

**The Munus Triplex:
A Pastoral Leadership Paradigm for HIV Prevention Ministry in the
African American Context**

by

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Duke University

Date: July 18, 2023

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry
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ABSTRACT

Pastoral leaders in African American contexts often play a critical role in conveying messages about what is vital to black and brown people. Pastoral leadership has always been the driving force behind change within the Black Church, especially in times of community suffering. Health disparities such as the HIV epidemic in the Black community have created a crisis just as alarming as the COVID pandemic, and the key to addressing this issue will require pastoral leadership. This research aims to examine the framework of pastoral leadership through the theological model of the Munus Triplex and how it can be utilized and maximized within the congregational context to transform its culture into one that is HIV competent and inculcated into the cultural fabric of the church.

My thesis will focus on the significance of pastoral leadership in the areas of proactive and preventative HIV education, and how the pastor's influence within the congregation can be best used to positively influence and generate outcomes leading to inclusive practices among members of the congregation in response to HIV stigmas. By examining the work of Christ through the lens of the Munus Triplex, we can ascertain some of the leadership competencies that constitute his roles as priest, prophet, and king. In turn, this can serve as a foundational model for pastoral leadership today. I will explore how each distinctive role of the Munus Triplex informs the pastor's work towards affecting change within the congregational context. Based upon this work, I will propose a leadership paradigm approach for African American religious leaders to help them embrace their vocational responsibility to care for the whole person free of stigma and harmful theological rhetoric in response to the HIV epidemic.

DEDICATION

“Education, awareness, and prevention are the key, but stigmatization and exclusion from family is what makes people suffer most.”- *Ralph Fiennes*

The compilation of this work is dedicated to the beloved Black Church and the faith leaders of such sacred space, in hopes of curating a pathway for us to collectively embrace the leadership characteristics of the Divine as an inclusive approach to addressing the HIV epidemic in our communities. I also dedicate this thesis to the individuals who experienced harmful rhetoric from the pulpit of the Black Church and as a result suffered in silence, shame, and siloed—may healing be your portion. Let us collectively strive towards compassion and grace for one another in our quest to live in harmony (Romans 12: 16-21, NIV).

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I am thankful for my supervisor, Dr. Jan Holton, who encouraged me to amplify my voice in this work; her guidance and support enriched my academic experience, and I am forever grateful. I also appreciate the faculty and staff of Duke University School of Divinity for their support and for ensuring the successful completion of this thesis.

I want to express my profound appreciation to Dr. Shonda Jones, founder and Principal Investigator, and Dr. Allison Mathews of The Compass Initiative® Faith Coordinating Center of Wake Forest School of Divinity for the opportunity to collaborate on the inaugural HIV & Faith Ambassador program. The collective efforts of this groundbreaking work have curated space for capacity-building training empowering African American faith leaders to faithfully commit to destigmatizing the harmful messaging associated with HIV.

I am deeply grateful for my husband, Dr. Thomas A. Banister III, his unwavering support in my ministerial and academic pursuits; have been the wind beneath my wings, I love you. I am immensely appreciative to Rev. Dr. Iris Banister for her wisdom, relentless support, and encouragement during this process, I am because of you. To my beloved children, thank you for your patience and understanding; I hope that I have been

an inspiration to you to reach for the stars. Lastly, to my family, “village” of friends and TMBC, your prayers, support and encouragement have been invaluable, and I thank God for each of you!

If

Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:

If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

Introduction

Born in the adversity of a public health crisis on July 1, 1946, the Communicable Disease Center (CDC) opened to prevent the spread of malaria across the United States. Over time the Center for Disease Control (renamed in 1970) has evolved into the leading science-based, data-driven service organization designed to protect the public’s health.¹ Thus, their core mission is to prevent the spread of communicable diseases for the purpose of “Saving Lives and Protecting People.”^{TM2} As the nation’s preeminent organization in the promotion of health and preventive healthcare measures, they are often recognized for disseminating information to the public in response to health crises and particularly those that may have global implications.

The CDC’s historical timeline officially first documents AIDS—in persons of hemophilia, transfusion patients, and infants born to mothers with AIDS—in 1982. In the following years, the CDC made significant strides to address the emerging epidemic of HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), so that by 1985, testing was available for individuals to determine their status before the onset of symptoms,³ and by 1994, the Center was able to identify the cause of HIV.

It is imperative to indicate that in the early days of HIV/AIDS, as cases emerged, limited information was known about the disease, and individuals who had contracted

¹ David J. Sencer, “Our History – Our Story,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), accessed May 17, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/museum/history/our-story.html>.

² “CDC 24/7: Saving Lives, Protecting People,” CDC Foundation, accessed May 17, 2023, <https://www.cdcfoundation.org/cdc-247-saving-lives-protecting-people>.

³ Anthony S. Fauci and H. Clifton Lane “Four Decades of HIV/AIDS—Much Accomplished, Much To Do,” *New England Journal of Medicine* 383, no. 1 (2020):1–4.

AIDS usually had a short span to live—sometimes only a matter of months.⁴ As HIV spread, it greatly impacted marginalized groups, including men who have sex with men (MSM), drug users, and people who exchange sex for money.⁵ Thus, public policymakers were slow to respond to the crisis.

Such a delayed response gives credence to the systemic implications of social injustices that continue to be the primary cause of the accelerated spread of what is known now as HIV. Historically, marginalized communities experience adversities that impede their ability to flourish across economic, health, social, and political dimensions. As the CDC notes, such “nonmedical factors . . . influence health outcomes. They are conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life. These forces and systems include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies, racism, climate change, and political systems”⁶ (see Figure 1.1).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Kaiser Family Foundation, *Evolution of an Epidemic: 25 Years of HIV/AIDS Media Campaigns in the U.S.*, June 2006, <https://www.kff.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/7515.pdf>; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Understanding AIDS* brochure, 1988, HHS Publication No. (CDC) HHS-88-8404, <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/6927>; James W. Curran and Harold W. Jaffe, “AIDS: The Early Years and CDC’s Response,” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) Supplement* 60, no. 4 (2011): 64–69.

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Social Determinants of Health at the CDC,” accessed May 17, 2023, <https://www.cdc.gov/about/sdoh/index.html>.



Figure 1:1: Social Determinants of Health⁷

Understanding the conceptual framework of social determinants of health helps us better understand how HIV impacts marginalized groups. In particular, in an article published in the National Library of Medicine, Felicia Hill-Briggs states, “Longstanding, pervasive patterns of disparities exists between African Americans and White Americans across various health conditions.”⁸ Additionally, Jeffries and Sutton affirm that African Americans have a higher risk of contracting HIV, a lower risk of being aware that they

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Felicia Hill-Briggs et al. “Social Determinants of Health, Race, and Diabetes Population Health Improvement: Black/African Americans as a Population Exemplar,” *Current Diabetes Reports* 22, no. 3 (2021): 117–28, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11892-022-01454-3>.

have the illness, and a higher risk of death due to HIV/AIDS than members of any other ethnic group in the United States.⁹

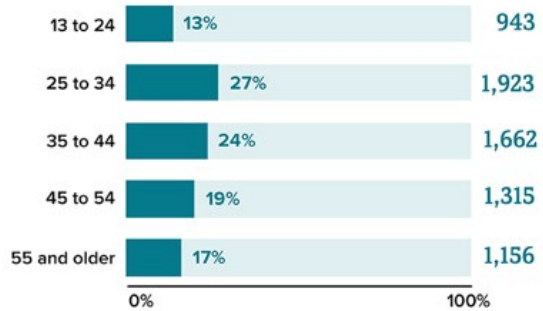
The Black Church, which has traditionally been seen as the main support system for communities of color, has typically been less willing, if not outright unwilling, to provide care and support through HIV prevention programs, certainly not in a manner commensurate with the serious impact of this devastating global disease. Among the several health-related infirmities that disproportionately impact African American communities, HIV continues to have the most devastating effects. Statistical data from the CDC in 2019 asserts that while “Black/African Americans make up only 13% of the population of the United States, they accounted for more than 42% of all newly diagnosed cases.”¹⁰ Recent data from the CDC further suggests more startling statistics that report the leading group of newly diagnosed cases is most prominent amongst heterosexual African American women in the demographic age range of twenty-five to thirty-four (see Figures 1.2 and 1.3). Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that churches serving the African American community get involved. (The tables below provide the most recent statical data from the CDC that provides insight into individuals with a new diagnosis.)

⁹ William L. Jeffries IV, Madeline Y. Sutton, and Agatha N. Eke, “On the Battlefield: The Black Church, Public Health, and the Fight against HIV among African American Gay and Bisexual Men,” *Journal of Urban Health* 94 (2017): 384–98, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-017-0147-0>.

¹⁰ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *HIV Surveillance Report, 2019*, vol. 32, May 2021, <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/library/reports/hiv-surveillance.html>, accessed May 18, 2023.

New HIV Diagnoses Among Women by Age in the US and Dependent Areas, 2019*

Women aged 25 to 34 had the highest number of new HIV diagnoses.



Total may not equal 100% due to rounding.

* Based on sex assigned at birth and includes transgender people. For more information about transgender people, visit CDC's HIV and Transgender People web content.

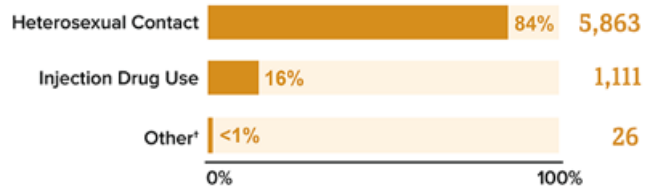
Source: CDC. Diagnoses of HIV infection in the United States and dependent areas, 2019. HIV Surveillance Report 2021:32.

Fig 1.2:

<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/images/group/gender/women/infographics/cdc-hiv-women-age-infographic-1200x630.png>

New HIV Diagnoses Among Women by Transmission Category in the US and Dependent Areas, 2019*

Most new HIV diagnoses among women were attributed to heterosexual contact.



* Based on sex assigned at birth and includes transgender people. For more information about transgender people, visit CDC's HIV and Transgender People web content.

† Includes perinatal exposure, blood transfusion, hemophilia, and risk factors not reported or not identified.

Source: CDC. Diagnoses of HIV infection in the United States and dependent areas, 2019. HIV Surveillance Report 2021:32.

Fig. 1.3:

<https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/images/group/gender/women/infographics/cdc-hiv-women-age-infographic-1200x630.png>

In the Fall of 2022, I was presented with a unique opportunity to collaborate on a new initiative to approach the challenges of HIV stigma that African American communities of faith grapple with. Essentially, The COMPASS Initiative® Faith Coordinating Center (FCC) at Wake Forest University addresses concerns about HIV stigma in African American faith communities in the U.S. South through training, grantmaking, and storytelling. FCC's grantmaking supports faith leaders and nonprofit organizations across North Carolina and the U.S. South in their efforts to implement HIV stigma reduction programming and services. FCC partnered with Old North State Medical Society (ONSMS), the second oldest African American-led medical society in the state, to leverage their network of NC Black physicians to increase HIV education and advocacy.

The partnership creates an opportunity for bidirectional learning between medical providers and faith communities to facilitate culturally sensitive engagement and change public perceptions about HIV using faith-based, medically informed information. Furthermore, this initiative is working to address enduring challenges that impact the advancement of HIV awareness among Black faith communities. The program is designed to reframe anti-LGBTQ and anti-HIV theological paradigms by incorporating African spirituality and providing historical context to sacred texts and practical tools for incorporating affirming messages in faith practices. It also addresses implicit biases of medical providers regarding ways to integrate faith-informed medical care. It encourages medical providers to develop partnerships with faith leaders to address the HIV epidemic.

The HFA program fills a gap in public health interventions to address HIV stigma by developing a scalable, network-based training model that works to ensure the sustainability of programming and shift cultural practices in interfaith and medical settings to be welcoming to PLWH. My involvement in this work has allowed me to witness the gaps in medicine, faith communities, and the academy.

Moreover, it is apparent through observation that some African American faith leaders still struggle with addressing HIV and often avoid the topic. They engage in harmful preaching and teaching that ensues shame and exclusion, further marginalizing those Persons Living with HIV (PLWH), their family, and friends. The harmful teaching and preaching rhetoric regarding HIV are antithetical to the fundamental principles of the African American tradition of Kwanzaa. Kellie Carter Jackson, assistant professor in the department of Africana Studies at Wellesley College and co-editor of *Reconsidering Roots: Race, Politics, and Memory*, conveys that the practice of Kwanza “is a great time for reflection and now more than ever, our country needs to be reminded of unity.”¹¹ Comparable to Jackson, I believe that the same is true for the African American pastor and faith community; in light of this prevailing issue, we need to gravitate towards practices that are inclusive of unifying us despite our differences.

From my perspective, some African American pastors wrestle with remaining gatekeepers of the gospel by upholding antiquated anti-biblical theological ideologies that are antithetical to the original mandate of Christ. Unfortunately, individuals in these types of religious spaces who experience harmful preaching that drives them away from God frequently feel ostracized and have limited spiritual transformational encounters. These

¹¹ Sunny Sea Gold, “10 Things You Might Not Know about Kwanzaa,” May 16, 2023, <https://www.rd.com/article/things-you-never-knew-about-kwanzaa/>.

off-putting experiences can cause the individual to feel isolated and ashamed. They soon realize that the space is no longer suitable for them, and they remove themselves from being a part of the faith community. I wholeheartedly believe this type of unresolved trauma warrants attention from those faith leaders who find themselves “on the fence” regarding their position. Therefore, African American faith leaders must be mindful of these the aforementioned occurrences, that give credence to a vast spectrum of individuals who are a part of our communities, be aware of their own implicit biases that can often prejudice their interpretation of scripture and understand how messages are conveyed to those whom they care for in the congregation.

I believe that many pastors are still unsure if they should preach, teach, or address HIV as a social justice imperative and consequently experience theological dissonance. The concept of theological dissonance is critical when contemplating how HIV should be addressed.

Moreover, in my experience as an adult educator and practitioner, I judge one of the main components of the learning process for students is the assimilation of new information. There are instances when adult learners experience cognitive dissonance when a new concept is introduced. For some, it can be perceived as being unpleasant, punitive, and objectionable. Additionally, cognitive dissonance theory can also be described as having the propensity for individuals to seek continuity within the context of their beliefs and opinions.

When there are discrepancies amid attitudes or behaviors, something must be transformed to eliminate the dissonance. When faith leaders in the African American Church refuse to expand their knowledge regarding issues that impact their congregants

and their communities, unfortunately, they perpetuate the systemic oppression which reinforces those who are marginalized and already suffering based on the aforementioned social determinants. Therefore, African American faith leaders need to reexamine their role and disposition in the matter.

Upon onboarding to the Faith Compass project, I became engrossed in learning more about the intersection of HIV and Faith communities. In my research, I discovered that contrary to popular belief, HIV had not gone away, and it still impacted people of color, particularly *heterosexual* African American women. This statistic alone pierced my heart and piqued my interest. Perhaps this gripped the corridors of my heart while sparking my curiosity because I fit within the statistical demographics of the leading group of new cases and thought about how many women who look like me are facing this life-altering diagnosis (which, thankfully, is no longer a death sentence).

I have been a member of the African American Church all my life. As a child, I quickly learned that the pastor was the first and last authority on all matters related to the Church and, in some cases, what goes on in the home, especially if a single woman heads the home. As a teenager in the Church, I often wondered how and why the pastor had so much power and determined what the Church did or did not get involved in. Still, they were just questions that I asked only myself, even if I did not find or even seek to find an answer.

When I became an adult in the Black Church, I liked most of the congregation, accepting the almost absolute authority of the pastor and things as they were. I am now married to a progressive African American pastor and have come to understand through observation and second-hand experience as the pastor's wife that congregations also

expect the pastor to have all the answers, as the pastor is accepted as the unmistakable voice of God on earth. My pastor, my husband, believes in and works towards shared decision-making that openly involves all church members. Though slow, the congregation is grasping the concept and is stepping forward to question decisions, offer suggestions and help to create, develop, and volunteer to lead programs, committees, and projects. One such committee, established before my husband became the pastor, was less than active in more than name—this was the HIV/AIDS committee.

My husband and congregation members seek ways to give meaning, create an effective agenda, and encourage others to join the committee or at least share their ideas. As aforementioned, my current role as a team member at Wake Forest School of Divinity's Faith Compass Coordinating Center has given me the opportunity to assist the committee and foster a knowledge of HIV/AIDS as an epidemic that threatens the Black community, both in this country and around the world, which is why I'm interested in the meaningful activation of the Church's HIV/AIDS committee/ministry. While I am not a part of the committee, I am a part of the group concentrating on HIV/AIDS to activate the church committee. Three of my objectives are to try to persuade the committee to reach out to the community in addition to the Church, to promote awareness of HIV/spread, AIDS, and to develop programming designs for HIV/AIDS that are effective and transferable to other churches and institutions.

The purpose of the work documented in this project is not only to evaluate the challenges that prevent African American churches from effective engagement but to ultimately craft a paradigm of pastoral leadership specifically designed for church leaders to aid them in moving the congregation's response to and support of the HIV crisis from

an ancillary concern to a primary pursuit. The impetus behind this work rests in the fact that pastors are the driving force behind programmatic change within congregational life and the centerpiece of a congregation's community engagement. Research indicates that it is critical to involve the pastor in the African American community to boost the success of all health and wellness efforts, not only those whose primary focus is the prevention of HIV.¹²

Pastoral leaders in African American contexts often play a critical role in conveying messages about what is vital to black and brown people. In times of crisis and community suffering, the relationship between the message proclaimed from the pulpit and the mission executed from the pews becomes even more evident. The authors of "The Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting Healthy Habits in Religious Institutions," Mark Anshel and Mitchell Smith, contend that the responsibility of religious leaders in encouraging healthy behaviors among their congregants must include the effective integration of health and wellness ministries.¹³ Anshel and Smith also highlight the great authority that religious leaders possess and their affiliation with religious traditions, which have a history of influencing people's morals and spirituality.¹⁴ In a pilot study sponsored by the National Center Biomedical Information, a data research arm of the National Institute of Health, a twenty-five-question survey was disseminated to African American pastors of a variety of church sizes, denominations, and geographical locations in which they were asked basic demographic information about themselves and their

¹² Marci Kramish Campbell et al., "Church-based Health Promotion Interventions: Evidence and Lessons Learned," *Annual Review of Public Health* 28 (2007): 213–34; M. J., DeHaven et al., "Health Programs in faith-based organizations: Are they effective?" *American Journal of Public Health* 94, no. 6 (2004): 1030–36.

¹³ M. H. Anshel and M. Smith, "The Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting Healthy Habits in Religious Institutions," *Journal of Religion Health* 53, no. 4 (2014): 1046–59.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

congregations.¹⁵ They were also queried on their health ministry programs' existence, breadth, and scope, specifically regarding HIV promotion and prevention. The reasons for providing or not providing HIV prevention services were also explored in the questionnaire, which ultimately led to results that undergird this document's purpose. Given that the congregations were of various sizes, demographic make-up, and geographical locations, the conclusions reached by the questionnaire were in line with what the researcher discovered within the scope of this project. While all the pastors surveyed felt a ministry addressing the adverse effects of HIV was of extreme necessity, less than a quarter of their congregations offered health-related services, and only half of the quarter offered programming and services deliberately addressing HIV.

Out of the three principal reasons why these churches lacked HIV prevention programs, the greatest was attributed to the lack of appropriate funding sources. With church budgets being stretched to the limit in many cases, especially during the COVID-19 epidemic, it can be inferred that financial resources that would have been used for extension ministries like HIV prevention may have been repurposed to meet needs that supported the church's immediate survival. Also of note after the further query was the lack of knowledge and appropriate information regarding the costs of designing and deploying a program of service and support proportional to the size of the church's financial and human resources. Though three-quarters of respondents recognized the need for HIV prevention programs for the community, very few identified the need for services within their congregations, nor did they identify as high-risk locations where

¹⁵ Alice Ammerman et al., "Research Expectations Among African American Church Leaders in the PRAISE! Project: A Randomized Trial Guided by Community-Based Participatory Research," *American Journal of Public Health* 93, no. 10 (2003): 1720–27, <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.93.10.1720>.

specific congregants were identified as persons living with HIV. Consequently, the pastors surveyed had little to no motivation to apply financial resources to an issue that impacted the community but was not reflected among the issues that directly affected the congregation consistently. This could be primarily related to the fact that individuals who are living with HIV may not have ever disclosed their illness to the leadership of the church, or church members who have infected family members or community associates may be less vocal about these conditions because of the stigmas associated with HIV or the fear of repudiation by the pastor or fellow congregants. However, without this knowledge, it is solely the perception of the pastor and church leadership that ultimately determines whether a program of HIV prevention becomes a pervasive ministry priority among and against the plethora of additional problems that harm the church and the community.

The lack of HIV prevention efforts in African American churches is also due to ignorance and false information. When HIV began infiltrating the U.S. population in the early 1980s, it was widely reported as a sexually transmitted disease affecting predominately gay white men. Initially known as Gay-Related Immune Deficiency (GRID) in the medical profession, the disorder was also known as “gay cancer” or “gay syndrome” in less official contexts. Because of the growing stigma associated with the original terminology, and the discovery that many heterosexual persons were also contracting the disease through modes other than sexual transmission, the terms HIV and AIDS replaced GRID. However, stigmatizing HIV as a gay disease did significant harm, particularly when early HIV pandemic photos showed young, white, gay men with AIDS-related health difficulties with devastated bodies. Because of the presumption of safety

from HIV based upon certain sexual behaviors and the absence of white gay men within African American congregations and communities, a tendency towards pervasive apathy was a natural consequence. However, as the African American community began to experience the devastating effects of the disease, not only did it expose the misnomer that HIV was an exclusively gay white male disease, it also showed that the disease was sexually transmitted among homosexual *and* heterosexual persons and also spread among intravenous drug users sharing needles with other infected persons. After decades of misinformation and apathy within African American congregations and communities, the calculus of HIV as a community threat suddenly and drastically changed so that none was prepared to combat it in a coordinated effort.

Another source of misinformation that continues to plague African American congregations and communities, preventing overall health and wellness, especially the treatment of HIV, is an enduring mistrust in the medical establishment.

There is a lengthy history of prejudice and exploitation directed toward African Americans at the hands of the medical profession in the United States. This dark memory is still present in the community today. In the past, medical institutions have utilized African bodies against their consent for the advancement of medical research and have supported organizations, ideas, and technology that fortified unjust regimes. In addition, they have used African bodies as guinea pigs for experiments on humans.¹⁶ In the wake of mistrust, misinformation in the form of conspiracy theories is rife, leading to decades of avoiding medical care, the formation of deeply engraining stigmas, and the raising of even higher barriers to testing and prevention. Three main false beliefs are held by those

¹⁶ E. A. Jacobs et al., "Understanding African Americans' Views of the Trustworthiness of Physicians," *Journal of General Internal Medicine* 21, no. 6 (2006): 642–47.

opposed to HIV treatment and prevention. According to the findings of a study funded by the National Institutes of Health on the health and sociocultural implications of AIDS genocidal beliefs and medical mistrust among African American gay men, common views included the beliefs that : (1) HIV is a manufactured disease produced in a laboratory by the CIA to control the growth of the African American community through strategic genocide; (2) people who take prescribed HIV medications are human guinea pigs for the government; and (3) the medications that doctors prescribe are either poisonous or cause people to get AIDS.¹⁷ The overall magnitude of these errant theories and hyper-homophobic attitudes prevalent in African American communities create a nearly impossible barrier to overcome for HIV prevention. With current trends suggesting that 1 out of 16 African Americans will receive a positive HIV diagnosis in their lifetime, the proliferation of misinformation based upon mistrust will drastically increase these numbers, especially among persons who will never seek a diagnosis from a doctor. According to the authors of “The Health and Sociocultural Correlates of AIDS Genocidal Beliefs and Medical Mistrust Among African American MSM,” “Despite significant advances in prevention and treatment, African Americans continue to have a lower likelihood of obtaining HIV antiretroviral medications, a higher likelihood of reporting poor adherence to medication regimens, and a lower likelihood of being maintained in care for the condition. In addition, the mortality rate for HIV patients among African Americans is thirteen percent greater than the mortality rate among Whites.”¹⁸

¹⁷ K. G. Quinn et al., “The Health and Sociocultural Correlates of AIDS Genocidal Beliefs and Medical Mistrust Among African American MSM,” *AIDS and Behavior* 22 (2018): 1814–25, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-016-1657-6>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

The existence of unsettled theological stances about ministry to HIV-positive people is the third factor preventing HIV prevention efforts in African American churches. To address African Americans' spiritual, social, economic, and physical needs as an oppressed community, the Black Church has offered resources to its members that were systematically withheld from African Americans throughout the time of slavery and Jim Crow segregation.¹⁹

African American congregations were self-styled as meeting points where education and personal empowerment through moral and spiritual behaviors lifted African Americans coming out of slavery and imbued them with a sense of agency to counter the forces of disenfranchisement inflicted upon them in a racist society. It is preaching, teaching, and music that have historically pointed members not only to the eschatological hope of heaven's gain in the hereafter but also provided community-level action to galvanize African Americans in protest against racial violence and hardship. However, according to the PBS special *From 1967 to Today: The Black Church and HIV/AIDS*, as traditional blue-collar jobs were replaced by the new economy, which locked many African Americans out of the marketplace, poverty devastated whole communities, and the sins of promiscuity and drug addiction traditionally demonized by Church doctrine began to rise to epidemic proportions. "It was a challenging situation. Ministers must address practices like homosexuality, drug use, and promiscuous sexuality that they consider highly immoral every Sunday from the pulpit.

Although there were gay worshipers in the congregation, Black preachers expressed their disdain because homosexuality is highly stigmatized in Black

¹⁹ C. E. Lincoln and L. H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990).

communities.”²⁰ Widely criticized for its silent outward response to HIV prevention for over three decades, its proliferation of homophobic messaging that has reportedly driven many gay men and their proponents away from the African American Church cannot be ignored. Robert Miller Jr., associate professor at the University of Albany, further supports this claim, stating, “Despite reporting high levels of spirituality, gay men frequently report that they are subjected to significant levels of religious ostracism and venom (such as anti-gay slandering), even when they hold important leadership positions within their congregations. This is the case even when they report that they have been able to overcome these obstacles.”²¹ It has also resulted in a fear among congregants across every demographic to reveal one’s positive status, or the status of those connected to church members, in the very place where community resources and spiritual support should be available regardless of demographic, social status, or sexual orientation. Even more disturbing is the effect that homophobic language has had on the African American Church, which has lost its role as the leader of the African American community in recent decades, leaving HIV-positive persons forced to seek resources and support from community-based secular organizations which offer services and support but lack the means and methodologies to offer spiritual or moral guidance to help HIV persons embrace lifestyle choices that are more closely aligned to the biblical imperative. As the HIV epidemic rages on, African American churches are forced to wrestle with a deep incongruence between the biblical mandate to minister to the needs of the oppressed and

²⁰ This Far by Faith, “The Black Church and HIV/AIDS,” 2003, https://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/journey_5/p_3.html

²¹ R. L. Miller, Jr., “Legacy Denied: African American Gay Men, AIDS, and the Black Church,” *Social Work* 52, no. 1 (2007): 51–61.

the biblical imperative to preach and teach the obligatory embrace of moral and spiritual purity.

One pervasive presumption in traditional Black congregations is that HIV infection is a consequence of sexual immorality and violates biblical tenets. Because of this, a vast majority of African American churches continue to be immobilized in their efforts to address the HIV issue fearing that their do-ology would hypocritically betray their talk-ology. For instance, the doctrine of the Church discourages relationships between people of the same sexual orientation, restricts engaging in sexual activity before and outside of marriage, and in some cases, prohibits the use of contraception. Therefore, while supporting the use of condoms or having exclusive relationships outside of marriage may be essential to preventing the spread of HIV, doing so is commonly perceived as going against Church doctrine, values, and beliefs. The prompt mobilization of the African American Church in the wake of the COVID outbreak is the most recent and compelling indication that congregations do indeed have the financial and personnel resources required to address issues that affect African American communities.

The unwavering dedication of the African American Church to meeting the requirements of those who are oppressed, the ailing, and the disenfranchised in African American communities is even more obvious. Though ingrained into its life and work, the congregation's motivation to respond to community challenges is discerned best in how the pastor communicates specific needs and gives them relevance through the lens of the gospel.

This makes the pastor the prime purveyor of the biblical imperative and the sole interpreter of how that message is internalized, translated, and executed through the

church's program. Consequently, the pastor's theological and sociocultural convictions conveyed through the pastor's messaging, whether it be through sermons, teachings, and observations, influence the thoughts, opinions, and perceptions of congregants with the ultimate intention of moving them toward some planned activity. Suppose the ability of the pastor to reconcile contemporary conceptions of human life and salvation with the fundamental ideas of the Bible is at the heart of the response of the African American Church to the HIV crisis, as it is to all other crises that have occurred throughout history. In that case, this crisis will be no different. It could be inferred that crafting the clergy leader's theological messaging with greater inclusivity, providing tools designed to combat misinformation and stigma, and linking the congregation to financial resources, may yield a shift in beliefs, values, and activities, creating an environment more amenable to effective HIV prevention programming.

The main objective of this study is to find and assess a leadership model that may be used to develop and carry out an HIV/AIDS program in the Black Church in collaboration with the Black community, community-based organizations, and health-oriented initiatives. This model, apart from drawing on strong medical data and attending to patterns of leadership in the Black Church, makes extensive use of the theological concept of the *Munus Triplex*—that is, the “Threefold Offices of Christ,” which consists of Christ's role as a prophet, priest, and king. Though the *Munus Triplex* has historically been used to identify the means through which Christ secures redemption and reconciliation for humanity, more recently it has become representative of a leadership model with significant elements that resonate with the leadership structure of the Black church. The *Munus Triplex* also presents as a paradigm for a pastoral theology that not

only resonates with the congregational impulse to advance effective engagement in a contemporary context but also undergirds the concept of a program of HIV prevention with educational and financial resources that sustain long-term mobilization of these efforts.

The analysis of Jesus Christ's soteriological role as prophet, priest, and king as one of the three tenets offered in the Munus Triplex paradigm will serve as the driving force behind the completion of this project's primary objective. This analysis also aids in galvanizing a leadership paradigm that provides the stability and cohesion necessary to lend credibility to this project. The Munus Triplex leadership model leaves room to explore and add specific resources designed to minimize the harmful effects of stigmatizing behavior against HIV-positive persons while shifting the congregation's message, method, and mandate from cause to cure. While the use of the Munus Triplex paradigm will be used as the basic framework for this project, I have concluded that using the actual Latin term may cause problems in the understanding and acceptance of my work; therefore, I will use the framework of the Munus Triplex, but for the sake of clarity I am replacing the term *Munus Triplex* with *PPK Paradigm*, which stands for Prophet, Priest, and King.

Pulpit messaging, though a primary indicator that determines the church's—especially the Black Church—theological disposition is only one part of preparing the congregation to become a safe space for HIV prevention. According to the reasons the pastors included in the study, the scarcity of financial resources and misinformation regarding HIV were also prohibitive challenges to HIV prevention. Offering the PPK Paradigm as the leadership paradigm for African American clergy allows us to remember

that all human suffering is a result of a fallen world, and that God is redeeming through the message, the mission, and the manifestation of Jesus Christ.

Consequently, clergy leaders feel called upon to address society's ills as compelled by their understanding of Christ's multifaceted function to reconcile humanity instead of being constrained by Church doctrine and socially accepted cultural norms. The preciseness of Christ's message of prophecy, the all-encompassing nature of Christ's priestly intercession, and the integrity of Christ's kingly charge to the world are the defining characteristics of Christianity that make the PPK Paradigm an effective foundational location from which clergy and congregation are compelled to model the life, work, and, ultimately, the sacrifice of Jesus. It also offers a very practical construct that lays the groundwork for HIV prevention and programming that limits focus on causality and directs emphasis on using Christ's example to inform clergy and their congregation to become agents of care who are concerned with redemption of mind, body, and spirit.

When viewed through the lens of the Munus Triplex, Black Liberation Theology reveals a shared theological commitment based on the notion that humans are made in the image of God. This conviction is predicated on the premise that people have free will. Consequently, African American congregations are obligated by the Bible to eliminate any obstacles that stand in the way of the divinely guided mission of human salvation. To dispel harmful theology and foster intersectional bridges amongst faith leaders, the theoretical framework of the PPK Paradigm may offer insights where faith leaders can glean wisdom to not only embody the characteristics of the three-fold offices but also provide a road map to develop HIV prevention programs within African American

congregations that reflect the spectrum of Christ's redemptive roles in accomplishing the Missio-Dei in the world beyond stigma, barriers, and exclusivity.

Munus Triplex has been replaced as a term only; therefore, it is important to this work to include in chapter one a literary review of the Munis Triplex as a leadership paradigm in a contemporary context is presented. Chapter two analyzes the historical, biblical, and theoretical foundations of the Munis Triplex as a leadership paradigm in light of the HIV pandemic and how its tenets are best synthesized with the theological and sociocultural context of the Black Church.

Chapter three provides the components and resources necessary for the programmatic implementation of an HIV prevention ministry and how leaders can best engage the missions arm of the congregation to design community-based outreach and create safe spaces for in-reach. Finally, Chapter four concludes the research project by offering insights and challenges to implementation, as well as recommendations that assist clergy leaders in addressing and engaging HIV prevention within Black congregations and the communities they serve.

Chapter One

Literature Review

Regarding Jesus Christ's person and ministry, the *Munus Triplex*—translated from Latin as the Triple Cure—is the central theological idea in Reformed Theology. Protestant theologians like Calvin and Barth have used the *Munus Triplex* to comprehend Christ's role in God's goal of rapprochement with humanity. As Calvin points out, the threefold office has ecclesiological implications because all Christians share Christ's ongoing work as a mediator. Christians have known from Scripture that the Holy Spirit calls and enables them to carry out the tripartite function of Christ since the early church and in almost every major theological tradition. Though notably expected and discerned in one who is called to lead, the work of every Christian has prophetic, priestly, and royal dimensions. The literature on the application of the *Munus Triplex* as a leadership paradigm for ministry is explored throughout this chapter; however, it is essential to quickly review the history of the *Munus Triplex* and investigate the existing literature on its orthodoxy as a theological construct.

Christ's prophetic, priestly, and kingly ministry in the New Testament has been directly linked to the Old Testament offices of prophet, priest, and king. This presupposition has existed among scholars for centuries. However, how these offices inform the theological and practical activities of the church, especially leadership practices, is a much more contemporary undertaking. In the fourth century, Eusebius of Caesarea was the first person to compare the prophetic, priestly, and regal offices that

Christ held.¹ Eusebius, in one of the oldest historical works, *Ecclesiastical History*, acknowledged that prophets, priests, and kings represent Christ. Following Eusebius, Thomas Aquinas, Peter Chrysologus, and John Chrysostom (c. 347–407) all acknowledged and elaborated on the tripartite function of Christ. Andreas Osiander (1496–1552) and Martin Bucer were the first Protestants to present Christ in this way. John Calvin is recognized as being inspired to create the framework for explaining Christ’s identity and mission of reconciliation by Bucer, who, according to Louis Berkhof, served as his mentor for three years at Strasbourg.² Through his work in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, which later served as the foundation for contemporary systematic theology, Calvin was instrumental in popularizing the threefold pattern of Christ’s offices throughout the Reformation. Calvin was the first to grasp the significance of differentiating the Mediator’s three ministries and drew attention to it in a separate chapter of his *Institutes*.³ In Book II, Calvin states: “So that faith may discover in Christ a firm base of salvation, and so rest in him, we must commence with this principle, that the office which he received from the Father consists of three parts. He was chosen to serve as a Prophet, King, and Priest.”⁴ Calvin makes a connection between the three-fold offices assumed by Christ, observing that these three offices in the Old Testament were not just necessary to the social, political, and cultural functions of the Israelite community; they were offices sanctioned by and anointed by God. This parallel connection is made in the Heidelberg Catechism (1563):

¹ Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Kirsopp Lake, Loeb Classical Library 153 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 35.

² Robert Sherman, *King, Priest, and Prophet: A Trinitarian Theology of Atonement* (New York: T & T Clark, 2004), 66.

³ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1938), 356.

⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 1:426.

Question 31. Why is he called “Christ,” that is, the anointed? Answer: Because he is ordained of God the Father, and anointed with the Holy Ghost, to be our chief Prophet and Teacher, who has fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption; and to be our only High Priest, who by the one sacrifice of his body, has redeemed us, and makes continual intercession with the Father for us; and also to be our eternal King, who governs us by his word and Spirit, and who defends and preserves us in that salvation, he has purchased for us.⁵

This idea was also expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith in 1646, which states: “It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only born Son, to be the Mediator between God and man, the Prophet, Priest, and King.”⁶

The Office of the Prophet

Calvin’s insistence on the prophetic office’s inclusion and importance in the Munus Triplex formula stems from the idea that in contrast to the kings and priests designated to serve as the people’s representatives, the prophets of the Old Testament were given supernatural authority to stand in for the presence of God:

⁵ Heidelberg Catechism (1563), “Question 31,” accessed December 11, 2022, <http://www.apuritansmind.com/creeds-and-confessions/the-heidelberg-catechism-by-zacharias-ursinus/>.

⁶ Westminster Larger Catechism (1648), 8.1, accessed December 11, 2022, <https://www.apuritansmind.com/westminster-standards/larger-catechism/>.

Moreover, it is to be observed that the name Christ refers to those three offices: for we know that under the law, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with holy oil. Whence, also, the celebrated name of Messiah was given to the promised Mediator. But although I admit (as I have shown elsewhere) that he was so-called from a view of the nature of the kingly office, the prophetic and priestly functions still have their proper place and must not be overlooked.⁷

Whereas the ability of kings and priests of the Old Testament to function publicly was preceded by a ceremonial anointing, prophets are anointed discreetly and directly. However, their message, and in many cases, the miracles that accompanied them, were proclaimed and displayed publicly. This combination of message and miracle imbues a sense among Israel that the message and the messenger are authoritative because he operates under a supernatural spiritual anointing. The first official prophet of Israel is Moses. After being anointed secretly by God at the burning bush (Exodus 3), he can communicate God's word and will to everyone, even the pharaoh of Egypt, not just to the Israelites.

He is also provided a rod that becomes both the emblem of this spiritual anointing and divine authority and the conduit through which miracles are ostentatiously performed against the enemies of Israel for their protection, rebuke, and reproof. As God's chosen prophetic messenger, Moses is not only the only one with the ability to utter the word of God and disclose the will of God on God's behalf; he is also the only one to accomplish

⁷ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:432.

miracles that establish and reiterate his authority throughout God's interactions with Israel.

As God's first anointed prophet, Moses functions as a liberator, defender, and lawgiver to Israel, establishing an archetype for prophets who would come after him, including Jesus. Throughout the book of Exodus, the function of the prophetic office also entails the proclamation of God's message for the current historical and cultural context and the performance of miracles that glorified God and ultimately shifted the alignment of their current reality toward the manifestation of God's will. More crucially, Calvin's understanding of the prophetic office underwent a substantial change when a teacher who, through empowerment by God's spiritual anointing, could proclaim future events, including the coming of a prophet who would not only exemplify the pattern of the Old Testament prophets but whose message would culminate all prophecies. He believes that the role of the prophets of Israel is to offer "useful teaching necessary for salvation," with the hope that the coming of the Messiah would complete the revelatory work and shed full light on God's desire to redeem humanity.⁸

While Old Testament scripture has much to reveal about the foretelling ministry of the prophets, Chafer reminds us that the ministry of the prophets in the Old Testament was primarily "that of reformer and patriot who seek the restoration to covenant blessings of the people who were under the covenants."⁹ Therefore, the prophet's primary role is to reveal God's will and to remind Israel of their bond with God. In agreement with Chafer, Robertson also points out that it was not Moses's leading role at Sinai to predict the

⁸ Ibid., 1:495.

⁹ Lewis S. Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, vol III (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), 17.

future of Israel, but rather “to declare God’s will as it was revealed to him.”¹⁰ Thus, even Moses’ proclamation concerning the prophets that would follow him establishes accepted standards for his present hearers and future generations to confirm the authenticity of anyone who claimed prophetic status. It also stokes Israel’s hopes for the promised Messiah in the Old Testament while serving as the standard by which the person and accomplishments of Christ would eventually be recognized and validated in the New Testament.

For Calvin, Christ’s prophetic office begins well before descending into the world. As “the Spirit of Christ,” according to 1 Peter 1:11, Christ was at work in the prophets giving them revelation, specifically concerning himself. In this way, Christ (though not yet revealed physically), “is the Prophet of all Prophets, the Teacher of all Teachers” and is thus the source of revelation through whom all other prophets get revelation.¹¹ In addition to Moses’s description in Deuteronomy 18, further evidence heralding the identity of Christ is found in Isaiah 49:1-7 and 50:5-9, where the prophet Isaiah speaks of his coming. Isaiah 61:1-3, however, is directly associated in the New Testament with the words and actions of Jesus Christ, as Christ himself professes the prophetic office as the purpose of his incarnation in Luke 4:18. Chafer, likewise, asserts that the specificity of the wording in this text explicitly reveals Christ’s coming ministry, not just as a prophet, but as the One who fulfills all prophecy. “The Second Person as Logos is the One who discloses whenever truth about the Person of God or [God’s] message is to be revealed.”¹²

¹⁰ O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Prophets* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2004), 26.

¹¹ A. A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith, A Commentary* (Edinburgh: Nelson and Son; 1870), 135.

¹² Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 21

Christ's prophetic role is to proclaim the gospel like the prophets before him. According to Turretin, this is the primary responsibility of the prophetic office: "Preaching the gospel or announcing the grace that Christ has brought in is another aspect of the prophetic function (and the principal)."¹³ Christ is not only the topic of the gospel doctrine but also "its major cause and primary author," according to Turretin. This is why the doctrine is referred to as "the doctrine of Christ" (Acts 13:12) or "the testimony of Christ" (1 Cor. 1:6; Rev. 1:2).¹⁴ The gospel is entirely centered on, derived from, and belongs to Jesus Christ. Therefore, part of Christ's prophetic ministry involves proclaiming this understanding about himself; this commandment is carried out through his atonement and resurrection. According to Edmondson, Calvin's position that the proclamation of the gospel is the primary function of Christ's prophetic office follows a similar line of reasoning. Calvin viewed the gospel proclamation as the primary purpose of Christ's prophetic office. However, he contends that while Christ the prophet "explains and enlivens the law for his disciples and leads the Church more deeply into the doctrine of life, the more significant aspect of Christ's teaching office is his testimony to that covenant of grace that he fulfills through his work as a priest and as Head of the Church."¹⁵ Christ's purpose as a prophet entails witnessing his redemptive work during his priestly and regal responsibilities. He then leaves the church with the mandate to carry on his work after he has completed his position as king and priest.

Calvin places a particular focus on the certainty that Christ is still acting as a prophet as he preaches the gospel and that this is because Christ's purpose is revealed to

¹³ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3 vols. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1992), 14.8.10 (2:399).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Stephen Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 156.

be “primarily concerning his office toward us, that in him God shows God’s love and God’s power to rescue.”¹⁶ Edmondson believes that the teachings of Christ are the exclusive means by which “we come to experience the advantages that Christ would bestow upon us in his capacity as priest and Head, and receive access to the salvation he gained for us in his death and resurrection.”¹⁷ Thus, as given to his church, Christ’s prophetic office is the courier and observer of God’s grace as a revelatory event, without which there could be little weight in the value discharged through Christ’s sacrifice. Preaching centered on Christ is inevitably related to those affiliates of the church who have been called to and set apart to participate in the ministry of the Word. According to the belief of the Reformed church, the pastor’s primary job is to preach and teach the gospel and everything else God discloses in the Bible. This is what people commonly refer to as the “ministry of the Word.”

On the other hand, Christ is the principal Prophet and Teacher who is still active in the prophetic ministry of his triple office. This prophetic ministry is still being carried out today. His ministry is made clear to his followers by his workers, who are the pastors. The pastor’s teaching also brings Christ into the lives of his followers.

The Office of The Priest

In the same way, Christ fulfills his job as a prophet, and he also fulfills his position as a mediating priest. However, this function of Christ is not exclusive to the former; He serves as both the high priest and the atoning sacrifice to completely atone for man’s sinful debt to God. Similar to the prophetic office, the priesthood is also

¹⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005), 21.

¹⁷ Edmondson, *Calvin’s Christology*, 157.

established in the Old Testament, based upon the archetype established by Melchizedek, the priest-king of Salem. During the Protestant Reformation, Calvin and his contemporaries discussed the biblical passages Genesis 14:18–22, Psalm 110:4, and Hebrews 7, which all reference the same individual: Melchizedek. Chafer claims that Melchizedek’s status as “a king of peace, without a record of father or mother, and without recorded beginning or ending of days” makes him a “God-designed prototype of Christ’s priesthood.”¹⁸ While the precise manner in which Christ executed this office is relatively obscure before his incarnation, we can see that this office was decreed by the Father long before that time. In Hebrews 7, the New Testament confirms Melchizedek’s identity and identifies him as the leader of the priestly order that Christ is a part of. This is although Melchizedek’s appearance in the Old Testament does not appear to be connected in any significant way to the development of the nation of Israel as God’s chosen people. The relationship between Christ and Melchizedek, as well as his mysterious ancestry, his use of the bread and wine as a presage of the Lord’s Supper, how he blesses Abram, and eventually his identification as a type or a foreshadower of Christ came into clarity for scholars as they studied these scriptures. The Old Testament contains several prophecies that look forward to the coming of a priest and a redeemer. The Psalmist reports God as stating to his chosen one, “The Lord has vowed to you that you will be a priest forever in the line of Melchizedek, and he will not change his decision.”¹⁹ The forthcoming Redeemer “will build the temple of the Lord,” according to Zechariah, and he will sit on his throne and rule. He will sit on his throne as a priest.²⁰

¹⁸ Chafer. *Systematic Theology*, 29.

¹⁹ Psalm 110:4, NRSV.

²⁰ Zechariah 6:13, NRSV.

Without a doubt, “the Old Testament priesthood, and notably the high priest, definitely prefigured a priestly Messiah,” as Berkhof observes.²¹

While Christ is inextricably linked to the order of Melchizedek through his divinity, Christ’s human genealogy also links him by blood to the Aaronic and Levitical priesthood. Melchizedek prefigures Christ; however, Aaron and the Levites originated the pattern after which the Israelites would come to anticipate and authenticate the person and work of the Messiah. Not only is it customary that priests come from the tribe of Levi, but the deuterocanonical law also begins to differentiate between the Aaronic priests; they were primarily responsible for presenting sacrifices in the temple, as opposed to the Levitical priesthood, which was distinguished by acts of charity and service to the community. According to Hodge, the three professional responsibilities outlined in Levitical law and espoused throughout the Old Testament were mediation, expiation, and intercession, embodied within these three orders but fulfilled in Christ’s incarnation.²²

Calvin also believed that the primary purpose of Christ’s work as a mediator between God and the world was to bring about a final reconciliation between God and humanity. Prior to Christ’s propitiation, God had established the priesthood through the lineage of Moses and Aaron to represent the Children of Israel. While the priesthood stood between God and God’s people, because of sin, they too were unable to provide a perfect sacrifice that would reconcile them to God forever. The priesthood of Israel, however, was transformed in Christ, whom God chose to fulfill the roles of priest and

²¹ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 365.

²² Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1970), 464.

sacrifice simultaneously. Christ was flawless, including his thoughts, words, and deeds. That is to say, he took on the responsibility of functioning as the high priest and as sacrifice for the sins of the people, and he did so by following the will of the Father and the prodding of the Holy Spirit. Calvin argues, “For unless Christ, as our high priest, has washed away our sins, sanctifies us and gets for us that favor from which the uncleanness of our transgressions and vices debars us, we or our petitions have no access to God.”²³

A priest is also chosen to atone for the people’s sins by presenting gifts and sacrifices. Before the coming of Christ, people’s sins were temporarily atoned for by the offering of sacrifices that involved the death of a substitute. As blood was needed, an animal was sacrificed to God. But the Psalmist goes further by preserving the Messiah’s prophetic words. “You have not been pleased by sacrifice and offering, but you have been open to listening to me. You are not compelled to make a burnt offering or a sin offering. Then I said, “Look! I’ve arrived; it is written of me in the scroll of the book: I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”²⁴ The Old Testament’s system of sacrifices will be replaced by the Messiah’s future sacrifice, according to the Messiah.

Consequently, when considering Christ’s atoning sacrifice, most Christians believe it occurs only at his death on the cross. But in Calvin’s opinion, the basic idea of the Christian economy cannot be overstated: Christ’s all-sufficient, once-and-for-all self-sacrifice. Christ’s death is frequently depicted in the New Testament as a sacrifice, an advantage for everyone who believes in him. According to John Owen, the death of Christ was effective in four different ways: first, it ratified the new covenant of grace;

²³ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1:480.

²⁴ Psalm 40:6-8, NRSV.

second, it freed us from the power of sin, death, and hell; third, it redeemed us from sin and death; and fourth, it secured grace and glory for us here on earth. All of these effects resulted from Christ's sacrifice on the cross.²⁵

In his role as high priest, Christ does more than atone for sins on behalf of humanity before God; Calvin asserts that without Christ becoming both God and human, intercession is impossible.²⁶ This is a radical overturning of Catholic belief in the practice of saintly intercession, a doctrine in which Roman Catholics contend that Christ mediates redemption and the saints mediate intercession. Calvin refutes this, contending that redemption and intercession are mediated only through Christ. Now that Christ has assumed the priestly position, he does so to accept us as his coworkers in this great ministry and win the Father's favor toward us.²⁷ In addition to giving us access to God's presence, Christ also intercedes for us before God by acting as our representative before the throne of grace in heaven. This is just one way that Christ serves God.²⁸ Hebrews 7:25 states that Christ "always lives to make intercession for them" and that Christ is the only one who "intercedes for us" (Rom. 8:34). In both instances, Christ prays based on his former death and offering as atonement for our sins. Berkhof posits that we must not separate the ministry of atonement from the ministry of intercession. He claims they are two facets of the same redemptive act of Christ. Atonement, which is fundamentally a mediation, is the core of intercession.²⁹ This makes it appropriate for Berkhof to add that

²⁵ William Goold, *The Works of John Owen*, vol. 1 (London: Johnstone and Hunter, 1690–1901), 481.

²⁶ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 502.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Goold, *Works of John Owen*, I:483.

²⁹ Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 402.

“Christ intercedes for all those for whom he has made atonement and for those only.”
This is because the atoning and intercessory work of Christ is so intertwined.³⁰

Office Of the King

The office of the king overlaps with the previous offices. Melchizedek was not merely a priest but is characterized as the Priest-King of Salem. It is stated in Genesis 14 that he is without a mother or father and a beginning or an end. This is a prefiguring of the Messiah’s origin as divine from the start and, as with the other offices, Christ is king not as an exercise of work but based on his very nature. In agreement with Zechariah, Psalm 110 claims that the Messiah will follow the pattern of Melchizedek and that he will be “sent forth from Zion, your great scepter” (v. 2) and “shatter kings” (v. 5) and “act judgment among the nations,” (v. 6). The three positions in Israel’s government were never to be held by the same person. Yet, these verses make it plain that the Messiah will contain all three positions. The earliest institution of the office of the king, as well as the prophetic benchmarks that, once fulfilled, indicate his identity, are once again found in the Old Testament, just like with the previous two offices. Zechariah 9:9 states, “Look, your king is coming to you; he is upright and has salvation; he is lowly and ridden on a donkey, on a colt, the donkey’s foal.” According to Matthew 21:5, the office of King was realized as Jesus arrived in Jerusalem. In the majestic prophecies of the Messiah found in Isaiah 7–9, it is stated that “a virgin would conceive a child and that his name would be Immanuel, meaning God with us” (7:14). Additionally, it is stated that “there will be no end to the increase of his government and peace, on the throne of David and over his

³⁰ Ibid.

kingdom, to establish it and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forever” (v. 15). Therefore, Jesus came into the world as the King of the Jews (Matt. 2:2).

Calvin uses the term “kingly office” to describe a rule that is spiritual in origin rather than either worldly or carnal. His kingly office is characterized by the eternal nature of Christ’s rule, which he exercises initially over the church and later over each member. In a world where “our state is harsh and horrible,” Calvin contends that Jesus Christ is “the eternal guardian and defender of his church.” This is because Jesus Christ is eternal. At the same time, he ties followers to himself to give them the desire to “expect for blissful eternity” right now. As the Father’s representative, Christ rules as king to guide his followers “little by little to a stable relationship with God.”³¹ Christ has complete authority over everyone and everything. He is the king, and he is a kind and powerful country. Christ is in charge of the church, which he is the head of, in the kingdom of grace. This rule is spiritual since it is largely practiced in and through the church’s word and sacrament ministry in a spiritual dimension. It is “settled in the hearts and lives of believers,” according to Berkhof.³² Throughout the New Testament, Christ is referred to be the “head of the church” on multiple occasions (Eph. 1:22, 4:15; 5:23; Col. 1:18; 2:19). The mystical unity that develops between Christ and the Church, which the Scripture refers to as his “body,” magnifies his reign over his congregation (1 Cor. 12:27). Christ’s authority over this kingdom is derived from his atoning service. No one is a citizen of this kingdom under his humanity; that honor and privilege belong to those

³¹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 500.

³² Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 406.

redeemed by faith through grace.³³ Despite this, it is plainly and firmly present everywhere that followers of Christ convene to hear the word of God taught and receive the sacraments, regardless of borders, flags, or geographic locations. This is true whether they are meeting in a house of worship or a public place (Rom. 14:17). This kingdom is the one that is usually referred to as the “kingdom of God” in the New Testament. It is described in a variety of ways throughout the Bible.

On the other hand, Christ’s rule or dominion over all creation is called the kingdom of power. He is Lord and the creator of everything (Col. 1:16-17). He oversees people’s lives and destiny, as well as the affairs of countries (Isa. 40:17). The Bible says it simply: “Our God is in the sky; he does whatever he pleases” (Ps. 115:3). Since we know that God is directing all things according to his will and that he is orchestrating everything, we can use this as the foundation for understanding how history ultimately serves God’s plan of redemption. As a result, human history is accelerating toward its grand and decisive climax—the return of our Lord to Earth for the resurrection and the final judgment. During ambiguous and shifting circumstances, the redeemed find solace and hope in Christ’s kingly authority.

The Munus Triplex as Leadership Paradigm

According to Geoffrey Wainwright, the three-fold offices of Christ have been utilized as a conceptual framework in the following five primary ways throughout history. First, the Fourth Century theologian, John Chrysostom, used the three-fold offices to craft a framework for Christology and as a formula for Christ’s work in the

³³ Ibid., 407.

baptism of believers. Second, in the sixteenth century, Calvin used phrases in a soteriological context to express how Christ had completed his mission as a mediator. Third, in the nineteenth century, Roman Catholics employed it to categorize the ministerial hierarch of teaching, priestly, and controlling responsibilities. Fourth, it also served as a paradigm for ecclesiology for many people in the nineteenth century, including John Henry Newman.³⁴

Finally, fifth, in the modern era many theologians have used the threefold structure, frequently providing more specialized contributions inside more significant systematic works. To build biblical anthropology, Andrew Murray draws on the three offices that Christ held, observing that these roles typologically represent human nature: “We were created with a nature that has three main faculties: the power of knowing, the power of feeling, and the power of willing. The offices of Christ match these talents.”³⁵ As well as describing the effects sin has on the depravity of humanity, he also explains the process of reconciliation as God draws humanity back to God’s self through Christ, who, as a divine prophet, illuminates hearts by exposing sin; as mediating priest, diminished the divide between God and humanity through love; and as protecting king, “fits [the Christian] to rule over sin and self.”³⁶ Using symbolic and analogical aspects of the Old Testament, Vern Poythress develops a biblical theology that points toward the manifestation of Christ. As Poythress posits, “Christ is the ultimate paradigm for the

³⁴ Geoffrey Wainwright, *For Our Salvation: Two Approaches to the Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 110–17.

³⁵ Andrew Murray and John Flavel, *The Believer’s Prophet, Priest and King*, ed. Louis Gifford Parkhurst (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1989), 26.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

archetypal instances of prophets, kings, and priests seen in the Old Testament.”³⁷ Gary Breshears also creates a symbolic framework based on the three-fold offices to define the ministry of Christian congregations: “If the Church is his body making his work concretely apparent across the world today, then the categories that explain his work illumine the Church’s activity.”³⁸ Though Breshears says little explicitly related to the pastoral leadership function within congregations, he clearly sheds light on how the three-fold offices of Christ relate to the mission and activity of today’s contemporary congregations. “The offices Christ performed guide the work of the Church maintaining the mission of our Savior,” the author writes in his conclusion.³⁹

Robert Sherman has proposed that one can only comprehend Christ’s work of atonement if one “recognize(s) a certain correspondence and mutual support between the three persons of the Trinity, the three offices of Christ, and the three commonly recognized models of his atoning work [Christus Victor, vicarious sacrifice, and moral exemplar].” Robert Sherman has used the Munus Triplex as a framework for a trinitarian understanding of the atonement.⁴⁰ Sherman’s sections on “Pastoral Application” that follow each of the three chapters on the individual functions of the three-fold offices are particularly valuable regarding pastoral leadership. He gives clergy an excellent resource to help them communicate the richness of Christ’s life and activity, although how the offices specifically influence pastoral leadership is absent. Sherman appears to be

³⁷ Vern Sheridan Poythress, “Multiperspectivalism and the Reformed Faith,” in *Speaking the Truth in Love: The Theology of John M. Frame*, ed. John J. Hughes (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2009), 189.

³⁸ Gerry Breshears, “The Body of Christ: Prophet, Priest, or King?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37, no. 1 (1994): 5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴⁰ Robert Sherman, *King, Priest, and Prophet: A Trinitarian Theology of Atonement* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 9.

intentional about leaving the reader to decide how to use this technique in practice, writing, “[This book] offers nothing more than a tool: three complementary ways, anchored in the act of the triune God, of structuring and delivering the gospel message of atonement.”⁴¹

John Johnson carefully examines the usage of the three offices as a paradigm for church leadership in his article “Seeking Pastoral Identity.” During a changing societal context, where the stature of pastoral ministry has been diminished by the range and complexities within today’s culture, he vehemently argues that religious identity must be shaped and rooted in the three offices. Here Johnson contends:

From these offices, the total marks of a minister emerge, guiding him in his self-concept and day-to-day responsibilities before God. They must be taken together, for they bring out the comprehensive nature of a pastor’s calling. To disregard any one of these roles will distort both the identity and the function of the pastor.⁴²

Johnson further identifies and makes a case for including a fourth office, that of sage, while outlining the characteristics of the prophet, priest, and monarch and how they influence the pastor’s work. Johnson claimed that a sage was the scholar of his day, set apart by God after the example of King Solomon for the sole purpose of instructing the populace on how to incorporate the prophet’s truth into daily life. Johnson states that “he was set apart, in particular, to persuade people to fear the Lord, the fundamental basis of wisdom.”⁴³ For Johnson, each of these Old Testament offices not only ground the

⁴¹ Ibid., 263.

⁴² John Johnson, “Seeking Pastoral Identity,” *The Spurgeon Fellowship Journal* (Fall 2007): 2.

⁴³ Ibid., 3.

pastor's work but legitimize the pastor's commitment to fulfilling the call to ministry in a way that inspires participation among the congregants to embrace a vision and authentically follow the pastor's leadership. Johnson concludes, "These four offices instruct pastors to maintain their ministry in the church in balance, even though their abilities, temperaments, and training will encourage them to gravitate toward one identity more than the others."⁴⁴

Much like Johnson, David Burke, while emphasizing his embrace of the three-fold office, also introduces the concept that all three should be viewed through the imagery of the *shepherd*.⁴⁵ This is because the Old Testament uses shepherd imagery to describe how God interacts with his people—for instance, in Psalm 23, where God is explicitly designated as the author's shepherd. The characteristics of a good shepherd are enumerated within its verses. Then in the New Testament, Christ applies the shepherd imagery to himself in John 10, with a back reference to Ezekiel 34 to describe the characteristics of "bad shepherds and Christ's promise to himself to shepherd his people and to provide them with a Davidic shepherd figure."⁴⁶ The shepherd metaphor is also used to describe New Testament church leaders:

The pastor title of Ephesians 4:11 is directly drawn from the shepherd language. Acts 20:28-29 refers to the 'flock' that church elders care for, and 1 Peter 5:2 calls elders to shepherd the flock under their care. The

⁴⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁵ David Burke, "The Prophet-Priest-King Shepherd and Pastoral Ministry: Rethinking the Paradigm and Its Implications," accessed December 18, 2022, https://www.academia.edu/34563587/The_prophet_priest_king_shepherd_and_pastoral_ministry_Rethinking_the_paradigm_and_its_implications1.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1.

same passage is also explicit about Jesus as the chief shepherd and, by implication, elders as under-shepherds. It is not hard to see the word (feed), mercy (care), and leadership (rule) ministries in the shepherd's functions as applied to the church, both for Jesus and church leaders.⁴⁷

In Burke's framework, Christ as Chief Shepherd is a prophet, priest, and king, while the church shepherd is the pastor called to embody Christ's character among the congregation by feeding Christ's word, caring for souls through Christ's mercy, and giving direction that is consistent with Christ's authority as the Head of the Church. Burke continues to make a compelling argument for how Christ incorporated the written and spoken word, mercy, and rule into every activity, including his miracles. The miracles reveal Jesus as the Son of Man who forgives sin (word), who meets an immediate physical need and brings forgiveness (mercy) and depicts Jesus as the creator's king (rule).⁴⁸ The Book of Acts delineates how Christ appointed the New Testament apostles directly to extend these benefits to the church. Today, not only is the church charged with doing the same, but those called to shepherd the church are charged with developing, exercising, and maintaining a balance between word, mercy, and rule as competencies in their work and within the church's ministry to the community.

In 2008 Albert C. Clavo conducted research on Pentecostal pastoral training in the Philippines, employing a theological framework that is built explicitly upon the three-fold offices as a paradigm for pastoral leadership. Clavo makes the case that the descriptive metaphors traditionally used to define the role of clergy within congregational life are

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 11.

insufficient because they lack foundational grounding within the image of Christ.

Regarding pastoral identity among Christian clergy, he contends, “Because Christ is the model and pastoral work flows out of his threefold ministry, pastors must find a way to connect the various pastoral roles to the person and work of Christ.”⁴⁹ Clavo goes even further to conclude, after conducting research designed to persuade pastors to embrace their prophetic, priestly, and kingly functions, that the three-fold offices should not be separated from one another but should instead “flow into and feed the others.”⁵⁰

Although much of the literature on using the Munus Triplex leadership model assumes that one person will hold all three posts, another strand of research appropriates the three offices as a leadership team. This is primarily driven by the author’s denominational background or the organizational leadership design of the religious body for which the author is researching. One reformed theologian holding this perspective is John Frame, the progenitor of a systematic concept he labels “triperspectivalism.”⁵¹ The frame presents his triperspectival framework to understand the church’s goal and embody leadership responsibilities throughout Presbyterian Churches. He uses Christ’s tripartite ministry as a prophet, priest, and king connected to the Trinity. Since Christians are one in Christ, many people have naturally drawn parallels between the three offices, and as a result, these offices have come to be regarded as the gold standard for church executives. Frame characterizes them as:

⁴⁹ Albert C. Clavo, “Prophet, Priest, and King: The Impact of a Pastoral Theology Course on the Practice of Pentecostal Pastors in the Philippines” (D.Min. project, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2009), 90.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁵¹ John M. Frame, *The Collected Shorter Theological Writings* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2008), accessed December 16, 2022, <https://frame-poythress.org/what-is-triperspectivalism/>.

The teaching elder (1 Tim 5:17) represents God's authority; the ruling elder (same verse) God's control; and the deacon the priestly ministry of mercy. As perspectives, none of these gifts can function adequately without the others. But sometimes, one or another is more prominent. Indeed, there are sometimes imbalances in churches that emphasize teaching, discipline, or mercy at the expense of others.⁵²

In their book *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches*, Banks and Ledbetter collaborate with Frame and offer insights from various denominational and cultural vantage points. They also take into account the tripartite nature of ministry in the traditional Presbyterian polity, which is that ministers (prophets) proclaim the gospel, while deacons (priests) as servants meet the needs of the congregation, and elders (rulers) exercise power over the congregation (kingly).⁵³ Similarly, Peter Drilling presents a Roman Catholic ecclesiology in which the church's executives oversee and provide the appropriate direction for the church's laity ministry. The priests fulfill their function as priests by delivering the sacraments; the bishop, in his capacity as the most senior educator in the diocese, fulfills the role of the prophet; and the bishops and priests together, in their capacity as shepherds of the flock, fulfill the role of the monarch.⁵⁴

Dan Allender's *Leading with a Limp* discusses the three-fold office as a leadership paradigm. He characterizes contemporary church leadership based upon the

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Robert J. Banks, Bernice M. Ledbetter, and David C. Greenhalgh, *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation Of Current Approaches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2016).

⁵⁴ Peter Drilling, *Trinity and Ministry* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 79–82.

Old Testament offices, first introducing the theocratic king who established the realm by building a system that upheld security, justice, and order. Then the significance of the realm was determined by the tales, artwork, rituals, and sources of solace that the priests curated within their dominion. And lastly, it was the prophet who disrupted both worlds by speaking on behalf of God when the people wandered from what God wished for them and pointed out their deviation. Allender challenges leaders to determine their primary role but explains how these different roles are intertwined within the framework of an organization and connect the three offices to examples of contemporary leadership theory and practice, all while effectively describing the three offices from a historical perspective. About prophets, priests, and kings working together on teams, Allender believes that “We must put all three types of leaders in the same room and invite each of them to respect the strengths of the others more than they value their talents.”⁵⁵ For him, the only way to see others as more precious and necessary is if they are all limping, broken leaders, which is a sign of the vulnerability needed to lead.⁵⁶ Allender encourages leaders to gain the ability to lead from all three perspectives rather than expecting Christian leaders to only fit into one category. He writes, “We are to be all three at once.” To lead is to imitate Jesus in each of these spheres.⁵⁷

The Munus Triplex, while embraced across generations and denominations of church leaders and theologians worldwide, does not exist without critique as both a biblically sound theological framework and a legitimate pastoral leadership paradigm. Objections were raised to the three offices almost immediately after Reformed

⁵⁵ Dan B. Allender, *Leading with a Limp: Take Full Advantage of Your Most Powerful Weakness* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook, 2006), 34.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 186.

theologians began using the formula. In the late eighteenth century, Johann August Ernesti objected that the three offices are an artificial theological formula forced onto Scripture, not a theme that authentically emerges from the text. Albrecht Ritschl objected to “office” a century later, claiming that Christ’s role as king is the “main thing” about his person and ministry.⁵⁸ He contended that the detailed accounts of the Munus Triplex restrict the ability to comprehend the complete breadth of Christ’s life and the things he did throughout the New Testament. For example, in John 10:11, Christ’s reference to himself as the Good Shepherd offers a descriptive analysis of the office similar to the one offered on the role of the prophet in Deuteronomy 18 or of the priest in Hebrews 5.⁵⁹ David Burke would agree with Ritschl that while shepherding is less of an office and more of what might be considered a vocation. Although it is less evident in the three anointed offices, Christ’s use of the self-description as one who leads and tends to his sheep is nonetheless a powerful image. Christ also refers to himself as “The Bread of Life” (John 6:35), “The True Vine” (John 15:5), and “The Light of the World” (John 8:12). Still, none of these allusions provide any indication that he will play an official function or fulfill the Messianic prophecy but serve as profound and artfully designed metaphors that no less deepen one’s understanding of the entire expanse of his person and work.

Another sharp criticism of the Munus Triplex, offered by Professor George W. Stroup, asks “[t]he question of whether or not the formula of the Munus Triplex,” does justice to the vast array of Christological images presented in the New Testament but is

⁵⁸ Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Sanctification*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay (Clifton, NJ: Reference Book Publishers, 1966), 428 (see also 417–34).

⁵⁹ John 10:11, NRSV.

not the only factor that determines the relevance of the Munus Triplex for Reformed Theology and Ministry; rather, the question that needs to be answered is “whether or not the three offices are given a dogmatic interpretation that is alien to their use in the biblical text.”⁶⁰ Is Calvin’s depiction of the prophetic office’s primary objective—teaching—consistent with the role of a prophet in the Old Testament, and was Christ’s earthly ministry fulfilling the duty of Israel’s prophets in the Old Testament? If so, what are the implications of this? According to Wolfhart Pannenberg, a German theologian, and other academics, the descriptions of Jesus found in the New Testament do not fit with the offices of priests and kings. Other scholars would agree with this assessment.⁶¹ The title of king is given to Jesus in the New Testament, not because of anything he claimed for or about himself, but because it was intended to disparage and belittle him in the eyes of those who still held on to the dim hope that Christ was the Messiah. He neither pretended to be king nor did he seek to become one. The latter was a derogatory statement made against him by his detractors, whereas Jesus appears to have flatly rejected the title of Messiah.⁶² Also, Pannenberg disagrees with the notion that Christ was a prophet. He asserts that Christ was neither a prophet nor an apocalyptic and that his earthly ministry cannot be explained in terms of the prophetic office found in the Old Testament. However, Pannenberg believes that the prophetic tradition of the three separate offices is a more accurate account of Jesus’ real action than the other two offices. He bases this

⁶⁰ G. W. Stroup, “The Relevance of the Munus Triplex for Reformed Theology and Ministry,” *Austin Seminary Bulletin (Faculty ed.)* vol. 98, no. 9 (1983): 22–32.

⁶¹ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Jesus: God and Man*, trans. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 218

⁶² *Ibid.*, 225.

belief on the fact that Christ places a significant emphasis in the New Testament on proving the Messianic promises made by the Old Testament prophets.

According to John F. Jansen's *Calvin's Doctrine of the Work of Christ*, Calvin added the prophetic office to the original offices of priest and king because "it suggested to him a way of relating revelation and redemption, and because it suggested a foundation for the protestant ministerial order. Whether by divine inspiration or selfish motivation, Calvin legitimizes the reformed pastor's role while diminishing the Catholic priests' role by emphasizing that the prophet's primary duty is preaching and teaching rather than carrying out sacerdotal responsibilities. In doing so, Calvin contrasts the prophet's role with the priests. This move was in stark contradiction to the Roman Catholic priesthood, which relished in the practice of indulgences, absolving sin, and falsely mediating reconciliation in exchange for money or favors. Calvin argued that only Christ's sacrifice of himself could satisfy the debt of sin for all humanity once and for all; it indicates that only Jesus Christ could ever fulfill the role of mediator between God and man in a manner that would be acceptable to God. Not only does Christ perform the duties of a priest to make the Father merciful and gracious to us, but also, to welcome us as his partners in this beautiful vocation, Christ fulfills the duty of a priest.⁶³ The tension formed here is in Calvin's insistence that Christ alone is High Priest, a divine role no priest could fill, and only Christ can receive the redeemed into his kingdom of priests.

Consequently, there is no need for the papacy and priesthood, for all believers are members of the priesthood in the sense that believers are required to partake in, and are consequently given a share in, the priesthood that Christ has been given to the church. On

⁶³ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 502.

the other hand, Jansen expresses concern that orthodoxy has fallen into the dangerous tendency of equating knowledge about redemption with redemption, substituting correct propositions about God for Himself. This is because the prophetic office was added to the older formula and the two offices of priest and king. Originally, the formula only called for the offices of priests and the king.⁶⁴ In other words, he points to the danger of empowering the clergy to speak with divine authority on God's behalf instead of scripture itself being the final authority upon which theology rests.

Despite supporting Calvin's formulation, Karl Barth similarly critiques the *Munus Triplex*. He warns that a unique risk is involved in attempting to use a useful conceptual instrument to explain the coherence of Christ's activity. According to Barth's interpretation, the end effect is that the schema takes on a life of its own and poses a threat of escaping the confines and resources offered by the biblical witness. Barth cites Roman Catholicism and the indulgence tradition as an illustration of how an increasingly "anthropocentric" interpretation of the central ideas of forgiveness and reconciliation grew from a divine act of God's favor into a thing that could be bought. In other words, those in authority supporting a particular position or belief are susceptible to a natural tendency to not only impose it upon others by justifying it as scripturally sanctioned. Thus, the fear of what Barth calls humanistic theology is that it leads to "religious men, complacent and self-explained."⁶⁵

Another criticism of Barth's *Munus Triplex* is that if the clergy are modeled after the prophetic office, doing so would lead the church to mistake its temporal authority for the authority of its Lord. Barth is deeply suspicious of institutional dogmatics because of

⁶⁴ Jansen, *Calvin's Doctrine*, 109.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

the human propensity to use authority to derive obedience, which obscures the idea of fellowship with God through grace. He asks, “For is there any institutional relationship between man and man whose form might aspire to resemble that between God and man? Is there a human authority that may institutionally convey to other men the authority of God?”⁶⁶ The temptation for the Church to believe it has the same authority to teach as Christ is always a danger, despite its commitment to share in Jesus’ teaching ministry. As quickly and ardently as Barth warns against this potential danger within the church to usurp divine authority, he is clear about the importance of a Christ-centered theology that incessantly points its members back to Christ. “The community is as Jesus Christ is—He who is the Lord of the human communion of saints, the head of His body, which is the earthly-historical form of his existence.”⁶⁷ In agreement with Barth, Jansen points to a human bias of scriptural misuse based upon a contrived authority. At the other end of the theological spectrum, the prophetic office has led liberalism to interpret Jesus as a teacher whose message can be separated from his person. In either case, Jansen argues there is a danger of substituting rationalism for faith. For the sake of faithful ministry, to dispel any notion that revelation is synonymous with “detached and uncommitted knowledge,” Jansen advises theological scholars to revert their focus to the dual roles of priest and king.⁶⁸

In a paper titled “Prophets, Priests, and Kings Today,” Paul Timothy Jones analyses the theological and practical issues that result from using the Munus Triplex as a leadership model, bringing Jansen and Barth’s argument full circle. While he agrees that

⁶⁶ Ibid., 17.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 679.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 119.

the tripartite offices are a “venerable and biblical organization,” he rejects the idea that they should be used as a model for church leadership.⁶⁹ His primary argument points out how the misappropriation of scripture can lead to the abuses inflicted upon congregants in spaces where the offender claims to be anointed by God and use the Bible to defend their dubious actions as above reproach. Jones contends that the Bible establishes very little to no relationship between the three offices of Christ and the obligations or qualities of church leaders in the modern era.

For example, pointing towards proponents who link visionary leadership and strategic planning with the kingly office, he claims that the lack of scriptural support for these qualities “skews our concept of church leadership under the new covenant”⁷⁰ He also notes that, unlike Calvin who promoted teaching as a prophetic function, scripturally speaking, teaching falls within the framework of the priestly office, but only as part of communal activity, as opposed to being a gift or special grace to be obtained by the individual. The tendency of people to claim ownership of any or all of the offices that Christ never gave to any individual but rather to the community of the faithful is, in fact, Jones’s most glaring criticism of the Munus Triplex as a leadership paradigm. Jones, further reiterates that while the Munus Triplex should inform our leadership, it is best understood and fulfilled when the three offices are not treated as a mere concept but rather embodied as functions that have been attained in Christ and expressed to the body of Christ.⁷¹ Furthermore, Jones asserts that this causes the theology to “fall victim to the

⁶⁹ Timothy Paul Jones, “Prophets, Priests, and Kings Today? Theological and Practical Problems with the Use of the Munus Triplex as a Leadership Typology,” 66, accessed December 20, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327038791_Prophets_priests_and_kings_today_theological_and_practical_problems_with_the_use_of_the_munus_triplex_as_a_leadership_typology.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 71.

⁷¹ Ibid., 72.

precise thing it wishes to avoid. Essentially, the Munus Triplex should affect the identity and theology of a leader; “it has the greatest impact on our leadership when these offices are viewed not as a leadership typology but rather as roles that have been fulfilled in Christ and communicated to the entire people of God” through the Holy Spirit’s union with them. This, according to Jones, is the most effective way for the Munus Triplex to affect our leadership.⁷²

⁷² Ibid.,72.

Chapter Two

Historical & Theological Foundations

The literature review in chapter one clearly shows the pros and cons of promoting the PPK Paradigm (Munus Triplex) beyond a theological framework as a leadership typology. Many who oppose using the prophet, priest, and king typologies for pastors believe that doing so poses a significant risk. According to this view, churches naturally acknowledge that certain ministers are more prophetic, others are more priestly, and some are more king-like in their gifts. However, the risk of abuse and authoritarianism increases when power or position is given to leaders and so elevate the individual above the congregation while downplaying the corporate goal for which Christ's mission was designed. Calvin's doctrine makes it abundantly clear that Christ alone fully completes the roles of Prophet, Priest, and King in His Church, and that every believer in the new covenant, regardless of station, is encouraged to serve with Him in these roles. When Timothy Paul Jones writes, "The [PPK Paradigm] should indeed shape our leadership, but it shapes our leadership best when these offices are treated not as a leadership typology but as functions that have been fulfilled in Christ and transmitted to the entire people of God through union with him," he illustrates what is the appropriate method of approaching the paradigm.¹

Like Jones, those who hold this critical opinion of the Munus Triplex as a leadership paradigm typically reject any official categories or offices for church leaders

¹ Timothy Paul Jones, "Prophets, Priests, and Kings Today? Theological and Practical Problems Using the Munus Triplex as a Leadership Typology," 66, accessed December 20, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327038791_Prophets_priests_and_kings_today_theological_and_practical_problems_with_the_use_of_the_munus_triplex_as_a_leadership_typology.

that suggest the offices or authority of the PPK Paradigm can be conferred upon anyone other than Christ. However, we can credit Reformed theology with the idea that clergy leaders do occupy a ‘special office’ through which Christ executes His kingship in the Church and throughout the world today. To serve in Christ’s particular office as a church leader, one must be called by Christ, the King of the Church.² This call will come through people, but not from people, as they recognize Christ’s grace in the life of the person called. Edmund Clowney , pastor, theologian and educator illustrates this point well by denoting that Paul’s calling, for example, though directly bestowed upon by Christ on the road to Damascus, yet even Peter, James, and John recognized the grace of Christ on him and received him as a leader and brother (Gal 2.9). Christ, through His grace, extends the calling to whom Christ chooses privately, but the Church then sees evidence of this grace and recognizes it publicly.³ Regardless of homiletical eloquence, pastoral skills, or administrative qualities, individuals, through the grace of Christ, are granted the privilege of leadership as an extension of the mission of reconciliation, which Christ has committed to the church (2 Corinthians 5:19). As a consequence, those who lead the church in fulfilling the work of Christ are obliged in this role to reflect Christ’s character as a mediator of the new covenant. While the character of this ministry is molded to the likeness of Jesus Christ is an undeniable fact, whether one can actually be endowed with the same titles, competencies, or expectations as given to Christ is a matter of ongoing debate.

James B. Torrance contends that the understanding of Christian ministry as participation in the threefold ministry of Christ has historically been obscured due to a

² Edmund P. Clowney, *Called to the Ministry* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1964), 85.

³ *Ibid.*, 84.

mistaken account of Christ's work in contractual and conditional terms rather than covenantal and unconditioned relations.⁴ The three-fold office belongs solely to Christ. However, through the approval of the congregation or denominational appointment, the pastor in the Black Church has access to provide leadership support that emulates Christ's work as prophet, priest, and priest-king. Even many who question whether or not this model should be applied to church leaders have acknowledged that the PPK Paradigm should be applied to all Christians. Consequently, it may be an opportune time to reintroduce the PPK Paradigm, not as a leadership paradigm, but a follow-ship paradigm in which leaders are graced to radically reflect and model the prophetic, priestly, and kingly functions offered in Christ but extended to the world through the ministry of the church.

It is critical, then, to examine how the PPK Paradigm aligns or syncretizes with the theological and socio-cultural foundations of the Black Church and those who lead within it. This requires putting the PPK Paradigm in dialogue with Black Liberation Theology in deciphering points of commonality and dissonance. In addition to this, it is essential to investigate the theological issues that have been raised by pastors of Black churches concerning HIV prevention, and to shed light on the possibility that the PPK Paradigm can inform and reframe the theological implications that are involved in the establishment of an efficient and effective HIV prevention ministry.

⁴ J. B. Torrance, "Covenant or Contract?," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 3 no. 1 (1970): 51–76.

Munus Triplex in The Black Church as Theological Construct

One of the most obvious parallels between the PPK Paradigm and Black Liberation Theology is that both emerge from a context of oppression, though different in origin. While Black Liberation Theology emerges from the vestiges of physical and cultural oppression weaponized against Black people in America beginning in slavery, the PPK Paradigm arises from spiritual and political oppression under the hierarchy of Roman Catholicism. One may argue that a dogma bolstering the infallibility of the Roman Catholic doctrine, the abuse of indulgences as a means to justification, and the hierarchy of papacy as both secular and state authority constituted spiritual oppression waged on the reformers of the sixteenth century. This might be best classified as both political and spiritual oppression because it constrained church membership from the rights and benefits of individual covenant relationship extended to all believers through Christ as ascribed in scripture. The beliefs of the reformers set them in direct opposition to the Papacy, which enjoyed excessive influence over secular structures that were deployed for over a century to persecute and imprison heretical dissenters. According to Timothy George, the reformers viewed the main concepts of the Reformation through the lenses of persecution and dissent. This shaped their ardent support for religious freedom and the principle of maintaining a division between church and state.⁵ After a hundred years of persecution, the passing of the Toleration Act soon followed a political development that resulted in a reprieve for nonconformists which led to the proliferation of Reformed churches across the European continent. Subsequently, the Second London

⁵ Timothy George, "The Reformation Roots of the Baptist Tradition," *Review and Expositor* 86, no. 1 (1968): 9–22.

Confession became the official working document that established the Christology informing the Munus Triplex as orthodox across the burgeoning movement.

By insisting upon the biblically established concept of human depravity, and then God's divine plan as the single architect of reconciliation, a literal reading of the Second London Confession, based upon the work of John Calvin, points to the mediating role of Christ as the one and only arbitrator between God and humankind. This primal implication in Reformed Theology was of grave importance because it overtly opposed papal authority as the sole interpreter of scriptural authority. Secondly, the Second London Confession emphatically states that Christ is the only person who holds the tripartite office of prophet, priest, and king, defining the exclusivity of the office as belonging to Christ alone. Finally, although declaring that Christ is the only recipient of this office, noting that it may not be transferred from Him to anyone else in whole or in part, nevertheless, the Church is considered His sole benefactor. Consequently, the pope has no authority to confer grace upon another, nor has any more right to receive the blessings of Christ's redemptive work than any other individual. The Second London Confession, in agreement with Paul the Apostle in Romans Chapter 8:9 and its immediate context, indicate that the blessings covenanted by God towards humanity come from and through Christ alone as the mediator. Whether the received benefits pertain to the prophetic, priestly, or kingly function logically considered, they are experientially inseparable. The Second London Confession states:

Only Christ, the Church of God's Prophet, Priest, and King, is qualified to mediate between God and humans, and neither the entirety nor any portion of that role may be given to another person.⁶

The Second London Confession, based upon the PPK Paradigm, ensured that all Protestants, including churches of Puritan origin that proliferated in Colonial America, were Christologically, experientially, and confessionally reformed in content, method, and application. Their ensuing ecclesiology was also the result of the logical progression of Christological principles arising from the Reformation, forged out of social, political, and spiritual unrest. The subsequent result were the major reformed movements led primarily by Protestant churches that impacted the American social landscape, namely the abolitionist movement, women's suffrage, prohibition, and prison reform. Not only did these movements bring about strident shifts in American life and culture, they led toward political changes after World War II, such as the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments which abolished slavery, guaranteed citizenship for Black people, and allowed them the privilege to participate in voting activities.

Aside from the physical oppression and violence that characterized the Black experience in the United States, the religious and political persecution endured by the reformers is startlingly comparable. Another point of similarity worth noting is the fact that the rudiments of Reformed Theology and that of Black Liberation Theology are centered upon a Christological foundation, though the proponents of each arrive from two different cultural and ontological locations. While we can look to Calvin's Institutes and

⁶ William L. Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, rev. ed. (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1969), 263.

the Second London Confessions as the significant basis for Reformed Theology, James Cone, frequently cited as the father and founder of Black Liberation Theology, asserts that “an investigation of their stories, tales, and sayings” reveal theological insights into the Black experience.⁷ Through an examination of the songs, sermons, and prayers of slaves, the experiences of oppression and steadfast belief in God are expressed through their religious and cultural practices. Historically, slavery forced Black people to abandon the rituals and practices of their indigenous lands to worship with and like their white enslavers. Despite these restrictions on their bodies, cultures, and spirits, enslaved people “transcended the confines of their servitude and proclaimed a religious value system that differed from the master’s in several subtle ways.⁸ Denied the right to literacy, white enslavers intended to present their version of a Christ that would make enslaved people obedient and docile, but many Black people rejected this Christ as they began to learn it contradicted the witness of scripture. Unlike the Christ preached that required an acceptance of their station in life and their obedient submission, they believed in an empowering and liberating Christ of whom scripture attests to being God manifested in the flesh.⁹

The conditions under which enslaved people were introduced to the Bible led to a much more contextual reading of the biblical text as well as a much more multifaceted reception of Christ as prophet, priest, and king. They found that their oral traditions and cultural heritage aligned with the stories in scripture, which made telling and retelling the stories of the Bible much more important than critical analysis. Identification with the

⁷ James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (New York: Orbis, 1997), 16.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Christ of the Bible, his origins among marginalized people, his transcendence above and beyond social and political oppression within the Roman-Jewish conflict of his day, and his single-minded focus toward completing the will of God further validated their sense of worth as children of God, as well as their understanding of Christ as a liberating prophet, a mediating priest, and a ruling king. Most importantly, it informed the righteousness of their struggle toward liberation as a divine act.

For Cone, scripture alongside the Black experience are the primary sources of Black Theology because they together empowered its adherents to confront systems of oppression created and disseminated by the descendants of the reformers, who had achieved religious freedom in Colonial America but denied freedom in every way to the sons and daughters of slavery. Enslaved people embraced a perspective of the God of the Bible born out of an oppressive reality that was fundamentally different from their owners. In the Exodus story, for instance, God is seen as making dramatic moves on behalf of the oppressed. There are also countless instances throughout scripture where God consistently embraces the marginalized and disenfranchised from society, and through divine interaction, inexorably lifts them to significance and infamy. Then ultimately, through the incarnation of Christ, anointed to continue God's liberation mission in the world, Black people developed a hermeneutic through which biblical authority gave them the impetus toward righteous struggle that proceeded directly from scripture. This impetus derived from Christ's birth into poverty, his early life as the son of a common carpenter, his rise to significance as an instrument of justice against the establishment, his redemptive act for all of humanity, and finally his rule over the church, made the idea of righteous struggle an imperative. And even until today, the Bible

continues to stoke the creative fires and strengthen the resolve of Black people to conduct their lives in a manner that is congruent with their perspective of themselves as the products of God's handiwork and the recipients of the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

Because systematic Christian theology is founded on the PPK Paradigm, Christology for Black Liberation Theology rests at the core of Black Church which extols Christ as a multifaceted liberator. But for Black Liberation Theology in particular, the reality of Christ's redemptive work happens from an experiential perspective that can be paralleled with the corresponding imagery that emerges from the more rigid construction of the three-fold offices. It is important to note that the PPK Paradigm has historically been considered a patriarchal Western European formula, resulting in what Takeshi Kimura calls "A speculative, utopian, and irrational theology alien to the reality of pain in human beings."¹⁰ However, the contributions of those theological voices from marginalized people potentially add the painful, violent, and oppressive reality of living under the social and cultural constraints of white hegemony. The ancestors of enslaved people believed that God chose them as benefactors of Christ's liberating presence who not only redeem their souls, but their bodies and social status as well. Christ, in this case, became both the incarnation of God's presence and the incarnation of their truth, which enabled them to realize "that white definitions of Black humanity were lies."¹¹ Based upon the reality of Christ's incarnation as truth, Black Christians believed they were granted divine authority that legitimized the pain of their experiences, but also emboldened them to speak truth to social and political power structures that subdued

¹⁰ Takeshi Kimura, "James H. Cone's Black Theology of Liberation as Postmodern Public Philosophy," *The Journal of American and Canadian Studies* 33 (2015): 9

¹¹ G. Clarke Chapman, "American Theology in Black: James H. Cone," *Cross Currents* 22, no. 2 (1972): 139-57, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24457694>.

them, to challenge the very basis of racism, and to dismantle the entire system of slavery in America.

According to Black ethicist Peter J. Paris, there has been little awareness of the theological contradictions existing between the beliefs of white American Christians and their treatment of Black people. For example, historically, white Christian Americans have been less concerned with applying authentic biblical ethics or the biblical notion of justice for advancing the concerns of the Black community throughout society.¹² Though the formulaic construction of the PPK Paradigm is never formally conveyed in Cone's writings, his construction of the three-fold redemptive work of Christ in the battle for liberation resonates distinctively with Calvin's Christological construction. For instance, Calvin's understanding of the prophetic office in the Catechism of Geneva advances the idea that Christ fulfills all prophecy and that the Holy Spirit gives the prophetic office of teaching to those who will carry on Christ's ministry of preaching the gospel.¹³ Also, Christ's enabling presence occurred not only in the Bible, but throughout history and in contemporary culture. Though Cone strikes a more contextual tone, he conveys the idea that Christ as prophet worked to liberate the helpless and those who were being abused, and that this work continues in the world today through the preaching ministry of the Black Church. Thus, the most important activity of the Church is preaching "freedom" to the oppressed and to say that "the old powers of white racism are writhing in final agony."¹⁴ Cone further adds, "Preaching in its truest sense asks individuals to act as

¹² Peter Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 76.

¹³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1975), 494.

¹⁴ James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2018 [1969]), 71.

though God has won the war against racism by telling the world about Christ's victory over death, hell, and the grave."¹⁵

Secondly, according to Calvin, the priestly office is primarily mediatorial and functions as the means through which humankind is reconciled to God and bestowed with grace. He says that Christ must be both the perfect sacrifice that propitiates the sins of the world and the priest who makes this sacrifice. Redemption occurs and is put into effect through the work of the priest.¹⁶ The primary role of the priest was the exact opposite of the office of the prophet, which had previously looked away from man and toward God. The Christ of Black Liberation Theology, though primarily mediatorial, also functions in redemptive and restorative constructs. Essentially, the emancipatory movements and enabling presence of Christ are at work within every believing person to bring healing and restoration to people in settings where maleficent agents have inflicted pain, suffering, oppression, and all sorts of evil. Kortright Davis, a Black theologian and Cone contemporary from the Caribbean, constructs a Christological proposal that relates to Christ's priestly office: "Jesus liberates Black people from false consciousness by the respect he shows humanity by taking human form. Christ calls them to an awareness of the conscience of black people by calling them to repentance and a life of adoration of God."¹⁷

Finally, according to the PPK Paradigm, God the Father bestows onto Christ God's son the kingly role, "subject to God's will, and designed to order all things to God's glory." It cannot be disputed that Christ assumed the role of a king to grant people

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁶ Calvin, *Institutes*, 502.

¹⁷ Kortright Davis, *Compassionate Love: An Ebony Grace: Christian Altruism and People of Color* (Lanham, MD: Hamilton Books, 2012), 14.

citizenship in a spiritual kingdom. And when Christ returns, he will be referred to as “King of kings and Lord of lords.” He will rule and judge everything, according to Revelation 19:16. More significantly, when individuals are converted, it is through the authority of Christ who regenerates their will to be submissive, to build church government, and to exercise authority in his name. The conceptualization of Black Liberation Theology suggests that Christ is actively involved in readjusting the affairs of this world toward divine justice and peace, which is the manifestation of his kingly rule.

In addition, he is making it possible for every believer to have a positive outlook on the final establishment of Christ’s kingdom in the world to come. As a result, the church’s role as a public witness is to further God’s global mission and carry out Christ’s liberating agenda. In this sense, Christian theology and ecclesiology need Black Liberation Theology to offer a real-world context. It has a unique part in freeing the entire world and the church from human sinfulness committed everywhere, oppression, and imperialism as a reflected reality of the soon-to-arrive Kingdom rather than being an afterthought or merely a political theme in theology. The purpose of Black Liberation Theology is to provoke or excite Christians of every race and nation to a new way of thinking about theology as a whole and the universal church in the twenty-first century. This can still be considered the greatest challenge as our time, as the church engages in bringing about the reality of God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Indeed, Cone’s Christological framework in Black Liberation Theology and the PPK Paradigm is the fruit of the same theological tree. In that case, the shared three-fold symmetry that each possesses appears to be quite evident and purposeful. Both hold the people of God accountable for the primary obligation of “becoming Christ to the world

by preaching the message of the gospel (Prophetic), by giving services for liberation (Priestly) and by being itself an expression of the character of the new society (Kingly).”¹⁸ In his theological treatise “Christ the Center,” Dietrich Bonhoeffer posits an all-encompassing thought regarding Christ’s location at the center of theological discourse.

Jesus Christ sits at the intersection of humankind, history, and nature as the crucified and resurrected one. Jesus represents both the center and the periphery of humanity. He occupies a marginal position since he is the legal conclusion, human judgment, and human justification. He serves as a standard by which humanity is evaluated. He is also the center of humankind because he takes our place when we cannot do so and acts as our just rediscovered center.¹⁹

The Black Church in The Post-Modern Context

A host of contemporary Black church leaders and theologians are currently weighing in on whether Cone’s version of Black Liberation Theology is a sufficient hermeneutic through which to engage the work of liberating Black people from a much wider range of oppressions and meeting the multiple spiritual and physical needs that have increased as a result of the challenges of post-modern society. As a matter of fact, contemporary theologians find it problematic to fully embrace liberation as defined in the Black Liberation Theology vis-à-vis The Black Church tradition. Black people no longer

¹⁸ Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 71.

¹⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ as Center* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2009), 62.

live under the singular threat of whips and chains; however, economic disenfranchisement, political marginalization, lack of access to healthcare, inequity, injustice, and a myriad of other social challenges continue to place constraints on Black bodies and souls. An even more compelling challenge for Black Liberation Theology is how it gives voice to the growing dissonance of Black perspectives—especially those that address gender and sexuality—that stand in contrast to its highly patriarchal traditions and narrow constructions of Blackness. Thus, Jason Evans, a gay Black theologian, raises the plight of Black sexual minorities and their struggle to find a sense of human dignity within an institution that often demonizes their existence for being same-gender loving, and transgender. Evans posits:

The persistent sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia within the Black Church and the greater African American community are prophetic challenges I welcome coming from black and womanist theologians. Many people stay inside the Black Church's walls because of their love for God and God's people, despite its unrepented sins toward its marginalized members.²⁰

For Evans, conservatives who cling to traditional moral and religious constructs versus those who are more progressive are at odds over the moral dilemmas that derive from emerging questions of race, culture, gender, and sexuality. An even greater conundrum facing the Black Church is how it will respond to these challenges. At this

²⁰ Jason O. Evans, "The Black Church after King: Toward a Liberationist Ecclesiology in African American Evangelical Perspective," 2013, 4, <https://virginia.academia.edu/JasonOEvans>.

juncture in history, the pluralistic nature of the realities faced by Black people put them in stark contrast to their formerly enslaved ancestors who struggled relentlessly for freedom as Blacks in America. In consideration of this growing dissent, Anthony B. Bradley takes issue with Cone's emphasis on Black victimology, which, in this setting, can be interpreted as the central idea behind Black Liberation Theology. With the contemporary social context moving away from African Americans' historical experience within a landscape shaped by Eurocentric values, Bradley's position is that Black Liberation Theology in the traditional sense lacks the appropriate theological perspective required to accurately address issues confronting us today. Writes Bradley, "The overall thesis is that Cone's starting point for Black identity as victim supplies a fundamentally flawed theological anthropology for later developments in Black Liberation Theology."²¹ Therefore, theological thinking that reflects a new reality in which many Blacks have overcome traditional barriers of systematic oppression to achieve success and wealth must be sought and embraced.

One of the most significant considerations espoused by the PPK Paradigm is that both schools of thought regarding the theological plight facing the Black Church could be harmonized, as both perspectives bear a significant amount of veracity. The abolition of legalized slavery and integration, along with the never-ending struggle for civil rights in America, have contributed to unparalleled levels of political success—in sports, music, enterprise, and virtually every other segment of mainstream culture. However, the gap between upwardly mobile Black middle-class and poor Blacks who are still entangled in the web of racial violence and economic inequality have, nevertheless, become even

²¹ Anthony B. Bradley, *Liberating Black Theology: The Bible and the Black Experience in America* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010), 17.

wider. This same polarization has also happened in real-time within the Black Church, as many congregations struggle to embrace theologies reflective of Black people's continuous migration into various social and cultural realities that are constantly evolving. The result has produced a plurality of social experiences and new identities that not only reinforce the dissonance from their ancestors' historical experiences of slavery but also force Black Church pastors to deal with a wide range of new and differing social and cultural issues. Consequently, Black Church pastors in the postmodern era are under increasing pressure to address issues of class, gender, and sexuality, in addition to race, in a way that moves congregants toward new and multi-faceted definitions of liberation (as seen in the movements addressing socio-political issues such as women's rights, Black Lives Matter, and LGBT rights). It is essential, then, to recognize the uncomfortable irony faced by supporters of Cone's Black Liberation Theology as well as those seeking a post-modern theological lens, as both sides are caught between historical theological conceptions forged in the pursuit for justice and the consequential fallout that has left the Black Church seeking a contemporary theological identity and vision forward. If the Black Church embraces the need to seek justice against all manners of oppression that infirm Black people, then its failure to aid and support those who are currently oppressed within the vestiges of this post-modern reality must be called out. The Black Church has also been vehemently criticized, in many cases, for its complicity in the oppression of its marginalized population, instead of being a warm place of healing, social reform, and liberation, particularly for Black women, LGBTQ people, and the impoverished.

According to Princeton Professor Eddie Glaude, “The Black Church, as we’ve known it or envisioned it, is gone” in light of these failures.²²

Given the current social challenges that harangue the Black Church, a post-modern theological identity must strive to expand its sacred space for new voices and identities to confront the Cross of Christ in ways unobstructed by the monolithic definitions of Black identity and social norms and constructs of the past. In today’s climate, the challenges for the Black Church pastor are varied and numerous. But codifying the PPK Paradigm as a model for ministry in the postmodern Black Church may not only help the Black Church pastor reevaluate and recalculate her personal experiences and theology but may also serve as a means to illuminate Christ’s revelatory, redemptive, and reconciliatory work as a model for effective service within the current social context.

As stated in chapter one, the lack of financial and health-related resources, misinformation and miseducation, and the effects of incompatible theological positions are three significant obstacles hindering HIV prevention activities within the Black Church. However, it is widely agreed upon among clergy and health professionals that the damaging effects of HIV within Black Communities constitute a significant concern that must be addressed.²³ The decisions on which initiatives, programs, and ministries will be carried out and supported are primarily made by clergy and lay leaders.²⁴ Especially within the Black Church, the theological perspectives through which the

²² Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., “The Black Church is Dead,” *The Huffington Post*, February 24, 2010, www.huffingtonpost.com/eddie-glaude-jr-phd/the-black-church-is-dead_b_473815.html.

²³ Justin Smith, Emma Simmons, and Kenneth H. Mayer, “HIV/AIDS, and the Black Church: What Are the Barriers to Prevention Services?” *Journal of the National Medical Association* 97, no. 12 (2005): 1682.

²⁴ M. H. Anshel and M. Smith, “The Role of Religious Leaders in Promoting Healthy Habits in Religious Institutions,” *Journal of Religion Health* 53, no. 4 (2014):1046–59.

pastor aligns the missional work of the congregation with the concerns of the surrounding community can greatly influence the commitment of its members to long-term, productive engagement. The driving thesis of this research is that if theological incompatibility can be harmonized in a sufficient way with the demands of the current social context, the impetus to shift congregational perceptions toward engagement in HIV prevention ministry can be achieved.

The greatest obstacle to theological compatibility is the Black Church pastor's perceptions and assumptions regarding HIV and homosexuality, as well as the behaviors that are connected with HIV transmission, including unprotected sexual activity and injectable drug use. This has made it difficult for the Black Church to respond effectively to the HIV epidemic. This is lamentable given the centrality and influence of the Black Church in the Black community—both within the church and outside of it. In a recent study titled “The Influence of Pastors’ Ideologies of Homosexuality on HIV Prevention in the Black Church,” researchers interviewed pastors in the Black Church about their perspectives on homosexuality and HIV prevention, questioning them about how frequently they brought up the subjects of homosexuality and HIV in sermons or other church events and what messages they sought to get across to their congregation in general and to young people in particular.²⁵ Participants were also questioned regarding the sexual behavior of adolescents and the role that the church plays in the fight against HIV. Respondents included members of churches ranging in size from small to large and pastors from various religious traditions, all of whom lived in large metropolitan areas.

²⁵ Katherine Quinn, Julia Dickson-Gomez, and Staci Young, *The Influence of Pastors’ Ideologies of Homosexuality on HIV Prevention in the Black Church* (New York: Springer Science + Business Media, 2016), 2.

Even though only one of the pastors reported having an active HIV prevention ministry, all claimed they had previously taken part in the Black Church National Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS. They also emphasized the importance of the congregation becoming involved in preventing the spread of HIV.

Although a wide variety of church denominations were represented in the sample, it did not appear that the beliefs held by pastors differed significantly from one denomination to another. Most of the pastors included in the study had opinions on homosexuality that were harmful, offensive, or stigmatizing to LGBT people. Additionally, the majority of them also held strongly to the idea that homosexuality is wicked, rationalizing it as a matter of depraved human choice rather than a social identity construct through which its adherents see and understand the world.²⁶ All of the pastors agreed that there was a fundamental conflict between homosexuality and acceptable Christian behavior, and there was a general understanding that a large number of homosexual people in the Black Church, as well as an increasing number of people who embrace homosexuality in society as a whole, believe that one's sexual orientation is an inherent part of one's being. According to Quinn, in order for homosexuality to be classified as wickedness, it "must be considered a personal choice, rather than the way God created someone," for pastors to view it as such. Conversely, if individuals were created to be homosexual, and had little control over their sexuality, it would be extremely difficult for pastors to hold homosexuality to be a sin, if they believed that some people were intrinsically gay as opposed to deeming it a lifestyle choice.²⁷

²⁶ Ibid., 7.

²⁷ Ibid., 9.

Respondents, therefore, believed it was the Black Church's responsibility to vehemently condemn homosexuality as a sin. They also presented a range of explanations for why people might be gay, including the effect of the media, the absence of father figures, sexual abuse throughout childhood, and manipulation by adult gay predators. Consequently, given that pastors are seen as authoritative and possessing a special power and duty to spread the message of God across the community (one pastor remarked during a sermon that "I feel God has appointed me and has told me that if I'm going to minister to people, I have to keep it real"²⁸), their views on issues such as homosexuality carry considerable weight—their words can greatly influence congregations and the general public theologically and in forming opinions about social injustices. However, when it comes to homosexuality, and HIV in particular, relying on the Bible to bolster pastoral perspectives can be read incorrectly and turn into a justification for views that would otherwise be regarded as homophobic. By presenting themselves as just messengers and using the Bible as a scapegoat, pastors can avoid being accused of homophobia or bigotry, acquit themselves of the blame for such attitudes, and absolve themselves of responsibility for such attitudes. It's possible that pastors who teach their congregations about the evils of homosexuality unknowingly contribute to the spread of homo-negativity. This is especially true for younger members of the congregation who are at a more impressionable age and by and large more accepting of alternative lifestyles.

Although research shows similarity in the positions taken by pastors with regard to homosexuality and sex and sexuality issues, there are differences. Many pastors

²⁸ Ibid.

claimed they had never discussed the subject with the congregation. After all, they found it difficult to do so, partly because they were aware that different congregants' views on sexuality could become inflamed and conflict with those who hold other views. Other pastors argued that more urgent issues, like neighborhood violence and education, particularly for young people, should take precedence. This avoidance of the subject was partly caused by the congregations' perception of the absence of LGBTQ people in their churches. While some pastors regularly address sexuality-related topics with their youth groups or in Bible studies, others do not. Most of those who did so state that it only infrequently came up. Pastors hardly ever criticized gay members of their congregations, but they clarified that homosexuality is immoral in the eyes of the Church and God.

Quinn's research sheds light on the dilemma confronting pastors who believe homosexuality is a sin while promoting the inclusion of all believers within the life of the congregation. The problem these pastors face is holding that homosexuality is a sin while promoting the inclusion of all sinners. Although he was adamant that homosexuality was a sin, one pastor gave a sermon encouraging his congregation to accept everyone into the Church, even if they didn't always live-in line with the Bible. He recognized that despite the Church's best efforts, persons who are different from the norm are not always accepted into the community and—presumably—should be. It would appear that the objective of sermons such as these is to minimize the attention that homosexuality has gotten within the church; nevertheless, by doing so, pastors may inadvertently add to the stigma associated with homosexuality or HIV.

One impact of the stigma surrounding homosexuality is the tendency for people to regard it as a different and more serious sin than other sins. In their minds, homosexuality

is a vice or temptation that needs to be resisted rather than a natural part of who a person is. As a result, pastors can only consider homosexuality a malleable or chosen aspect of a person's identity and so a personal sin. This allows them to continue to love the person, but only with the focus on changing the individual's behavior or "loving the sinner but hating the sin." Views about homosexuality have their roots in the theological conservatism that so many Black Church pastors have espoused. However, because of their history of civil rights efforts and more liberal political inclinations, they are unhappy when people are treated unfairly. As a direct consequence, pastors have often showed sympathy for LGBT persons but, at the same, have counseled them to change what are considered sinful lifestyles. It has been common for pastors to assume that it is their responsibility to "rescue" LGBT members of their congregation or assist them in navigating what is viewed as a challenging time in their life. They have typically compared abandoning a "gay lifestyle" to getting clean from an addiction to drugs or alcohol, although the reaction to homosexuality has never been one of overt hostility or social isolation.

Here, then, lies the challenge for many pastors. Even if they acknowledge that they are in a position to take a vital leadership role in addressing issues related to sex and HIV, and that HIV is a severe problem, particularly in the Black community, they fear that their efforts to prevent the spread of HIV may be misunderstood as a form of endorsement of homosexuality. The research found that even though pastors typically claimed to love and welcome gay members of their congregations, there was still an underlying unease and concern about being seen as encouraging and endorsing homosexuality. If the findings of Quinn's research indicate the prevailing mindset of

Black church pastors, and how churches operate under their leadership, then a good number of these congregations say they welcome people of all backgrounds, though their theology does not match their missiology. Pastors rarely consider the potential detrimental repercussions that their words and deeds may have on recipients. In reality, the ideals they proclaim, and their underlying philosophical beliefs are not as accepting as others may believe them to be. They have preached against homosexuality in Sunday sermons, Bible studies, and youth groups because, in general, they believed that religion and homosexuality were incompatible with one another and so couldn't coexist. Even though they are less obvious, pastors and other church members are more prone to engage in what Quinn refers to as "casual microaggressions." These slights have the potential to be just as hurtful and influential as more obvious ones.²⁹

Even churches that strive to practice compassion can use language and attitudes that either directly or indirectly stigmatize HIV-positive people or engage in risky behaviors. When people attribute HIV infection to bad actions or as a punishment from God against the offender, it is challenging to provide care. The Black Church, in particular, has historically met community challenges with its greatest vigor when Black people are perceived as suffering through no fault of their own, not when they inflict suffering on themselves. Assumptions that HIV-infected persons are promiscuous or irreligious are less a matter of theology and more the result of conservative viewpoints that stigmatize rather than heal.

The question of responsibility and 'sinfulness can be illustrated by the following example. At the observance of World AIDS Day in 1995, which took

²⁹ Ibid., 12.

place in the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Bujumbura, the priest made the following statement during his speech: “We must show compassion for those with AIDS because they have sinned and because they are suffering for it now.” Then, Jeanne Gapiya felt compelled to state, “I am a loyal wife and also infected with HIV. Who are you to say that you haven’t done anything wrong and that I have? Who are you to say that I have? We are all sinners, which is fortunate since Jesus came to save us.”³⁰ In other words, one, those infected by HIV may be “innocent” of promiscuity or homosexuality; but two, regardless of such particular “innocence,” we are nevertheless all sinful and all in need of healing—something the Church must respond to.

The focal point of PPK Paradigm, which is centered on Christ’s person and work, seeks to help pastors suspend judgement as to how anyone came to be in the situation or condition they are in today. Calvin’s presupposition is based on the Reformed concept of human depravity, which holds that despite people’s ability to uphold the rule on the outside, an underlying distortion still causes all human activities to be displeasing to God, whether they are good or wicked.³¹ The PPK Paradigm provides an answer to the question of how far Christ is willing to go to mediate and ultimately carry out God’s continuous plan of salvation for all of humanity. Christ performed these actions as an act of submission to the will of the Father. In this sense, Christ’s prophetic, priestly, and kingly work serves as his blueprint for the ministry of his church and as a model of leadership for those tasked with carrying out their responsibilities in Christ’s name. It

³⁰ J. Brown and H. J. Hendriks, “The AIDS Fulcrum: The Church in Africa Seesawing between Alienation, Estrangement, Prejudice, and Love,” *Practical Theology in SA* 19, no. 2 (2004): 19–36.

³¹ Richard A. Muller, *Calvin and the Reformed Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 51.

also serves as a powerful tool that removes the emphasis from a human predisposition to judge or condemn any individual's sexual activity or behavior as sinful, placing emphasis on compassionate care.

While the PPK Paradigm is designed to assist clergy in making the shift from harmful theologies that stigmatize HIV/AIDS infected persons, it is clear that the road to compassionate care can be long and fraught with psychological and experiential obstacles. In this case, other approaches can be helpful. One approach that has been helpful is to highlight the strides made among HIV medical professionals who are increasingly moving away from behavioral therapies and concentrating only on biological treatment while also shifting their attention away from sexual activities to lessen patient prejudice.³² Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrExP), for instance, entails giving HIV drugs to people who may be at risk of infection without considering sexual conduct or partner history. Pastors have responded more favorably to this as an HIV ministry engagement strategy, which is simpler to promote in a religious setting. This is because open distribution indirectly helps to reduce stigma and microaggressions against LGBT persons, as everyone has equal access to preventative treatment without having to reveal one's status or behavioral information. More importantly, it helps to shift the focus from whether a behavior is sinful to concern for HIV prevention. While this may seem to be a simple biomedical approach and not a theological strategy, it is an aperture through which one should visualize the implementation of a Christ-centered model of care. By placing Christ's person and activity at the forefront as the only judge of healing and

³² P. L. Anderson et al., "Emtricitabine-tenofovir concentrations and pre-exposure prophylaxis efficacy in men who have sex with men," *Science Translational Medicine* 4, no. 151 (2012): 4, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22972843/>.

liberation in all of its manifestations, the purpose of developing an HIV prevention theology based on the PPK Paradigm is to lessen stigma and discrimination. In light of this, it is the responsibility of the church, which is the body of Christ, to cultivate an environment that represents Christ to enable others to experience the mercy, grace and wisdom of Christ. McDonald provides support for this position by stating that:

[Christ] looked for sinners. This is the gospel's new note. According to Judaism, God was willing to extend grace but tended to let the sinner take the first move. Jesus stood out from the crowd because He willingly and deliberately took the initiative on behalf of God. This is grace in action.³³

To engage in congregational transformation, Black Church pastors would do well to model the three offices of the PPK Paradigm as they are discerned both individually and corporately, both existentially and ecclesiastically. Only then will the congregation be able to experience real change. It must be lived out incarnationally within the church so that the congregation recognizes that the church is not merely a dispensary for HIV prevention services; it is indeed a benefactor of Christ's grace called to extend the same grace without judgment or condemnation to all. According to David Langerman's article, "Between Cathedral and Monastery: Creating Balance Between a Pastor's Personal Faith and Public Role: The Munus Triplex and The Pastoral Function," the pastor's incarnational role as a transformational leader and communicator of Christ's three-fold office is powerfully highlighted by the PPK Paradigm. When the biblical passages that

³³ H. D. McDonald, "Grace," in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. M. C. Tenney (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980), 799–804

explain Christ's mission and the actions of the Black Church are taken into account, these three perspectives take on a more tangible form. Calvin describes Christ's prophetic role as an "ambassador" and an "interpreter" for God. In this capacity, Christ would communicate God's will to the people whom God had chosen. This would "illuminate both God's gracious initiative in himself toward God's Church and God's expectations of the Church in response."³⁴ As a prophet, the pastor's responsibility is to serve the church of Christ, motivating individuals to use their prophetic imagination to catch a glimpse of themselves in the light of Christ's love. The pastor's preaching ministry is the main venue to give the people a picture of an alternative present and future. In Luke 4:18, Christ declares, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor," which is in light of his statement of his divine fulfillment.³⁵ Christ uniquely anoints the pastor to point to those who are oppressed, the impoverished, and those who are in need in the right. This is a crucial point to keep in mind in a post-modern society characterized by the dominance of powerful interests and the formation of materialistic self-interest. In the Black Liberation tradition, the goal of prophetic preaching has always been to make the Living God apparent in the lives of the congregation and the modern world. Prophetic preaching is, by design, an incarnated message of hope, personified by the preacher's movement and tone, and most often characterized by a celebration of what is to come. As Frank Thomas illustrates, "sermonic celebration" refers to "the completion of the sermonic design," where a moment is created in which the memory of a redemptive past and the conviction of a liberated future transforms the events immediately experienced," and as such, it is a

³⁴ Stephen Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 154.

³⁵ Luke 4:18, KJV.

distinctive feature of the Black preaching experience.³⁶ The use of celebration in preaching assists in highlighting the most critical parts of the sermon since it appeals to the emotions of the audience members, given that people tend to relate to and remember what they celebrate. Prophetic preaching is required to increase public awareness of HIV/AIDS, inspire the neighborhood to support and embrace those afflicted, and instruct the populace on prevention.

The prophetic pastor must also know how words can be weaponized to construct or deconstruct perceived stigmatization and discrimination. In very much the way a pastor prepares a sermon manuscript to ensure that points are precisely delivered, the same care must be taken to ensure that one's communication, both from the pulpit and within the pews, is so deeply imbued with messages of affirmation and hope, stigmatizing and discriminating language is also reduced among those with whom the pastor engages. According to studies, when a pastor publicly endorses an HIV testing program, it helps to establish a positive norm that promotes acceptance of testing as an adaptive reaction to a health concern. This contributes to the "normalization" of HIV as a health issue rather than a moral issue, in line with the strategy of decoupling HIV awareness from homosexual behavior.³⁷

To fulfill the priestly vocation, it is the responsibility of the pastor to remain among the people, to live in fellowship with them, and to experience life alongside of them. Also, within the PPK Paradigm, the primary responsibility of a pastor is to educate the members of their congregation, through precept and practice, what it means to follow

³⁶ Frank A. Thomas, *They Like to Never Quit Praising God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching* (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1997), 31.

³⁷ J. R. Koch and R. E. Beckley, "Under the Radar: AIDS Ministry in the Bible Belt," *Religious Research Association* 47, no. 4 (2006): 393–408.

the teachings of Christ. The ability to empathize with the anguish and distress of the congregation, and offer compassionate support in response, not only has immense influence over members, but can potentially impact the outward perceptions of the church in the community. Thus, according to each of these points of view, the priestly responsibility of the pastor is to demonstrate to people the love of Christ to all, which lies at the core of the gospel's message. According to Luke 4:18 of the King James Holy Bible, the pastor's function as a priest is to "heal the brokenhearted" by thoroughly showing Christ's love, notably through worship and prayer.³⁸ The love of Christ, which originates in God's love for people and God's desire to heal them, serves as the foundation upon which the principles of the gospel are constructed, and the Church of Christ is built. The church, according to Geoffrey Wainwright, "lives from the faith that Christ is present in the midst of those gathered in his name (Matt 18:20) and accompanies them on the mission."³⁹ This resonates in the thought of Cone, though the location at which the mission of Black Liberation Theology occurs is within the broken hearts and fragmented identities of Black people. Within the context of the PPK Paradigm, the pastor not only serves as the arbiter of Christ-like compassion for all in need but also leads the congregation in advancing that same compassion to the community.

At its core, the PPK Paradigm is undergirded by Black Liberation Theology, which, according to Cone, seeks to reclaim the broken and fragmented identity distorted by oppression and systematic violence perpetrated upon Black bodies and spirits by white

³⁸ Luke 4:18, KJV.

³⁹ Geoffrey Wainwright, *For Our Salvation: Two Approaches to the Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 132.

hegemony.⁴⁰ Katie Cannon, an architect of Womanist Theology, agrees with Cone, though, she insists that “the complexities and nuances that constitute the after-shock of systematic racism have further fragmented the distortions of Black identity in multifaceted ways that cannot be encapsulated by the superficial classifications of Black or white.⁴¹ Black identity can no longer be limited to a narrow set of values or behaviors placed upon them within a social construct that has historically denied their full humanity. Even more injurious, however, has been the denial of full expression often perpetrated upon them by the Black Church. For both Cone and Cannon, in view of the ontological complexities derived that exist while living Black in White spaces, Black identity must be reclaimed through an encounter with the Biblical Christ, in whose presence one can rediscover a spiritual identity free of racial distortions or constraints. Thus, the Black Church becomes the primary space dedicated to the reformation of Black people into the likeness and image of Christ, where Blacks are at liberty to transcend color and culture, regardless of where they fit within the spectrum of what can be defined as Black. The worship, preaching, rituals, and traditions are unapologetically Christ-centered in the Black Church with the goal of spiritual and racial liberation, delivered in a way that hopefully drives its membership to a transformative moment at the Cross of Christ. However, the pace at which its theological convictions have undergirded its ability to acknowledge, embrace, and support these ever-expanding definitions of Blackness has been a point of contention. Cannon advocates for the Black Church evolving towards being a place of inclusivity where all of those who have been erased

⁴⁰ Simon Mary Asese Ahiokhai, “Black theology in dialogue with LGBTQ + Persons in the Black Church: Walking in the Shoes of James Hal Cone and Katie Geneva Cannon,” *Theology & Sexuality* 27, nos. 2–3 (2021): 137–54, DOI: 10.1080/13558358.2020.1868157.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

from the world due to whiteness as a mode of being in the world can be acknowledged. Both Cone and Cannon urge for a significant shift in a viewpoint that will allow the genuine embrace of creative imagination, which is necessary to help its congregants and community participants to reimagine the various ways blackness can be expressed and valued.⁴²

The PPK Paradigm also seeks to curate space for innovative and creative strategies that support and uplift the intrinsic value of all persons. As priest, the pastor incarnates the love of Christ by curating safe loving, listening, and learning spaces that are also radically inclusive, where individuals, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation, are free from fear of condemnation but are granted free access to confront the fragments of their own identities at the foot of the Cross. Beyond providing educational material and workshops for congregants and service seekers, the pastor as a priest must be willing to challenge theologies that reinforce stereotypes and stigmas against HIV-positive persons, regardless of gender or behavioral differences, as well as combat myths and conspiracy theories that have led to mistrust of prevention and treatment methods within Black communities. According to the tenets of the PPK Paradigm, pastors as priests must be willing to invite persons and the congregation into participation in the priesthood of all believers to intercede for the oppressed and provide resources to alleviate the conditions that persist in the lives of those seeking relief.

The Black Church pastor is uniquely positioned to embody the PPK Paradigm because she serves at the center of the church and the community. The Black Church pastor holds a multifaceted, intersectional role in maximizing the congregation's spiritual,

⁴² Ibid.

social, and community fulfillment of Christ's mission to the world. Those who embrace the PPK Paradigm are uniquely positioned to act as social innovators and change agents for the church, the surrounding community, and even beyond those borders. This makes the pastor the driving force behind increasing HIV prevention efforts in their communities and reducing and removing stigma and discriminatory barriers that stop the church from doing its prophetic, priestly, and royal service to the community. The hope of this research into crafting a theological perspective that drives HIV prevention ministry is that Black Church pastors would not only embrace the reality of the PPK Paradigm as part of their own spiritual and professional journey but would also instruct their flocks so that they might take part in their communities without adopting the numerous attitudes that turn away instead of draw in those in need of care. Assisting the Black Church pastor to promote change within the congregation. Chapter three aims to show how the PPK Paradigm can be used to make HIV prevention programs and models easy to use in both the Black church and community. The PPK Paradigm best shapes leadership when the three offices are seen first and foremost as roles finished in Christ and passed on to the whole people of God through their unity with Christ. Knowing the responsibilities attached to the roles and understanding how they are carried out in Christ helps pastors bring to mind that being a leader doesn't make them kings or queens over the people they serve, but stewards of a people whom God purchased through the sacrifice of Christ.⁴³

Finally, the role of the pastor as a royal servant requires the individual who serves Christ to reflect the character of Christ by acting as a model of sacrifice and submission,

⁴³ Michael S. Wilder and Timothy P. Jones, *The God Who Goes before You: Pastoral Leadership as Christ-Centered Followership* (Nashville: B and H Academic, 2018), 52.

just as the kingship of Christ is revealed through the act of Christ's submission to the will of the Father through the act of Christ's sacrifice. According to Luke 4:18-19, Christ came into the world "to set at free them that are bruised, and to proclaim the year of the favor of the Lord."⁴⁴ Even if Christ now rules as king due to his exaltation, the pastor, for example, is still obligated to model his behavior after the one "who came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."⁴⁵ According to the belief held by the vast majority of members of Black churches, the pastor is a servant leader in the community who is called to embody the spiritual part of Christ and demonstrate what it means to live out faith in God's faithfulness. This is the role that the pastor is called to fulfill. The pastor is responsible for upholding the integrity of God's covenants with the church members.

In addition to managing connections within the community, the pastor serves as a royal servant and ensures that congregational resources are strategically and methodically marshaled to ensure that the congregation achieves God's favored destiny. According to a 2011 study by Brad Fulton of Duke University, the likelihood that a Black church will have an HIV prevention program and will continue to keep it going is significantly increased when the church maintains teams made up of individuals who assess the needs of the community, collaborate with organizations' from the outside, and encourage political participation.⁴⁶ By creating coalitions with members of the congregation and organizations in the community, pastors can strengthen their congregations' understanding of and capacity for attaining the goals of the preventative ministry. One

⁴⁴ Luke 4:18-19, NRSV.

⁴⁵ Matthew 20:28, NRSV.

⁴⁶ Brad R. Fulton, "Black Churches and HIV/AIDS: Factors Influencing Congregations' Responsiveness to Social Issues," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50, no. 3 (2011): 14.

such significant coalition of religious leaders, for example, is Philly Faith in Action. It was birthed as a result of a community-based participatory research study to involve African American clergy in HIV prevention actively.⁴⁷

In addition to promoting program testing options from the pulpit, several religious leaders tested their HIV status in front of their congregations on Sundays. The project's findings indicated that direct clergy involvement could be a powerful catalyst for social change when collaborating with community partners.⁴⁸ These findings also highlight the significance of shifting away from a purely programmatic approach that is focused on how religious institutions can alter individual behaviors toward a more participatory approach, as well as toward a process that by its very nature addresses stigma as well as the social and economic contextual factors that contribute to racial disparities in HIV infection. The most impactful act a pastor may perform in this context of HIV prevention is self-sacrifice; overtly and openly, these pastors showed their vulnerability to get publicly tested in front of the congregation. It serves as an example of the most profound act of faith for others and calls on others to actively participate in Christ's royal servanthood.

⁴⁷ Gladys Thomas et al., "What's God Got to Do with It? Engaging African American Faith-based Institutions in HIV Prevention," *Global Public Health* 8, no. 3 (2013): 258–69.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

Chapter Three

PPK Construction & Analysis

In this chapter, I will provide what I believe is a powerful representation of the PPK Paradigm. I will present a particle article that identifies aspects of PPK Paradigm as personified by Black Church pastors (through an article highlighting one pastor specifically that shares the work about HIV done by Pastor James L, Cherry. His work will be explored in depth). The ultimate purpose of exploring this article is to further present specific activities that directly lends credence to the model as an effective strategy to increase awareness within the congregation and diminish stigma towards persons living with HIV within the Black church and local Black communities. This article demonstrates the PPK Paradigm in action through the work of Rev. Cherry, a former pastor of the Aeon Baptist Church in Rochester, NY, and a member of the board of the National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS (NBLCA), the largest and most respected non-profit of its kind in the country. As an affiliate partner of the NBLCA, Rev. Cherry as well as a number of other committed Black pastors and ministers whose goal was also to increase awareness within their congregations and diminish stigma towards persons living with HIV, has been an integral part of launching projects all over their individual cities to help lessen the effects of the disease. According to the article about Cherry, it is important to note that he was active both on the local and national levels, Cherry was a prominent promoter in the implementation of programs that helped the NBLCA carry out its mission to “educate, organize, and empower Black leadership, including clergy as evidenced by a variety of articles and written interviews, elected

officials, medical professionals, business professionals, social policy experts, and the media, to meet the challenge of fighting HIV/AIDS in their local communities.”¹

Christopher A. House in “The Wounded Healer: The HIV/AIDS Rhetoric Of Rev. James L. Cherry,” provides an account of the preaching of Rev. James Cherry from the perspective of what Henri Nouwen calls the “wounded healer.”² A wounded healer is a person who identifies with the pain of those whom they serve in ministry, because they have come to grips their own suffering, and now make that suffering the starting point of service.³ Cherry exemplifies such a person by positioning himself as a fellow human who has experienced some measure of emotional, physical, and spiritual brokenness in his own life. Consequently, in his sermons and sermon commentary, Cherry describes that brokenness as a starting place and an identity for creating a community of compassion and support for persons infected and impacted by HIV/AIDS. However, “wounded healers” must take care in how they fill such a role, for if they minister from a place of unexamined suffering, they can inadvertently impose their woundedness on others, thereby inflicting suffering on the most vulnerable. In the Black Church, the idea of preachers who have not adequately healed from their own traumatic situations and who inflict pain on others in their interactions are often described as “bleeding on the sheep.” Therefore, it is crucial that pastors and church leaders seek the support and necessary resources to facilitate personal healing so they can effectuate healing among their congregants and community participants.

¹ The National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS, “ABOUT BLCA,” accessed March 23, 2023, <http://www.nblca.org/about.html>.

² Christopher A. House, “A Wounded Healer: The HIV/AIDS Rhetoric of Rev. James L. Cherry,” *Listening: Journal of Communication Ethics, Religion, and Culture* 55, no. (2020): 195.

³ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 2.

House's methodology reveals the strength of interactive engagement and allows us to evaluate Cherry's pulpit rhetoric and related activities in addressing and supporting the congregation's work with HIV-positive persons within the church and community. It also provides a lens for seeing the elements of prophetic, priestly, and royal activities that align with the PPK Paradigm in a congregational context. Because of the weight placed upon the power and influence of prophetic preaching in the worship experience within the Black Church, a premium is placed upon the use of religious symbolism and identification with traditional symbolic figures. These, in turn, can have a positive or negative effect on those who have HIV/AIDS within the community. House illuminates Cherry's ability to utilize his skillsets as a gifted orator and seasoned administrator to motivate the Aenon congregation towards outward ministry with a heart of love.

Describing what led Cherry toward his efforts to mobilize the Aenon congregation to embrace HIV/AIDS prevention as a major ministry priority to strengthen the surrounding community, House goes on to note that there is no consensus among Black religious leaders about whether they should speak on HIV/AIDS from the pulpit.⁴ In the 1980s and '90s, many church leaders believed that homosexuality and social decay precipitated the HIV/AIDS pandemic throughout urban communities of color. While most leaders have been more reticent to engage the subject, Cherry moved in a different direction, mainly due to two significant losses in his ministry, which forced him to confront his theological convictions in a meaningful and effectual way. In his earlier years and then again, later in his ministry, Cherry was personally and deeply impacted by

⁴ Christopher A. House, "Religious Rhetoric(s) of the African Diaspora: Using Oral History to Study HIV/AIDS, Communication and Rhetorical Interventions," *International Journal of Communication* 7 (2013): 1-20.

another illness that disproportionately affects African Americans: sickle cell anemia. Experiencing the debilitating effects of the disease that ended the life of two of his children ultimately forced him to revisit his theological understanding of suffering in light of God's grace. While the loss of his son, Michael, threatened to derail his faithful service early in his Christian walk, Cherry admits that his pastor, in his role as priest, not only comforted him but also confronted him by urging him to utilize his pain to minister to others who were suffering too. And then later, well into his pastoral ministry, when his daughter passed from the same disease at the age 52, this second loss forced him to direct the pain of his personal loss toward helping others through similar circumstances. This led him to agree to join Dr. Calvin Butts of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, New York, as a board member of NBCLA.

The idea of leaning into one's suffering and using it as an impetus to respond to the suffering of others is the central theme of Nouwen's work in *The Wounded Healer*. We can also identify suffering as a significant element of the PPK Paradigm, as believers are invited to share in the humiliation and triumph of Christ in His person and work as prophet, priest, and king. Nouwen challenges all clergy to follow the way of Christ as wounded healers by sharing the sadness, anger, anxiety, and inadequacy which emanate from their suffering. Through the process of exposing their own vulnerability, they are endowed with a measure of grace to exhibit the tenants of both suffering and redemption which deepens the impact among those with whom they serve.

Empathizing deeply with the feelings of others allows those who minister to communicate with them and aid in their healing. I am convinced that my own suffering has led me to conclude that personal suffering is a significant foundation for spiritual

leaders and believers to develop empathy for the suffering of others. As Nouwen cautions, “Unless it comes from a heart wounded by the pain about which we talk, our service will not be seen as sincere. Therefore, a better comprehension of how ministers might use their traumas as a source of healing is necessary before anything about ministry can be written.”⁵ Donald Messer, a professor of Practical Theology who has written about clergy theological convictions regarding the HIV/AIDS crisis, sees the problematic nature of believing that HIV/AIDS is a divine judgment. He argues that pastors must now deliberately move toward preaching informed by “a new HIV/AIDS theology.”⁶ This imperative denounces the stigmatizing presumption that HIV/AIDS is God’s judgment and drives the preacher as theologian to advocate for the well-being and health of all people regardless of their differences or the orientation they may embrace. Similarly, Cherry elaborates on how he has used the sacred place to dispel the misconception that HIV/AIDS results from sin or a punishment from God by adopting this line of reasoning. He further suggests that the stigmatization and ostracization of persons afflicted with leprosy according to Levitical law in Ancient Israel can be seen as analogous cases when treating persons living with HIV/AIDS today. When lepers are shunned and marginalized, Christ takes the position of drawing near to them and healing of the disease, allowing them to return to society, no longer as stigmatized outsiders. Using this comparison, Cherry makes the case that HIV/AIDS is not a punishment from God because the infected who encounter Christ are benefactors of his compassion, just as

⁵ Nouwen, *Wounded Healer*, 4.

⁶ Donald E. Messer, *Breaking the Conspiracy of Silence: Christian Churches and the Global AIDS Crisis* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004).

individuals afflicted with other diseases in the gospel. As Cherry asserts, “God is a good God. God didn’t give people leprosy; he healed them of the disease.”⁷

House’s interview with Cherry can help us recognize the alignment of Cherry’s HIV/AIDS ministry with the functions of prophet, priest, and king. In keeping with the role of the pastor as a prophet, Cherry stresses the importance of pastors speaking from the sacred space about health disparities, including HIV/AIDS, as consistent with the gospel message of salvation and liberation. “I still believe that the church is a center of information for the community,” states Cherry, “and with all that people are bombarded with, on Sunday mornings, they need to hear good stuff, and they should be challenged.”⁸ For example, one of Cherry’s favorite scriptures to quote is Mark 16:16, which sets forth the concept of God not being responsible for bringing damnation on the nonbeliever. Cherry then reminds his parishioners that, regardless of race, gender, or HIV/AIDS status, anyone who has believed and is baptized has received the right to fellowship in Christ. Intentional or not, Cherry explains the Munus Triplex idea of the priesthood of all believers by using Christ’s teachings. Cherry can do this by framing HIV/AIDS as a health issue instead of a moral one. Since persons affected with HIV/AIDS are like others who have experienced hardship, they too can look to the hope of Christ through faith for release and relief.

Because his pulpit delivery carries the weight of a moral authority characteristic of the Black Church prophetic tradition, Cherry’s sermons, according to House, are “infused with worldly practical advice and advocacy in terms of his understanding of a

⁷ House, “A Wounded Healer,” 202.

⁸ Ibid., 202.

holistic approach to ministry.”⁹ Preaching entails sensitively and carefully articulating what is happening in the community, where HIV/AIDS is one of many problems. The ability to say, as Nouwen did, “You say what I only suspected, you clearly express what I vaguely felt, you bring to the fore what I fearfully kept in the back of my mind,” is now available to every listener. Yes, you describe who we are and acknowledge our situation.¹⁰ This sentiment deepens the connection between the preacher and the listener and creates space for the pastor as a prophet and priest to engage with each congregant. In my opinion, the congregation is given the liberty to act on their capacity to demonstrate compassion, aligning them with the pastor and with the stance of Christ. This sameness of thought between the pastor and the congregation diminishes the potential for theological conflict to develop and grow.

House emphasizes the idea that the moral authority conferred upon the pulpit in the Black Church is embodied in the speaker, much like the authority of the Roman Catholic pope is conveyed as *ex Cathedra*.¹¹ This means that the speaker’s power to influence the hearers’ actions is not relegated to the pulpit; every space occupied by the one who embodies it is embraced and accepted beyond the pulpit, including seminars, workshops, and pastoral counseling sessions with parishioners. This understanding and demonstration of pastoral oratory, connected to HIV/AIDS in particular, provides a critical theoretical lens to highlight how the pastor’s priestly function is extended to the congregation and community. While not occupying the physical pulpit, Cherry continues to grant a voice to the issues, impact, and presence of HIV/AIDS in other areas where he

⁹ Ibid., 203.

¹⁰ Nouwen, *Wounded Healer*, 44.

¹¹ House, “A Wounded Healer,” 203.

gives the same authority as if he spoke from the pulpit. This is not surprising given that in the Black Church, the pastor's preaching comes to life through the pastor's individual and corporate engagement with parishioners as a priest who dwells among people; also, Black Church pastors are granted considerable authority as the leader charged with translating the words of scripture into the programmatic activity of the congregation.

The most recent research on HIV education and prevention indicates that effective interventions to eliminate the stigma associated with HIV should have an informational component and a contact component.¹² Misconceptions regarding the illness and anxieties about infection are dispelled by the informational components, which inform about transmission and treatment. Contact components encourage direct or indirect connection with persons who have HIV. By encouraging individuals to consider a stigmatized person's perspective, this interpersonal encounter promotes empathy for those who suffer. Cherry identifies with and responds to concerns of alienation, stigma, and the "othering" of those living with the disease through his ability to identify with his audience and through engaging in acts of reconciliation founded on identification with those currently coping with HIV/AIDS. In addition, like Cherry, the pastor may address misconceptions about HIV/AIDS and its prevention in the Black community by acting as a priest. This boosts the pastor's credibility and efficacy with infected people and those not infected with the virus. Unfortunately, the Black church's pastors, clergy, lay leaders, and congregations have not generally embraced this idea. Perhaps the most significant activity impacting the nexus between the church's corporate life and the community occurs as the pastor operates within his kingly role. As established in chapter two, the

¹² L. Brown, K. Macintyre, and L. Trujillo, "Interventions to Reduce HIV/AIDS Stigma: What Have We Learned?" *AIDS Education and Prevention* 15, no. 1 (2003): 49–69.

pastor's royal capacity is concerned with the overall strategies used to implement effective programs and reach outside the church to create coalitions within the church and between community organizations to support HIV testing and prevention.

Cherry provides an excellent example of this by combining information and identification with his vulnerability as a launching point for crafting an HIV/AIDS prevention ministry that not only had a major impact within the community served by his congregation but has also shaped the congregation's ministry focus, reshaping its community identity as a place of healing. House reports that on December 6, 2009, a Sunday dedicated to World AIDS Day, Cherry preached a sermon called "Call the Mainline," in which he drew parallels for his audience between the secure private nature of prayer as a means to process the presence of HIV in one's life and community with that of the secure, confidential nature of communication one would experience when one used a "private" line instead of a "party line" to make a phone call many years ago. "In this sermon, Cherry encouraged the members and visitors of the church, particularly those who had been infected or affected by HIV/AIDS, to remember to call into Jesus' private mainline of prayer in dealing with the disease."¹³ A part of Cherry's sermon included his being tested for HIV/AIDS before the audience, underscoring that his actions reflect his beliefs. Cherry says, "I was one of the first to get tested on a Sunday morning. I had to do it in a room that was sanitary, so I went down and came back up and told them [his congregation], 'the same way I did it, you can do it too!'"¹⁴

Just as Christ's kingship is revealed through sacrifice and submission to the will of the Father, so too is the pastor's role as a royal leader revealed through sacrifice and

¹³ Ibid., 202.

¹⁴ Ibid.

submission to the will of Christ for the benefit of the congregation and the community. Cherry embodies royal leadership by undertaking the HIV testing procedure as a first partaker and invites his listeners to follow his example toward healing and prevention. In this way, the pastor leads in not only diminishing the stigma against the disease but also positioning the HIV testing procedure as a means of receiving grace and pointing those infected toward wellness and wholeness. Cherry's participation also impacts those leaders and volunteers who may not be infected but are responsible for dispensing grace and who seek to serve others compassionately. In this one instance, Cherry artfully utilizes the authority of the pulpit as a prophetic preacher, engendering the power of identification through his sermonic delivery as an empathetic priest, and then assuming the character of exemplar and first partaker as the royal leader.

Cherry's actions thus both illustrate and reinforce a leadership paradigm based on the PPK Paradigm designed to guide pastors toward gaining the competencies required to develop effective HIV prevention programs. Given that it is essential to present a set of critical standards for each office that is clear, concise, and without ambiguity, a rubric designed to guide the sermon development and delivery process, can aid pastors to not only deliver relevant content to challenge and inspire, but also ensure that they intentionally employ inclusive language that reduces stigma, and presents HIV/AIDS as a health concern instead of a moral issue. For the priestly office, which primarily has to do with pastoral care, a book of narrative-based training modules entitled, *Help Me, Help You: Creating Sacred Spaces of Hope and Healing for Health Disparities in Our Communities* by Sande Bailey-Gwinn, can be used as a tool to help pastors curate safe spaces for those suffering from health disparities. This resource aims to familiarize

pastors with the personal experiences of people living with HIV/AIDS to evoke the empathy necessary for meaningful involvement and reduce the pastors' tendencies to stigmatize others. For the royal office, a model for building coalitions through community partnerships and providing educational and financial resources is presented. The importance of this final section is to ensure that pastors can strategically align with the goals of the medical establishment in attacking the HIV/AIDS epidemic and become a conduit through which resources for education, medication, and assistance can be accessed.

Prophetic Resource

It is essential that pulpit rhetoric not only possesses the authority of the gospel message to liberate HIV-positive persons with the love and grace of Christ; it must also be used strategically to inform the congregation about HIV/AIDS and lessen the stigma associated with people who are infected. Therefore, the pastor's sermon and remarks regarding HIV/AIDS prevention must be prepared to avoid accidentally using language and theologies that increase stigma rather than lessen it. The following criteria were derived from the research-based study "Promoting Health from the Pulpit: A Process Evaluation of HIV Sermons to Reduce HIV Stigma and Promote Testing in African American and Latino Churches."¹⁵ The included rubric applies ten points that serve as markers to ensure that the sermon, along with other remarks on HIV/AIDS or programs connected to prevention, are communicated as intended. The table below shows the

¹⁵ D. D. Payán et al., "Promoting Health from the Pulpit: A Process Evaluation of HIV Sermons to Reduce HIV Stigma and Promote Testing in African American and Latino Churches," *Health Communication* 34, no. 1 (2019):11–20.

themes related to sermon development and the key points that should be included in each theme.

Table 3 Preaching Rubric
Sermon Guide Themes, Objectives, and Fidelity by Church Leader* and Example Quotes (Beginning in chapter 3, p. 71)

Theme	Specific Objective	Pentecostal Pastor	Baptist Pastor	Catholic Pastor	Catholic Assisting Priest 1	Catholic Assisting Priest 2	Example Quotes
Project Awareness	1. Discuss why the church is involved.	√	√	√	√	√	"Since this summer, we started in our parish the FAITH project to educate and sensitize our community about the HIV."
	2. Mention recent project activities**		√	√	√		
HIV Awareness	3. Describe how HIV is affecting the AA or Latino community	--	√	√	--	--	"The rate of diagnosis of HIV in Long Beach is the double of the rate in the County of Los Angeles and triple the rate of California. In Long Beach, the new infections of HIV are the majority among Latinos and African Americans."
Stigma Reduction Cues	4. Share a personal story about PLHIV	--	√	√	--	--	"In Kenya, I knew several people infected with AIDS. How they were rejected by society... living alone, abandoned by their own people. I visited some, sharing their suffering and bringing them the consolation of faith. I had a nice group of catechists who visited them, bringing medicine and food but especially love, attention, and care."
	5. Describe the effect of HIV-related stigma on PLHIV	√	--	√	√	√	"A lady, a catechist told me about her encounter with a person who was just infected with this disease. How his own family threw him out of the house... becoming now a homeless and rejected person from society and his own family."
	6. Contrast the prejudicial treatment of PLHIV with the value of love and compassion	√	√	√	√	√	"We as a community are participating because we want to create love and compassion towards our brothers and sisters suffering from AIDS and to reduce the stigma and to create more awareness. Because HIV is a virus, AIDS is a disease, and neither is a sin."
	7. Implement the visualization exercise	--	--	--	√	--	"And if the person to your left or to your right has cancer, will you help that person? Will you listen to that person? Will you take their hand? And will you offer this person help? Now please imagine that the person to your right or to your left has AIDS or is infected with HIV. Will you still love this person? Will you listen to this person? Will you offer them help? And will you take their hand? Very good!"
HIV Testing3 Prompts	8. Mention the importance of HIV testing	--	√	√	√	√	"And if you are HIV [positive], you want to know as soon as what? Possible. Yeah. Amen. Because it's treatable if you get it, right? If you catch it, right, it's what? Treatable. But if you let it do what it do, then your date gonna move up. Amen."
	9. Encourage congregants to undergo testing	--	√	√	√	√	"We're trying to be a socially conscious ministry, a socially sensitive church. Our prayer is that you won't leave today without participating in what we're trying to do today."
	10. Mention the HIV testing event	√	√	√			"I want to remind you of FAITH Health ministries and (organization) in conjunction with the Long Beach Health Department."

[Payán](#), Denise D., [Flores](#), Karen R., Bogart, Laura M., [Kamouse](#), David E., Mata, Michael A., Oden, Clyde W., and Kathryn P. [Derose](#). "Promoting Health from the Pulpit: A Process Evaluation of HIV Sermons to Reduce HIV Stigma and Promote Testing in African American and Latino Churches." *Health communication* 34, no. 1 (2019): 11. Accessed May 23, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2017.1384352>.

Objective One of the rubric is **Contextual Awareness** and addresses the purpose of the sermon and its connection to the biblical context. The two critical questions are: Does the sermon's purpose connect to a particular project or a unique program the congregation will be expected to support? Secondly, how will the biblical scripture or topic reinforce the projects or special program's importance or value? The importance of bridging the current context and the biblical context serves a crucial role in crafting a theological lens through which the preacher will ultimately invite the hearers to review their positions and move them towards a theology that aligns HIV/AIDS with the

Christian witness. According to House, “Any rhetorical reaction from a church to HIV/AIDS is ultimately a theologically informed response to HIV/AIDS.”¹⁶ In light of this, for pastors to confront the reality of HIV/AIDS within a spiritual context, they need to integrate rhetoric with theology effectively.

Objective Two is **HIV Awareness**, which addresses the need for the pastor to be intentional about sharing not only factual information about the harmful effects of HIV but also establishing points of identification by personalizing an HIV narrative that coincides with the retelling of the biblical text. The purpose behind including both national and local facts is to highlight what is happening in real-time within the context of the community in which the congregation is seated. It is also essential for statistical data to be culturally relevant, as it contextualizes the problem for the hearers, raising the alarm and creating an impetus for mobilizing human and financial resources to confront the challenges. It also aids in bringing those who are not infected closer to the issue while alerting those who may be infected that they are not alone in their struggle.

In the HIV advocacy vocation I am currently engaged in my team and I find it invaluable to observe and hear with anonymity, or written and verbal consent, real stories from relatives, friends, and acquaintances of those presently living with HIV. These intimate stories provide a launching point for discussions that can potentially lead to destigmatization, increased compassion, and sympathy, and even give way for the listener to have the opportunity to try putting themselves in a person’s struggle with this disease.

¹⁶ House, Christopher “Religious Rhetoric(s) of the African Diaspora: Using Oral History to Study HIV/AIDS, Community, and Rhetorical Interventions” *Critical Communication History Special Edition of the International Journal of Communication* 7 (2013): 1-20

The impact of these stories is helpful not only for the person who is telling them but also for the team that has been assigned to assist them in designing programs that will openly address the issue of HIV/AIDS.

Research also suggests that sharing one's personal narrative is equally important as a rhetorical device because it creates a necessary juxtaposition between the reality of HIV within the congregation's context versus the biblical text. The preacher can investigate non-traditional textual readings in this space created by personal narratives, an act Charles Campbell calls "dislocated exegesis," or "reading and understanding Scripture in unusual, even jarring locations."¹⁷ Because the biblical text is engaged from a different social location or even a different physical location than expected within the faith tradition, it allows the preacher to raise new questions and create unique perspectives that emanate from that space and more readily engage the congregation and community at large. It thus has the potential to elicit new and creative discourse in ways that evoke a different sense of immediacy and priority from the hearers. It also prompts new symbols and imagery to be created that infuse spiritual meaning into a more familiar and readily accepted context. As a result, the congregation and community may devise new ways to support the pastor as volunteers, giving them a sense of being a part of the solution. They move from just hearers into "doers."

Objective Three is the creation of **Stigma Reduction Cues** whereby the preacher is engaged in the rhetorical task of: intentionally presenting HIV/AIDS as a health concern as opposed to a moral issue; and contrasting the prejudicial treatment of persons living with HIV/AIDS with the values of love and compassion.

¹⁷ Stanley P. Saunders and Charles L. Campbell, *The Word on the Street: Performing the Scriptures in the Urban Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 8694.

When HIV/AIDS is normalized among various diseases affecting Black communities, it reduces the stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS as a moral issue because the focus on the way the disease is contracted is diminished, while the focus on methods of care and prevention is increased. This is a powerful tool when partnered with challenging the hearers to visualize themselves providing compassionate ministry to the person sitting next to them as needing care from any number of diseases, with HIV being one among a number presented. Visualization, also known as an imagined hypothetical contact scenario, is a powerful rhetorical device that allows congregants to imagine having a meaningful social interaction with someone living with HIV. This can help lessen negative attitudes toward stigmatized groups insofar as simulated contact or interaction with someone with a stigmatized characteristic can help to reduce negative attitudes toward stigmatized groups.¹⁸ Hearers are not only invited to see themselves in the position of a person who has HIV/AIDS, but they are also internally provoked to understand, accept, and see needs rather than yield to their hopefully former attitudes of judgment, stigmatization, and condemnation.

Objective Four involves presenting **HIV Facts/Testing Prompt**. It is an integral part of crafting the sermon's close as hope is disseminated through factual information to reduce stigma further, eradicate misinformation, and submit the challenge to all hearers to be tested. Although many clergymen and -women know how HIV impacts their congregations and communities, they frequently lack the tools to inform themselves or their flocks with the most recent information that would encourage congregants to pursue prevention and treatment. When people with HIV/AIDS have access to information and

¹⁸ I. V. Blair, J. E. Ma, and A. O. Lenton, "Imagining Stereotypes Away: The Moderation of Implicit Stereotypes through Mental Imagery," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81 (2001): 828–41.

possess knowledge about the disease, they can live long and productive lives, debunking the myth that HIV/AIDS is a death sentence.

The three current buzzwords—“treatment as prevention (TasP),” “Undetectable = Untransmittable (U = U),” and PrEP medications—are phrases that clergy within this paradigm need to become familiar with.¹⁹ These are important to share as factual evidence that contracting HIV/AIDS is not a death sentence, and that advancements in HIV/AIDS research have led to persons impacted by the disease to live long and healthy lives. PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), formally known as Descovy, is a more recent treatment as prevention that, when taken regularly, reduces contraction of HIV during sexual intercourse by over ninety-nine percent.²⁰ For many congregations that may have resisted the idea of distributing condoms, PrEP has been a well-received alternative because it is accepted as a HIV preventative measure that can be distributed in partnership with trusted community based medical professionals such as health departments and health centers without feeling as if it promotes sexuality. U = U refers to the theory that HIV-positive people who have suppressed their viral load for at least six months can not pass the virus on to their sexual partners.²¹ The use of medication, most commonly in the form of pills, is called pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP. Its purpose is to prevent the transmission of HIV and AIDS in people who have not yet been exposed to either virus.²² Simply informing members of their congregations about these three biological interventions can benefit the community, especially in the light of the fact that

¹⁹ A. Nunn et al., “African American Clergy Perspectives about the HIV Care Continuum: Results from a Qualitative Study in Jackson Mississippi,” *Ethnicity and Disease* 28, no. 2 (2018): 85–92.

²⁰ Margaret M. Paschen-Wolff et al., “HIV Treatment Knowledge in the Context of ‘Treatment as Prevention’ (TasP),” *AIDS and Behavior* 24, no. 10 (2020): 2984–94.

²¹ R. W. Eisinger, C. W. Dieffenbach, and A. S. Fauci, “HIV Viral Load and Transmissibility of HIV Infection: Undetectable Equals Untransmittable,” *JAMA* 321, no. 5 (2019): 451–52.

²² Nunn et al., “African American Clergy Perspectives,” 85–92.

parishioners may be unaware of these interventions, have limited financial resources, and have no relationships with community health centers (CHCs) providing HIV testing, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), treatment, and care. This creates an opportunity for pastors to not only educate; they can create an intrinsic impetus on the part of interested persons within the congregation to pursue opportunities to establish a ministry of impact to address HIV/AIDS as a community issue, which widens the scope of knowledge among both congregants and members of the community, as well as heighten the possibilities of growth of community-based ministries and partnerships.

Priestly Resource

While the preaching rubric is designed to help pastors following the PPK Method to use the pulpit to deliver sermons, the information provided here is intended to aid pastors in converting the pulpit's work into participatory experiences. These opportunities to not only study information about HIV/AIDS, but to engage in structured facilitated events with those impacted by HIV/AIDS, creates great potential for authentic and effective community engagement. According to Lisanne Brown, "Most of the studies show that information together with skills building is more effective in raising knowledge levels and reducing some stigmatizing attitudes among the general population as compared with information alone."²³ When the volunteers (most of whom are members of church congregations along with pastors, religious leaders, and other faith-based individuals) in my program are supplied with information about HIV/AIDS and have the opportunity and space to talk freely (often with like-minded people) and ask questions,

²³ Brown, Macintyre, and Trujillo, "Interventions to Reduce HIV/AIDS Stigma," *AIDS Educ Prev.* 2003 Feb. 15(1): p65.

we have observed and seen behaviors change. Attitudes become more accepting of HIV/AIDS as a health challenge, rather than a moral issue, and members of the congregation can develop increased competency towards HIV/AIDS and a sense of love, compassion, and empathy those suffering from it.

Looking at the most current literature regarding HIV/AIDS, I am particularly struck by the recent workbook, *Help Me, Help You: Creating Sacred Spaces of Hope and Healing for Health Disparities in Our Communities* by Sande Bailey-Gwinn. The workbook is a narrative-based training guide that walks the reader vicariously through the challenges faced by persons grappling with four distinct and significant issues that are not uncommon in the Black community: HIV/AIDS, mental health, substance abuse, and re-entry to the community from incarceration.

Though the workbook looks at four health issues in low to medium-income families (all of which are serious and in need of our attention), the section on HIV/AIDS is important, identifying as it does a major challenge in these communities. In fact, Bailey-Gwinn, founder of Foundations for Living (FFL), a nonprofit organization based in Northeast Georgia, dedicated to creating transformational opportunities through education and inspiration, Bailey-Gwinn has created an organization that aims to empower particularly low to moderate-income families to envision, discover, implement, and achieve personal and professional goals. FFL offers services and training in career development, domestic violence, mental health, and HIV prevention outreach and education. The purpose of the *Help Me, Help You* workbook is to use the power of stories to help faith leaders overcome the stigma and discomfort associated with discussions around mental and physical health, etc., and to provide them with the tools “to listen to

and engage with neighbors facing these health disparities and to guide them forward with love and support, in the way of faith.”²⁴ This reflects explicitly the work I do professionally and speaks to my academic research interest. For each topic, the author offers extensive background information on the particular health disparity she examines; the case study is transcribed from dialogue between the community expert and the local individual working through the issue. Then, a discussion portion with self-reflection questions is included. I also noted that scripture prompts could be used for sermon development related to the topic under discussion and support resources to facilitate partnerships with community organizations that can help support persons needing services. The workbook is an encouraging resource because it lends itself well to new pastors trying to expand their ministry to have HIV/AIDS programming and can serve as a launching point for personal evaluations of the pastor’s attitude, behavior, knowledge, and stigmas relative to HIV/AIDS while also providing a guide into this often misunderstood, complicated, and social vs. moral world of religion. Ultimately, Bailey-Gwinn has normalized HIV/AIDS as another health issue rather than exclude it as “undiscussable”—a move too often made in churches.

One portion of the workbook is particularly strong. In the HIV/AIDS case study, the work of Rev. Dr. Percy Johnson is described. Johnson, a Georgia pastor with a background in counseling, has spent many years working in an infectious disease clinic geared toward providing holistic care to those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. In his initial engagement with his case study subject, he seeks to build a relationship based on a connection with his humanity. He will take several months with the subject to reach a

²⁴ Sande Bailey-Gwinn, “Help Me Help You: Creating Sacred Spaces of Hope and Healing for Health Disparities in Our Communities,” (2023), 3. Georgia, Wilco Printing Company.

place of comfort and trust. In dialogue, he discovers that his subject grew up in a church-going household and loved God but didn't care for church folk. Learning this, Johnson was able to address the trauma his subject bore because of the stigma and discrimination he had experienced in his formative years. They were also able to discuss scriptures and grapple over their meaning in ways that laid the foundation upon which they continued building trust and mutual respect. In one instance, Johnson inquired about the subject's status when he experienced a significant setback in the efficacy of his treatments, to which he lashed out in anger, asking, "Why the hell do you care, and what do you want from me?"²⁵ Instead of becoming defensive, Johnson incorporated a compassionate therapeutic method by sharing his interpretation of the subject's feelings, helping him to lower his defense mechanisms and navigate through and beyond his frustrations. Throughout the journey of loss, transitions, grief, and treatments, regarding his subject Johnson said that he had learned the meaning of *philia*, "a friendly type of love that requires one human being to suspend judgment, engage in active listening, and extend value and honor to the other human being."²⁶

The fact that Johnson approaches his topic using tactics that are reminiscent of those that are associated with the priestly office is readily apparent in his work. The pastor—as priest—must be among the people, live with them, and experience life alongside them. The pastor is one who is given the responsibility to see the sufferer's pain and the magnitude of the suffering. In the priestly role, the pastor responds with empathetic love while teaching the person suffering what it means to follow Christ. Thus, the pastor's priestly function is essentially one of incarnational love.

²⁵ Ibid., 5.

²⁶ Ibid., 6.

Kingly Resources

The sacrifice, resurrection, and ongoing incarnation of Christ are some of the most significant aspects of the PPK Paradigm's kingly office. This interpretation of Christ's successive incarnation as a resurrected monarch has profound repercussions for the role of pastors and the church in general. Theologian Walter Brueggemann makes the following connection between the position of the king and the act of sacrifice in and of itself, as well as the requirement to care for the oppressed and the marginalized: "Here the mandate is made even more precise regarding economic justice and the significance of care for the immigrant, orphan, and widow, the tradition holds that Yahweh's sovereign will for the world's well-being, with genuine economic and political aspects, can be accomplished and established through his human agency."²⁷ The paradoxical imagery prevalent in this interpretation of the kingly office is that of a servant leader—a king with power but called to self-sacrifice and strategic service—and is most prevalent within the cultural framework of the Black Church, where the congregation confers an excessive amount of authority upon the pastor. Thus, Black Church pastors consciously or unconsciously minister within a framework of biblical servant leadership, embodying characteristics and practices of a pastor as king within the PPK Paradigm, and can be vulnerable through self-sacrifice and accommodating through strategic service. This affords them the influence and gravitas necessary to challenge conservative theology, implement new programs and activities, and impact the congregation and community in ways that lead to empowerment and uplift.

²⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 1997), 614.

The role of the pastor as a prophetic preacher and priestly teacher concerning the execution of HIV prevention measures has previously been established. However, the pastor is also called to self-sacrifice by actively supporting planned HIV activities as a royal servant following the PPK Paradigm. Even though pastoral modeling of voluntary engagement in HIV prevention should ideally be based on active collaboration, sermons, bible study sessions, and personal testimonials work in concert to promote a spirit of commitment throughout the congregation. When attempting to engage congregants in HIV prevention, it is hard to exaggerate the benefits of influential pastoral leadership.

Along with an HIV education workshop and a visualization exercise, participating pastors were asked to preach a sermon with pre-designed anti-stigma content and then lead as testing participants in launching an HIV testing event on the same Sunday morning as the sermon was delivered as one intervention to reduce HIV-related stigma among Black and Latino congregations.²⁸ According to the findings, pastors and lay leaders who supported and promoted HIV testing were responsible for forming a positive norm that encouraged acceptance of testing as an adaptive reaction to a health hazard. Because the event was planned when congregants attended services, testing participation increased significantly from six to twenty per hour. Additionally, the intervention led to an ongoing HIV testing program with long-lasting de-stigmatizing benefits.²⁹ Similar results were achieved in another city-wide intervention among Black churches in Philadelphia when a sermon designed to reduce HIV stigma was developed by a city-

²⁸ Kathryn P. Derose, "An Intervention to Reduce HIV-Related Stigma in Partnership with African American and Latino Churches," *Journal of Religion and Health* 55, no. 3 (2016): 918–27.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 925.

wide collaborative team of clergy and delivered on a Sunday morning before a testing event.

HIV testing turnout was best in the congregations where Pastors and Imams encouraged their congregations to get tested during sermons. For example, in 3 churches where pastors did not preach about HIV but offered testing events, only ten individuals tested for HIV. In a single church where a Pastor participated with the congregation to test for HIV, over 100 individuals underwent HIV testing. These phenomena highlighted the enormous value that preaching, and leadership have on HIV testing trends.³⁰

In 2016, the United States National HIV/AIDS strategy, which encourages the utilization of faith communities to lessen the burden of HIV infection in the African American community, carried out a testing intervention and a focus group analysis among a variety of Black churches in a metropolitan area with very high incidences of HIV infection.³¹ Only 28 of the 116 people who took part in the survey believed that their interest in getting tested for HIV would increase if several members of the congregation underwent public testing, but 81 of the 116 people who participated in the sample believed that their interest in getting tested for HIV would increase if their pastor

³⁰ Amy Nunn et al., “Keeping the Faith: African American Faith Leaders’ Perspectives and Recommendations for Reducing Racial Disparities in HIV/AIDS Infection,” *PloS One* 7, no. 5 (2012), <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0036172>.

³¹ J. M. Stewart, K. Thompson K, and C. Rogers, “African American Church-based HIV Testing and Linkage to Care: Assets, Challenges and Needs,” *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 18, no. 6 (2016): 669–81.

underwent public testing. This strongly suggests that the pastor is more involved in encouraging testing. On the other hand, in most cases, it appears to be much more effective to urge HIV testing and connection to care with the backing of both the church and the pastor. One respondent said:

In the African American community, a pastor influences the local church and the congregation's members significantly. The pastor, the head of the church, sparks the congregation's leadership, and then we get started. To view the big picture of what we are doing, we can perform HIV testing. However, the pastor is an extremely important figure in getting things started. Because he was concerned about HIV testing, the congregation, neighborhood, and participants benefited.³²

Black PRAISE—which stands for Pastors Raising Awareness and Insight of Stigma through Engagement and was developed by the National Black Church Leadership Institute—is an additional intervention for Black Church congregations. This program emphasizes the efficacy of prevention programming when pastors actively participate in it and the significance of strategic alliances to strengthen critical awareness of HIV affecting Black communities. Six Black churches in Ontario, Canada, took part in the sermon delivery, an educational component, and a testing event to evaluate changes in congregants' HIV-related knowledge and stigma due to their exposure to the

³² Ibid.

intervention.³³ The project's strength is that it was clergy-led. However, resources that included a short anti-stigma film featuring Black Canadians and an HIV informational booklet were developed in collaboration with HIV education professionals and a local medical provider. Congregants were exposed to Black PRAISE through this multi-stakeholder partnership, which greatly increased their awareness about HIV. Those with high levels of stigma at the beginning of the project saw significant decreases over time.³⁴ More significantly, the study denotes that as participants spent more time exposed to intervention methodologies, this increased their knowledge, and the amount of stigma they experienced greatly decreased. The congregations improved their ability to support and participate in preventative programming.

As royal servants within the PPK Paradigm, pastors are not only called to model appropriate actions by active participation in HIV testing, they are also actively called to engage in developing strategic partnerships with community organizations to build and sustain a program of HIV prevention. Because faith-based organizations play such an essential part in Black communities, community organizations are actively searching for opportunities to form strategic alliances to engage religious leaders to end the HIV pandemic. The Faith Coordinating Center at Wake Forest University School of Divinity in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, launched a new initiative last year called Black Faith and HIV with the assistance of \$5 million in funding from the COMPASS Initiative of pharmaceutical behemoth Gilead Sciences. The initiative is focused on addressing the relationship between faith and HIV. More than eighty-five congregations and faith-based

³³ W. Husbands et al., "Black PRAISE: Engaging Black Congregations to Strengthen Critical Awareness of HIV Affecting Black Canadian communities," *Health Promotion International* 36, no. 2 (2020.): 303–12, <https://doi.org/10.1093/HEAPRO/DAAA057>.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 308.

organizations have received funding as part of their commitment to educating religious leaders and the people in their communities about HIV prevention and stigma reduction initiatives, particularly for the most vulnerable groups. The initiative proactively seeks to engage faith leaders through educational opportunities, informational materials, and HIV communication marketing brochures, as well as acting as a central location for interfaith groups to find chances for in-person professional development and other resources. HIV religion ambassadors have also been recruited as part of the campaign, with the responsibility of educating community members and leaders about HIV stigma and giving religious organizations a chance to collaborate on long-lasting projects with healthcare networks. Since 2022, I worked directly for the Faith Coordinating Center as an HIV Faith Leader Trainer and professional medical coordinator with the Old North State Medical Society, the oldest Black consortium of medical doctors in North Carolina. My work aims to form strategic partnerships between faith leaders and medical doctors, provide training and informational sessions for congregations, and, when scheduled, host HIV testing events. From this position, I've been able to witness both clergy and congregational transformations, not only among faith leaders working to deepen their knowledge about HIV, especially as it pertains to the struggle of harmonizing efforts of prevention and care with their theological perspectives and the mandate of the gospel. Regardless of conservative or liberal theological stances, congregational culture, or demographics, one fact is assured: when pastors wield their influence towards HIV prevention through sermons grounded in love and compassion, a study that informs and inspires, and self-sacrifice through proactive participation, their congregations respond in

significant and impactful ways that positively impact the congregation and the community.

Chapter Four

Conclusions

In exploring the issues I have presented in this thesis the parable of the lame beggar found in Acts 3:1-10 has frequently informed my thinking. In the passage we meet a lame man whose friends carry him to a gate called Beautiful. There, all-day long, he would sit begging for money from people entering the temple. Although he had the ability to see, speak, hear, and even move his upper torso, he had no strength in his ankles or legs, and, apparently, he had been in this condition since the day he was born. However, his fate would forever change when the intersection of the lame man's constraint collided with a hand of hope, creating a window of opportunity for healing and restoration.

Peter says to the man, "I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, rise and walk" (Acts 3:6, NABRE). Then Peter takes him by the hand and raises him up, and immediately his feet and ankles grow strong. Adam Morgan and Mark Barden, in *A Beautiful Constraint*, define a constraint as a limitation or defining parameter, but one that is often the stimulus for finding a better way of addressing a challenge.¹ Therefore, the authors posit that we should view constraints not as restrictors but rather as stimuli for increased creativity and positive change. Challenges can be seen as innovative opportunities to welcome hope in the most despairing situations. While constraints are often assumed to be a bad thing, they can also

¹ Adam Morgan and Mark Barden, *A Beautiful Constraint: How to Transform your Limitations into Advantages, and Why It's Everyone's Business* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley, 2015).

be the essential element that is necessary for creating a beautiful masterpiece filled with promise and hope.

It is inevitable that we will all face constraints and Black faith-based organizations are definitely not exempt. I propose that Black faith leaders of Black Church consider approaching their theological and personal constraints regarding PLWHIV (Persons Living With HIV) through an innovative lens, a disposition of hope and not despair, in addition to acquiring competent techniques that can be used dismantle the constraints of HIV (ex. stigma, biases, and presuppositions) and thereby liberating one to live into God's preferred future inclusively, welcoming all into the priesthood of believers.

Conceptually, I know this is going to be difficult for some Black faith leaders to embrace, and I have to admit I found myself contemplating my position regarding how the Black Church and its faith leaders should respond to HIV and PLWH. However, after expanding my theological understanding of Christ and becoming aware of my personal biases and assumptions and gradually minimizing them, I was able to see beyond those constraints, witnessing a beautiful opportunity to innovatively conduct ministry. Additionally, I found myself immersed in the grass roots efforts of HIV advocacy work, which placed me in the epicenter of the academy, Black faith spaces, and the amplification of HIV education. I invite you to pause and see the spiritual truth that Christ models for us, patiently beckoning us into divine partnership with him for the purpose of being light in the shadows of darkness in this overtly stigmatized disease of HIV.

Narratives such as the accounts found in Acts 3 have the tendency to challenge how we approach ministry in the twenty-first century, particularly considering the vast changing culture and the faith leaders' desire to remain true to tradition and upholding religious and institutional doctrines. For the consideration of innovative approaches for effective ministry in the face of constraints, particularly in light of the Black Church and persons living with HIV, I would like to suggest that the crippled man at the gate is emblematic of PLWH, and, perhaps, Peter and John are symbolic of Black Church and faith leaders. The documented encounter between the crippled beggar, and Peter illuminates a powerful testament to the authentic work to which Christ calls faith leaders. In Acts 3:7, an innovative ministry approach transpires, when "Peter took [the crippled man] by the right hand, Peter helped him, and at once the man's feet and ankles were made strong." The pericope doesn't insinuate that Peter nor John questioned the beggar's predicament, nor does the text lead us to believe that they had implicit biased reservations about helping the man, and lastly there are no indications that they judged him based on his condition. Through the extension of Peter's hand connecting with the hand of the beggar, the miraculous convergence of faith and healing immediately ensued, and this same individual who was once constrained by his personal afflictions and physical limitations experienced a moment of transformation; rejuvenated and strengthened to arise.

I am curious, what would happen if more Black faith leaders embraced the theological disposition modeled by Peter and John through simply taking individuals by the hand, lifting them up without judgement, without inserting their personal biases into the lives of those whom God has called to them to minister to. As to addressing HIV and

its impact on persons of color in the African American community, I argue that the Black Church and Black faith leaders are uniquely positioned to be first responders in the matter and can be instrumental in resuscitating the breached relationships that have left countless individuals in silos of shame and silence. And it should be noted that this response is antithetical to the leadership tenants modeled by Christ and His followers as written in biblical accounts. I believe that in order for Black faith leaders to acquire this degree of awareness in addressing issues related to HIV, it requires a level of competency, and perhaps it also requires them to appraise their current theological presuppositions in comparison to what Christ modeled as prophet, priest, and king in his earthly ministry. It is imperative to note the various faith-based organizations that are committed to support local churches in upholding missional efforts reflective of the work of Christ.

Particularly, the local and global educational programs and resources that are available to support communities of faith, equipping them to engage in HIV advocacy work competently. I believe the surplus of educational materials is ideal, given that no faith space or community is the same and has different needs and strengths. In my research, I discovered an inclusive resource produced by The World Council of Churches that approaches HIV advocacy work that can be integrated in a wide range of communities and faith spaces.

The World Council of Churches, which was established in 1937, was driven by student and lay members for the purpose of establishing a fellowship of churches. Over the years, the organization has expanded its mission to include international conferences on theology, sacraments, ordinances, social ministries, international affairs, and relief services. In 2008, Dr. Sue Parry created the handbook *HIV Competent Churches: A*

Framework for Action as a framework for faith leaders and explained why HIV competence is crucial for addressing HIV. Additionally, Parry suggests that an HIV-competent church is one that has, “Developed an inner competence through internalization of the risks, impacts, and consequences and has accepted the responsibility and imperative to respond appropriately and compassionately.”² Furthermore, Dr. Parry states that in order to progress to outer competence, there is a need for leadership, knowledge, and resources. She prescribes the following as pathways to HIV inner competence:

1. Acknowledge the scope and risk of HIV.
2. Personalize/internalize the risk in an honest open way.
3. Recognize the impact and consider long term consequences.
4. Assess the risk factors that increase vulnerability.
5. Confront stigma, discrimination and denial associated with HIV.
6. Accept the imperative to respond appropriately and with compassion.³

The Process Towards HIV Outer Competence

Develop technical competence through building institutional capacity to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate and coordinate HIV programs effectively.

1. Ensure social relevance, inclusivity and seek to build social cohesion.
2. Network: seek allies and collaborate for increased scale and sustainability.
3. Advocate and reclaim the prophetic role of the church.

² Sue Parry, *HIV Competent Churches: A Framework for Action*, April 2007, EHAIA documentation., n.d., #15.

³ Ibid., 16.

4. Restore dignity and hope, with compassion, to all who are infected and affected.⁴

The suggested pathways to an HIV-competent church that Dr. Parry offers is an ideal place to enter into conversation with faith leaders regarding the action that is required to be adequately equipped to engage HIV work from a healthy theological perspective. Parry's work thus adds sound practices to the arsenal of resources that address HIV. However, while Parry's work provides substance and contributes to the field, it lacks a concrete theological framework that models the behavioral and attitudinal dispositions that faith leaders and congregants can use in their HIV-related work. Therefore, I argue that the PPK paradigm is one that we can begin to examine for tangible leadership tenants that can influence Black faith leaders' response, nudging their hearts towards mercy and compassion and moving forward in action. Simply put, Black faith leaders must move from the messy margins of condemnation, shameful rhetoric, and mediocre theological imagination and consider re-entering the conversation on HIV/AIDS with an undogmatic disposition—one that is amenable to embracing a Christ-centered leadership paradigm.

The plethora of research included in this document, in addition to the medical and social data, consistently purports that historically the Black Church has been and continues to be a vital source for its community providing information, in addition to strategically organizing their communities and congregants to address the surplus of issues that often plague the black community, ranging from social, economic, political and health. Despite its critical role in the community and though slow to respond and often tempted to ignore HIV/AIDS-related problems, the Black Church has had an

⁴ Ibid., 16.

unclear, dualistic, and vague response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. For example, the Black Church has for the most part grappled with the question as to whether the church should openly speak on the question of HIV/AIDS as anything other than a result of sinful behavior. However, because of the alarming rate at which HIV/AIDS continues to spread especially in Black communities across the nation, the Black Church has been forced into making efforts to address the reality that members of church congregations, as well as their families and friends are affected by HIV/AIDS. Nevertheless, while offering numerous health programs, the Black Church offers relatively few HIV prevention programs.

As research shows, the stigma against HIV, the behaviors associated with contracting HIV, limited funds, and restrictive programs that are aligned with the churches' polity and doctrines, particularly regarding morality, all militate against effective strategies of care. As Pichon et al. notes, there is a distinct reticence by the Black Church to discuss issues related to HIV prevention such as the promotion of healthy sexual behaviors, and homosexuality.⁵ Studies suggest that expressing these issues in church is judged inappropriate and that most Black Church congregations consider that other venues should be used so as to keep the church "clean" and free of the task of getting involved with sexual affairs. According to several public health analyses, the data from these assessments denote that pastors of Black congregations admit the significance of acknowledging HIV in their churches and communities and believe that HIV is a pressing matter, and ultimately possess a desire to institute effective HIV

⁵ L. C. Pichon et al., "Faith Leaders' Comfort Implementing an HIV Prevention Curriculum in a Faith Setting," *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved* 23, no. 3 (2012):1253–65, doi: 10.1353/hpu.2012.0108. PMID: 24212172.

prevention programs to serve their communities.⁶ Findings from the research further indicates that many black faith leaders feel they are inadequately equipped with the necessary competencies, and lack access to capital resources to efficiently execute effective initiatives, with the result that few programs have been developed.⁷ While studies have been extensive regarding the Black Church's social engagement in addressing HIV/AIDS within their local communities, assessments regarding the dissonance that may exist between the theological convictions of Black Church pastors and their perceptions of social behaviors surrounding HIV/AIDS are virtually nonexistent. The controversy surrounding homosexuality, as backed by a significant amount of research, consistently demonstrates the long history of confusion and division amongst black faith leaders and the community of faith, thus disallowing a unified humane response and further perpetuating assumptions and stigmas that prohibit healthy, biased-free conversations that are clear, inclusive, and empathetically responsive.

The goal of the research in this dissertation is to illuminate a pathway to examine orthodox theology with pragmatic public health strategies to aide in the destigmatization of HIV. Thus, providing a leadership paradigm through which pastors can lead their congregations to shift towards being culturally competent can bolster the successful implementation and sustainability of a responsive HIV prevention program in their respective communities. The general consensus among medical professionals and pastors alike is that pastors are central figures in determining the theological and missional program of Black churches. The pastor lays a solid foundation for the intent of projects based on the concept that when the pastor's messaging, methodology, and modeling are

⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁷ Ibid., 14.

tailored towards HIV stigma reduction and prevention promotion, the results can lead toward positive change and productive ministry.

Drawing on the framework of John Calvin's Munus Triplex, replaced with the PPK Paradigm, the formula of prophet, priest, and king can present a Christ-centered leadership approach that rests on three significant concepts: the hope and moral authority heralded by the pastor as prophetic preacher, the love and value placed in the priesthood of all believers embodied by the pastor as priest, and the faith and power of influence by the pastor as kingly servant-leader. When the pastor is intentional in fulfilling these offices for the purpose of HIV prevention, evidence from a myriad of studies and sources point to three salient findings:

- 1) Prophetic preaching that is inclusive of messages espousing the concepts of love and compassion for all, frames HIV/AIDS as a medical issue as opposed to a moral concern, supports the fact that HIV/AIDS is no longer a death sentence for the infected and affected, and promotes the importance of testing, can exert the moral authority required to challenge theological presuppositions, reduce stigma and discrimination, and increase trust among the affected and infected, as well as promote compassion and understanding within the members of the general community.
- 2) Priestly engagement at the congregational level (workshops, bible study, etc.) and at the individual level (counseling, personal interactions with the infected as well the uninfected) allows the pastor to extend pulpit messaging on love and compassion into curated spaces of value that with consistency and inclusivity can exemplify the priesthood of all believers.

3) Kingly servant-leadership within the congregation and community advances the mission of HIV/AIDS prevention. This is achieved by both submission to the act of public HIV testing to model appropriate response and behavior and by intentionally utilizing influence as pastor to recruit other Church leaders and volunteers within the congregation. And lastly, by seeking strategic partnerships among community-based organizations that possess the human and financial resources to launch an effective and sustainable program of HIV prevention can produce evidenced-based increases in the congregation's ability to impact HIV/AIDS reduction in the community it serves.

The most significant benefits of the PPK Paradigm are that they challenge pastors to engage in the process of self-reflection about their own theological convictions toward the biblical mandate to care for the sick, marginalized, and oppressed. The Paradigm also assists pastors in clearly translating these convictions into congregational activities that challenge bad theologies, misinformation, and stigma and discrimination against HIV infected and affected persons in a way that is supported by scripture and practical public HIV policy. Of great importance to this writing is that PPK provides a roadmap to secure HIV testing, raise awareness, destigmatizes HIV/AIDS, and drives the congregation to assume a critical role in extending the ministry of the Church into the Black community. Significant scholarly evidence supports the effectiveness of the activities espoused by the PPK Paradigm, though there are some significant barriers that can impact the process of adoption and proliferation into the culture of the congregation, especially in contexts where the reality of HIV/AIDS is met with silence and even hostility.

In the remaining portion of chapter four we will review the challenges that have the potential to hinder or diminish the outcomes as defined by the PPK Paradigm, review significant research that pertains to these obstacles, and offer ways in which the paradigm helps pastors to overcome these challenges with strategies that mitigate challenges to implementation and sustainability. A congregation's theological orientation, whether liberal or conservative, is arguably one of the greatest impediments that impact a church's involvement in community crises. Sociologists involved in congregational studies suggests that while more conservative congregations tend to put greater focus on the morality of its members, more liberal congregations focus less on individual piety and place more emphasis on community-based social advocacy. For example, Hoge, Perry, and Klever suggest that "Researchers consistently find that conservative beliefs undermine social activism, and that conservative congregations tend to be less involved in providing social services to members of the congregation or to the community-at-large."⁸ This is crucial when determining how congregations prioritize their response to the needs of the surrounding community, even when the need for their support is apparent. The juxtaposition of these two theological positions in relation to the HIV/AIDS crisis is analogous to the proverbial burning house, where conservative congregations are inclined to rout out and indict those who are accused of starting the fire, versus the liberal congregations trying to figure out how to put the fire out. Relevant statistical data also points to the fact that issues of homosexuality and promiscuity for

⁸ Dean R. Hoge, Everett L. Perry, and Gerald L. Klever, "Theology as a Source of Disagreement about Protestant Church Goals and Priorities," *Review of Religious Research* 19, no. 2 (1978): 116–38.

both liberal and conservative congregations is often associated differently as it relates to HIV status, which may further undermine church responsiveness to HIV prevention.⁹

Though many Black churches hold to long-standing traditional Christian values of abstinence before marriage and marital fidelity, congregations in general today are now more tolerant toward sexual activity outside of marriage. This newfound position of many Black Christians has given rise to a more liberal relaxed attitude regarding HIV status and engaging persons living with HIV/AIDS. Nevertheless, even though the attitudes of Black Christians are changing due to more factual knowledge about both homosexuality and HIV/AIDS, the majority of church-going Blacks maintain the overt Christian traditional stance towards the behaviors and conversations which continue to stigmatize HIV/AIDS but provide fertile ground for the PPK Paradigm. These attitudes keep the pastor hostage to antiquated theological concepts that result in little or no movement towards decreasing stigma and discrimination towards the HIV affected; additionally, such attitudes fail to promote development of HIV/AIDS initiatives in the church or community. Even though personal beliefs and attitudes have changed or are changing, there is a reticence to openly share their changed attitudes or admit that they are changing their attitudes; thus, all too often things remain the same within the Church regarding homosexuality and HIV/AIDS.

Organizational Theory is a conceptional design that provides structure to understanding congregations' responsiveness to social issues. Due to the organizational structure of any given church or faith community it is imperative to denote the possible challenges to the PPK Paradigm being effective in the Black Church context. According

⁹ Pamela Leong, "Religion, flesh, and Blood: Re-creating Religious Culture in the Context of HIV/AIDS," *Sociology of Religion* 67, no. 3 (2006): 295–311.

to Scott and Davis, “Because they are not isolated, autonomous units driven solely by internal characteristics, congregations are open systems embedded within a network of interrelated institutions that can influence their activity.”¹⁰ Congregations are institutions that operate within a communal context, which means they reflect communal values at varying degrees, and are also susceptible to contextual and cultural pressures from within the environment. The strain they encounter will vary since congregations are diverse in their demographic composition and their engagement with the external world. After four decades of the HIV epidemic being normalized within the context of the community, and the ongoing threat it poses to Black communities, congregations face an ever-growing moral imperative that can overcome the ideological resistance that hinders its ability to engage in community impact. If the growing moral imperative is not embraced by the congregation or is not strong enough to overcome the standing ideological of the church, the PPK Paradigm has a very difficult, if not impossible, potential of taking root in the church.

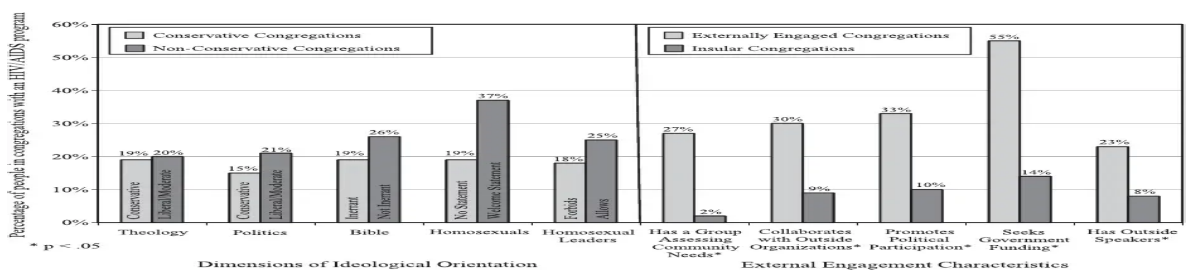
The following figure depicts the difference between the ideological orientations of liberal congregations versus more conservative congregations that are involved in HIV prevention activities. As the graphic illustrates, congregations with a more liberal ideology tend to be more connected to the external context and are far more engaged in community interventions than those leaning towards a more conservative stance. Also elucidated by the graph is the fact that conservative congregations tend to be much more insular, protecting themselves from the influences of the external context, whereas churches with a more liberal ideology are far more likely to be fully immersed in HIV

¹⁰ W. Richard Scott and Gerald F. Davis, *Organizations and Organizing: Rational, Natural, and Open System Perspectives* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2007).

prevention programming. This is most likely because conservative congregations may engage in HIV prevention activities despite their ideology, whereas more liberal-leaning congregations possess a mandate towards community concerns. The graph also shows that the interconnections that flow through members into the congregations' external context may tend to support programming that reflects their unified personal values. The implications here are that the congregation's ideological underpinning may not only determine its willingness to participate in providing services, but the underpinning may also impact the overall breadth and scope of the type of HIV prevention activities supported by the congregation.

Figure 1

Bivariate analysis of congregations with HIV/AIDS programs comparing conservative with liberal congregations and externally engaged with insular congregations.



Though beyond the scope of this research, it is of value to note studies have shown that Black congregations are much more flexible in terms of their ideology,

impacting their external activities than non-Black congregations.¹¹ Omar McRoberts agrees when he writes, “This flexibility of religious beliefs suggests that theologically conservative congregations aren’t necessarily resistant to the development of social service programs within the confines of the Black church,” specifically in the face of an imminent crisis. Additionally, by postulating, “viewing religious ideology as a resource rather than a constraint,” McRoberts reveals how pastors have “used elements of their conservative faith to promote social activism.”¹² He discusses pastors of conservative congregations who have been able to “mold and shape [their religion] to justify their own activist imperatives.”¹³ Because pastors within Black congregations tend to lead with an exceptional amount of autonomy in deciding the church’s overall vision and mission, they can incorporate a variety of programmatic innovations that are countercultural to current theological presuppositions. This bodes well for pastors undertaking the PPK Paradigm, as the fluidity of conservative imperatives provides the gateway necessary to shift the congregation’s culture towards a proactive engagement into social issues. Through crafting sermon design and delivery that adhere to the messaging concepts supported by the PPK Paradigm, pastors can advance prophetic preaching that cuts through predetermined ideologies with a clear message of love and compassion that destigmatizes HIV/AIDS and motivates the congregation toward social activities that support prevention.

¹¹ Brad R. Fulton, “Black Churches and HIV/AIDS: Factors Influencing Congregations’ Responsiveness to Social Issues,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50, no. 3 (2011): 628.

¹² Omar M. McRoberts, “Understanding the New Black Pentecostal Activism: Lessons from Ecumenical Urban Ministries in Boston,” *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 1 (1999): 47–70.

¹³*Ibid.*, 66

Another challenge which can potentially limit the effectiveness of the PPK Paradigm is the speed at which information is absorbed and received within a specific social group. This concept is classified as Diffusion of Innovations (DOI), which refers to “an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new to an individual or group, and how a new practice can diffuse through a given social system to the point it becomes a social norm.”¹⁴ DOI is characterized by four elements: the innovation, the means through which the new innovation moves through channels of communication, a measurable period of time for the innovation to be implemented, and the demographic and ideological make-up of the members in a social system. DOI, expressed in terms of speed and time, can help to measure the rate at which congregational transformation towards the normalization of HIV prevention is permeated into church culture.¹⁵ As it specifically relates to HIV prevention, Rogers considered the progenitor of DOI, ascribes it as a “preventive innovation,” defined as “an idea that an individual or members of a group adopt at one point in time in order to lower the probability that some future unwanted event may occur.”¹⁶ For many congregations currently involved or preparing to commit to the work of HIV prevention, program adoption is a necessity, as complex social issues facing Black communities persist.

As Rogers explains, when “trend setters in a social group begin to model a new behavior to others, they alter the perception of what is normative.”¹⁷ As a result, ways of thinking and doing are impressed upon the adherents according to the constraints

¹⁴ E. M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 4th ed. (New York: Free Press, 1995), 5–6.

¹⁵ Jane Bertrand, “Diffusion of Innovations and HIV/AIDS,” *Journal of Health Communication* 9, sup.1 (2004): 113–21, doi:10.1080/10810730490271575.

¹⁶ Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, 170.

¹⁷ E. M. Rogers, “Diffusion of Innovations,” 4th ed. (New York: Free Press, 1995), 171.

informed by the new innovation. Subsequently, new norms as informed by the innovation gradually impact the behavioral culture of the group as adherents begin to engage with one another throughout the community's social connections. The rate of diffusion by which the new innovation is accepted and received by the group as a complete system is ultimately impacted by the speed at which each individual works through the stages of the innovation-decision process (awareness, knowledge, persuasion, adoption, and implementation).¹⁸ Within congregational settings there are pre-determined factors that preclude or incline the membership to embrace or resist innovation, which include personal ideological constructs, comprehension level of individual members, the pastor's level of earned influence, as well as the presence of self-appointed gatekeepers determined to maintain the status quo. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the pastor subscribing to the PPK Paradigm to activate intentional kingly servant leadership by actively recruiting church leaders to leverage their networks of influence within the church and community in the work of messaging and modeling. Church leaders (e.g., deacons, trustees, and ministry leaders), while possessing significantly less gravitas than the pastor, still have a certain amount of influence that directly enables or inhibits the receptivity of a new innovation. According to Stewart, Hong, and Powell, without the support of church leadership, "it is unlikely that HIV testing would be accepted or integrated within the cultural framework of the church. Congregational support has been found to be critical to the health of many Black Americans, including HIV positive persons, in terms of leveraging social support of HIV testing and services."¹⁹ Also of

¹⁸ Bertrand, "Diffusion of Innovations and HIV/AIDS," 115.

¹⁹ J. M. Stewart, H. Hong, and T. W. Powell, "Strategies to Promote African-American Church Leadership Engagement in HIV Testing and Linkage to Care," *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities* 6 (2019): 319–26, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40615-018-0527-5>.

particular note, Stewart posits that congregations whose leaders promote and create space for discussions on sexuality and HIV “may be more likely than other congregations to reduce HIV stigma and shame among their congregants at a much faster pace.”²⁰ Consequently, the importance of recruiting and involving every facet of congregational leadership must be a distinct priority.

Another potential barrier to the PPK Paradigm in the Black Church is the theological compatibility of prevention innovations. There are three prevention innovations recommended by the Department of Health and Human Services for faith-based organizations—abstinence, being faithful, and condom use—and out of the three, abstinence is endorsed by the department both socio-behaviorally and theologically as the most effective prevention model.²¹ It is generally accepted that abstinence within the secular world is specifically related to the avoidance of disease transmission, but abstinence for the majority of Black Church goers is a theological imperative, as spiritual purity and a life connected to God is mandated by biblical teachings. However, evidence found in *HIV/AIDS: A Manual for Faith Communities* suggests there is a growing number of people within the confines of the Black Church that are abstinent by chance rather than by choice.²² Traditionally, the Black Church has considered monogamy amongst heterosexual couples to be the cardinal manner for prevention; but from the

²⁰ J. M. Stewart and B. L. Dancy, “Factors Contributing to the Development of an HIV Ministry within an African American Church,” *The Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care* 23, no. 5 (2012):419–30.

²¹ Roman Isler and Malika Dawn, *Perceptions and Social Constructions of HIV Prevention in the Black Baptist Church* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.17615/ryb8-ez85>.

²² Department of Health and Human Services (with the National Coalition of Pastor’s Spouses), *HIV/AIDS: A Manual for Faith Communities*, accessed May 23, 2023, <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/hiv-aids.pdf>.

socio-behavioral perspective, this framework is also suitable for same-sex and unmarried couples, even if it is not endorsed within the Christian tradition²³

The challenge with the traditional concept of heterosexual and monogamous relationships is that it does not guarantee sexual autonomy. New scientific data from the Center for Disease and Control indicates that women are disproportionately impacted by transmission of HIV/AIDS and account for 85% of the new HIV cases.²⁴ Furthermore, the CDC further suggests that in 2018, 57% of the new HIV diagnoses were amongst black heterosexual women.²⁵ This data further reiterates how assumptions about who is usually infected can no longer be made, nor can we continue to believe that people contract HIV because of their choices.

Condom use, the third innovation, can also be controversial in some congregations. Social scientists Isler and Dawn in *Perceptions and Social Construction of HIV Prevention in the Black Baptist Church* claim that some congregations “may find it impossible to resolve the incompatibility between theological perspectives and socio-behavioral realities. However, studies show that many have reconciled the absence of a theological basis for condom use with the socio-behavioral urgency of preventing disease transmission—particularly among HIV positive persons.”²⁶ However, it is imperative to denote that, for these congregations, discussing the use of condoms also most likely emphasized abstinence as well. Regarding the commitment to teaching abstinence, one pastor in a recent study commented:

²³ Isler and Dawn, *Perceptions and Social Constructions*, 473.

²⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *HIV Surveillance Report*, vol. 31 (updated), 2018, <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/library/reports/hiv-surveillance/vol-31/index.html>.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Isler and Dawn. *Perceptions and Social Constructions*, 481.

We have a ceremony around a marriage band for our young people. We try to teach abstinence. We know it doesn't always work. And of course, kids come up pregnant and things like that. But the official policy and what we really try to stress is abstinence; and if abstinence is not working, then protection.²⁷

As I have previously mentioned, an intrinsic part of my current vocation is to address the ongoing impact HIV/AIDS has had and continues to have on members of Black Church pastors, their congregants, and community members and to help faith ambassadors develop HIV/AIDS church-based/community programs. As a result of my study, I wholeheartedly believe the PPK Paradigm demonstrates strong potential to be an effective leadership model in the Church in the implementation of HIV/AIDS programs. One example of an experience that has caused me to come to this conclusion is the testimony of a faith ambassador during one of our Black Church/ community HIV educational sessions. In summary, she said that when she had gotten a phone call from a family member who had just been diagnosed as having AIDS, her first reaction was that it could not be true because HIV/AIDS did not exist anymore because it had been eradicated. Her next thought was what she could do to help him.

She proceeded to thank us for the work that we are doing and that she was committing herself to working with her pastor and congregation to develop and maintain a HIV/AIDS program and that she would now be a voice in her community and within

²⁷ Kathryn Pitkin Derose et al., "Religious Congregations' Involvement in HIV: A Case Study Approach," *AIDS and Behavior* 15, no. 6 (2010): 1220–32, doi:10.1007/S10461-010-9827-4.

her sphere of influence to share factual HIV/AIDS information. Hearing her, I was struck by how her testimony fits the PPK Paradigm. One of the strategies that can help demystify assumptions, is for trusted church leaders to lead the discussion, as opposed to a health professional who may have professional credibility but lacks the trust of members of the congregation. A trusted facilitator would minimize the inherent theological conflicts in response to socio-behavioral sexual peril. Among a wide range of suggested scientifically proven prevention strategies that bolster healthy sex behaviors through educational forums, is curating safe space for inclusive conversations about the importance of safe sex practices in partnership with trusted community-based entities.

Another barrier to the PPK Paradigm that might hinder or even curtail pastors and churches from embracing this model is inconsistency. Unfortunately, research data suggests that even if HIV prevention “goals are met, congregations may be unlikely to remain engaged in HIV prevention activities if church culture and life seem to lack relevance” amid competing priorities.²⁸ Continuing to keep HIV prevention before the congregation as a salient issue may prove difficult without creating a framework for sustainability that lies beyond the pastor’s involvement. After basic innovations have been successfully adapted into the congregation’s activities, facilitators who continue moving the congregation to engage specifically in HIV prevention are critical. Congregations that have a group interacting with the community by surveying its needs are often better positioned to recognize and respond to social issues and are thirteen times more likely to sustain an ongoing prevention program.²⁹ Similarly, congregations that seek government funding “are almost four times more likely to offer a program and

²⁸ Isler and Dawn, *Perceptions and Social Constructions*, 481–82.

²⁹ Fulton, “Black Churches and HIV/AIDS,” 623.

congregations that collaborate with outside organizations to provide outside speakers are three times more likely to offer a program.”³⁰ Each of these results supports the hypothesis that when congregations have persons dedicated to prevention work, it significantly increases the efficacy of their HIV prevention program. While there are some instances where the Black Church has had a credible track record of being influential regarding the health behaviors of black communities, some black faith leaders still have a limited understanding and lack exposure to the innovative medical advances that have been made coupled with reinvigorated theological ideologies in addition to socio behavioral perspectives of progressive Black clergy.

Unfortunately, many Black faith leaders fail to understand how their influence advances or deters congregational involvement in HIV prevention. My hope for the PPK Paradigm is to instruct pastors who intentionally embrace their role in curating safe spaces that truly exemplify the love of Christ and, regardless of status, invite all persons into Christ’s presence and priesthood. My sentiments are reflected in an article by Dion Forster, “The Church Has AIDS,” who writes:

This statement challenges Christians to recognize that it is impossible to do theology and engage in Christian life and ministry without taking into account the impact of HIV and AIDS on the world. We are reminded that theologians, and all Christians who take their belief in Christ seriously, have a responsibility to forge a positive theology of HIV/AIDS, since sadly so much of the Church’s official and popular rhetoric has sent the

³⁰ Ibid., 624.

false message that at best God is silent on HIV and AIDS, and at worst God is either punishing persons with AIDS or has abandoned us in our suffering.³¹

In theory, the Black Church is the central institution designed to address the holistic needs of the black community, inclusive of their spiritual, physical, emotional, social, economic, and psychological needs. Thus, the Church is in a position to be a collaborator with other community-based initiatives in the fight to eradicate HIV. It also provides a space for faith leaders to begin integrating effective communicative tactics as prophetic preachers, leading pastorally as priests, and engaging their church and community influence as kingly servant-leaders.

The PPK Paradigm is a theological framework that shows that it is sound enough to be used in the Church/Black Church given that any social issue can be adopted and fit into its methodology alleviating the need to reshape or create the framework to the issue. Moreover, the framework of the PPK Paradigm accommodates the implementation of the issue leading to resolution of the issue or at least moves closer to the resolution which serves as an encouraging strong element of this paradigm.

Going forward I plan to insert the tenets of my finished work into a theological model to educate Black Faith leaders in Black Faith communities that are grappling with social issues, particularly HIV/AIDS, and chronicle the results with the intent to determine if my basic conceptual theory has regency. Additionally, I want to explore the implementation of the PPK Paradigm an effective sustainable HIV/AIDS program in

³¹ D. A. Forster, "The Church Has AIDS: Towards a Positive Theology for an HIV+ Church," *Epworth Review* 1, no. 2 (2010): 6–24.

Southern Black church contexts in cooperation with community-based agencies and organizations for sustainable transformative practices that destigmatize HIV/AIDS. The next phase of the program development would be to create Christian education materials, including a curriculum and handbook, to be used in training participants as well as teaching professionals, pastors, lay ministers, community volunteers, and other interested participants. I am led by my heartfelt convictions, led by my faith, driven by my belief in the PPK Paradigm, and my profound desire to help in halting the spread of HIV/AIDS, decrease the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS, and helping the Black Church be an intricate part of stemming the growth of this epidemic among Black people worldwide, reclaiming the prophetic, priestly, and kingly, as the origin of healing for humanity.

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Biography

The Reverend Tarsha W. Banister is an Associate Pastor at the Temple Memorial Baptist Church in the Piedmont-Triad Area of North Carolina and serves as the Medical Program Manager for Old North State Medical Society of North Carolina in partnership with the Faith Compass Initiative of Wake Forest School of Divinity addressing challenges that impact the advancement of HIV awareness among Black Faith communities. Additionally, she serves as a Congregational Consultant for The Center for Congregational Health, a Wake Forest Baptist Hospital affiliate. She is an ordained minister in the Baptist tradition.

Rev. Banister is a native of Raleigh, North Carolina, and a graduate of North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina, where she obtained her Bachelor of Science degree. With an undying love for education, she also pursued and completed her Master of Adult Education from Walden University, followed by the completion of her Master of Divinity degree from Wake Forest University School of Divinity in Winston-Salem, NC, and is currently completing her doctoral degree at Duke Divinity School. One of her most notable accolades includes being granted the 2020 Addie Davis Leadership Award for Outstanding Leadership in Pastoral Ministry by the Baptist Women in Ministry organization.

Beyond the pulpit ministry, Tarsha is a visionary leader in the church, community, and academy. She has served in various capacities within the church, including Christian Education Ministry, Spiritual Formation Director, and Congregational Care Ministry. Her passion for healthy leadership has led her to explore Christian Social innovation practices that will renew Christendom witness through practical approaches for the transformation of the beloved community and church as a fresh expression of the gospel of Christ.