neighbors in NECD. Perhaps Rev. Tammy is the embodiment of the celestial matron saint. Or, she may more likely is a composite of two or more strong Christian women, who have labored faithfully in NECD for decades including Ruthy herself.

Women like Ruthy and Tammy are priestly listeners and courageous midwives loving their NECD neighbors. Along with Rev. Allen and others they helped birth the United Servants in Christ quarterly community outreach initiative, prayer gatherings, clothing and food distribution along Holloway Street in 2014. The first outreach took place on October 23, 2014. Approximately 20 men, women, and children gathered on the steps of Antioch Baptist Church to participate in prayer inside the church sanctuary while teams of individuals walked the street and talked to neighbors. BullCity Outreach Ministries, located on the corner opposite of Antioch,  

23 These courageous midwives include Ms. Effie Steele, who serves as president for the Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham and is a vociferous, highly effective facilitator of the monthly community lunch sessions. In 2007, Effie’s twenty-one-year-old daughter Ebony Robinson, who was nine months pregnant, was murdered by the baby’s father. Ms. Steel carries on today through her grief and loss, comforting other mothers of murdered children and family victims. She is a tireless advocate for victims of violence and she proclaims her faith in a loving God for all people.
served as the home base for fellowship with passersby and food and clothing distribution. The goal of the outreach initiative was to show Christian love by engaging neighbors in listening conversations about their hopes and dreams for themselves, the community, and to offer prayer when accepted for specific need(s) such as job, housing, health information, etc. The United Servants in Christ are committed to a holistic vision of the community through intentional presence and encouragement for their neighbors.

Initial attempts to connect with churches along Holloway and vicinity were unsuccessful. Many were hospitable to meeting with DurhamCares to discuss church mobilization. Most were unreachable by phone and unresponsive to email. The ones that were reached were mildly receptive to talking about community engagement. While the majority of NECD pastors agreed that collaboration was important, none were compelled to establish intentional, collaborative ministry to walk the proverbial extra mile to address systemic issues related to poverty and violence. Many churches have settled to being open for worship on Sunday and offering some form of charity a few days a week with an occasional “community” day to serve food or provide a summer recreation day for youth. Therefore, non-denominational or parachurch ministries such as The ARK Enrichment and Resource Center, Grace of God Ministries: Community Outreach Center, or Grace Outreach Enrichment Ministries strive to fill the gaps.

24 BullCity Outreach Ministries, 1512 Holloway St., directed by Pastor Terry and Angie Shuff, is a non-profit ministry that focuses nearly 100% of its time and resources in street evangelism to the prostitutes, addicts, homeless and gang members. They have been in NECD for over 10 years. See www.bullcityoutreach.org for more information.

25 Grace Outreach Enrichment Ministry is a nonprofit organization and ministry based in Durham. The founders, Gladys and Robert Harris received the distinguished 2016 Unsung Heroes Award from Spectacular Magazine. People find them by word of mouth as they deliver food and encouragement those in need. See Homer Fennell, “Grace Outreach Ministries: On the Move Helping Many,” The Durham Voice, October 7, 2016, http://www.durhamvoice.org/grace-outreach-ministries-on-the-move-helping-many/ (accessed October 12, 2016). The ARK (formerly the Ark of Safety Outreach Ministry led by Apostle Clifton Farrington Sr. and Pastor Sherry Farrington and located on W. Chapel Hill St.) is now located at 612 Gary St. in NECD. According to one of their handouts, their mission is to provide support for youth by offering education enrichment, healthy living, extra-curricular activities, and resources for families. Grace of God Ministries: Community Outreach Center was one of the six ministries in attendance at the DurhamCares Mayor’s PRI breakfast in July 2014. Pastor Freddie and Apostle
There are several factors that are barriers to NECD churches holistically engaging their neighbors. Time and resources are a real issue. It’s one thing to read the parable of the five loaves and two fish, and believe the miracle. It’s another matter altogether to experience such miracles today as churches with small congregations with limited income or no true ownership in the community imagine or attempt various forms of service. It’s easier for churches to offer charity and one off donations to the “needy” such as giving away backpacks filled with school supplies, or offering meals and gifts on Christian holidays. These are all important gestures of love. However, local churches working collectively have the ability to offer much more than they could alone. What is lacking is a common theological language and biblical imagination for addressing historical and systemic realities of marginalization and victimization of our most vulnerable neighbors.

DurhamCares works to band together churches to mobilize greater commitment and courage to move toward not away from their immediate neighbors. Churches are built to overcome fear, apathy, and denominational differences toward solidarity with the materially poor. But such solidarity is unlikely to occur when so many of the pastors and the majority of members, don’t live in the community. The average attendance of NECD churches are less than 50 active members. The churches have limited time and capacity to care for the material needs of their neighbors and to vision cast for the generations that will follow. There is a crisis of ownership for the welfare of our streets most in need of the transformational power of the body of Christ. Community members express the consistent lament, where is the church? The community believes that churches should be with them, and in certain instances lead by example

Elizabeth Vareen lead this ministry with a mission to “reach the unreachable.” For more information, see the Grace of God Ministry, Durham, NC, website at http://graceofgodministry.weebly.com/.
in the community. Unfortunately, while churches are shut in, gentrifiers are moving in. And, they are completely disconnected from neighborhood churches. This is often bad for the neighborhood, but another slow form of displacement of the poor.

Northeast Central Durham is now beginning to experience the ill effects of gentrification even while greater attention is being drawn to the plight of the poor and the impact of poverty and marginalization on the city as a whole. Churches in the community need to be engaged in these type of concerns, as neighborhood blight and flight or evictions will further marginalize the poor and churches will either die or choose to move out of the community. DurhamCares aims to inform and inspire beyond awareness and basic charity for churches to see the urgency of their engagement for the life of the church and the flourishing of the community. Ironically, the critical witness for holistic transformation may best be seen through individual not institutional, courageous acts of loving kindness and sacrifice—the proverbial Samaritans in our midst.

DurhamCares actively works with a hope for a future free of homicides in NECD through the concerted efforts of local churches loving their neighbors. The organizational vision is to plainly see local churches preventing violence and its necessary conditions that there be no more Kourtney’s shot in front of church steps or anywhere else in the community. Thus far isolated institutional efforts such as the Durham Police Department’s Project Safe Neighborhoods have created more awareness, but transformational peace has yet to be fully realized. The FaithActs is initiative has run its course and is longer operating. Yet, priestly witnesses and local

---

26 This is a constant refrain of community members in public settings. There is ongoing lament for greater engagement from local churches in the daily life, hopes, and struggles of the community.

27 Faith Acts was supported by federal funding. The grant officially ended in 2014. Several churches continued to convene beyond the funding period.
Samaritan’s travel on looking for ways to experience Jesus’ offering of abundant life in the midst of violence according to John 10:10.\(^\text{28}\)

### 2.3 Priestly Listening Path 2: Antioch Baptist Church to Angier Avenue Baptist Church

The one-mile, twenty-minute walk from Antioch Baptist Church to Angier Avenue Baptist Church includes six churches, a city-operated Career and Resource Center, a Montessori school, the East Durham Children’s Initiative (EDCI), and Muhammad Mosque #34.\(^\text{29}\) These community assets are found along a street that also includes boarded up and dilapidated houses, poverty, drugs, and sporadic gun shots. Sometimes the gun shots are from police officers. Such was the case on the morning of Saturday July 27, 2013, Durham Police Officers responded to a call involving a stabbing in the 700 block of Park Avenue. At the scene Officer R.S. Mbuthia approached 33-year old Jose Adan Cruz Ocampo as a possible witness to the assault. According to police reports, Officer R.S. Mbuthia fatally shot Mr. Ocampo after he failed to heed police commands to drop the knife he was holding. Mr. Ocampo, a Honduran immigrant, instead brandished the knife and advanced upon Officer Mbuthia.\(^\text{30}\) Following the shooting, there was great community outrage and backlash against the Durham Police Department, already under fire for perceived over-policing (i.e., disproportionate traffic stops and vehicle searches without consent in certain neighborhoods) and profiling of black and brown residents in Northeast Central Durham. Unfortunately, most gunshot victims are young black and brown males. In

\(^{28}\) The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. 

\(^{29}\) In addition to Antioch and Angier Avenue, there is Love Divine Ministries, Shepherd’s House, Grace Park, and Victory at Calvary. The one-mile walk follows a route traveling south along Park Avenue, Liberty Street, and Driver Street.

2015, there were seven shootings within a mile radius of Antioch. Twenty-two-year-old Jonathan McClain was killed in a drive-by shooting on March 22 on Holloway Street; two other adult males, who were passengers in Mr. McClain’s vehicle were also shot but were treated for apparent non-life threatening injuries.

As civilian unrest rises in cities around the country, it behooves the Body of Christ in Durham to pause along the side of roads like Holloway, Park, Liberty, and Driver to imagine and enact new forms and public displays of Christian leadership that can transform the community to best reflect the power of Christian witness and holistic local missions. This kind of witness requires seeing and participating in a second dimension subsequent to rescuing the oppressed. Amy Sherman characterizes with the term equity. She writes, “Equity is about ensuring that the poor… are not disproportionally burdened by society’s problems.”31 The local church is called to resist policies that further marginalize people and communities. Churches working together can work against the creation of public housing “ghettos” that essentially become proverbial ditches that whole families fall into and rarely rise above for generations. There are unjust systems that ditch the poor and infirm, and the local church was created as God’s ultimate answer for humanity’s unjust practices. Yet, active community members refuse to sit idle waiting for churches to show they care.

Community members are gathering in learning circles and participating in racial equity training conducted by the Racial Equity Institute (REI).32 The REI Phase I, 2-day workshop shifts the focus from individual racism and personal character flaws as leading causes for why people are poor. The training presents a full historical, cultural, a sociological picture through an institutional analytical lens on poverty and racism in the United States. Priestly witnessing

31 Sherman, Kingdom Calling, 30.
32 I participated in the REI workshop, January 17-18, 2014, at The United Church of Chapel Hill, NC.
requires an intentional gaze through the analytics of racial equity. This form of witness is a bold and courageous move that pastors and church leaders are loathe to make. For many it is too costly in terms of the time required to sit with generational victimization and pages of buried histories of systemic structures of oppression. Yet, this is the courageous action the local church is created to embody for the imminent reign of God. Isaiah 58 speaks deep truth, Almighty God is determined to bless humanity, and God requires a deliberate turn by the people of God to be priestly listeners, truth-tellers, and Godly actors.

Sherman’s third dimension is about God’s restorative justice as proclaimed by the prophet Zachariah. “But now I am determined to bless Jerusalem and the people of Judah. So don’t be afraid. But this is what you must do: Tell the truth to each other. Render verdicts in your courts that are just and that lead to peace.”33 One vital truth-telling organization headquartered in NECD with a long history of restorative justice advocacy and priestly listening practices is the Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham (RCND). The RCND has been a beacon of light in the midst of darkness and despair through its Vigil Ministry and Reconciliation and Reentry Ministry with churches.34 RCND seeks more church collaborations and re-entry partner congregations.35 The community gathers monthly to explore violence reduction efforts from policy, advocacy to general information sharing and relationship building. Shepherd’s House UMC is the monthly gathering place. Yet, the community remains frustrated by escalating violence. The community meetings are a visible reminder that people care enough to talk about

33 Zachariah 8:16-17.
34 The RCND was founded by Leslie Dunbar and Rev. Mel Williams in 1992, and incorporated in 2004. It is an interfaith and inclusive organization. Currently, St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church, Immaculate Conception, Church of Reconciliation, Pilgrim UCC, Duke Chapel, Bethel, and one team of mixed faiths have active reentry faith teams. There have been 24 different congregations, who have had active faith teams in the past.
35 The Reconciliation and Reentry (R&R) Ministry is a one-year covenantal Partnership between individuals recently released from prison and congregational faith teams of 5-10 members to help formerly incarcerated persons and the Durham community reconnect and restore wholeness to one another.
the problems, to exchange information and strive to build relationships. But, the question remains, are the roads any better because the people have gathered inside a church? Why are there not more neighborhood churches in attendance? The community cannot say, “Amen” while starring at a black hole of institutional presence and commitment on the part of local churches. There is a palpable expectation for local churches to be more visible and active for change. What exactly is the more the church is called to do?

Priestly listening and presence is the crucial beginning step to welcome and invite local churches to participate. Pastors and compassionate members must be called upon to observe and move toward the pain and the promise of building beloved community. Shepherd’s House is approximately a half mile from Agape. In between, there are homes, Victory at Calvary Temple Church and the Holton Career and Resource Center. However, these vital entities are not engaging in strategic partnerships for the larger good of the neighborhood. There is great opportunity, hope, and possibility yet to be fully tapped.

The location where Officer Mbuthia fatally shot Mr. Ocampo was in the front yard of a neighbor’s home one block west of Antioch Church and a few houses down from the dilapidated, abandoned Agape Corner Christian School Boarding House. Through a posture of priestly listening one observes that though Agape Corner Christian School now stands abandoned and the home severely deteriorating, the two signs, one in front of the former school house and the other in the yard of the abandoned boarding home, stand firmly planted with the inscription from Nehemiah 2: 20: “The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.” This is a bold statement in the face of great adversity and public skepticism over the integrity and sincere care for the
community by local churches. Will local churches seize the opportunity to come together as restorers of the breach?\textsuperscript{36} The hope-filled journey of priestly listening continues.

2.4 Priestly Listening Path 3: Refiner’s Fire Community Church to Greater Emmanuel Temple of Grace

The 1.3-mile, twenty-six-minute walk traveling east along Main Street from Refiner’s Fire Community Church to Greater Emmanuel Temple of Grace Church includes four churches, an elementary school, and a major sub-division of Habitat for Humanity homes.\textsuperscript{37} Though New Life Christian Center, formerly located at 1415 E. Main St., has long since moved out of the community. This stretch of road has several enduring signs of God’s love flowing in the community. Habitat for Humanity is thriving in building homes having surpassed 100 homes built in Durham since 1994. The Durham Rescue Mission (DRM) perseveres in its compassionate ministries of housing and addiction recovery programs as well as generosity to the poor through annual charity events for the community. The Mission opened in 1975 and is expanding its residential quarters. The founders, Ernie and Gail Mills are contemporary Samaritans in their own right. In response to God’s call the Mills relocated to NECD as a young couple opening their lives by faith to the transforming power of God in loving and serving their neighbors. They began the Rescue Mission in 1974 in an abandoned, two-story house at 1301 E. Main St. “Vagrants had taken up residents without invitation, and Ernie realized that was the perfect location for the Mission. No one wanted that dilapidated house, not even the owner. Perhaps that is what drew Ernie to it as a place to house homeless men, who were also in a way...
discarded by society.” Approximately two years later the Mills acquired the former Fuller Memorial Presbyterian Church building that had been up for sale for two years—the Mission’s current location at 1201 E. Main St. Today the Mission serves 400 men, women, and children and now operates thrift stores and The Good Samaritan Inn, a homeless shelter in northern Durham for women and mothers with children. The Mills remain passionate for the Lord in serving their neighbors. Both were active participants in the 2014 CCDA National Conference host team planning efforts and have been more present at community events. However, their expansion efforts have not been entirely well received by the community, since several of the homes they owned adjacent to their main facility were demolished to make room for an additional residential dormitory for Mission residents.

The Mission’s goal is to mend the lives of men and women who’ve been shattered by drugs and alcohol addiction for God’s glory. From its humble beginnings in a two story house offering shelter to 35 men to now having two facilities capable of housing and recovery ministries for over 400 men, women, and children is miraculous. On February 16, 2016 the DRM held a groundbreaking ceremony for the first of three new academic residence halls housing homeless men and women at 1203 E. Main St. Durham Mayor Bill Bell and several city and county council members were in attendance. The work of the Mission is overwhelmingly positive. Yet, local neighborhood churches are not strategically involved in the Mission or in any form of collaboration with the Mission or other entities such as the Salvation Army which recently faced closure due to lack of funding. Though the Mission has expanded immensely upon its corner of the neighborhood, perhaps its expansion could be much deeper and impactful.

39 Fuller Memorial was built in 1929 and is the current location of the Mission.
if the 19 churches within a mile of the Mission were convened to form a collaborative circle of mission and ministry for the next 4-5 years.

A stone’s throw away from the DRM is one church serving as a powerful love story and that is Refiner’s Fire Community Church (RFCC) led by pastor, Reverend Willie L. Jones II, affectionately known as “Pastor Roy.” Pastor Roy’s mother, Dr. Tessie M. Jones founded the ministry in 1977 with the name the “Evangelistic Prayer Band.” Against all odds as an African American woman minister and evangelist, Dr. Jones stepped out in faith with nine members launching Mt. Temple Tabernacle. In 2001, as her health declined she yielded to the Holy Spirit and passed the mantle on to her eldest son, Willie Jones II. In 2002, “the Lord birthed a new name for the ministry in the heart of pastor Roy, Refiner’s Fire Community Church. The church moved into its current location in 1991. The building had been vacated by the former Edgemont Baptist Church, an all-white congregation, and remained unoccupied for five years before RFCC moved in. The members of Edgemont Baptist chose not to withstand the heightening level of drugs, crime, and prostitution in the community. The crack epidemic hit the community hard in the 1980’s becoming so severe that loitering, drug deals, and prostitution didn’t stop on Sundays. According to Pastor Roy, when RFCC moved in, church members had to step around and sometimes over men and women loitering on the corner and the front steps of the church. The level of disrespect for the church was unfathomable. But, since the property had

41 I met with Pastor Jones on numerous occasions, formally and informally, as we encountered one another regularly at the Lakewood YMCA and became friends, sharing life and ministry experiences. Over the course of 2014, I attended RFCC Sunday worship services as well as a joint Passion Week services with three other local churches (Faith Community in North Durham, Nehemiah Christian Center downtown Durham, and One Love Ministries formerly located on Holloway Street in NECD). Additionally, in my role as a 2013-2014 BullCity Forward Fellow (BCF), I designed and directed a Congregational Wellness Initiative (CWI) sponsored by BCF and the Duke Divinity School Clergy Health Initiative. RFCC was one of seven participating churches. The other congregations were CityWell, Tobacco Trail Church, One Love Ministries, Union Baptist, Faith Assembly, and Christ Central Church. The focus of the initiative was to engage pastors and their congregations, who believed in the mutual flourishing of the church and the wider community in wellness through Christian spiritual practices, including honoring Sabbath rest, healthy eating, physical exercise, and building intentional communities focusing on the whole person. The theological vision for the project was inspired by 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24.

been vacated for years, it would take some time to transform the block. Pastor Roy was up to the task. He stands six feet tall approximately 230 pounds. He looks every part of an NFL linebacker. He’s not at all someone you would want to encounter in a dark, back alley. As providence would have it, it was in the back alley of the church that pastor Roy and several men of the church engaged in aggressive “ministry” tactics to run off the thugs and respond to parishioners’ vehicles being broken into. It took the church nearly four years for the way to be made clear of the darkness that surrounded the grounds and was destroying the community. The police became involved once they saw how serious the church was about reclaiming the grounds around the church as holy as the sanctuary within the church. Like both Ruthy and Rev. Tammy, Pastor Roy experienced a Jacob’s ladder type-vision also, a few years after to becoming the pastor of the church. However, he described that his encounter with the Divine occurred in the full light of day. One morning a finely dressed man and a beautiful woman were walking as Pastor Roy and his brother were standing on the corner on the opposite side of the street from the church. According to Pastor Roy it appeared as if they may have been setting the woman up to do prostitution. Pastor confronted them and asserted that prostitution was no longer permitted on the street. The man replied, “he wished more Christians would take a stand for what they say they believe in and shook his hand.” As Pastor Roy and his brother turned to go into the church the couple was gone as if caught up in a cloud. From that day forward the drug dealers and prostitutes were gone for good as if blown away by a fierce wind. As Pastor Roy related the story, the Genesis 18 account of the Lord appearing to Abraham in the form of three men affirming God’s promise to make Abraham a great and mighty nation from which all others would be blessed came to mind.43 If you follow the Genesis 18 narrative to the end of the chapter, you’ll read the tragic story of the depravity and destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Pastor Roy faithfully presides like a Godly priest over his congregation as well as the community with a watchful eye and an intercessory heart for God’s guidance and direction for the shalom of NECD.

RFCC has a security ministry the church and community events, a healthy rapport with the Durham police including serving the Durham Police Department’s National Night Out events and having been a FaithActs partner church. Pastor Roy is the only NECD pastor, who attends the RCND monthly meetings, and congregation members take regular prayer walks in the neighborhood. He has advocated for a city park to be developed behind the church. As RFCC approaches its 40th anniversary in 2017, Pastor Roy has declared this year as a year of “Standing in the Gap” for the community. Again, this conjures the biblical narrative of Abraham in Genesis 18 interceding on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah.44 He will urge his congregation to commit to regular community service, and he is doubling down on the belief that the prayers of the righteous are powerful and effective.45 Though he supports community programs and shows up as often as he can, pastor Roy views his primary calling as shaping, affirming and leading by holy example the people God has given him to shepherd at RFCC. He is more concerned and focused on the prayer life of the church as opposed to community meetings that tend to haggle over who is and isn’t doing good in the neighborhood. Like a faithful priest, he begins each year by shutting himself in the church for several days of prayer and fasting for himself, the church and the community to draw closer to God. Refiner’s Fire is committed to abiding in the community with no plans of leaving, yet Pastor Roy is keen not be caught by every wind of

---

44 Genesis 18:22-26: “So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom, while Abraham remained standing before the Lord. Then Abraham came near and said, ‘Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then sweep away the place and not forgive it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just?’ And the Lord said, ‘If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will forgive the whole place for their sake.’”

45 James 5:16b.
doctrine or a new cause to be taken up. He’s cautious and guarded with his relationships and is careful not to let issues override the Biblical theme of intercession, passionate and compassionate proclamation of the Gospel message, and viewing the community as whole and fully beloved in the eyes of God.

Another positive sign of faith, hope, and love flowing from a local NECD congregation is at the opposite end of the mile stretch from RFCC. Greater Emmanuel Temple of Grace (GETG), 2722 E. Main St. led by Bishop Marion Wright, Sr., Pastor and Founder. GETG has sought to be a light and uplifting presence through acts of love, service, and hospitality to the community since its arrival in NECD in 1983 at 1801 E. Main St. to its current location in 1990. GETG flourished in the 90s and early 2000s offering 30 ministries and auxiliaries, two duplexes, educational space and a 3.8-million-dollar Family Life Enrichment Center opening to the community for a variety of recreation, education, and job training. A Hispanic church also has worship space on the GETG campus. In 2011, GETG began hosting an annual “Back to School Community Day.” Coordinated through GETG’s Evangelism and Community Outreach Department, led by Minister Demarcus Williams, Evangelism Director, in collaboration with Word Empowerment Church and several community partners the 2015 Community Day distributed 300 backpacks filled with school supplies and fed 400 families. The theme for 2016 was “Serving on One Accord.” Beyond the distribution items of food and school supplies, the powerful witness of the event has been the gathering together in one place over the past 6 years of nearly 40 non-profit organizations sharing resources and information for children and families throughout East Durham. However, other than Word Empowerment Church (no longer in NECD) and Nehemiah Christian Center (Downtown Durham), there are no other churches listed among the past or present community partners. Among the partners are the Salvation Army and
the Durham Rescue Mission, both of which offer worship services on their campuses, but primarily function as direct service agencies for individuals and families in need. GETG is a part of the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, Inc. Though GETG has persisted and striven to be relevant and in relationship with the community, the membership is declining and the Family Life Enrichment Center remains mostly closed due to lack of church staff and financial capacity to operate at its originally envisioned level. The facility is occasionally rented out for special events while its salon area has no business license for offer training and services to the community. There currently are no after school programs or enrichment activities for youth. GETG wants to do more. For now, it settles for a one-day community outreach event and has adopted the nearby East End Elementary School for periodic visits and outreach to parents. GETG is for the community. DurhamCares is in conversation with Minister Williams, who has expressed a genuine desire to love the community realizing that the welfare of the GETG is inextricably bound to the welfare of NECD.

2.5 Priestly Listening Path 4: New Creation UMC to the Salvation Army

New Creation United Methodist Church, formerly Asbury Temple UMC, is located on the bustling corner of Angier Avenue and S. Alston (Hwy 55) Avenues. To say this corner is bustling is an understatement. The intersection is the first main intersection coming off the NC Freeway 147. One-mile south is North Carolina Central University. Traveling one mile north beginning at New Creation along S. Alston are several small convenience stores, two auto repair shops, a Hispanic grocery store, The Durham Rescue Mission, Eastway Elementary School, Ecclesia House of Prayer Church, Sav-a-Lot Grocery Store, and the Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club. This section of S. Alston is high volume automobile and pedestrian traffic as
commuters hustle to get on the expressway and neighbors walk between stores, homes, and bus stops. Of all the sections within the priestly view and concern of this project, S. Alston is perhaps the most vibrant in terms of human action and interaction. The low income apartment complex in the backyard of New Creation Church is now predominantly Hispanic families. Across the street from the church is another low income apartment community. New Creation United Methodist Church is a newcomer to NECD. However, the church building has been located in the community for over 100 years. The condition of the building is rapidly deteriorating as New Creation prepares to move out of the church and into its new location six miles in south Durham on Fayetteville and Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. In January 1994, two blocks east of NLCC, Peace Missionary Baptist Church (circa. 1974 in NECD), 1212 E. Main Street, outgrew its building and moved out of the community into its new modern church approximately four miles south. The building the church once occupied is literally falling apart.

In listening to the community and observing church closures, departures, and limited engagement of NECD churches from the early 1990s until today, it is apparent that the community is viewed (with exception for a few churches like Refiner’s Fire, Shepherd’s House, and Greater Emmanuel) as a place to escape from not as a place to abide and invest in for the long haul. Though there is less housing blight, due to the work of Habitat for Humanity, gentrification, and government interventions, Northeast Central Durham remains a community that many pass over or around without much burden of thought to its promise and potential, at least not in any intentional and strategic ways beyond basic charity. With exception for GETG’s Back to School Community Day, churches simply don’t mix company in NECD, not even for city-wide prayer efforts, community events, or joint service opportunities with local non-profits

---

New Creation came to be as a result of a merger between Reconciliation UMC and Asbury Temple UMC in 2014.
like the Durham Rescue Mission or Habitat for Humanity. The is more history of churches or organizations outside the community entering in to “do good” and in at least one instance intentionally reside in the community.\textsuperscript{47} The life of local churches is conspicuously dismal in terms of vigorous presence and participation in NECD. So, local and federal government action and initiatives and a spattering of non-profit agencies work mostly in silos to address community concerns. DurhamCares is listening and witnessing to what the community is saying, and working for the day when the headlines read, “Neighborhood Residence Say, ‘Amen’ to Churches Coming Together for Generations to Flourish.”

To the skeptic, hope for local church engagement in sustained, strategic beloved community building work in NECD appears bleak. What are the prospects for genuine transformation given that there is little to no incentive for churches to work together much less work with secular institutions with varied approaches to addressing felt human needs? Even eternal optimists have to fight back the temptation that mobilizing churches for the common good is an exercise in futility. Chapter 3 is neither pessimistic nor optimistic, but an honest accounting of historical and contemporary church-based community coalitions in Durham, related community engagement efforts across Durham, and the dearth of NECD church engagement.

\textsuperscript{47} The Summit Church supports DWELL teams that “engage targeted neighborhoods all over RDU by relocating teams of people, who commit to eat, pray, study and serve together to form Gospel communities that invite neighbors to experience God’s love. DWELL teams pursue the mission of God under the authority of the local church, and are made up of singles, couples, and families of all ages.” (For more information visit, http://www.summitrdu.com/outreach/local/dwell/
Chapter 3

Priestly Witnessing: Assessing Local Churches for Transformative Potential in NECD

Prayer is not a substitute for action it is an action for which there is no substitute. The community is looking for local churches to have a greater active presence and involvement in transforming streets and neighborhood for the greater good. Based on the FGI Research & Analytics study compiled in 2011 sponsored by DurhamCares, Durham citizens considered its highest priorities to be the issues of affordable housing, disconnected youth, education, health care access, homelessness, refugees, senior care, substance abuse, and workforce development. ¹

“In 2007, The City of Durham’s departments of Neighborhood Improvement Services (NIS) and Community Development (DCD) partnered to conduct a series of focus groups to gather data on the quality of life in the community, assess the community’s needs, and improve citizen awareness of services provided in Northeast Central Durham (NECD). These focus groups were comprised of citizens that reside, work, and own businesses in Northeast Central Durham (NECD) and Partners Against Crime (PAC) District 1 participants.”² From the focus groups, a new vision for the community began to come into view. According to the “Northeast Central Durham Livability Initiative—A Partnership for Sustainable Communities Report,” a scheme focusing on entrepreneurial education, safe and healthy living, local investments, streetscapes were strategized.³ The partners involved were the North Carolina Department of Commerce, Department of Economic and Workforce Development, City/County Durham Planning Department, Durham Public Schools, Builders of Hope, Habitat for Humanity, and the

---

¹ FGI Research and Analytics is a local NC based market research and analytics company that specializes in membership organizations and the nonprofit industry.
University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill. Other than the involvement of Habitat for Humanity there were no churches or other faith-based institutions registered in the sustainability report.

Habitat Humanity of Durham is heavily invested in NECD housing construction and renovation work.\(^4\) Today there are 37 churches listed among DCIA’s member congregations. Two of the 37 are in Northeast Central Durham—New Creation UMC, 201 S. Alston Avenue and the aforementioned Shepherd’s House UMC.

Community organizations such as End Poverty Durham (EPD), Durham Congregations in Action (DCIA), and Durham Congregations, Associations and Neighborhoods (Durham CAN) are non-profit organizations established to listen and offer a collective voice for broad-based community change efforts. End Poverty Durham, coordinated in 2004 by retired Pastors Mel Williams and Haywood Holderness, is comprised of interfaith leaders and community-based organizations working together to eliminate poverty in Durham. EPD meets monthly at Westminster Presbyterian Church to build awareness of the poverty crisis in Durham and to develop a strategy to eliminate it in 25 years (2029). EPD has successfully developed core initiatives to achieve its ambitious goal including creating a job training program in 2008, a child poverty program with Durham’s Partnership for Children called, “The Early Childhood Faith Initiative,” and most recently in 2014 an initiative in East Durham called REAL Durham.\(^5\)

Another example of a “convener” organization is The Yates Baptist Association (YBA). The YBA motto is, “Touching, Equipping, and Serving.” Antioch Baptist Church, one of the churches in NECD, is a food pantry partner organization sponsored by the YBA. YBA partner churches desire to reach out in the Triangle area by encouraging and renewing existing

---

\(^4\) In October 1985, Durham Congregations in Action (DCIA), an organization of 24 churches and faith communities, came together to officially found Habitat for Humanity of Durham.

\(^5\) The purpose of the Early Childhood Faith Initiative is to raise awareness of early development of children from birth to five within congregations, and to encourage the faith community reach out to underserved families with young children. “REAL” stands for relationships equipping allies and leaders. DCIA, made of mostly main line churches, serves as the fiscal agent for REAL Durham.
congregations through missions and ministry partnerships, by starting new work, creating language ministries and discovering strategies for reaching the people moving into our area. YBA is comprised of 72 churches in the Triangle which encompasses Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill. Fifty-two of the YBA churches are located in Durham. Antioch Baptist Church and Grace Park are the only existing NECD churches listed among YBA participating congregations. Angier Avenue Baptist Church and Refuge Durham were listed as YBA partner churches; however, both churches closed in 2014.6

According to YBA Executive Committee member Scott Mofield, the YBA is in transition and seeks a resurgence of financial stability, inspired vision, and renewed participation to carry out its mission.7 The YBA church participation and financial commitments have been declining and the YBA leadership is in transition. They plan to hire a Director of Missions in 2016. This is a critical time for the YBA to renew and re-envision its role in Durham by listening to the community. Its vitality is a question of imagination, capacity building, and accountability toward the common good.

Church-based ministry initiatives in Northeast Central Durham have not coalesced or engaged strategically through organizational associations such as EDP, YBA, DCIA, Durham CAN or the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Durham and Vicinity. None of Durham CAN’s 16 partner churches are located in NECD. However, Durham CAN sets a powerful example in its ability to influence local political leaders through collective action and mobilizing the masses. DCIA is driven by a philosophy of relating people’s stories, hosting public forums—called Candidate Assembly and Delegate Assembly meetings—to hold local elected officials accountable to supporting issues such as family sustaining wages, affordable housing, just

---

7 Conversation with Scott Mofield, Durham, NC, August 4, 2015.
policing, and healthier communities. The organization galvanizes and empowers the local citizenry to transform their community through non-partisanship, shared-ownership and the identification of practical solutions. Created in the summer of 1997 by leaders from the Duke Divinity School, Immaculate Conception Church, Catholic School Ministries and El Centro Hispano, Durham CAN was created to break down barriers between people so they could work together on common issues. The leaders chose to use the organizing model taught by the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) in cities across the United States. Of its current 25 participant institutions, 15 are Protestant churches, 2 Catholic congregations, a Jewish Congregation, a Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, a job-training center, a community land trust, 2 child education organizations, a grass roots citizens political organizing committee, and a neighborhood association. New Creation UMC is currently the only NECD church listed among Durham CAN’s 15 participating congregations.

There are several reasons for the dearth of church-based, collective engagement toward positive change in NECD including theological differences, the historic divide over social gospel efforts and more fundamental evangelical interpretations of mission, lack of inspired movements beyond charity, and the tendency of pastors and church leaders to focus on Sunday morning worship and Bible study attendance versus engaging in the life of the community during the week. In addition, many NECD pastors are bi-vocational and have limited time to inspire, lead and implement holistic ministry initiatives addressing systemic issues that stifle community flourishing. DurhamCares seeks to burst these and related barriers to the manifestation of local churches fully engaged in community transformation efforts beyond Sunday worship, weekly

9 Durham CAN Celebrates 8 Years working to create social change in Durham, 2006 brochure, Durham, NC.
Bible studies, and seasonal charity efforts. DurhamCares’ research and relationship building efforts have been aimed toward responding to the community’s cry for local churches to show they truly care about the whole community, not just official members or those, who tithe to the church.

I agree with Sider, Olson, and Unruh’s statement, “No church will travel the same path toward becoming a holistic congregation. Each congregation starts in a different place, has a unique makeup and character, and ministers to a particular community.” A good place to begin reflective action is by examining how churches are connected (as well as disconnected) through associations and inter-denominational alliances. Are there any binding forces working for intentional church engagement and collective action? If not, how might new forces be generated? Pastors and church leaders have limited time, and therefore, must carefully discern where to make strategic investments of not just their personal vocations but the collective passions and gifts of their unique congregations. In Durham, as aforementioned, there are historical associations and church-based groups that were created for churches to relate and work together with the community for the common good. A close look at these associations yields critical insight as to why the general community expects churches to be central to the transformation of all Durham as a city flourishing in tangible good news for the poor.

DurhamCares seeks to build bridges and close gaps that organizations like EPD, YBA, Durham CAN and DCIA are not directing toward in terms of specific neighborhood-based initiatives. These important organizations do the work of relationship building and addressing on issue-based causes such wage campaigns or affordable housing or poverty alleviation. The priestly tasks argued for in this project calls for dedicated attention to very specific roadways

---

(i.e., the biblical Jericho road; Holloway St.) and building relationships with particular persons and families, who are the most vulnerable and subject to victimization. The priestly work of listening that leads to community flourishing could be taken up through a strategic, intentional presence and participation in community-driven initiatives led by neighborhood leaders such as those actively involved in Communities in Partnership or Uplift East Durham. However, residents and community leaders do not want to be proselytized. They prefer to be seen, listened to and dignified as full human beings with valuable gifts to share in and with the community despite their zip code being defined as economically impoverished and crime-ridden. People want to be dignified as persons with innate value and worth despite the labels and often-distorted identities projected upon them and their community. In theological terms people want to be blessed by God and to be seen as a blessing to their community and not a problem to be fixed or discarded. Dignifying ministry is transforming other communities. Certainly biblically-based transformation is possible in NECD.

In Sacred Strategies, Aron, Cohen, Hoffman, and Kelman offer cases studies of eight American Jewish synagogues became visionary congregations transforming their communities through entrepreneurship, experimentation and committed members. They explain,

Visionary congregations have adopted three essential concepts that characterize their commitment to social justice and community organizing. First, they believe that their community derives from something more than mere membership and incudes the relationship between the congregation, its members, and their city… Second, they understand that community building is a process that requires intentionality. And third, they tie the work of community building to a sense of sacred purpose that is necessarily, larger than simply creating a community for its own sake.11

It helps to look outside our own community at times in order to envision the promise of renewal and reconciliation at home.

---

DurhamCares is called to be a witness to the good and work with and within neighborhoods, churches, and associations promoting a holistic view and value for all human life. DurhamCares seeks to harness material and spiritual resources to uplift human lives across the myriad differences that tend to isolate, foster fear, and ultimately exploit and objectify non-church-going residents. Yet, the community expects the church’s prayers and the “preached” word to make a difference beyond the weekly worship hour and to pour out into the streets, alleys, and corners of the community like rivers of living water. People have grown weary of meetings and general talk about community change. The community languishes in poverty conditions and the realities of life in a city that is literally under construction in terms of new commercial enterprises including restaurants, entertainment, and hospitality industries, entrepreneurial capital and technological innovations.

3.1 Witnessing: Churches “IN” the Community

Being physically located in a community or neighborhood is an essential component of being a witness and potential advocate for the materially poor and most often marginalized members of our communities. However, substantive transformation that has the potential to impact generations for good requires more than simply being present with nothing to say, exchange or share in community. Even when a church is physically located in an economically poor neighborhood, congregation members often commute from outside the community to attend church including the pastor. This is the case for Shepherd’s House Church. DurhamCares witnesses to the prospect that a cohort of the NECD churches that are within a mile of each other are ready and willing to work together if and when given the opportunity. The hoped for sacred
strategies for transformative community development in NECD have not and will not spring forth without a catalyst.

Sider identifies at least six essential elements of holistic ministry. Divine love and power for outreach, a commitment to community outreach, a healthy congregational base for ministry, church leadership for holistic ministry, a ministry-centered organizational structure, and ministry partnerships. Each of these six components is significant in and of itself. Theologically, when two or more are gathered in Jesus’ name, the power of God is present to move miraculously. However, there is no such guarantee that the people will be patient enough to wait and yield to Holy Spirit-enlivened speech and action that spills over into the highways and hedges of community life. Furthermore, congregation size must not prevent the all-important first and continual acts of priestly listening and unconditionally loving our neighbors. The original disciples were sent out two-by-two carrying the Good News with little to no baggage, i.e., personal assets. Fuder argues that ‘exegeting’ a city “starts one neighborhood at a time, or even just a few streets at a time in a community… But, the best way to start is one life at a time.”

The NECD churches assessed for this project are small (<50-100 weekly worship attendance), and represent the following denominations: Baptist, United Methodist, Pentecostal, Church of God in Christ (COGIC), Independent or Non-denominational, Holiness, Apostolic, Full Gospel Baptist. In speaking with the pastors and members of these churches their collective essence as loving people with a profound sense of an almighty God still at work in the salvation and redemption of the world is unmistakable. However, the clarion cry of the community remains, “show us love by your works.” This project posed to the churches the following

---

13 Mark 6:6b-10.
reflective questions (with some language adaptation) from Fuder’s ethnological approach to church-based community engagement.\textsuperscript{15} How informed is the pastor and the congregation about neighborhood assets, needs, and desires? Are there community “gatekeepers” in the church? If yes, how is their wisdom welcomed/shared? If no, is the congregation connected in any way to local sages (elders, youth, activists)? Can the church accurately identify and describe predominant lifestyles/beliefs/ethnicities in the community? Does the church have resources for community exegesis? If no, is the leadership open to learning exegetical methods to get to know the community? Is the church actively partnering (or willing to partner) with other churches/ministries/agencies to impact lives locally?

To assess the church with these questions is to assess its potential to become integral to community flourishing. If the local church is charitably viewed as inherently valuable to the community, then community assets deserve the same charitable view despite highly visible signs of poverty and degradation. The summit of all assessment questions is, how may pastors and church leaders begin to truly be priestly witnesses on the way to becoming beloved change agents in fully flourishing community life? Christian pilgrimage is a powerful way forward into the grain of genuine engagement. The goal is solidarity. For to be a true Christian pilgrim is to strive to be in solidarity with our neighbors. It is not tourism. Pilgrimage is about seeing another human life in the full image of God no matter one’s surroundings.

A walking pilgrimage is a no economic cost way to listen for the voice of community. Walking pilgrimages through the neighborhood surrounding the church offers the opportunity to simply be in and breathe in the realities of daily life. Walking pilgrimages are a holistic form of priestly witnessing without evangelism or proselytizing as an immediate short-term goal or outcome. A walking pilgrimage through the community within a theological frame should

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 81.
engage the following critical reflection questions. First, what do you see (with your collective physical eyes)? What do you hear (with our physical ears)? What do you sense, feel, and perceive (in the Spirit) to be true about the community? What shall we lament and hope for about our neighbors and our neighborhood? Where would Christ be found here? Where is Christ calling you to take up your cross in this place? The goal is to stir and stimulate one’s biblical imagination for the possibilities not to be overcome by the real problems that must be named also. Thus, it is important to have a biblical narrative or call story in mind and heart during the journey.

The Walk to Emmaus passage in Luke is illustrative for the biblical imagination and offers profound insight into the possibility of Kingdom building that can happen in the midst of our wonderings and wanderings for fully flourishing community. The Walk to Emmaus narrative is a story about “seeing” or “witnessing” the kingdom of God as an unfolding story of revelation in our struggle to know God and make God known (to be living witnesses, living epistles of the heart of God for full human flourishing). As two demoralized disciples are walking, Jesus appears and inquires, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” The disciples don’t recognize Jesus, and Cleopas calls him a stranger for not knowing the recent happenings in Jerusalem. Perhaps the most chilling part of the Emmaus story is the disciples recounting the complicity of the chief priests and religious leaders for handing Jesus over to be condemned to death and crucified. As in the story of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, the priestly establishment is the dehumanizing force betraying human flourishing and in Jesus’ retelling actually aiding and abetting the robbers, who stripped, beat, and crucified Jesus. Jesus

---

16 Pilgrims are encouraged to journal and record as much as possible. The goal is to experience life and the presence of God any and everywhere in the life of the community.
compassionately walks the demoralized disciples through the scriptures and recounts the story of
the prophets to open the disciples’ eyes that the promise of God had been fulfilled. The local
church is called to relive and faithfully walk this same road of affirmation and renewal in the
daily life of the community. The church is called to show up, sometimes unannounced, in
surprising places, and indistinguishable from all other residents (not prim and proper or dawning
priestly attire) without stripping off its institutional identity as a royal priesthood.

Mobilization begins with walking slowly and purposefully taking in all of God’s creation
in the midst. It’s about seeing victimization, isolation, disparities, inequity, beauty, blight, joy,
hope, despair, and promise. Pastors and congregations neglect the essential work of community
engagement and organizing to their own peril. Although prayer walks offer powerful experiences
of community witness, prayer walks are one-way talking to God about the community without
listening to how the community talks about God working in the acedia of daily neighborhood
life. Kathleen Norris explains the challenge of acedia in the following powerful way, “It is hard
work to look beneath the surfaces presented to us and examine the cultural and historical forces
underlying the current conditions. Why should we care enough to make the effort? In positing
this question, we are well advised to name and confront our acedia … Acedia is not a relic of the
fourth century or a hang-up of some weird Christian monks, but a force we ignore to our own
peril.” To be a faithful priestly witness is to do battle with acedia. Priests are called to go before
God deliberately and cautiously on behalf of the community. It may be counterintuitive for
pastors and church leaders to see the criticality of going into the community as listeners before
acting as mediators or agents of change for the betterment of the people. The pace of change is

19 Kathleen Norris, Acedia & Me: A Marriage, Monks, and A Writer’s Life (New York: Riverhead Books,
2008), 129-30.
often slow and difficult requiring sacrifice and acts of revolution in order for new conditions to be formed.

Almighty God created the earth in seven days. Surely that is miraculous. But, as Dr. Perkins often reminds the CCD community, “you’ll see things begin to change… after about 10 years.” This type of timing is unacceptable to most of us. We expect to see change “overnight” as we interpret God creating heaven and earth and everything in between in a literal 24-hour period. So, for a church to remain planted in a neighborhood for a decade or more and participate in forms of community development or neighborhood revitalization is as unusual as it is for a poor person to choose to return to her community once she is able to move or is pushed out.

Why would anyone want to remain or return to a marginalized, poor community? This is a question of motivation and expectation. While some see profits and promising potential for economic opportunity and growth for commerce and exchange of goods and services, others see and experience exploitation, neglect and abuse by decision makers and power brokers, who can do whatever they want with property and people. Wealthy developers can quickly change the face of a community outwardly while displacing the poor and polluting community ecosystems. Gentrification is often devastating to the poor as property values (with rising rent and taxes) spike creating economic situations that lower income families cannot maintain. Who will defend the poor? This is a form of victimization that the church is called to the priestly act of witness and incarnational action. Again, it doesn’t begin with the conceptualization of programs to change people. The church is called be a living, breathing body that sees and seeks holistic relationships with its neighbors while decrying unjust laws and practices that push people into ditches of despair. The local church exists to be a revolutionary or “radical” (in secular terms) organization of believers, who are moved to acts of mercy, justice, and compassion for uprooting
systemic poverty while also tending to the daily symptoms of crisis and relief work. Linthicum is right, “Whereas prayer, presence, proclamation, and the practices of social services, advocacy and community development are essential and strategic elements of the church’s ministry… they are not sufficient.”

Chapter 4 offers data gathered from NECD church interviews conducted during the summer of 2016. This data collection serves as the basic ground work and relationship building efforts of DurhamCares for the long term purpose of mobilizing a cohort of NECD churches to participate in emerging Christian community development initiatives over the next four years. The promise of God spoken through the prophet Jeremiah recorded in Jeremiah 29:11 remains the fuel that propels DurhamCares’ stakeholders into the vision of flourishing life in NECD. The question going forward is whether the organization will be relevant and necessary after 2020. When the NECD community says, “Amen,” to holistic local church mobilization then DurhamCares may joyfully move on to other Durham neighborhoods.

Chapter 4
Prophetic Vision: The Promise of Mobilizing NECD Churches 2015-2020

There is no strict-time line for the priestly work of listening to the community and participating in the life of the community before taking specific action and expecting certain results. But, it is impossible to live in the United States and not be goal-oriented, driven, and determined to produce outcomes. Funders want to see results, and they want to see them quickly. The challenge of church mobilization work is coming to terms with the amount of time and the level of openness necessary to trust the community with its own best interests, wisdom, and determination to thrive. However, once the role of priestly listeners has been faithfully embodied, the subsequent tasks of practical theology that Osmer delineates as interpretive (sagely wisdom), normative (prophetic discernment), and pragmatic (servant leadership) must also be secured, blessed, and commissioned for the fulfillment of a vision of restoration and flourishing.¹ The limits of the scope of this project do not extend into these subsequent tasks. However, they begin to emerge in the priestly paths as the Spirit working as Advocate reveals the God-given future and hope as promised to the Israelites in Jeremiah 29.

What we have gathered from the stories of Samaritans and victims in NECD is that NECD churches are mostly on the sidelines and are not on the playgrounds working to build beloved community or even relations among themselves and their neighbors. Though some churches are engaged in basic outreach initiatives, these initiatives fall far short of the vision of transforming exilic conditions in the community. As the lesser known prophet Habakkuk declared, “The Lord answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that the runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end and does

not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay.”\(^2\) The vision for church mobilization in NECD is to see a cohort of three or more churches actively engaged in initiatives that the community invites, shares and desires vigorous church engagement without distortion, objectification, paternalism, or presumption that the community is broken and “simply” needs Jesus. The role of the faithful priest is to do justice, to love kindness, and walk humbly with God alongside God’s people.

DurhamCares has seen, read, and heard stories of church mobilization in other communities like Mission Mississippi’s claim to “change Mississippi one relationship at a time.” Slade explains that Mission Mississippi’s strategy is both a pragmatic strategy and theological statement of hope for social and systemic change in the state.\(^3\) Here in Durham, we have witnessed the embodiment of priestly listening and faithful Christian witness in Durham through the coming together of ministers from five churches in the Walltown neighborhood. According to retired pastor Mel Williams (formerly of Watts Street Baptist Church in Walltown), he along with four other pastors began meeting in 1996 to build relationship and collaborative leadership to revitalize the Walltown Neighborhood. Through monthly activities including joint Bible studies, prayer, and food, five churches over a period of three years getting to know and love one another before they began to “do” justice in the community. In 1999, a visit from the Rev. Joe Mann of The Duke Endowment with a proposal to fund a major community initiative in Walltown came at an opportune time with the sincere trust, including a written covenant of life together, already achieved between the five churches. The priestly listening and ground work had already been prepared.

\(^2\) Habakkuk 2:2-3.
The pastors put forth a bold proposal to The Duke Endowment, and the grant was approved. The grant included an after-school program, a health ministry (a part-time parish nurse in three of the Walltown churches), senior adult ministry, a summer camp for teens, and residential community chaplaincy experiences for Duke Divinity students. They formed a non-profit corporation with help from Self-Help. An executive director, office manager, a part-time bookkeeper was hired. The initiative engaged in “Street Reach” community efforts and block parties. The five churches held annual joint worship services. Friendships deepened, and the partner churches continue to work together in various ways. St. John's and Watts Street have continued to meet together for an annual Martin Luther King, Jr. worship service and luncheon celebration. Walltown Neighborhood Ministries (WNM) proceeded with vigor for four years until grant funding ended. However, WNM continues today through ongoing collaboration, with regular meetings of the Board of WNM, including the pastors of the original five churches, and a few additions. Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, Executive Director of the School for Conversion and the Rutba House, an intentional Christian community in Walltown, serves as the Board Chair for WNM.

The early years of listening were a wearisome period for Williams, who was eager to get something (anything) started for the good of the community. He found it very difficult to sit still and wait until he was told or invited to participate in the community. He learned some valuable lessons during this time. He learned the value of priestly listening that lead to community transformation. The “retired” Reverend Williams is tirelessly leading the way for change in NECD through the work of REAL Durham.

---

5 For more information visit, http://www.realdurham.org/
In addition to REAL Durham and the Mayor’s Poverty Reduction Initiative other vital and new initiatives are underway in NECD. The transformation of the old Holloway Street elementary school is beautiful. In 2015 the KIPP:ENC Schools, Inc. a college preparatory program expanded to Durham and began restoring the old, run down building at 1107 Holloway St. and now serves nearly 100 students in the community in grades 5 and 6. Also, Antioch Baptist Church operates Antioch Builds Community, Inc. with the goals of providing temporary housing for persons re-entering the community from prison to achieve self-sufficiency. ABC seeks to offer holistic support for personal development and enrichment.6 ABC, Inc. hosted a faith re-entry conference entitled, Producing Healing Ministries through Faith-based Partnerships. DurhamCares seeks to share outcomes and continue community-based discussions on the opportunities to reduce recidivism and connect community members to healthy environments.

One final initiative that deserves mentioning is the 2econd Helpings Food Truck business being spearheaded by Drew Doll of the Religious Coalition. Doll, the faith re-entry team coordinator and coordinator of Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA), came up with the concept of a food truck business that would train and employ formerly incarcerated individuals at a living wage while creating accountable community to end sexual victimization.7 As indicated in this final project NECD is ripe for church-based community engagement. The critical question is the posture of local churches. DurhamCares has begun the journey of discovery by practicing not only priestly relationship and listening to the community, but also listening to pastors seeking

---

6 For more information visit, http://www.antiochbuildscommunity.com/mission--values.html
7 2econd Helpings, a collaboration of the Religious Coalition for a Nonviolent Durham, Durham Criminal Justice Resource Center and Core Catering, is working to break the cycle of prison recidivism by providing transitional employment that requires a criminal conviction to get hired, teaching skills necessary to keep a good job, and paying a certified Durham Living Wage.
to understand their views and visions for community. The grid below captures basic NECD church data and pastor responses as a beginning process of interpretation, learning and understanding for mobilization efforts. The goal is to find the thread for engaging a NECD church cohort for holistic Christian community development and transformation. In addition to this data, DurhamCares is constructing a church-mapping initiative that will be an interactive map of churches accessible to the public to see where churches are located physically and engaged practically in community transformation efforts. DurhamCares is committed to not only sharing the Samaritan stories, but also sharing the stories of churches active outside the walls of the church in on-going community development and holistic flourishing. Though the data of churches flourishing outside their walls is minimal, the organizational calling remains undaunted. For the most part churches in NECD are closed and the pastors and leaders are not easily accessible. Few are active in the community, and most do not have office hours or administrative offices. The best way to reach pastors and leaders was through attending church services and approaching them at the end of services. Other general history and information we gathered from church websites and Facebook pages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NECD Church</th>
<th>History in NECD?</th>
<th>Outreach focus? receptivity?</th>
<th>Perception(s) of NECD and one thing the church wants to see change in NECD?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angier Avenue Baptist Church</td>
<td>Established in 1861. Prior to 1970 had between 700-800 members. Full-time pastor departed in 2015.</td>
<td>No outreach ministry; church sold to Self-Help Credit Union in 2015. Part-time Pastor Moody currently gathering with 12-20 attendees on Sunday mornings. They have until Aug. 2017 to remain in facility.</td>
<td>Biggest issue is the cultural shift. Community used to be 90% white and now 90% black/Hispanic (white flight). Church did not adapt/embrace changing demographic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of the Apostolic Revival</td>
<td>Since 1993. Pastor Bennett is the founder; started at NCCU. The church had plans to move to east Durham, but the community wanted them to stay. Prostitutes worked near the church, but now respect the church because of the difference the church has made. ~800 members; 500 active. Church Motto: Love. They want to bring people up.</td>
<td>Thanksgiving dinner with vendors such as Golden Corral. They feed community every Sunday. Church van picks up members for Sunday service. Church has received the Key to the City from Mayor Bell on two occasions. Clothes Drives. They host a community day at NCCU around Easter. Host quarterly services at NCCU. They help with job searches and back to school drives. They would be interested in partnering with other churches as well as StepUp Durham. They also minister at a detention center every Wednesday. In 5 years the vision is a new sanctuary hopefully in NECD.</td>
<td>If they could change anything about the community it would be giving people Jesus. The biggest issue in community is the jealousy which is the reason why there is so much crime. Not necessarily leaders because they can't do everything and people must be accountable for something. Treating neighbors as they treat themselves is very important in community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecclesia House of Prayer</td>
<td>Church built in 1950s. Ecclesia has been in NECD for about 27 years. Current pastor has been pastoring church since 2009. ~300 members, ~60 active and will participate in outreach. Church motto: A church called to do great work, empowering men and women through the word of God.</td>
<td>Starting on a food pantry; provide blankets for homeless. They are interested in partnering with other churches as well as StepUp. In 5 years the pastor desires to relocate to a facility that seats 800-900 and rent out the current building.</td>
<td>The community is in limbo, because churches have not come together to aid the community. Need to get churches to be more selfless. The community needs outlets for youth. Inner-city kids are lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Shepherd Church of God in Christ.</td>
<td>Church built 1916. Active for about 35 years in NECD. Pastor Stanley Roberts has been there for about a year. 20 members, 18 active. 10 would most likely participate in outreach due to age. Membership is predominately African-American. None of the members live in the community.</td>
<td>No current outreach program. However, they periodically walk the community distributing information on God, Jesus, and Church. They desire to start a food pantry. They are interested in partnering with other church and organizations including StepUp Durham. They envision having a food pantry in 5 years.</td>
<td>Pastor Roberts views the community as lost and lacking knowledge of available resources. If he could change anything it would be more networking opportunities and for Pastors to come together and put their egos aside. Church motto... Touching lives with Jesus Christ not for notoriety or publicity. The church simply wants to preach truth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace Park Church</td>
<td>Church started out of Maureen Joy Charter School on Driver St. in 2013 (Feb). Now located in downtown Durham. Pastor Dante Randolph. 55 members; ~45 are active. Church Motto: To glorify God and impact the community through the word of Jesus Christ.</td>
<td>They intend on doing outreach through the now closed Agape Corner Christian School. Pastor Randolph is the Executive Director of the boarding school. They are interested in partnering with StepUp Durham as well as other churches or non-profits. 5-year vision is for Grace Park to be a place where community can see an organic love with sincerity by what's taking place behind closed doors. To be a church that is prospering and the prosperity is spilling into the community, drawing people to the kingdom.</td>
<td>NECD has great potential and is changing through gentrification. East Durham is a rich community, but is hindered by people attempting to provide services. If he could change anything it would be the methodology which serving is classified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Emmanuel Full Gospel Baptist Church</td>
<td>Since 2000. Pastor K.L. Johnson has been pastoring 14 years (former pastor was killed in a car accident). Church started in Holloway Funeral Home. Working on building a church on Pettigrew St. 379 members on role, ~75-100 attend, 25 are active for outreach. Church motto: They look down on no man unless they are looking down to help him.</td>
<td>Offer support for recovering addicts; currently inactive due to turnover within church. They would like to partner with other churches and StepUp. Church attempted to partner with organizations engaging formerly incarcerated individuals, but conflicts as a result of false promises to people that Pastor Johnson could do certain things through his position as a police officer which put him in a compromising position. He is open to working with a more transparent organization like StepUp with clear measureable outcomes. In 5 years the church desires to be in new location on Pettigrew St.</td>
<td>The community is in need of help. There has been disenfranchisement of the community from the city. If he could change something it would be the attitudes of the pastors. Pastors in the community do not get along. &quot;It's all about notoriety.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Full Assurance</td>
<td>Since 2011. Apostle Pastor Joseph Ivey lives in Wake Forest and has been pastoring for 18 years. ~100 members, 30 active and would support outreach. African-American Membership. Church motto is setting goals and being persistent and consistent which pleases God.</td>
<td>Church food bank open on Tues/Thurs. Annual Community Days (food and clothing giveaways). They are interested in partnering with other organizations incl. StepUp. Desire a larger facility, a daycare and more outreach programs. Pastor would like to remain in NECD, however, if property opens to allow a daycare facility, church would move. Currently</td>
<td>Community needs a lot of work, more resources, and people need to know about available resources. Need for more ministries to come together as one to meet the needs of people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Healing and Peace Tabernacle</strong></td>
<td><strong>Iglesia De Fe Monte De Los Olivos</strong></td>
<td><strong>Iglesia Rios de Agua Viva J.I.L</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since 2013. Pastor Anderson</td>
<td>Since July 4, 2015 under same pastor. ~130 members; 40 active and willing to help in outreach ministry. Hispanic Church. Motto: The church is a place of love.</td>
<td>Since 2006. Pastor Edgar Pabellon has been the pastor since 2008. ~120 members; 80 are active. Motto: A Restoration Church. Restore hurting people, hurt mainly from other church experiences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No current outreach program. Former door to door evangelism. They are receptive to partnering with other organizations such as StepUp Durham.</td>
<td>No current outreach programs, but are interested in partnering with other outreach programs and StepUp Durham. In 5 years they envision relocation. They want to grow and capture souls for Jesus.</td>
<td>No current outreach programs. They have responsibilities to their own members as well as their international church/organization (NC Circuit Assembly of Christian Churches) headquartered in New York. Uncertain whether the church is able to partner with any organization or church. Pastor is strapped for time and resources. Willing to be added to DurhamCares email list serve. Not interested in StepUp at this time. In 5 years they envision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerned about frequent shootings. Church is very loving and welcoming to all regardless of background. Worship center is a place for restoration, peace, and a judgement free zone.</td>
<td>The community needs a lot of help. If pastor could change anything it would be the people. &quot;The people are lost and commit crimes.&quot; The pastor wants to implement a plan for help.</td>
<td>If Pastor could change anything about the community it would be Hispanic integration. El Centro Hispano is the only group he knows about that does this. Hispanics seem to be visitors in NECD rather than a part of the community. It's hard for them to identify with something. Nothing draws them in. He believes African American churches connect, but Hispanic churches do not. There is no Hispanic identity. There is no connection of Hispanic and community. Pastor mentioned that it is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Since/Date</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love and Devine</td>
<td>Since Nov 2011. Contact Lucille Marley. ~19 members, 3-5 are active. Church Motto: Love, 1 Corinthians 13</td>
<td>Food pantry (Bank Agent); used to take part in clothing giveaways. Occasional Vacation Bible School. They are interested in partnering with other churches. Would like to have more information on StepUp Durham. In 5 years their goal is to be a thriving church with more members. They envision offering a music ministry and increased presence in the community. The neighborhood has improved, but more is needed. Prostitutes and drug addicts used to loiter on church steps. Holton and Y.E. Smith Elementary School has improved with several upgrades. Drastic decrease in unsafe activities on corner of Driver and Angier. If they could change anything about community it would be to see more people so they can teach them about God. Many people going to church in area are commuters and they rarely see people in the community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive Holiness</td>
<td>Since 1975. Founder, the late H.L. Brown. James Lewis has been Pastor since 2004. Church motto is to maintain a standard of holiness.</td>
<td>No current outreach programs, but interested. Church Daycare closed in 2015. Previously engaged in re-entry of incarcerated and halfway houses. Get more people engaged to recognize God as a source of Hope. People need to know how to depend on God.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepherd's Flock Baptist Church</td>
<td>Church established 2001. Pastor Wilhem has been pastor for about 5 years (anniversary is in November. 60 members, ~40% are</td>
<td>Annual Vacation Bible School open to the community. They provide resource booklets. Church sponsors a fall Community Fest with The community is growing with a lot of revitalization. He had no specific comments on the biggest issues in community.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Name</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Outreach Efforts</td>
<td>Concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shepherd's House UMC (formerly Carr UMC)</td>
<td>Since 2004. Majority of members are immigrants (Southern Africa/Zimbabwe). Rev. John Gumbo has been pastor for 6 years; served as associate pastor for 5 years prior.</td>
<td>vendors sharing resources and services for the community involving organizations such as Healing with CARRE, Ankle and Foot Doctors, Dentists, etc. Annual Clothing drive, (Urban Ministries). They are interested in partnering with other churches as well as StepUp Durham. Aspires in 5 years to have a renovated sanctuary; a community food bank, after school and summer camp programs; and 501(c)3 status to apply for grant funding.</td>
<td>Concerns for crime; and second chances for persons formerly incarcerated in terms of employment opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victory at Calvary</td>
<td>Since 1990. Pastor Boney pastor since 1990. ~300 members; ~50 are active. Membership is fairly mixed. The church motto encompasses a free spirit environment where all are welcome.</td>
<td>Back-to-School giveaways (Calvary Closet); summer feeding programs (breakfast and lunch); and Christmas toy giveaways. Highly receptive to partnering with other churches and organizations.</td>
<td>Community as quiet, not much crime around the church. Church is surrounded by homeowners vs. renters. Several old abandoned homes need repairs and restoration.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
None of the NECD churches have a designated community outreach minister or coordinator with the exception of Greater Emmanuel Temple of Grace. Pastors are strapped for time and are focused on feeding their flock with an occasional look to the needs of the community. And, this marks the motivation of this project’s ultimate aim to inspire new stories of church and community flourishing in NECD that will spread to other neighborhoods in Durham. A serious conversation was started in 2014 by national and local CCD leaders. Durham Mayor Bill Bell took the conversation to yet another level by initiating the Poverty Reduction Initiative. And, DurhamCares abides in a critical middle space of bringing the community together with the churches to fulfill and write new parables that include churches and Samaritans tending holistically to the needs and aspirations of our neighbors for the glory of God. Though there is no tangible end in sight as yet, there is a definite beginning. That beginning starts with a clearer view and vision of what has gone on, is going on, what should be happening in NECD. The playing field is attractive. The community players are active and well known. The question remains between now and the year 2020 will NECD churches embrace a vision for Christian community development and respond faithfully to their community’s hopes and aspirations in ways that dignify human lives, honors the goodness of creation, and glorifies God? DurhamCares works and prays the answer is yes and that the community will say, “Amen.”
Officer of Church Mobilization
Job Description

Job Summary:
Reporting directly to the Executive Director, this dynamic, well spoken, self-starter will strategically engage and build relationships with local churches in Durham to encourage and mobilize them to action. Leveraging the content and relationships DurhamCares has developed around each key issue area they will be responsible to inform, inspire and connect the Church to opportunities to serve and love their neighbors in their community.

Primary Objective: To collaborate with the larger Christian community in Durham and directly engage the local Church in an effort to support and empower the Church to live outside their walls and care for the larger community through healthy Christian community development.

Responsibilities:
● Speak, teach, and articulate effectively, intelligently, credibly, and passionately the biblical call to love and serve our neighbor;
● Ability to effectively initiate, develop and nurture one-on-one relationships with ethnically diverse church leaders, and various other constituents;
● Secure 100 meetings with 30 different Durham churches;
● Foster and maintain healthy relationships with local nonprofits and ministries;
● Raise the profile of healthy Christian community development broadly among churches and Christian leaders;
● Discover and share best practices of vivid church models (of every denomination, demographic and size) that demonstrate a wide array of possibility for churches engaging in Christian community development locally;
● Facilitate partnerships among churches and their programs and connections to nonprofit programs
● Procure innovative resources for churches to use that will strengthen their witness through Christian community development.
● Identify and fully vet successful model churches, inviting the most capable into field-based partnership that tangibly and measurably advance the greater work in the Durham;
● Frequent evening and weekend speaking and attendance at events within the Triangle required,
● Recruit and manage volunteer and intern staff
● Produce and present regular status updates to Executive Director.

Skills & Talent:
● A passion for community development and the mission and vision of DurhamCares
● Minimum of 5 years’ experience on a church staff, preferably in a community
development role;
● Proven ability to design multi-faceted projects, manage execution, monitor their results and make program adjustments as necessary;
● Significant experience delivering compelling 30-minute presentations to audiences in excess of 200 persons;
● Proven experience in reaching denominationally, socio-economically and ethnically diverse congregations;
● Bachelor’s degree required, advanced community development degree preferred.

Critical Qualities

● Mature orthodox Christian faith as defined by the Apostles’ Creed;
● A genuine passion for Christian community development;
● Knowledge of, experience with, and passion for the church in all its complexity;
● Commitment to excellence;
● Winsome bridge builder and strategist;
● Excellence in written and oral communications;
● High initiative self-starter;
● Tenacious, with a disciplined pursuit of DurhamCares strategic goals; and
● A mature and confident personality, a sense of humor and ability to handle pressure with professionalism
Bibliography


Bakke, Raymond. A Theology as Big as the City. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997.

Banks, Donna. Sermon preached at CityWell Church, Durham, NC, March 2015.


Durham Cares (www.durhamcares.org)

*The Durham Voice*. Durham, NC. www.durhamvoice.org


