

NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

INNOVATION LEADERSHIP IN CHANGING CULTURE:  
A THESIS IN "THE TRANSFORMATION/RENOVATION OF THE URBAN BLACK  
CHURCH DEVELOPED THROUGH CROSS GENERATIONAL ECCLESIOLOGY."

A DISSERTATION AND ARTIFACT  
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BY  
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ABSTRACT

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INNOVATIVE LEADERSHIP IN CHANGING CULTURES  
"The Transformation/Renovation of the Urban Church: Developed through Black  
Cross-Generational Ecclesial"

The problem of "*A Change is Gonna Come*" (*Sam Cook*) is the dichotomy between The Urban Black Church and the community. A Cross-Generational ecclesial is the process for bridging gaps within the community and within the congregation. The introduction of Black Theological pedagogy as the ecclesial foundation of cross-generational ministries and community engagement guides the research, ethnographic surveys, and interviews of African Americans that attend Urban Black Churches of Kansas City, MO. Stanzas from Sam Cook's song, "A Change Is Gonna Come," are the chapter titles connecting the past and present hopes. The transformation/renovation in the Urban Black Church and community and the story behind Sam Cook's *A Change Is Gonna Come* are the challenges experienced in many Urban Black Churches. Developing principles and practices for a multi-generational ecclesial enhances interconnections across age groups and rejuvenates a community for cross-generational mission.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### ***Change!***

Alvin Toffler, the author of "*Future Shock*," founder of Toffler Associates, and "world-renowned futurist" whose work foreshadowed the full effects of rapid technology development on people, businesses, and governments, famous quotes is, "Change is the process by which the future invades our lives."

Missions, therefore, are transformative. It is this knowledge that change is

mission, and mission is change. Hence, a church with an active mission ministry is a transformative church due to the fact that mission and transformation go hand-in-hand. A mission is "to start and finish with a commitment to the God that we are called to share." Though a common word in this dissertation, transition or change refers to taking the risk of failure, which is "absolutely crucial to breakthrough success." Mission, transformation, and renovations relate to the commitment to sharing God's ideas at the risk of making changes to address the Church's context.

Sam Cook wrote *A Change Is Gonna Come* in 1963, after being arrested and jailed for disturbing the peace when angered because of racist accommodations at the Holiday Inn in Shreveport, LA. Cook quickly put the words and music to this song two months after the incident. Interestingly, this sophisticated arrangement's verses were constructed with different movements using strings, horns, and timpani drums. When Cook asked Bobby Womack, his protégé, what he thought of the song, Womack said, 'It sounds like death.' Bobby then recanted and said, 'Well, it's not like death, but it sounds kind of spooky.' Ironically, before the song released in 1964, Sam Cook was killed in a hotel in Los Angeles, CA. It then became an anthem during the Civil Rights Movement.

Today the song *A Change Is Gonna Come* is a song of hope for every generation, situation, and circumstance of change that appears in the Urban Black Church as depicted in this allegory below:

***A True Allegory: An Accident Bound to Happen***

Since the late sixties, Deacons at *Anywhere K.C. Church* always began worship services with a song and a prayer as the men entered the sanctuary fifteen minutes before service would begin and huddled together like a football team. Individuals were selected

to sing, read the scripture, and pray.

The early morning worship services began at 6:30 am. That time was selected to give people an opportunity, if they chose, to get breakfast at nearby "Mom and Pop" restaurants. Soon, The Church began providing a continental breakfast for the members for convenience, cost, and comradery.

In the sixties, the unique characteristic of *Anywhere K.C. Church* was its' central location in a thriving neighborhood surrounded by one high school, two middle schools, and two elementary schools. It was a working-class African American community and "has more African and Sub-Saharan African ancestry people living in it than nearly any neighborhood in America? It is true, 13.8% of this neighborhood's residents have African ancestry, and 13.8% have Sub-Saharan African ancestry". There were three bus stops within a two-block maximum walking distance, making the church an ideal location.

Many of the members lived close to the Church. Being a parish or neighborhood church created ministries for families, youth, and children. *Anywhere* was one of the first churches in the city to open a child-care program for the membership and community. That program remained a staple in the community for over three decades, graduating two and three generations of preschoolers into its community of academicians.

*Anywhere* had boy's and girl's athletics programs and a plethora of youth ministries developed to meet the needs of young African American boys, girls, men, and women who resided in the community. This Urban Black Church also had the usual youth choir, children's choir, youth ushers, children's ushers, Children's Worship, summer activities, and youth specialty programs that engaged and entertained youth in a safe and fun environment. *Anywhere's* adult ministries addressed topics about economics,

homeownership, job training, parenting classes, as well as having adult choirs, usher boards, workshops, conferences, and so much more!

It was said that *Anywhere K.C. Church* was where everyone wants to be for worship ...until...it began. Desegregation! What started as an opportunity also became a device for closure. African Americans began to move out of the neighborhood of *Anywhere* for various reasons. The opportunity has now afforded a chance to build new homes in new subdivisions as they began to see their property value drop in the city. African Americans wanted to experience living in a multicultural community. “More recent studies of preference suggest that blacks prefer to reside in racially diverse neighborhoods. Whites, however, do not have such a preference but prefer more racially homogenous neighborhoods.” These urban dwellers knew that they could take advantage of living in the suburb's new areas without dealing with red lining issues in some of the city's affluent neighborhoods. Blacks wanted to get away from crime and challenges with the city's public school systems.

Many of the members of *Anywhere K.C.* moved out of the community as well, looking for new, more significant, and better homeownership opportunities. Moving to the suburbs changed and extended their commute to and from The Church, but no one discussed this cultural change. Members now spend fifteen to twenty minutes driving to and from The Church. Over fifty percent live in neighboring suburbs, passing thriving multiethnic churches, McDonald's, and Starbucks on their drive-in as they arrive late for Sunday School.

What once was a growing active community that reflected all the strides and advancements for African Americans during the Civil Rights Movement now resembles a

ghost town with those remaining who were not economically able to move.

Vacant apartments or homes are a significant fact of life. The current real estate vacancy rate here is 31.9%, which is higher than the rate of vacancies in 95.0% of all U.S. neighborhoods. Also, the most vacant housing here is vacant year-round. If you live here, you may find that several buildings in your neighborhood are empty.

The neighborhood progressively changed from homeowners to renters, with "57 percent of renters here compared to 34 percent" in the entire state. It changed from caring communities, residents to temporary short-term housing tenants and economic stability to low-income section eight desolate dwellings. Gone are the manicured lawns and kids playing in the streets. Gone is the desire to know the neighbor, borrowing a cup of sugar, and speaking to the passers-by. Gone are neighborhood watch clubs. Everything seems gone!

No longer are members living in the neighborhood with easy access to the Church. The elementary schools and one of the middle schools in the neighborhood closed. The school bus became the student hang-out and trouble space. *Anywhere* is almost sixty years old, but no one has discussed her community's changes and membership. It appears that no one wants to take a hard look at "*Who Moved the Cheese*," a book about how to handle life's changes written by Spencer Johnson. Spencer's book requires the reader to ask the hard questions where it went, why did it go, and when did it go?

After sixty years of change in the neighborhood, membership, society, and family dynamics, one Sunday morning, one of the old deacons rose from the front pew and slowly walked to the microphone. Looking around the room and having a nostalgic moment, the deacon decides to sing a song from the Civil Rights era when Black communities were united. With eyes closed, the deacon began singing the call and

response song of decades of the past. Holding the tones slowly and elongating each letter, the old deacon sang the call... "*I-I love the Lord He heard my cry-y-y...*" The church was to respond, but there was SILENCE. A deafening silence. Why? What could be happening? What could the church be experiencing now? One fact was absolute; only a few people in the church and the old deacon knew the old songs. Until that day, no one in the church considered this inevitable crossing at the intersection of cross-generational road and community transition. No one was prepared for this accident that was bound to happen.

### ***A Perfect World***

In a perfect world, reflecting an Eden, the family nucleus would embrace all its members' values and nurture them to be planet productive, God-honoring, peace-loving, and compassionate creations of God. No accidents bound to happen, no generation gaps, and no injustice. This world would be a place of caring communities, safe spaces rich in mercy and grace. That is a perfect world! It would have empowered fathers and mothers who would minister to their families. The pastor would guide their congregant within the parameters of their call to be doers of God's Word everywhere they went. Meaning that every day would be Sunday, like in the great gospel song "Walk Around Heaven," written by Cassietta George in 1964. Earth would be heaven, and heaven would be on earth because the Kingdom would have come.

There would be no need for Black Church History, Black Theology, or Cross-generational ministries. Pastors of The Church would show family leaders how to present the gospel with clarity at home. Presenting the gospel this way would make the pastor's job easier because now the pastor is duplicating his/her teachings into each of their congregants' homes. Members would not have to wait "to get your praise on" Sundays.

They would come into worship, prayed up, and with praise.

Deuteronomy 6 would be more than a commandment. It would be a way of life:

Israel, remember this! The Lord - and the Lord alone is our God. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Never forget these commands that I am giving you today. Teach them to your children. Repeat them when you are at home and when you are away when you are resting. Tie them on your arms and wear them on your foreheads as a reminder. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates. (NLT Verses 4-9)

How changed would the dynamic of the family be? Once the head of the house has created daily worship at home, the pastor teaches his congregants how to engage others in their extended families, such as brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, and cousins. From there, the pastor provides his members with tools to branch out into the community around the Church that would include neighborhoods and schools. The culture would be completely engulfed in Christ-likeness.

Nevertheless, this is not a perfect world but in a fallen world where the fallen can be transformed, renovated, restored, and made whole.

### ***Description of Chapters***

The observation of this paper, Chapter One of this investigation, will examine transition or change from a physiological perspective titled "*Just Like a River, I've Been Running ever Since.*" Asking what does change, trauma, and faith have in common, and how does this impact and form neighborhoods in Kansas City's urban community's mission? Chapter Two, titled "*Brother Help Me Please,*" builds the case for cross-generational ministry in the Urban Black Church. Cross-generational ministries are not

new to the Urban Black Church, but establishing an opportunity for mission and promoting an understanding of what each generation brings to the table could alter how to form missional ministries for the future. Chapter Three, the most crucial part of this study, is entitled: "*I Think I'm Able to Carry On.*" Its importance stems from the historical-theological view of the Urban Black Church. Dr. Kenneth Clarke, who is a noted psychologist, wrote the book *Dark Ghetto*. The book states that the Black Church provides the space where people of color can come together to embrace and launch a frontal attack on the realities that negate their being and their person. This chapter will look at the Black Church's history and theology's past, present, and future. Before the Black Church implements another program, it must understand what makes it unique, its' history, its' present stakeholders, why it is in a specific neighborhood, and what impact it wants to make in that community?

Chapter Four, "*It's Been A Long Time Coming,*" defines what it means to be an Urban Black-cross-generational church in the community through the interviews and surveys of a diverse cross-section of African Americans currently part of an urban church in Kansas City; their demographics, responses in the interview, and evaluation of the Focus Group.

Chapter Five concludes the project by summarizing, "What does it mean to be an Urban Black Church that ministers cross-generationally to the community where it exists and the congregants who commute into that community" and "What will help the Church be faithful to both congregants and the community?" Additionally, the writer will respond to the follow-up process on future studies or plans, evaluate the outcome of this research (expand, narrow, or change the focus), and how others could build on this project. In

Appendix A and B at the end of this paper is the sample "Tool Guide Workbook for Church Leaders," and link to the Zoom Presentation, "Cross Generation Engagement Utilizing Black Church History and Black Theology," given to the Focus Group.

There are as many theologies as there are cultures. Webster defines theology as the study of religious faith, practice, and experience, primarily: the study of God and God's relation to the world.

As Black people in America, Black Theology tells us that our faith, practices, and experiences are a combination of the ancestral culture of Africa and our American experiences of slavery, Jim Crow, Civil Rights Movement, Black Power Movement, and their hope in God for tomorrow with Black Lives Matter Movement today. As written, "God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow" (Hebrew 13:8). Black theology speaks that God is the God right now as he was with our parents and grandparents. He will make an enemy a foot stool (Matthew 22:43-45), place his Word in our hearts (Deuteronomy 11:18), and never leave us (Hebrews 13:5). Jesus has not changed. This study proposes today as the beginning of transformation/renovation through cross-generational ministries for more vigorous faith formation for the next generation.

## **CHAPTER 1: "JUST LIKE A RIVER, I'VE BEEN RUNNING EVER**

### **SINCE."**

#### ***Introduction***

Personal reflection, the urgings of God, and the restlessness to gain insight into the Black Church's unknown history are the driving force behind exploring what can happen when the Black Church takes the risk to change, transform, and renovate. One

fact about it is that when change comes," it initially comes on a personal level first. The individual's change begins the process for other revelations to come into view. The removal of the scales from the individual's eyes first brings into view innovation and creativity, asserted by Paul in Acts 9:18, as well as by Jesus in Matthew 7:5, the beam removed from the eye to see without hypocrisy.

As in the story of the old Deacon and The Church, a lack of preparation for change or life's transitions is what happens. No growth, no movement, no creativity, and no innovation. Unlike what happens when a river is running, declared by Cook, there is life where a river runs. What is the human reaction when confronted with change? What does it will look like, and most importantly, what are some best practices?

Change blindness is a term used by psychologists to describe the tendency people have to miss changes in their immediate visual environment. If something in your visual field changed dramatically right before your eyes, you would notice it immediately. While you might think that you see or are aware of all the changes that happen in your immediate environment, the reality is that there is simply too much information for your brain to fully process and be aware of every single thing that happens in the world around you.

There have been many experiments depicting the unusual behavior of people experiencing "change blindness." In these experiments, people are talking directly with another person when a minor visual disruption occurs. These interruptions are as quick as a wall coming between them or switching persons behind a desk. After the wall is gone or someone else appears, the person they are talking with does not recognize that they are now speaking to a different individual. What scientist Daniel Simon from the University of Illinois proves in this experiment is that humanity has "attentional blindness," the inability to notice something obvious right there before the individual. As this behavior is a reference to the Black Urban Church, it helps explain why the old Deacon and The

Church are unaware of the changes happening all around them. It validates the need for The Church to create places and spaces for intentional change to run like a river among its parishioners to become relevant within their surroundings. The video makes an interesting point when it says toward the end, "Being aware of our limitations can help us adapt and compensate for them allowing us to do things that prevent the really negative consequences that can happen due to failures of awareness." This statement interpreted the words of Paul when he wrote, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness. So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses so that the power of Christ can work through me." 2 Corinthians 12:9. (NLT)

### ***Change and Faith In the Black Church***

Often in the Urban Black Church, increasing church attendance is, unfortunately, the goal; why, because it is measurable. Leaders and congregants believe that numbers represent effectiveness, effectiveness shows progress, and progress means efficiency. The rationale concerning growth cannot discredit the justification of attendance, but using it as the determining factor of success is one-dimensional. As attendance drops in Urban Black Churches, there are some cultural truths to be considered. One truth is that loyalty to The Church is no longer a "staying factor" for young members. Another truth discussed in the introduction is that many members no longer live in The Church's neighborhood. The third truth is the fact that many congregants travel twenty to thirty minutes into the city to attend an urban church. Fourth, many younger congregants are looking for convenience in worship for various reasons; and lastly and most concerning, many young black men and women question the relevance of The Urban Black Church as it addresses community issues of change, trauma, and faith.

"Is the Black Church dying and why are established congregations in decline" are two questions that reflect the reality that the Black Church could be on the brink of extinction, like the dinosaurs that formerly roamed the lands. A definition for dying or declining Urban Black Church typically refers to a decline in membership. Circumstantially, it relates to the lack of or decreased youth and young adults' attendance in The Urban Black Church. Ecologically, it is the dissolution of the involvement of the congregants.

In the forum on the State of the Black Church in Kansas City in 2019, several of the panelists gave grim descriptions of the Black Church's impact today. Describing it as; "a rocking horse religion," "movement with no forward motion," "asleep," "taken on the ways of the oppressor (racism)," "a mind-set unwilling to change," "out of touch with the people, and The Church is not telling the why's." These descriptions depict the complexity of a church dying and declining.

All of these descriptions relate to communication and active listening deficiencies. Catterton-Allen mentions how cross-generational ministries create safe spaces in The Church where uncomfortable conversations may occur to guide and help develop a focus on the problems The Church is facing and not the person or personality shared the problem. "It is the difference between "technical challenge – situations for which existing systems and structures provide adequate solutions and adaptive challenges – that require The Church to engage in the experimentation process of learning." The Black Church's challenge is to develop opportunities to "build the why's of Black theology." Spending time with people from different generations provides unprecedented learning opportunities. Witnessing senior members learning from teen members' technology skills

to use their mobile devices; teen members learning from older members self-control in specific settings; senior members learning from young adult members how to multitask; and middle age adult members learning from the innocence of the children how to trust God. Jessica Stolling, in *Intergenerate*, lists five principles to break down the walls and give all generations a place to belong together. They are unlocking understanding, unlocking appreciation, unlocking collaboration, unlocking communication, and unlocking wisdom sharing.

Unlocking these principles demonstrates cross-generational ministries' power to open doors and paths to life on the other side of the death and decline that some predict will happen in the Black Church. Is it possible that today, just as in John Wesley's time, The Church is not challenging the people?

Even though most were, in some sense, churched, many were not being challenged by the Church with a vital Christian faith. Wesley's intent was to create an ecclesiolae within the ecclesia, a movement of vital primitive Christianity within the established Church that would not only serve to reach the lost but also revive the Church.

A cross-generational ministry revival would challenge Black Churches and help build lasting relationships across the generation gap, open minds and attitudes about life, and broaden the missional outreach as it transforms lives.

### ***Trauma and Faith In the Black Church***

The discussion of the effects of trauma experienced by African Americans is crucial. In an "attentional blindness" society, what is the Black Church doing to combat the ills of growing racism in America? As protests that "Black Lives Matter" continue in communities and the nation presently, as well as in 2015 in the Ferguson, Missouri riots, speaks to the trauma youth are experiencing today. In Leah Gunning Francis's book,

*Ferguson and Faith*, are the trials and triumphs of The Church going to the people.

"Church came to us whether we realized it or not."

As Walter Fluker describes the black church as "narcoleptic"; James Cone depicts it as "exclusion of doing theology," and Foster and Shockley report it as "ambivalent to the struggle." Fluker states that knowing the Black Church's history is the best effort to revive The Church's comatose state. Fluker's portrait of the Black Church with an acute narcoleptic disorder, being asleep when The Church should be awake, is not only frightening but reflective of the need to develop a better method for assessing The Church's impact and worth. Cross-generational ministries would be a vibrant wake-up call to a sleeping congregation because it would allow youth to have a "brave space" where they could be heard and engage in solutions such as those accomplished in Ferguson, Missouri.

Fluker continues, "The ghost of post-racialism is embedded in the dominant ideological discourses of American culture, which we manifested in possessive individualism and religious narcissism... Consequently, a large majority of Black Churches are in a state of possession, suffering from social-political narcolepsy, a condition of uncontrollable sleeping."

Black American youth today, after four hundred years of slavery, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights Movement, are still victims of a society that withholds from them the equity they deserve. Many African Americans are frustrated with the constant fight for opportunity and fairness. There are many examples of accomplishments and fairness toward African Americans available (and that we cannot blame anyone but ourselves sometimes for the irrational choices made). However, it is still difficult to understand

why Blacks are often still having to prove their worth in America; after all, they have shown loyalty to the United States of America. The lack of recognition of African Americans' contributions questions if The Urban Black Church today has provided black youth with the egalitarian tools of their faith to continue the fight into the following decades. There was a time when it appeared that Black youth was sleeping through a time of exceptional provision of resources, information, and global networking. Technology has aided Black Americans. It has opened the opportunity for the world to see the injustices in the United States.

Trauma-Informed Care is a nationwide program created to establish a "compassionate culture and resilient workforce." Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) was initiated after the ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), a study by doctors Vincent J. Felitti and Robert F. Anda. ACE's are stressful or traumatic events, including abuse and neglect. Dr. Joy DeGruy defines trauma as "the result of what has been done to us, what we have done to ourselves and others, and what we fail to do."

The history of oppression in America affects Black's view of the future of the next generation. Trauma is the essence of this viewpoint. If the Urban Black Church develops relevant ministries, a cross-generational ministry must include a study of trauma. Trauma has been engraved into the Black Americans' DNA. It is affecting the educational, social, and spiritual development of the next generations... "epigenetics research has revealed that the environment can influence people's genes and, more specifically, that trauma is transmitted over generations."

Everyone is familiar with all the disadvantages and disparities within the urban core of the Urban Black Church's neighborhoods. The statistics on Black Church

attendance show the significance of a firm belief structure in the black community.

"Black Americans are markedly more religious on a variety of measures than the U.S. population as a whole." Knowing these statistics and intentionally creating a missional cross-generational ministry would significantly impact the congregants worshipping in Black Urban Churches and give them tools to reach out to the communities in the urban core and establish relationships, mentorships, and discipleship. "A primary goal of The Church's ministry to black youth must be to connecting them to a viable future.

Establishing these types of relationships can only be done after an incisive analysis of the problems they face and an identification of the quicksand and landmines they confront as they move from early childhood through adolescence." Recognize a truth spoken by Mike Breen, former pastor of Saint Thomas Crookes, agrees with Van Gelder, Zscheile and Middendorf, almost repeating verbatim, "as we look around as Christendom is crumbling and the landscape of The Church is forever changed, a stark revelation emerges: Most of us (pastors) have been trained and educated for a world that no longer exists." What are some of these crumbling conditions surrounding the urban Blacks in Kansas City, Missouri?

Thabiti Anyabwile, in an article titled "What Responsibility Does the Black Church Have Now for Preserving Black Culture," presents a challenge to the Black Church when he states:

Our cultural ways of "doing church" can actually rob God's word of its power! So, it's worth asking whether the Black Church has arrived at a point similar to the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day. Has the culture of The Church so shaped our point of view that it nullifies the word of God? In whatever way it has, we need to drop the cultural practice and return to the priority of God's powerful word.

## ***The History of the Black Church in Kansas City, Missouri***

Kansas City's church history, depicted in Bill High and Annika Bergen's book, *The Spiritual Roots of Kansas City*, shares that after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, "many freed slaves fled the south and traveled up the Missouri River to Kansas City." The Blacks living on the banks of the river would hear sermons from black preachers in Kansas City.

In November 1863, three black leaders, Rev. John Loving, a Methodist preacher from Quindaro, Kansas; Reverend Clark Moore, a Baptist minister affiliated with the mission, and Reverend Anderson, a Baptist preacher from Leavenworth, Kansas, held an organizational meeting at Straggler's Camp. Straggler's Camp was located on the south bank of the Missouri river between 1st and 6th Streets, Delaware to Wyandotte.

In the history of the "Allen Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church," two-thirds of the attending group decided to unite as Baptist and one-third as Methodist. These two groups were then known and have been known as Second Baptist and Allen Chapel A.M.E. (African Methodist Episcopal). Ironically, both churches are located on the Eastside of Kansas City, Missouri.

After African Americans arrived in Kansas City after the Civil War, High and Bergen's book introduces the 'Exodusters' (a term used to describe a large number of Blacks that migrated to Kansas City), found jobs, and continued to grow. "However, as the Black community grew, white residents felt threatened by their presence. Many Black workers were limited to unskilled hard labor positions, limited financial opportunities, diseases ran rampant, police discrimination, high crime rate due to the influx of 'relegated vice business' in the black community, and poverty." Unfortunately, this systemic racism is the foundation for the acute disparities today.

At The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, Olivia Williams wrote an article, "I'm A Young, Black Kansas Citian Planning to Move – K.C., Why Should I Stay?" where Williams questions the viability of Kansas City, Missouri for upcoming young blacks. Olivia shares concerns about living in a city that does not secure a sense of “belonging” for young Blacks.

If I'm going to consider Kansas City my long-term home in the future, several changes would have to occur first. Here are three broad ones that come to mind.

- Invest in Black youth,
- Make space for the city's Black population, and
- Give Black communities the resources to lead.

If Kansas City prioritized programs that explicitly supported Black youth – beginning with increased funding, but also publicity, visibility, and community support – the battle for equity would feel a lot less defeating.

### ***Kansas City, Missouri Eastside Community***

Today Kansas City, Missouri, is known for barbeque, but the city has a history of unpublicized racism. The fact is that Kansas City's own racial dividing lines have been the focus of Elle Moxley's research and the reasons behind the demographics presented in the data analysis of the 64128 and 64130 zip codes, two communities on the "east side" of the city plagued by systemic insecurities economically, emotionally, academically, and physically.

Obtaining data about Kansas City's urban communities led to viewing several documentaries and websites validating this information.

Kansas City is a 15-county metropolitan area that's anchored by Kansas City, Missouri. The city is located on the border of Kansas and Missouri, and it is the second-largest metro area in the state after Greater St. Louis. The most densely populated area is within the Historic Kansas City boundary, with about 58 square miles and a density of around 5,000 people per square mile. The urban core of the city has dropped in population continually for the past 13 years, while only a few areas -- especially the Greater Downtown area in the city center -- have gained population. The most significant growth has been in the Northland area.

<b>Race by Zip Codes</b>								
Zip Codes	Black	White	Two> Races	Hispanic or Latino	American Indian	Asian	Hawaiian	Some other race
64128	9,970	595	331	681	23	10	1	2
64130	18,524	774	494	575	70	34	6	15
<b>Race by Percentages</b>								
64128	67.5%	4.0%	2.2%	4.6%	0.2%	0.07%	0.01%	0.01%
64130	72%	3.0%	1.9%	2.2%	0.3%	0.1%	0.02%	0.6%

Diagram of demographics of 64128 and 64130 zip codes:

***A Community of Significant Disparities***

The educational levels of those living in this zip code population for the last 25 years are High school or higher: 79.8%, Bachelor's degree or higher: 10.5%, Graduate or professional degree: 3.4%, and Unemployed: 10.6%. The residence means of travel time to work (commute) averages 24.4 minutes one way. The marital status within this 15 years span is: Never married: 48.5%, Now married: 21.7%, Separated: 3.5%, Widowed: 9.1%, and Divorced: 17.2%.

The average household income is below the state average. The estimated median household gross income in 2017 was \$31,093; for the state of Missouri, it was \$53,578. The median house value is significantly below the state average. The unemployed percentage is above the state average. Black race population percentage significantly above the state average. Hispanic race population percentage above the state average. Renting percentage above the state average. Length of stay since moving-in considerably

above the state average. House age significantly below the state average. The number of college students below the state average. Percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher significantly below the state average. Residents with this zip code's income are below the poverty level in 2017 at 27.4%, while Missouri's whole state is 13.4%. Means of transportation: To drive a car alone in 64130 zip code is 5,638 - 73.0%, Carpooled 673 - 8.7%, Bus or trolley bus 673 - 9.6%, Taxi 739 - 0.8%, Motorcycle 60 - 0.2%, Bicycle 8 - 0.1%, Walked 94 - 1.2%, Other means 152 - 2.0%, and Worked at home 317 - 4.1%. The average time spent traveling for these residents is 5 to 14 minutes 1,542, 15 to 24 minutes 3,291, 25 to 34 minutes 1,604, 35 to 44 minutes 255, 45 to 59 minutes 531, and 60 to 90 or more minutes 305.

In an interview with KCMO Council Member, these statistics provide other concerns that paint a humanistic picture of Eastside neighborhoods. The Council Member shares that health is the vibrancy of the community and that several environmental factors affect the health of the residents in this zip code. These factors are the prevalence of poverty, older housing stock (which value is one-third of the rest of the city), unavailable employment attainability, and lower graduation rate of educational attainment. The Council Member continued to say that the Third District is in such despair that there was a tax generated to help build up the vibrancy of the community. Unfortunately, the Eastside neighborhood's physical health has an eleven-year variation compared to the more vibrant neighborhood in Kansas City. Heart disease is the number one killer in people in this community. This Council Member stated, "heart diseases increase the cortisol levels, which are brought on by stress, trauma, and the inability to self-realize." Employability is another disturbing challenge in this area, weathering the effect of how

race shows up in K.C. and the third district, which is "the blackest district," with more people returning from the penal system, poverty, re-education, and unemployment. Race and racism have reared their ugly head in KCMO, again. The systemic racism monster has feasted and devoured the residence of this community.

Statistics show that those in the "only fifteen percent of 'Busters' (born between 1965 to 1985+) have been reached for Christ. Being the least church-ed generations, they are not looking to The Church for discussion and least likely to attend church," they are all programmed out. The initial task is to recognize and speak to this paradigm shift defining The Church's mission. "In this age, The Church is missional, or it is not The Church." Cross-generational ministries open paths for understanding and knowing theology. J. Deotris Roberts describes The Church as "the organ of the Spirit and the extension of the incarnation." As this extension, the Urban Black Church should flourish within an environment of people who are connected, addressing concerns in a controlled setting, allowing questions and ideas that are directly related to The Church's specific vision and goals.

There is an analogy in the black community of the crabs in a barrel. It is generally referred to when a discussion arises about unity in the black community. The unfortunate focus is that Black folk are holding other black folks down. In an interview, the subject came up, and the interviewee asked the question, "Why are the crabs in the barrel?" They continued saying that, "barrels are not the natural habitat for crabs; therefore, someone or something intentionally put the crab in the barrel." This profound realization gave thought to the idea that maybe the crab at the bottom of the barrel is not trying to hold the other crab back but maybe trying to protect the crab from whatever it was that placed them in

the barrel. The barrel's top could be seen as a dangerous place; the barrel's bottom has the possibility of survival. The new challenge would include all the crabs working together to understand the barrel phenomenon and create a solution to their dilemma. Crabs in a barrel are cross-generational.

## **CHAPTER 2: "BROTHER, HELP ME, PLEASE."**

### ***Introduction***

The Church is its members in the context of revival expressing the *Imago Dei* (God's image). Revival meaning that the people are bringing to life God in transformative ways. The Apostle Paul has charged every person in the Church to “live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” (Ephesians 4:1) Personal renovation is a revival from the inside out.

The Church members in context include people from every generation, from broad social, cultural, and institutional influences, while ministering in the urban community. One essential fact about ministry is never to do it alone. Ministry requires the called to seek help, support, love, experience, and expertise from others. It also requires knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the team. In cross-generational ministries, the challenge is understanding each generation's dynamics, the broad influences they have encountered, and how these dynamics are perceived in urban communities.

### ***Meet America's Generations***

Today six living generational cohorts are existing in America. There are various titles given for each group, but the list below provides a basic description. From oldest to

youngest, the generation years and titles are:

- 1900 to 1924: G.I. Generation
- 1925 to 1945: Silent Generation
- 1946 to 1964: Baby Boomers
- 1965 to 1979: Thirteeners or Generation X
- 1980 to 2000: Millennials or Generation Y
- 2000 to present Post Millennials/Generation Z/Centennials

This chapter will primarily focus on Baby Boomers, Millennials, and Post

Millennials or Centennials. Baby Boomers, one of the largest generations, who are living longer, are raising their grandchildren (Post-Millennials/Centennials), caring for their parents (G.I. and Silent Generation), and additionally, and their children (Millennials) due to the economic factors of caring for them when they have to move back home.

The Baby Boomer cohort grew up in the post-World War II era, 1946 – 1964, ages fifty-three to seventy-one by most distinctions. Boomers are people who had to postpone many things because of The Great Depression and World War II. They were "eager to start families and looked forward to having children because they were confident that the future would be one of comfort and prosperity." Additionally, during this time, many "Corporations grew larger and more profitable, labor unions promised generous wages and benefits to their members, and consumer goods were more plentiful and affordable than ever before. As a result, many Americans felt certain that they could give their families all the material things that they themselves had done without."

The Millennial cohort, born after Generation X, comprises Generation Y from the 1980s through the mid-2000s. There were 69.2 million Millennials (ages: 18-35 in 2016) that matched or equaled 69.7 million Baby Boomers. William Strauss and Neil Howe are credited for creating the name Millennials in 1987. They based their description "around

the time children born in 1982, are entering preschool, and the media identification of their prospective link to the new millennium as the high school graduating class of 2000 and wrote about it in their books *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069* (1991) and *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (2000). Many market research groups study generations to understand their thinking as consumers. The Millennials are considered as those born into the world of technology and social media from various sources. Another essential attribute of the Millennials is their racial and ethnic diversity in America.

“Data shows that millennials, unlike their parents' generation, are ushering in an age when minorities will lead the U.S. population. They do not desire to marry early; they are the most educated generation, as well as having a majority that remains undereducated. Millennials have entered the workforce amid a sluggish economy are underemployed, and despite those hard realities, they are optimistic about what their future holds.”

The final focus generation cohort is Post-Millennials. Post-Millennials or Centennials are born during the turn of the century from 1997 to the present. This generation has many names. A few other common descriptive names for this Post-Millennial cohort are Generation Z (Gen Z) or iGeneration. This generation is characterized as the generation that lives in a world of continuous updates; therefore, they can process information faster than other generations, thanks to apps like Snapchat, Vine, and Tiktok. This group's attention span might be significantly lower than Millennials. They have the tech-savvy to create documents on their school computer, do research on their phone or tablet, take notes on a notepad, and then finish in front of the T.V. with a laptop face-timing a friend. Gen Z's can quickly and efficiently shift between work and play, with multiple distractions going on in the background; they are more likely to go

straight into the workforce, opting out of the traditional route of higher education by finishing school online. “Gen Z’s are more entrepreneurial than Millennials. They were born into a world overrun with technology; therefore, what was taken as amazing and inspiring inventions, are now taken as a given for them. Gen Z is big on individuality, and they are more global.”

Interestingly, all three generations want the same thing to have a successful future. They differ in how to obtain it. Anne Streaty-Wimberly states, "When we celebrate together and care for one another, we are in hope-building vocation because, by our actions, we affirm and offer the promise of hope in a persons' life." Many elders in The Urban Black Church congregations have invested hope into the next generation's life. Building this hope was a crucial factor in their existence. This training provides socialization for black youth and spiritual, theological, and psychological praxis. Streaty-Wimberly discusses the rootedness of preserving the rich heritage that stems from teaching Black youth the truth about their history and provides holistic ministries "must be intentional within the Black Church." This pedagogical experience with cross-generational ministries is the catalyst for this investigation.

One very intriguing method used by former generations to teach, inspire, and create critical thinking is the use of colloquial and parables. Jesus utilized this technique throughout his ministry, for example, his encounters with the Women at the Well (John 4), The Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:17 – 27), and Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42). Like Jesus, the G.I. and Silent Generations' mentorship spoke in parables and short stories to stimulate perspectives and enhance critical thinking. Below are a few parables taught to this researcher, still circulating today:

- *"Remember, the cheese is always free on the mousetrap."*
- *"Don't burn your bridges going over. You may need them when you come back."*
- *"You are not held responsible for your heritage. But you are responsible for your future."*
- *"Don't let your mouth write a check that your butt cannot cash."*
- *"There's always room at the top."*
- *"As an individual, think so is he."*
- *"There is no right way to do the wrong thing."*
- *"You can't go anyplace if you don't know where you are going."*
- *"You go to success. It doesn't come to you."*
- *"A cackling rooster and a crowing hen never come to a good end."*
- *"If a task is once begun, never leave it till it's done. Be the labor great or small do it well or not at all."*
- *"Nothing hurts a duck but his bill."*
- *"Beauty is skin deep. Ugly is to the bone."*

Considering these wise saying and the desire for each generation to obtain success, it is fascinating that all ages have a devotion to technology. Even though "Baby Boomers grew up making phone calls and writing letters, solidifying strong interpersonal skills, they became fluent in technology and now use cell phones and tablets. The difference is how each generation uses technology as productivity tools instead of connectivity like the Millennial and Generation Z".

*"Those 60 and older – a group increasingly populated by aging Baby Boomers – now spend more than half of their daily leisure time, four hours and sixteen minutes, in front of screens, mostly watching T.V. or videos. Screen time has increased for those in their 60s, 70s, 80s, and beyond, and the rise is apparent across genders and education levels. Meanwhile, the time that these older adults spend on other recreational activities, such as reading or socializing, has trickled down slightly."*

For Streaty-Wimberly, "liberation, and vocation evolve collective awareness and demonstration of celebratory and caring kinship." When it comes to work and productivity, all the generations share a passion for a good work ethic. The Baby

Boomers "play by the rules, putting their work-life first, and living the true 'American Dream.' Generation X or Millennials focus more on work-life balance rather than following the straight-and-narrow path of Corporate America. Although little is known about Generation Z's work habits, we do know that they are smarter, safer, and more mature and want to change the world." Such is the purpose and impact of cross-generational ministries to create generations that are "free to be in vocational."

Finally, when it comes to family values, the generations differ. Baby Boomers are sandwiched between being caregivers for the G.I. and Silent Generations (their parents), Millennials (their children), and Post Millennials (their grandchildren). They are the first generation to experience this type of family dynamic. Post-Millennials are just beginning to enter the workforce. Their role in family values will develop from their experience living with Millennials. Nevertheless, "they are not Millennials on steroids; they have their own distinctive attitudes, values, and lifestyle."

Interestingly, Millennials are clearly "delaying marriage longer than any generation before them. Eighty-six percent are single or have never married. Additionally, almost half of the oldest millennials who have never married nonetheless have children. Although their different cultures' social norms create each generation's values, to ignore the strengths and endurances achieved when family members come together, pull their resources together, and support one another, should not be. The dynamics of Baby-Boomer's hard work, coupled with Millennial's love for family and iGenerations technology-savvy pulled together through the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, are unbeatable, un-moveable, unstoppable forces that will change the world.

***Social, Cultural, and Institutional Impactors***

Every generation is in a collision with separate social, cultural, and institutional entities. In The Urban Black Church, social, cultural, and institutional impactors are determinant factors that have to impact The Church's existence. The combination of differences between generations with the impactors will shine a light on their influence on The Urban Black Church. The first is social impactors, defined as public influences by an organization or a group, comparing Benjamin Valentin's *Mapping of Public Theology* with Jesse C. Middendorf, Megan M. Pardue, Greg Arthur, and Josh Broward's book *Edison Churches*. Secondly are cultural impactors, looking at the Church from the lens of racial equity, paralleling Michael Goheen's writings, *The Church and Its Vocation*, and Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile *Participating In God's Mission*. Third are institutional impactors, referencing Van Gelder and Zscheile. Although discussed separately, social, cultural, and institutional impactors are intertwined when viewed through the lens of cross-generational ministration.

### *Social Impactors*

In today's culture, a church that is not dismantling generational, cultural, racial, economic, and territorial barriers is a country club creating cliques, repeating redundant traditions, and perpetuating stereotypes - creating a church that is constipated. A constipated Christian institution/church has zero to minimal "movement," as described when struggling with the same body symptom. In order to find relief, a person is advised to make changes in consumption (intake), movement (output), and logic (outreach). That institution will find experience deliverance and liberation as it becomes inclusive (intake), compassionate (output), and communal (outreach).

Valentin states the importance of the "theologians to be attentive not only to the

need of ‘local’ theologies but also to the possibilities of ‘public’ theologies that can engage the broader context [cross-generations] of social and political life, and that may revitalize a populist sentiment and coalitional energy in our society.” The *Edison Churches’s* book always challenges church leaders (pastors and laypeople) on ways to make their congregations impactful or compassionate in their context. In the *Edison Churches*, innovation comes through failure, and “in this era of immense change, we in The Church need to get over our failure complex and begin to experiment more freely.” If The Urban Black Church desires to make an impact, they must know that it can only occur by being risk-takers and assessors. The six blunt questions asked by the leaders at Portland First Church are:

- What does the Church need to look like to reach others?
- What is the Church really?
- What are The Church essentials?
- What is nonessential?
- What can stay the same?
- What needs to drastically change?

“The default direction of a church is always to grow inward, to take care of your own people, to raise your children, and to look inside your doors. Inertia moves inward,” doing nothing and remaining unchanged. It is easy to create a ministry for those inside the Church, but it is not joyful. L. Gregory Jones, in *Christian Social Innovation*, explains that the Apostle Paul’s joy is complete “by avoiding ‘selfish ambition and vain conceit,’ choosing instead to “consider others as your superiors.”

Chapter thirteen of the *Edison Churches* outlines practical steps a church must consider as a transitory impactor of innovation called "The Dark Side of Innovation." The Dark Side constitutes ethos not of the kingdom of God, but of by any means necessary

and uses people as a means to an end.” To prevent being overwhelmed by darkness, church leaders must intentionally execute these eight steps:

- employ self-care,
- learn to embrace limitations,
- realize it takes time to cultivate a mission,
- do not become impatient,
- watch out for moral failure,
- keep an eye open for imbalance,
- be careful with utilitarianism, and
- do not sacrifice the family on the altar of immediate impact or growth and be courageous.

### *Cultural Impactors*

In some shape or fashion in the past, many of America's majority churches have explicitly rejected African Americans, Native Americans, and Latinx Americans. Admission of racist practices in the American majority church challenges the Church's responsibility to all who have been and are being oppressed and ignored by the Church today. At this very moment, reparations for African Americans and the effect of systemic racism has become a serious debate. American history has many examples of racial injustice against every minority group that came to this country. The truth is that much of this racism is the result of an incorrect biblical ecclesial stance in American culture. Here are four questions for the American Church to consider as The Church relates to racial equity.

1. Is ecclesiology in the American Church willing to address these issues of systemic racism?
2. What risks are the American Church and Christian institutions willing to take in the name of compassion/missions, to provide impactful opportunities for their congregants to wrestle with these questions?
3. If an ecclesial institution is unwilling or afraid to recognize these problems and search for truth and deliverance, how will that affect its compassion/missions?
4. To what extent are we stewarding the power of the gospel, and to what extent

are we relying on the power and privileges that U.S. culture provides us in order to engage in missions?

Van Gelder and Zscheile probe the issue of how the Church “sees its context, understand their context, and grow and live out who the Church is.”

### *Institutional Impactors*

Another challenge of the American Christian institutions is, “What does it mean to be The Church?” Many American churches and institutions suffer from an “identity crisis,” which unfortunately prevents them from exercising their true faith in God and understanding their role. As The Churches and Christian institutions of America address the crisis of the “great unraveling,” described Van Gelder and Zscheile as an era of rapid and unsettling change,” the vocation of mission translates into relationship building. The American church struggles in this critical theological area. Instead of developing relationships, many Black Churches resort to power and authority positions, described using the terms related to a consumer fashion of seeing our neighbors as “niche marketing.” This idea of power and authority brings to light “important outcomes,” as stated in Antonio Settle's book, “*Power Moves*.” When the focus is on “the mission of The Church, all groups will stay in step with each other.”

Social, cultural, and institutional impactors require the Church to dig deeper into the innovative abilities and beyond historical practices and traditions. Yes, the Church has built “faith-based hospitals and hospices, colleges and universities founded by Christians, organizations such as Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, and World Vision.” However, many of these organizations did not service or stand against racial injustice, poverty of segregation, freedom for civil rights, and gender preference.

### ***How Each Generation Views The Urban Black Church?***

Considering how each generation views the urban community, the investigator interviewed eight African American Kansas Citians who live or serve in the Eastside community. This section compares and contrasts these residents' and workers' opinions on their view of the Black Church's impact.

Overall, all eight interviewees recognize that the Black Church is a vital institution in Black residents' lives in the urban community. For a social worker at a neighborhood ministry and an entrepreneur, each believes The Urban Black Church's presence is significant. However, they agree that the Black Church can still do a better job. As members of the Baby-Boomer generation, the social worker and entrepreneur suggest more involvement with the community and using appropriate methods conveying and helping people connect to the message in their everyday lives.

The social worker believes that churches that are not involved in the community during the week are purposeless. When growing up, the Church was "everything" to the community. The social worker is afraid that "young people are falling away from The Church because they can watch church on T.V., and they have gotten away from the fellowship." (This comment was made before the pandemic.) On questioning the social worker concerning young people, the writer asked, "Is there something The Black Church is not doing to make The Church irrelevant to the younger generations?" Although the social worker did not directly answer the question, a concession agreed that The Black Church should think about its relevancy to the next generation and how it influences them. The writer suggests that the Church consider using the "Affinity Group" approach found in Douglas Powe, Jr., and Jasmine Smothers – Ross book, "*Not Safe For*

*Church.*"Affinity groups are intended to be community-based, open, and always invitational." Implementing an Affinity Group during this world pandemic of coronavirus occurring among churches would be an enormous opportunity to develop and create ways to connect under the federal social distancing ordinances. The online website "Church Marketing Sucks" lists varied approaches churches can initiate. Such as "Watch Parties," watching live sermons on Facebook, and more. The article continues to advise that "one of the challenges that churches will face with their groups is to make them relevant and useful community building/discipleship groups." Recently in a Pew Research poll from March 28 to April 1, 2020, "calculates that about four in ten who reported attending church last year fit the profile of now attending less often in person and watching online or on T.V. as a replacement."

However, to these younger interviewees, it seems that the Church's influence has become less significant over the years. The young minister, a teenager (Gen Z) of a local Black Church in Central K.C., views The Urban Black Church's presence and role in the community as "currently degrading." The young minister, the outreach (Millennial) manager for one of K.C.'s anti-violence organizations, and transgender friends (Millennial), somewhat agree. The young minister says explicitly, "Churches preach about mission and evangelism but do not have ministries to back them up." A transgender friend gave the Black Church an "F for failure to communicate" with people from the LGBTQ community. This transgender friend would like the Black Church to be more open and not look at the outside but see the inside of people's hearts; "instead of building barriers, The Black Church needs to build bridges." The manager as well would like the Black Church to open an opportunity for healing in the LGBTQ community.

Unfortunately, the manager realizes that Black folk have unresolved systemic trauma and pain (discussed in Chapter One). “Black people are so overwhelmed within this toxic society that getting to the LGBTQ community is not a priority.” However, this nonprofit corporation manager is committed to providing domestic violence, sexual assault, and hate crimes advocacy and education to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities, hopeful that one day it will.

Nevertheless, the young minister sees leaders in the Black Church wanting to have Megachurches but not wanting to do the Mega ministries. The young minister advises The Black Church to take time to assess their ministries. "If Jesus had been in a closed box," the young minister says, "the woman would not have been able to touch his garment. Jesus never healed, taught, or preached in a confined place. Jesus came out to the people. The Black Church wants to get people inside their doors but does not want to come out and support what young people are doing, reaching every generation." The young minister is a student at one of the KCPS Charter Schools. One of his final statements is that "The Black Church must spend as much money on missions as it does on the pastor's salary."

The connections between the ideologies of the young minister, transgender friend, and manager were enlightening for this writer. These three young individuals' under the age of thirty, views of The Urban Black Church's presence and the role and about the LGBTQ community had expected and unexpected responses. Although they shared that the Black Church does not have a favorable relationship with this marginalized group, they recognize the Black Church's value in the community and the longing of many Black LGBTQ's to be a part of the Church.

The final three interviewees were with KCPD Officer (Baby-Boomer), one of the City Council Members (Millennial), and a local educator (Millennial). Their views of The Urban Black Church's presence and role support the writings of Black Liberation Theology. Each believes that leaders in the Black Church must lead the charge for the Black people because the Black Church has the answer of hope in Jesus Christ for Black people who "are the oppressed and alienated of American society." The Councilmember comments that "the moral and ethical compass that The Black Church contributes makes it still the center of hope where African Americans can go and have peace, from being beaten down throughout the week." The local educator was emphatic about the Black Church's historical impact, also referenced by Carter G. Woodson earlier, stating how "at one time in history, it was the only resource available to African Americans." "This is where The Black Church and Black Churchmen must stand to be representative of Jesus Christ and His teachings," a statement in the *Black Theology A Documentary History, 1966 – 1979*, by Gayraud S. Wilmore and James H. Cone.

The KCPD Officer stated that the KCPD administration pushes the relationship between KCPD and the Church. The officer describes the Black Church as "a pillar in the community, the place to go when all else fails, the strength of the city, a significant voice and foundation of the community, a place of help, salvation, uplifting, and soul care." As a youth growing up in The Urban Black Church in Kansas City, the officer admits that The Black Church is critical to the Black Urban community's well-being.

The council member says The Church is the best kept physical asset in the Third District (which includes zip codes on the Eastside of KC) because there is no blight around the Church, and that adds to the value and vibrancy of the community. Most of the

interviewees described various contributions from the urban Church to the city. They listed community support through food pantries, clothing pantries, youth development programs, nutritional programs, backpack giveaways, health fairs, and free hair cuts as resources provided by many Urban Black Churches. The council member wants to challenge The Black Church to think outside the box.

In reporting the views of these eight insightful members of the Eastside community, what was most impressive was the level of hope each expressed. Each person concluded with a remark similar to these final words of council members and local educators concerning The Black Church. The Black Church, although “underutilized in the community,” “must look for new, innovative, and creative ways to breathe life into The Church to make it useful, functional, and engaging in the community, continuing to be the prophetic voice,” especially in these times of new standard in the Black communities and neighborhoods.

### ***How Would Cross-Generational Ministries Enhance the Urban Black Church?***

The epistemological praxis of cross-generational ministration stems from ministries that allow families to develop and create endless disciplining opportunities and leadership in their homes, empowering families and making a more profound impact on children and youth benefactions. What is uniquely being enhanced is ministry becoming a way of life for the family. Historically, the concerns as people of color in America have focused on survival and oppression. The Church must increase opportunities for people from all generations to learn each other's strengths, weaknesses, hopes, fears, skills, and insights.

Anne E. Streaty-Wimberly and Evelyn L. Parker express an idea, "narrative of a

leap of faith." This narrative is the story of faith coming alive or what is called in the Black Church "testifying," which gives hope to a stanza that comes from the gospel song by Rev. James Cleveland entitled, *"I don't believe He brought me this far to leave me"* mentality. Streaty-Wimberly and Parker share the hope of the living words of each generation, calling it "wisdom formation." It is "an unfolding narrative and participatory 'reasoning' that centers on our waiting, though we are suffering, we make a narrative leap of faith that compels us to say, 'Nevertheless, I will trust God'; or as Job said, 'I know that my Redeemer lives.' (Job 29:25a.)"

### ***What Have Blacks Gotten From The Black Church?***

As a black person raised in The Black Church, the experience has been inspiring, liberating, and empowering. Growing up in the Black Church gave this investigator purpose, position, and self-esteem. When other children were trying to find their niche in the world, The Black Church was providing their young members the platform to express themselves, the opportunity to take risks, and the support needed to know that accomplishing anything was doable with hard work. James Cone says, "Revelation is a black event – it is what blacks are doing about their liberation." J. Deotris Roberts says, "It is the responsibility of Black theologians to remind Black families of the moral and spiritual resources inherent in the Black family tradition, without which we may not survive." The Black Church's survival in this "mean ole world" was part of the nurturing obtained in The Church.

Dr. Emmanuel Cleaver, III, stated, "The Black Church is the place and provision for black people." While Dr. Cleaver did not define what was meant by "a place and provision," the Black Church historically gave leadership and instructions to their

members to work together to pool their resources. Specifically, during Reconstruction, “the black congregation took over plantations and established economic communities all under the leadership of the Black pastor.”

The Black Church has a history of giving to, providing for, and moving the Black community forward. Today, people ask how the Black Church is a place and provision that impacts the everyday lives of Black folk to remain as a place and provision. J. Deotris Robert goes on to say, “If The Churches default on this legacy, it may mean their rapid decline. The Black Church must continue to seek both survival and liberation for black people in all areas of life.” Therefore, if The Black Church “defaults” on being a stable support system in the Black community, Black people do not have any other system in which to depend.

The concern here is how The Black Church will seek survival and liberation in today's context? Bonnie Miller-McLemore's paper on *Practical Theology and Pedagogy* identifies similar questions that reflect the experience of the Black Church. Miller-McLemore asks several critical questions: “How are practice and theology subtly intertwined and powerfully redefined in the practical theological classroom? How are distinctions between theological fields and between classroom and congregation both appreciated and transgressed?” These questions help get to the core of practical impact in the Black Church because they focus on what is learned about The Black Church in seminaries other religious institutions across the nation.

For example, in their book “*The Black Church in the African American Experience*,” Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya describe the economic impact of the Church of God In Christ denomination on the establishment of the Black middle class.

In the mid-1950s, with eight hundred churches, Bishop Charles Harrison Mason, Sr. and COGIC applied for membership in the National Council of Churches, and they were immediately rejected because they were regarded as a cult. Fifteen years later, they returned with eight thousand churches, and the National Council was willing to accept COGIC as a full-fledged black denomination. As the fastest growing black denomination, in 1979, COGIC listed ten thousand churches and ten thousand clergies in their first published International Directory. Furthermore, its members have been gradually moving into middle-income status as members of the black middle and working classes.

In the 1960s, youth attended an all-family worship atmosphere without Children's or Youth Church. When the family came to worship, the children sat with their mother, father, grandmother, or granddad. Both adults and children sang the same hymns. Children learned to praise God, watching the adults get into the spirit of worship. From personal experience, when the family came home from Church, the discussion included what happened during worship, why the sister fainted, the words the preacher said, and the ways of worship. Going to Church was more than an obedience to scripture; "forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrew 10:25). It was a relief, rest, and even recreational. In the family, this was personal transformative living worship.

Cross-generational ministries would aid in tackling questions on the influence of The Black Church past and present. Holly Catterton-Allen brings us to understand that "When the whole community learns the same thing at the same time, it strengthens the sacred nature of the whole community." Instituting a structure similar to all-in-worship is cross-generational. Calvin Butts, pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, differentiation between "old-time black religion" and "new black religion." Old-time black religion was concerned with survival and preparing people for future life. The new

black religion is holistic. “It does not give up the celebration aspects of Black religion, and it is concerned with all aspects of life.”

This investigator agrees with Catterton-Allen that, “In the intergenerational environment, there is comprehensive mutuality, equality, and reciprocity that makes the individual or collective transformation more likely.” The communal stability The Black Church has given to Black people from the past must be replicated today for the Church to continue to be a “place and provision” in the lives of Black folk in Kansas City.

If Crabs in the Barrel story, as referenced in chapter one of this document, using the communication skills of Catterton-Allen, what difference would have been possible in the crab's predicament, hypothetically speaking? For example, the crab at the bottom could ask the crab at the top, “Why are you trying to get out?” What would they both learn? Alternatively, the crab at the top should ask the crab at the bottom, “Why won't you climb out with me?” What would they discover? They would discover history, insight, hope, and community. They would learn together and develop solutions. They might not always agree, but progress, transformation, renovation, and restoration would become evident. Crabs in a barrel using Catterton-Allen's cross-generational exercises would be an example of generational collaboration.

### **CHAPTER 3: “I THINK I'M ABLE TO CARRY ON!”**

#### ***What Does the Black Church Know about Black Theology?***

Henry Mitchell's book, “*Black Church Beginning*,” is a challenge for the Black Church's spiritual, social, and communal legacy.

The challenge is for African American believers to reclaim and refine the spirit and the powerful commitment that uplifted so many illiterate ex-slaves, built schools for them, briefly shaped government for them and encouraged the newly freed as they launched out into the deep of private enterprise. It appears beyond question that this is our providential place in history, the role for which we were divinely chosen, and from which we dare not default.

Expressing a providential and divine calling for The Black Church to continue to transform and renovate African Americans' lives is the platform for this chapter to carry on the legacies built in the past. The best process and place to begin rebuilding is knowing Black Church history.

From the terms, place, and provisions described by Cleaver and Roberts discussed in chapter two of this document, the Black Church has three foci. The first is the history of Black Church Theology, its inception, and enlightenment for the urban community. Next is The State of Black Church Form held in Kansas City, specifically the violence in the Urban Black Church community. The third topic is Black youth's place and provision of The Urban Church position. Completing the discussion is the theology for Cross-generation ministries and how effective it could be for The Urban Black Church.



Hence, this chapter will acknowledge the impact of the place and provision of The Black Church, historically first looking at the birth of The Black Church in America and the history of The Black Church in Kansas City, MO. The NAACP calls Carter G. Woodson "The Father of Black History." In the online article, The NAACP History of Carter G. Woodson, the NAACP confirms the impact of historical place and provision in a statement from Dr. Woodson that says, "the object of historical study is to arrive at a reasonable interpretation of the facts. History is more than the political and military records of peoples and nations. It must include some description of the social conditions of the period being studied."

***The History of Black Liberation Theology***

Just as critical as it is for a believer to know their theology, The Black Church needs to know her religious history in America. In James Cone's book, "*The Cross and the Lynching Tree*," he describes the violent environment that gave birth to black theology and faith. Cone states that "It was risky for blacks to assert their humanity overtly during those times."

Reading James Cone, Raphael Warnock, Emmett Price, and Anne R. Streaty-Wimberly's books extend the discovery of the answers to the questions concerning: Why did black people go to church? What need did The Black Church provide for African Americans in racist America? How did racism affect the attitude of each generation? What was learned and ignored as society changed?

James Cones aids The Black Church in recognizing that "the task of black theology, is to analyze the nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the light of oppressed blacks so they will see the gospel as inseparable from their humiliated condition, and as bestowing on them the necessary power to break the chains of oppression." This view of Black theology explains the value of The Black Church for oppressed people. Providing Black people with the sanctified ability to see that oppression, trauma, and racism in America results from a fallen world and not because there is something inferior with people of color. Not only are people of color valued by God, but according to Cone, "God is black," and their suffering, like 'Jesus' suffering, is not in vain. "The blackness of God and everything implied by it in a racist society is the heart of the black theology doctrine of God."

Once knowledge of historical roots is perceived, better prepared are those with the knowledge to map out future goals and see where to go both spiritually and historically.

"The independent Black Church movement of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is the distinct turning points in the development of the African American religious resistance to racism before the emergence of black theology." The history of The Black Church branches out from the development of black liberation theology because, as James Cone expresses that, "Christian theology must become black theology, a theology that is unreservedly identified with the goals of the oppressed and seeks to interpret the divine character of their struggle for liberation."

Emmett G. Price makes a provocative statement that "The Black Church is the only space that can play a key role in reversing the detonation clock on the self-imploding dreams of ALL generations. No other institution, with all its faults, challenges, and failures, can issue the challenge to all generations and receive a response." Price's writings address the need for The Black Church in racist American. Price reveals the Black Church's power to unite all generations regardless of how racism has affected and infected dynamics within each cultural generation from the Civil Rights Movement to the present. Additionally, Price provides four lessons the Black Church must implement and confront as The Church rallies all generations — first, the pathology that the black community must rely on and express loyalty to one charismatic leader at a time. Second, to do continuous self-reflection, self-assessments, and self-correction. Third, to debrief with youth the impact, afflictions, and decisions made in the war against racism. No longer should adults say to black youth, "This is grown folk business." Finally, to plan and prepare for the victory. "What happens to a dream deferred? It waits for action!"

### ***Kansas City's State of Black Church Forum***

Interestingly, the Black Church in America is birthed out of a cultural context of

the violence of racism (slavery), and yet it is the only viable solution to the violence that is systemic and perpetual in the Black community. "The slave was removed from the protection of organized society. Both sacred and secular institutions disregarded the humanity of the slave. Religion for Blacks could not be practiced without the permission of the master." J. Deotris Roberts showed how the Black slave in America had no safe place. No balm in Gilead for healing or peace. Nevertheless, in the souls of Black people dwelled a connection to God. God carved a place in their heart, and that place and provision still speak peace amid anger and rage, transforming every life it touches.

As a people group, African Americans during slavery were stripped of every known human right, and they still retained their sense of community. "West Africans had a highly complex civilization. Their family life pattern was closely knit, well organized, highly articulate with kin and community 'patrilineal and matrilineal' and highly functional for the people's economic, social, and psychological lives." This African lifestyle, called Ubuntu, puts man at the center of things – the difference being that 'man' can only be identified with other human beings in the context of Ubuntu. Expressions such as *Ha se motho* (He is no human being) do not mean he is dead, but he has lost his Ubuntu or humanity. Ubuntu can be lost completely – through one's anti-community behavior." The investigator believes that violence in the Black community is the result of an "anti-community behavior" embedded in the African Americans since slavery.

In the urban community, violence appears to be so pervasive that one of the panelists during the State of the Black Church Forum commented that The Church must "look at methodologies to reach an angry generation." A local leader created a movement against violence with a biblically-based program to reach the angry young generation.

This movement has decided to "Do more than talk about angry kids. They have created ways to address society's senseless violence problem." Their primary objective is that they "refuse to just 'accept' violence as familiar and routine. They help homes, schools, churches, families, marriages, and caring corporate companies confront violence at the core! Their wisdom and insights about violence are rooted in Genesis 4."

Understanding the root cause of a problem like violence in The Urban Black Community is the solution. In discussion with this movement leader, the perspective root cause of violence in the urban neighborhoods, this leader begins within the book of Genesis. The first murder in scripture is told in Genesis 4. Why did Cain kill his brother Abel? What pushed him so far over the edge that killing his brother was Cain's only solution to the problem." They continue to explain:

We must all ask ourselves when we experience, read, and hear about violence in our community. Analyzing the "root" of violence is the best method for stopping it and changing someone's mind and heart. When we don't manage our hurt, we hurt others just like Cain; therefore, mismanaged hurt and pain are the origins of all violence. This pain leads to poor decisions, and these decisions affect the home environment and society as a whole. Science catches up with the Bible. The story of Cain and Abel slips under the radar of our perception, and many people just do not see what is happening between the two siblings.

The State of the Black Church Forum's panel's comments closely aligns with the local movement's purpose against violence written above. The panels' references to The Church's ability to help the Black community find a balance between desire and anger because of gross society inequities is a key component for The Black Church to provide leadership and guidance in response to an attitude of anti-community. The local movement against violence supports a cross-generational ministry format that targets groups with people as young as three years old through senior citizens. In the interview,

the leader of the movement against violence described how using biblical stories without Scripture, such as "Treat people the way you want to be treated." They seek organizations with a wide range of access to broad age groups in The Urban Black Church. The leader said, "when you share real stories about real people in real experiences of real violence, it makes your message credible." This local movement against violence developed a creative and innovative way to help the next generation search for solutions to the violence within them, giving them an outlet for their emotions and a process for healing. Connecting The Churches with this specific local movement against violence is one practical theological solution to address violence in the urban community.

### ***Black Youth Place and Provision***

Finally, the State of the Black Church Forum focuses on the Black youth. When addressing the next generation's issues, it opens a plethora of concerns like activities, jobs, parenting, policies, education, morality, and even theology to transform the next generation's lives, and now the COVID-19 pandemic.

A preliminary question to answer is, where are the Black kids in the Black Church? Many Urban Black Churches struggle to maintain active youth programs. The church has seen a significant decline in youth participation in its programs, factored by many variables.

If there is declining enrollment in public schools around The Church, then there is a limited number of children and youth in the Black community. If the number of youth are few in the Black neighborhoods, where are all the children and youth going to school? Who is attending The Black Church? Why are young Black families not living in The Church community? Has The Black Urban Church considered what effect this has on

how The Church will minister to young families that do not live near The Church?

Powe and Smothers call this attitude "*How I Roll*," which seeks to understand why the next generation does not worship with the previous generation. Another challenge by Powe and Smothers is that The Church must address and overcome the "youth or next-generation getting on our nerves" syndrome. Powe and Smothers offer five ways to address this challenge. "First, allow young people to be The Church right now. Second, teach the youth their Christian legacy. Third, recognize that today's youth are not being "brought up" in The Church. Fourth, give youth a voice in The Church. Finally, determine an agenda for what the youth need to know."

Combining the panelists' suggestions with Powe and Smothers's four "Breaking the Rules" list creates practical next steps that The Black Church can use to process the dilemma surrounding ministry for youth today. The four Breaking the Rules are:

- New disciples just don't walk through The Church's front doors on Sunday mornings.
- The focus of the congregation must move beyond membership to discipleship.
- Some people will never become "members" of a congregation. Nevertheless, they will grow into contagious and committed disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Moving The Church's focus from information overload to transformational engagement allows new people to find their place in the congregation.

In "UnChristian," David Kinnaman presents reminders that "Christianity's image problem is not merely the perception of young outsiders. The church must grasp the idea that young people in The Black Church are also feeling the heat of these negative perceptions." One negative perception maybe not recognizing the struggle many members face to get to church on Sundays and during the week. Some of these struggles are

bumper to bumper traffic, feeding the family before or after attending a church ministry, cost of gasoline to get to and from church ministries, the fact that they are passing churches to come to an Urban Black Church, after school programs, sports programs, and wear and tear on their mode of transportation. If The Black Church neglects to address these struggles, The Church "defaults on her legacy" and the survival and liberation of Black people living near and far from The Church.

### ***Theology of Cross-Generational Ministries***

In conclusion, there are four core points of cross-generational ministries in The Black Church. The first is the family. When ministering to the family, one should significantly impact their congregants and the Black community. The family is a cooperative environment. It is the first ordained institution of God where He walked with them and talked with them; Genesis 3:9 "that evening they (Adam and Eve) heard the Lord God walking in the garden, and they hid from him among the trees." Here is shown how God executes relationship and worship to man and woman, and the first church - the family. God was with Adam and Eve. The first church with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:9) exemplifies the New Testament promise of Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." This relationship established Adam and Eve as the first congregation and initiated the family's religious institution as the place "where God dwelled."

The second is on ministries in the Black Church. Cross-generational ministries propose immense impact and will alter the way ministry is done. The Church will no longer be a building or a place but a movement that is changing the very fabric of society as in the book of Acts 2:48, "Praising God and having favor with all the people. And the

Lord added to The Church daily such as should be saved." The Church then was not trying to increase their attendance. Their attendance was increasing through their communal activities of sharing, worshipping, and living in harmony. The Acts Church created a culture that was appealing to everyone. Believing in The Black Church's power and supported by Emmett Price's writing only confirms that The Black Church is the "only institution" with the capability to jolt and electrify all ages.

The third is that The Black Church can no longer view the predicaments and struggles surrounding African Americans with the mentality that "they ought to know better," knowing that African Americans' lives and mindset are afflicted with the "legacy of trauma" systemically and epigenetically. Cross-generational ministries, intentionally designed to address and provide healing in response to these injustices, will create an environment to make Black people more robust, better, and united, working together hand in hand cross-generationally, looking forward, and reaching back simultaneously.

The fourth and final point would integrate a foundation of hope. Hope is what has kept Black people fighting for justice and fairness, and hope will continue to invigorate Black people to "keep on keeping on." James Cone says,

The cross is paradoxical because it inverts the world's value system with the views that hope comes by way of defeat, that suffering and death do not have the last word, that the last shall be first and the first last. African Americans maintained the same great challenge of how life could be made meaningful in the face of death, how hope could remain alive in the world of Jim Crow segregation.

Hope is part of the triune of completeness found in 1 Corinthians 13:13: faith, hope, and love. The "viable future" for Black youth is none other than providing hope for the next generation. Who but The Black Church can better articulate hope; who, but The Black Church can develop, implement, and carry out a legacy of hope countering the

"legacy of trauma;" and who, but The Black Church is better situated and suited to assist African Americans of every generation?

## **CHAPTER 4: "IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME COMING"**

### ***Introduction***

To be an Urban Black Church that ministers cross-generationally means recognizing the place and provision of Black Church History and executing a practical Black Theology. Mary Clark Moschella reveals that "the secular and sacred, like the intellect and the spirit, and like theology and practice, dwell in us together." The Urban Black Church's future should correlate Black Church history, Black theology, and the Cross-Generational engagement to create a transformative communal awareness.

Pastor Antoine Lee, in a sermon to The Concerned Clergy, presented this challenge. "The Church has been stripped of her respect and dignity. The Church has been infiltrated and raided by the false prophets, slothful members, and self-promoting ministries. The Church has lost respect in the community, and an unbelieving generation challenges the gospel message." To bring healing under this condition, he advises pastors and church leaders to intentionally:

- Pursue - It is our job to prevent crime (with the power of reverent fear of the Lord). This pursuit is our value to society.
- Overtake - Overtake that family by becoming their real pastor. Accept the fact that there are several people in your church that you do not pastor. You share them with other pastors.
- Recover All - Recover the Voice of the Lord. We are God's Hands. We are God's Feet. We are God's Voice:
  - God's Voice is intelligent

- God's Voice is powerful
- God's Voice is persuasive
- God's Voice is demanding
- God's Voice is everlasting (*it does not get stale, boring, uninteresting, dull, irrelevant, and does not take the second chair to anyone*).
- Recover the Voice.

The merging of Black Church history, Black Theology, and Cross-Generational engagement is the theory supporting the research in this chapter. Twenty-four participants were surveyed and given a Pre-Test supplemented by viewing a video "What Is The Black Church" and a PowerPoint presentation. Next, the group took a Post-Test, concluded with an interview and the evaluation.

### ***Demographics of the Participants.***

There are four generations represented in the Focus Group. The goal of the writer is to obtain the perspectives of the selected question from the three generations focused in this research Baby Boomers (ages: fifty-five to seventy-five), Millennials (ages: twenty to forty), and Generation Z (ages: zero to twenty). Generation Z and Millennials were the two largest age groups of the Focus Group, with a combined percentage of 66.67% (19). For this research, these two groups, intentionally selected to have more participants for several reasons:

- Millennials are the most discussed generation,
- Both groups have experienced the most change in social dynamics,
- They are least likely to attend a traditional church,
- They are incredibly mobile,
- They have experienced critical economic challenges and
- Millennials most influence Generation Z; therefore, having their opinion was tantamount.

As noted in Chapter Two, under the subtopic, "Meet America's Generations." The

data for the age groups are: zero to fifteen 12.50% (three), sixteen to twenty-nine 25.00% (six), thirty to forty-five 29.17% (seven), forty-six to sixty 12.50% (three), sixty-one to seventy-five 16.67% (four), and over seventy-five 4.17% (one). The age group graphs and statistics can be viewed in Table 1, page 87.

Gender wise, the group was 70.83% (seventeen) female and 29.17% (seven) male. Women dominated the number of attendees in the African American Church; consequently, this was also an intentional design of the writer to model The Church. Observations of Gender and Ethnicity are located in Tables 2, page 88 and 3, page 89. The group was predominant, African American by 83.33% (twenty), with 12.50% two or more (three) ethnicities, and 4.17% (one) Other/Unknown.

Knowing where the participants reside in contrast to where they worship is essential for this research (Tables 4, pages 90 and 5, page 91 - Part One and Two). The participant's home zip code validates (Table 6, page 92) that a "large percentage of African Americans attend church not in their neighborhood and commute fifteen to twenty minutes one way to get to church." Living in Central City is the largest population of members 37.50% (nine), followed by 29.17% (seven) in Raytown, 12.50% (three) in South KC, 8.33% (two) in North KC, and 4.17% (one) in Liberty.

The focus group's marital status is available in Table 7, page 93. This group's marital status is 37.50% (nine) single, 33.33% (eight) married, 20.83% (five) divorced, 4.1% (one) widowed, and 4.1% (one) engaged.

The education of this group (Table 8, page 94) is 4.1% (one) has some high school, 33.33% (eight) have completed high school, 4.1% (one) trade school, 29.17% (seven) have Master's degrees, and 12.50% (three) prefer not to say.

The most provocative statics of this group is the location of the churches they attend. Table 9, page 95 shows that the participants live all over in greater KCMO, yet they predominately attend churches in the urban neighborhood zip codes (Eastside) with 58.33% (Central KC - fifteen) in 64128 and 64130, 12.50% (South KC - three) in 64132, 8.33% (Central KC - two) in 64109 and ending with 4.17% (Grandview - one) in 64030.

***Responses to the Survey Questions***

The group's first task was to take the survey, which included the demographics above and these additional nine questions. Below are the questions with the Focus Group responses.

- Does The Urban Black Church provide help for traumas of the Blacks' experience in America? (Table 10, page 96.)

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
Always	4.17%	1
Usually	12.50%	3
Sometimes	33.33%	8
Rarely	33.33%	8
Never	4.17%	1
Do not know	12.50%	2
	Answered	24

- Are you aware of the disparities and demographics on the Eastside of Kansas City? (Table 11, page 97.)

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
Yes	83.33%	20
No	16.67%	4
	Answered	24

- Is the history of The Black Church in Kansas City taught in The Church? (Table 12, page 98.)

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
Always	4.17%	1
Usually	12.50%	3
Sometimes	16.67%	4
Rarely	37.50%	9
Never	25.00%	6
Do not know	4.17%	1
	Answered	24

- Is Black Theology explained in The Urban Black Church? (Table 13, page 99.)

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
Always	0.00%	0
Usually	8.33%	2
Sometimes	8.33%	2
Rarely	37.50%	9
Never	33.33%	8
Do not know	12.50%	3
	Answered	24

- Does the Urban Black Church discuss why young people are moving away from urban communities? (Table 14, page 100.)

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
Always	0.00%	0
Usually	4.17%	1
Sometimes	8.33%	2
Rarely	37.50%	9
Never	45.83%	11
Do not know	4.17%	1
	Answered	24

- If given the opportunity, would you be interested in learning how your family could be more impactful in building unity spiritually, socially, and culturally? (Table 15, page 101.)

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
A great deal	54.17%	13
A lot	16.67%	4
A moderate amount	25.00%	6
A little	4.17%	1
None at all	0.00%	0
Do not know	0.00%	0
	Answered	24

- Should all youth or young adults have a voice in church policies and administration in The Black Church? (Table 16, page 102.)

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
Always	70.83%	17
Usually	12.50%	3
Sometimes	16.67%	4
Rarely	0.00%	0
Never	0.00%	0
Do not know	0.00%	0
	Answered	24

- Should pastors consult youth or young adults in The Black Church? (Table 17, page 103.)

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
A great deal	54.17%	13
A lot	37.50%	9
A moderate amount	8.33%	2
A little	0.00%	0
None at all	0.00%	0
Do not know	0.00%	0
	Answered	24

- What would bridge the gap in The Black Church between younger and older attendees? (Table 18, page 104.)

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
A Bible Study on generations.	58.33%	14
Generation sermon series.	58.33%	14
Mix generation Activities.	83.33%	20
Mix generation ministries.	75.00%	18
Mentoring programs.	79.17%	19
Teaching households how to do mission.	50.00%	12
	Answered	24

The survey results highlight three foci of this research: first, Black Church History's importance with regular discussions and presentations in The Church study. Second, Black Theology needs to consistently teach congregants to bridge the gap between generations and address African Americans' systemic trauma in this nation. Third, Cross-Generational Engagement to learn about each other's lives, recognize each other's values and establish best practices to engage Black youth in every facet of The Church. The results summarize that help through a traumatic experience is split between doing and rarely or never done, Black Church History is 62.50% rarely or never taught, Black Theology is 83.33% rarely or never explained, the lives of Black youth is 87.50%

rarely or never addressed, ways to be impactful spiritually, socially, and culturally are 70.84% desired. 83.33% of those in this group believe youth's voices should be heard on policy and administration issues. Consultation of the pastor with youth and young adults should occur a great deal or a lot 91.67% of the time. To further address these concerns, this Focus Group was interviewed to obtain ideas and suggestions to enhance these finds.

### ***Responses to the Interview Questions***

Interviewing the Focus Group provided insight into best practices toward implementing a Cross-Generational Ministry in an Urban Black Church, ways to empower the African American congregant, and ways to aid pastors and leaders with ideas from the perspective of the four generations.

The Focus Group interview consists of the eleven questions below. In collaboration with the three major themes on Black Church History, Black Theology, and Cross-Generational Engagement, the responses provided are only the **bold** questions below because of their direct correlation to the themes.

- What caught your attention most in the video featuring Dr. Joy DeGruy, on *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*?
- **What does change, trauma, and faith have in common?**
- How have these variables contributed to "Black Flight?" (*Why black people move out of the city.*)
- **What are the reasons some young people leave The Church?**
- **What would be an exciting topic for discussion on Black Church History?**
- **What would be an interesting topic(s) on Black Liberation Theology to discuss?**
- What topic(s) would you like to discuss with older/younger church members, and why?
- **How could the pastor provide youth and young adults opportunities to voice their ideas about church policy and administration?**
- Do you feel there is a generation gap in The Black Church? Why or Why not?

- **What topics could a pastor preach/teach to help bridge the generation gap?**
- **What could The Urban Black Church do to be faithful cross-generationally to both congregants who commute in and the urban community?**

*What do Change, Trauma, and Faith have in common? (Question Two)*

Chapter two of this document addresses the similarities between change, trauma, and faith. The members of the Focus Group agree with Walter Fluker’s description of the “narcoleptic church.” Both the Group and Fluker admit the best solution is creating an atmosphere where knowing the history should be as prevalent as understanding faith because they are intertwined. Fluker calls this tool of reflection “remembering, retelling, and reliving our stories, that parallels a correlated conceptual movement of memory (past), vision (future), and mission (present).” The commonality between change, trauma, and faith determine the impact on the lives of the Focus Group members.

Conceding to the realities of the disadvantages and disparities of the communities that surround The Urban Black Church, trauma is illuminated by the Focus Group comments below. Therefore, Black Church leaders must receive training and education on ways to get in touch with these realities to adequately minister to their congregants and community, effectively using the power of God’s Word as a priority as Anyabwile shared along with cultural analysis, also discussed in Chapter One of this document.

- #1 Often, people of faith put a band-aid over traumatic experiences caused by negative change.
- #2 Change, trauma, and faith affect how I behave, think, and feel about people.
- #3 Change, trauma, and faith are what we have experienced as African American Christians.
- #4 When you go through trauma, it changes you, and you rely on your faith.
- #5 Change and trauma can cause pressure. Faith is the hope that God has a plan for your life. You use the pressures of your life to bring out your abilities.
- #6 Change, trauma, and faith are adaptations to something different but not

- always positive. They all teach you something.
- #7 All three teach that you got to believe. You have to be real.
  - #8 Change can bring back things that happen to lead people back to church.
  - #9 Your faith urges you to push for change.
  - #10 All three have a component of fear.
  - #11 Trauma shows how your brain sees change and adapts; your faith gives you the strength to endure the trauma.
  - #12 All three are interconnected and first cousins. They are codependent.
  - #13 Trauma happens to your brain to not be controlled. You change your way of thinking through faith.
  - #14 They can all be questioned.
  - #15 They mold you and your lifestyle into who you are currently.
  - #16 With all three, you are facing the unknown.
  - #18 Change requires faith, the desire for change can cause trauma, and trauma can diminish one's faith.
  - #17 They are reactions after something has happened.
  - #19 They all reflect on hope, and hope is the only thing you can claim.
  - #20 Much work comes with each of them. Moreover, faith without works is dead.
  - #21 They are all based on your experiences. When you are questioning your faith, change, or trauma, you are experiencing something.

*What are the reasons some young people are leaving The Urban Black Church?  
(Question Four)*

Understanding Millennials' challenges would be what Jonathan Brooks calls “practicing presence, the essence of a long-term loving relationship with one another.” In Chapter one, two questions were asked that are pertinent to this question to the Focus Group. Those questions are, “Is The Black Church dying, and why are established congregations in decline?” They were questions discussed in the State of The Black Church Forum in 2019. The panelist in the forum are pastors in the Greater Kansas City, MO area. Their descriptions were grim. The writer was fascinated by the clergy’s response; therefore, to gain additional insight into the questions, the Focus Group members were asked why some young people leave The Church. Again, the responses are intriguing and provide a broad picture of not only what is happening from a biblical,

relational, and theological view from the panelist of pastors at the forum, but what is happening socially, emotionally, and psychologically in the pews.

- #1 Young people are not empowered.
- #2 Young people are not seeing the genuineness of walking by faith by elders.
- #3 Young people have many things that simulate them and grab their attention. It is hard for them to appreciate the Black Church tradition.
- #4 They do not feel their ideas are being incorporated into The Church.
- #5 They see the same things in The Church as on the street.
- #6 They are trying to figure things out for themselves. The Church is unrelatable.
- #7 Some people do not do Church. To change this, The Church must have open arms.
- #8 Because of trauma and change, they might not want to stay in the city anymore.
- #9 Theological coherence in The Black Church is not engaging with society in intellectual discussions of social issues.
- #10 They fear for their children, their environment, and themselves.
- #11 This is a rebellious stage in their life experience.
- #12 They do not want to deal with all the drama in The Church. The legacy of The Church is gone.
- #13 They were not raised to attend Church.
- #14 Young people in the urban community have nothing to do.
- #16 Youth are talked about, and no one helps them.
- #17 Youth are bored.
- #18 Many over and undertones of European effects, i.e., you do not question authority.
- #19 Judgement.
- #20 Church is not fun or engaging. Youth must be taught at home.
- #21 They have experienced trauma in the city.

Dr. Ruth Dennis of Meharry Medical School, in a study mentioned in Lincoln and Mamiya's book, agrees with the Focus Group by stating that "Even though we see daily evidence of the return of individuals to church, from our study, we see evidence of The Church...losing ground as it relates to Black male youth, adolescent, young adult, and adult."

*What would be an exciting topic for discussion on Black Church History? (Question Five)*

Among the Focus Group participants, 62.50% listed that Black Church History was rarely or never taught. That is more than half. Additionally, 83.33% expressed that Black Theology was rarely or never explained; therefore, asking the participants about these two topics was unavoidable. Henry H. Mitchell challenges The Black Church as he quotes W.E.B. DuBois, "As DuBois declared, the growth and strength of The Black Church in America stem from the fact that it is a cultural continuation of the 'sole surviving social institution of the African fatherland...'" What a great legacy there is in The Black Church. The remarkable prophecy of Henry Mitchell discussed in Chapter three says The Black Church has a "divine providence" to be the transformative agent in America is thrilling. What a powerful way to state the provision and place of The Black Church? What would happen if cross-generationally, those words became the mantra for The Urban Black Church? Couple Mitchell's words of encouragement with Carter G. Woodson's definition of Black History "as the social conditions of the period being studied," are examples of stimulating topics from the Focus Group that pastors and church leaders can use to begin the progress toward developing a study of Black Church History within their congregation.

- #1 The cultural pieces in the Bible. Most are about people that look like them. If people can accept that over 90% of biblical people are Black.
- #2 The power of the Preached Word in the Black Community. The power of the Word sung or preached in "churchy words."
- #3 What have our ancestors done to pave the way? How did The Black Church get started? The history and establishment of The Black Church in metropolitan cities. How and Why?
- #4 Why is it called The Black Church? Stop all this talk about The Black Church vs

The White Church?

- #5 What is Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome, and how does faith help us to survive?  
Do a Book Club.
- #6 What is Black Church History?
- #7 Has never been taught Black Church History.
- #8 How does the Bible relates to what is happening today? What were ways kids participated in the Black Church in the past?
- #9 How were early Black Churches formed? What is the history of Slavery and The Black Church? What was the original goal(s) and purpose of the Black Church to help Blacks move forward? Compare the past value of the Bible vs. today.
- #10 What effect did the Black Church had on slavery?
- #11 How did slaves get converted to Christian?
- #12 What is the history of Black Church music and the effects on The Black Church?
- #13 What is the evolution of The Black Church?
- #14 How does the Bible relate to Black Church History?
- #15 What is the foundation of The Black Church?
- #16 What is the origin of The Black Church?
- #17 How can we get generations together?
- #18 What effect did the Roman conquest have on the adoption of Christianity? What were the religious practices or teachings for people of color? What was the central role that the Black Church played in the community?
- #19 What is the origin of the Black Church from Africa? What could community service do to show Christian life at this time?
- #20 How did Denominations get started?
- #21 What is Black Church History?

*What would be an interesting topic(s) on Black Theology? (Question Six)*

On a webinar forum of ATS Seminaries titled, "Black Lives Matter: Where Do We Go From Here?" Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas of Union Seminary profoundly said, "It is the responsibility of the faith community to lead the way to the future." Considering Dr. Douglas' words prompted the question, "What would be an interesting topic(s) on Black Theology to discuss?" Many in the Focus Group were unaware of the understanding of Black Theology. James H. Harris writes an essay in the book *Black Theology A*

*Documentary History 1966 – 1979* that casts light into this taboo discussion in the Black Church by saying:

Black Churchgoers expect the preacher to have the knowledge and faith to assure them of God's power, not to question or doubt it. What these laypersons need to understand is that the process of faith development may sometimes be enhanced by searching the depths of the soul for a more comprehensive understanding of the nature and power of God. The pastor can challenge The Church to deal with the issues of injustice and oppression by using black theology as a method of teaching and preaching liberation. If every black preacher in cities, towns, and rural areas would begin to think of freedom in existential terms, then black liberation could be realized in a short time. The church is in need of a black practical theology whose function is to liberate it from the forces of social, political, and economic oppression.

Some of the participants struggled, as seen below, with the validity of Black Theology. James Cone explanation of its' value discussed in Chapter three of this document, "the task of Black Theology, is to analyze the nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the light of oppressed Blacks; so they will see the gospel as inseparable from their humiliated condition, and as bestowing on them the necessary power to break the chains of oppression;" is also depicted in the responses of other Focus Group members. The participants in the Focus Group had varying perspectives on this topic. Below are a few of their consideration and points of view on the subject of Black Theology:

- #1 The community was the first technology. People know their roles. How do we establish a strong relationship with the Black Community?
- #2 Why am I still letting White thoughts affect my Black Mind? My mind defines who God is.
- #3 What does Black Theology look like in Haiti, Jamaica, and Cuba? What does the oppression look like, and how did it manifest within the theologies of those countries?
- #4 What is Black Liberation Theology?
- #5 Learn about Black Theology.
- #6 What is Black Theology?

- #7 This is their first time hearing about Black Theology.
- #8 What were the doctrines of the first Black Church(es), and how did they develop them?
- #9 Read material written by Rev. Dr. William Barber. What denominations discuss Black Theology? Why do we need Black Liberation Theology?
- #11 Was Christianity used to oppress Black? Was Christianity created to make people aware of social justice? How can we become financially stable and initiate self-empowerment?
- #12 The examination of other religions gives a clear view of the freedom of our religion.
- #13 Why is it called Black Theology?
- #14 All African American topics should be a part of the general teaching.
- #15 What is Black Theology?
- #16 How would we use our history to better our future?
- #17 What is Black Theology?
- #18 Read material about Rev. Nate Turner. Read Ishakamusa Barashango Books.  
Teach biblical Story of the Messiah from Genesis to Revelations. The factual story of the Haitian Revolution (First African Nation Freed on their own). Read about The Messiah Concept.
- #19 The Perception of God from African and Slavery. The common core theme in all Black Church.
- #20 Learn about Black Theology.
- #21 Learn about Black Theology.

*What topics could pastors preach/teach to help bridge the Generation Gap? (Questions Eight, Nine, and Ten)*

It was unanimous among the Focus Group that a Generation gap of some degree exists in The Church. Ways of bridging that gap provided some fascinating suggestions for the pastor or church leaders. The combining of the generation gap and giving youth and young adults a voice are in this section because they provide leadership with ideas on approaching, educating, and involving the next generation. "Living in your own skin is not something that happens quickly. It takes what it takes," says Father Gregory Boyle in

his book *Tattoos On the Heart*. As the founder of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, CA, Boyle ministers to ex-offenders. Father Gregory helps his constituents recognize “the slow work of God is through being compassionate to friends, family, enemies, and their kids.” Like Boyle, the Focus Group emphasizes the need for compassion and authenticity among Black Church pastors and leaders to minister to the next generation. The Focus Group suggestions are:

- #1 Be open, educate, and be transparent.
- #2 Create a safe environment for discussion.
- #3 Organize opportunities to talk with youth and young adults regularly.
- #4 Put youth and young adults on the Pastor’s Board.
- #5 Create more leadership opportunities.
- #6 Break the gaps down by what goes with each generation.
- #7 Create small discussion groups.
- #8 Have a suggestion box with topics from each generation.
- #9 Value the views and opinions of each generation. Help different generations see where you are coming from.
- #10 Have small discussions in bits and pieces. Find what speaks to the youth through technology.
- #11 Create textile hands-on, building communication, and dialogue groups. Have frequent surveys. Create a Focus Group.
- #12 Create a mentorship program. Build trust between older and younger people. Connect generations with someone who has the pastor's ear. Pastors must come out of the pulpit. Pastors must work with the people. Pastors must be willing to get dirty with your people. Pastors must not ask members to do anything they will not do. Pastors must know their members.
- #13 Create a forum.
- #14 Put youth and young adults on committees.
- #15 Open up internship experiences for teens and young adults. Provide a little stipend.
- #16 Pastor needs to talk to the youth and have regular meetings with them.
- #17 Pastor must ask the young people their opinions.
- #18 Pastor should hold church meetings after bible studies so people can ask questions.
- #19 Create a youth council and talk to them.
- #20 Pastors should create a conversation with the youth and learn from them.

- #21 Use technology with surveys and round table meetings.
- Topics*
- #1 Prodigal Son Welcomed by his Dad  
Noah and his Sons
- #2 Take Off your Rose Colored Glasses and Put On Mine  
Walk A Mile in my Shoes
- #3 Relevant Bible stories  
The Ethiopian Eunuch  
Ananias and Sapphira
- #4 Black Church History  
Why We do (This or That) at Our Church  
Our Church Traditions
- #5 No suggestions
- #6 Budgeting In Your Daily Life
- #7 Do not know
- #8 Black Lives Matter Movement  
Oppression Against Black People
- #9 Biblical stories Where God Uses Messed-Up People for His Glory  
Messages that Uplift  
Messages "Out of the Box" For Today's Issues  
Framing the Black Lives Matter Movement with the Christian Movement  
If The Church Moved from its Location, Would it be Missed?
- #10 I Do not know right now
- #11 Building Relationships  
How Today's experience Ties Into the Bible  
Genesis: Leah and Rachel Family Dynamics  
Jealousy  
Rape in the family  
Family abuse  
How to handle Trauma? What Do We Do?
- #12 Come Out of the Pulpit  
Work with the People  
Build Relationships
- #13 Story of Nehemiah  
Everyone is Essential and Has a Role in The Church
- #14 How Parents Can Teach Their Children
- #15 How can The Church impact the World?  
The Sanctification of Marriage (series)  
False Teachers and Prophets  
Are the Lives of the Leaders Matching the Word?
- #16 How to Take the Bible to the Kids Life  
Real Bible Study on what is Going on Today
- #17 Speak about Things That Matter to All Generations
- #18 African History Past, Present, and Future (scripture comparison)  
Compare Harriet Tubman and the Bible  
How Real and Relevant Scripture Is In People's Life

- #19 Why Does The Church Need Everyone  
What Is Your Purpose In the Church
- #20 Fear: How does It Take Over Your Life, Alter Life, and Stop Progress  
A study for older members about accepting new regimens coming in  
Create Interactive Learning: No One Left Out
- #21 Blacks in America Past, Present, and Future  
Being Bi-racial in America

*What could The Urban Black Church do to be faithful (incarnate) Cross-generationally to congregants and community? (Question Eleven)*

John Wesley said, "I look upon all the world as my parish." This was Wesley's way of saying that the gospel never should be relegated to a particular church or confined to a building. It was a missional statement that affirmed Wesley's idea of The Church being a sent people. This statement is the nucleus of this paper. The Church being incarnate wherever it is embodied. Krin Van Tatenhove and Rob Mueller write in their book "*Neighborhood Church*," "If we want to enter into this Kingdom this new way of being in relationship with God and each other requires risk and radical realignment. To say 'Thy Kingdom Come' is a revolutionary confession of willingness." Therefore gaining insight from the Focus Group on ways to be incarnate was paramount.

- #1 Respect those in The Church through a celebration. Make people feel good and want to come to The Church. Give people a job/task. Make sure the mission is for the building of the Church.
- #2 Come out of the building with block parties extending out. Go out to where members live with door to door fellowship. Establishing small discussion groups in all communities.
- #3 Marry the congregant to the community. Use the resources of those living in the suburbs to help those back in the community.
- #4 Develop satellite churches for those in the suburbs.
- #5 Multiple services that catered to each generation, occasionally bringing them all together. Cross-generational discussion groups to create

- opportunities to share stories.
- #6 Develop more community events. Using technology, music, art (artist), food (free and for sale), and making it a learning experience..
- #7 Be conscious of people's schedules, time, and travel.
- #8 Annual community service tasks.
- #9 Know who is in/of the community. Help congregants and community to know each other.
- #12 Develop community centers that serve the community.
- #13 Use your building as a meeting place for community organizations.
- #14 Black History should be presented more often. We need to figure out how to include it in a more appropriate way.
- #15 Get serious about strategic pastoral care. Be faithful to God first. Ask the community how we can serve them through strategic outreach. Must teach and preach the 5-fold ministry:
- Apostle – establishes The Church and develops leaders,
  - Prophets – proclaim the truth of God's,
  - Evangelist – recount the life,
  - Pastors – wisdom, and
  - Teachers – Beacon of life.
- #16 Be true Christians with no judging.
- #17 More community activities like Vacation Bible School.
- #18 Teach the Black truth to help us realize the universality of our struggle. Teach that we are no different regardless of our economic means.
- #19 Prove you can have fun and be Christ-like. Talk about real issues and problems people are facing. After Church, have Sunday meals and commune with each other.
- #20 Make travel easier for commuters. Be open more than Sundays and Wednesdays. Provide tutoring. The church could be a place to come to do Zoom classes. Learn how to get volunteers to help. Take a page from white churches. When it comes to ministry, big churches and white churches got it.
- #21 Include ministries with both congregants and the community. Do not make ministry just for church members.

## EVALUATIONS

The Focus Group began with twenty-four participants who completed the survey and the Pre-Test. Twenty-one completed the Post-Test and the 1 – On – 1 Interview.

Ending with eighteen participants who completed the evaluation. Below are seven of the nine evaluation questions and response percentages:

- Did you learn about Black Church History?

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
Strongly agree	66.67%	12
Agree	33.33%	6
Neither agree nor disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	18

- Did you learn about Black Theology?

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
Strongly agree	50.00%	9
Agree	44.44%	8
Neither agree nor disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	5.56%	1
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	18

- Did you learn about Cross-Generational Ministry?

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
Strongly agree	55.56%	10
Agree	33.33%	6
Neither agree nor disagree	11.11%	2
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	18

- Did you learn about trauma in the African American community?

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
Strongly agree	83.33%	15
Agree	16.67%	3
Neither agree nor disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	18

- Were you able to express your idea(s) on youth and young adult participation?

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
Strongly agree	77.78%	14
Agree	16.67%	3
Neither agree nor disagree	5.56%	1
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	18

- Do you believe you were heard when given your concerns about the generation gap?

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
Strongly agree	77.78%	14
Agree	11.11%	2
Neither agree nor disagree	5.56%	1
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	5.56%	1
	Answered	18

- Do you feel the topics of discussion were relevant and beneficial to The Black Church?

Answer Choices	Response Percent	Responses
Strongly agree	83.33%	15
Agree	11.11%	2
Neither agree nor disagree	5.56%	1
Disagree	0.00%	0
Strongly disagree	0.00%	0
	Answered	18

The participant's responses were very favorable. They experienced an effective pedagogy that involves a range of approaches that included group work, guided learning, and individual activity. Participants' focus was on developing a broader perspective about Black Church History, Black Theology, and Cross-generational ministry. This process used dialogue and questioning in order to achieve this goal amid a pandemic and social distancing. These techniques can be viewed in the recorded Zoom/Workbook presentation discussed at the end of this work as an artifact.

The evaluation's final two questions asked the participants if they felt there were better processes for presenting this information. Question eight asks if they would change anything/ Seventeen participants replied no. One participant stated that they "Sometimes was not always clear how the various parts fit together." Question nine asked if they would include anything. All eighteen respondents replied, no.

## **CHAPTER 5: "I KNOW A CHANGE IS GONNA COME!"**

### ***Methodology***

The methodology for this project includes; developing relationships and opportunities to work with local congregations, seminaries, expansion of the idea and concept, utilization of technology, collaboration nationally and internationally, becoming another catalyst for the development of the Black Church, including the study of Black Theology in church programming, in its' reading and research, and living and breathing. Looking in retrospect, with over forty years of ministry, if this researcher had access to this knowledge in the past, it would have enhanced, inspired, and provided the ministries implemented answering concerns that young people are searching and fighting to achieve this very day and time. More young people would be more secure in their faith with fundamentals about the history of their faith, history of their culture, relationships with others, and subsequently, their journey into the future.

Presently, this study's implications should increase the desire for pastors and laymen and women to study Black Church History and Black Theology at local seminaries. Many people have different opinions about the Black Lives Matter Movement. Seminaries now have a platform to provide history and information about

Black Church History and Black Theology in their curriculum to address some issues swept under the rug of American history. Seminaries could also provide workshops, conferences, and auditing classes for local pastors, church leaders, and parishioners. If seminaries would become engaged with The Black Church, their city could have the potential to diversify a seminary's student and faculty population with studies in church history and theology from various ethnic groups. The seminary would be the initiator of the universal church. In Revelations 7:9, The Church is breaking down racial barriers and establishing cross-cultural studies. Today's seminaries could bring that vision into reality, answering the call of the ecclesia, opening the opportunity for the majority church to shed the scorn of racism past adoring the robe of inclusion, equity, and justice for all, as Micah 6:8 commands, "He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

In the future, this project has no limits in this age of technology. The pandemic has made The Church realize that reaching out to those who would not come into The Church building has been neglected far too long. Pastors and church leaders can no longer use the excuse of not knowing how to reach the unchurched because they have been forced to do so under this new normal. Taking this project to the next level using YouTube, webinars, Zoom meetings, and Gaming are among the wide range of visions for the future, for no longer is The Church stuck in a building. The church's transformation/renovation and innovative leadership in changing culture are moving to a new communication, engagement, and access levels.

Several steps would require a change in this project, mainly in the Focus Group development, structure, and presentation. Transformation/renovation of the Urban Black

Church has been the passion, focus, and interest of this writer for many years. The target audience will never change because there is a love for the Black Church deep within. It is the Black Church that gave birth to the idea, and it is the Black Church that has nurtured and spoke to the soul of this research. The first change is becoming more familiar with all video conferencing tools so that the Focus Group Session would flow smoother and be more engaging. Knowing how to manipulate video conferencing tools and any other form of videoing programming is essential and the way of the future. Second, using technology to create additional online interactive pedagogy such as fill-in-the-blank, puzzle, and coloring pages with the videography would have provided and enhanced a participant's understanding. These electronic manipulatives will make learning fun for all participants and age groups. Realizing that many in the Black Church are unfamiliar with Black Church History and Black Theology topics is a fact and the third consideration. The Black Church is “one of the few stable and coherent institutions to emerge from slavery.” Unfortunately, in the Black community's attempt to keep up with American consumerism's societal ideologies, the Black Church has neglected to teach and celebrate the massive contributions African Americans Church has made in this nation's history and has not prepared Black youth for their future as change agents for God. As Walter Fluker says, the Black Church is asleep, but even more critical, as Henry Mitchell says, the Black Church has a sacred responsibility to lift man to God, that has been forsaken, “the major role being a historical reservoir of black culture and as examples of resistance and independence.”

Lastly, including more information about generational mindset is vital. Comparing the R & B/Soul generation's mentality, the first generation Hip Hop/Rap, and the present

generation Hip Hop/Pop culture would be a great discussion. Each generation established a form of protest against systemic racism and theology. The R&B/Soul generation began with the Civil Rights Movement and Black Theology. The first generation Hip Hop/Rap continued the Black Power Movement that “shifted from color-conscious racism that relied on a system of racial segregation to apparently color-blind racism that promised equal opportunities yet providing no lasting avenues for African American advancement, and challenges the Black Church as an “isolation nation of wealth.” Today, the second generation Hip Hop/Pop culture groups like Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement use social media to promote their efforts to:

1. See black people as human beings and not racist stereotypes (which was how Zimmerman and the system described Trayvon Martin walking home from the store).
2. Affirm the human dignity and value of black people as equal to all other people.
3. Challenge the hearer or reader to consider what it means to create a social order that values black people's lives in all facets of their existence.

The BLM was created by LGBTQ black women, a group that is not discussed in the

Black Church today. A form of group leadership, not a charismatic individual, is taking a stand in the African American or general American mindset, asking the questions, “Who wants to follow queer black women? Who wants to follow a rapper? For the clergy in Ferguson, ‘there was not a separation between faith and justice, to stand with the oppressed is to stand with God.’” Thabiti Anyabwile of Front Porch discussion on “What is The Black Church” addresses that question too, saying:

That suspicious of black theologies, political positioning contrary to the Word of God its views on homosexuality and women ministry are the crossroads of broad camps that look at each other with critiques. The question is, what will we hear? Which will prevail? The answer is: the one who depends on God's Word will be the most relevant to the greater number of issues in black life.

The narrowing of this idea will emerge from the need of The Church. The goal of penetrating others' accessibility to this project through technology will also narrow and target churches with specific needs. Every church is different, and that difference is delightful.

To expand the focus will require the development of a YouTube Channel and a website. The hope is that this project will resonate within the hearts of leaders in The Urban Black Church and others interested in promoting, innovating, and renovating The Urban Black Church using a Black Cross-Generational Church format; supported through technology. Hopefully, bring to life the dreams of this project, making it available to people across the nation and worldwide. This project is looking for collaboration with individuals, churches, and institutions.

***Conclusion:***

In reference to Chapter three of this document, reiterating James H. Cone's words is the platform for The Church today in any culture but specifically in this context that Black Theology explains The Black Church's value for oppressed people. Providing Black people with “the sanctified ability to see that oppression, trauma, and racism in America is the result of a fallen world and not because there is something inferior with people of color.” The world is a place of fallenness; that is why God has called The Church. As his representatives, The Church helps humanity see the things that cause her to stumble. In that moment of revelation, The Church is the only institution with the answer and the way out. "Make me know your ways, O Yahweh. Teach me your paths.” Psalm 25:4

In summary, the artifact of Chapter four becomes a tool for church leaders and

pastors to transform and renovate using cross-generational ecclesial ministries as the catalyst. Achieving that change should begin in general with similar processes of a soon developed guide entitled: "A Tool Guide of Black Church History, Black Theology, Cross-Generational Ministry & Missional Opportunity." (See Appendix A.)

The intriguing discussions and topics presented here inspired this writer to apply cross-generational ministry praxis as support to enhance the theological ecclesiology of The Black Church. In this paper, each question concluded with a method that cross-generational ministry input could utilize. Although cross-generational ministries are essential, theological knowledge affirms that without attaching it to a missional impact, it only makes it another church program, and The Black Church does not need another program. The Church needs an ecclesiology that transforms the lives of the congregants so that they change the lives they touch daily. Powe and Smothers describe shared sentiments by saying;

In the U.S., the culture is transient and mobile. Congregations drive in and out of communities to go to places that they are familiar with or have a connection to without concern or acknowledgement for the people that they pass as they travel along. Some communities are home to people who look and sound like us, while other communities are home to people who terrify us. They are all worth something. Yet we cannot go because we are paralyzed by our preoccupation with our stuff and our lives by our selfishness and by our fear.

Historically, the old Black Church had what the contemporary Black Church needs to grow and remain alive. Past ecclesiology moved the prosperity mentality aside for powerful, purposeful ministry providing youth with agendas, support, and information they needed to be The Church. Youth still need these today. Moreover, some historical ecclesiology addressed the Black Community's violent experiences that today have paralyzed urban neighborhoods. What is this old-time way that has gotten lost in this

contemporary society? Ubuntu humanism is “making the community the center; hence, the fundamental anti-individualism and religiosity.” It considers all who are a part of the community. The believer's missional formation "refers to how God shapes a church to participate in God's love for the world. Every congregation is both 'called' and 'sent.' The call gathers us to hear, understand, and accept our vocation, which is that we are sent into the world for the sake of the gospel." 1 John 1:7 (KJV) says, [HYPERLINK](https://www.biblestudytools.com/kjv/1-john/1-7.html) "<https://www.biblestudytools.com/kjv/1-john/1-7.html>" "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." The initial effect of every transformation begins with believers walking in the light of Jesus Christ and walking in communion with each other, shouldering one another, extending hands to those in the community, and lifting each other and transforming the common into unity and making the community a common-unity.

The Black Church must realize that it has a unique history in America and the world. An account that cannot deny the particular presence of God. Black believers have a rare opportunity. The African American Jesus follower may not have always had the support or protection of American society, but the ability to remain communal is a gift from God.

In closing, are the inspiring words of Powe and Smothers concerning the missional engagement of The Church: "Once we help people find their place, we must push them out of the nest to help others find their place." Cross-generational ministries will help people find their place. It also challenges African American believers to live and

give their God-given abilities daily to help others find their place.

The Black Church loves to sing the very popular hymn, *Amazing Grace*. The story behind the song describes how John Newton, the author, was captaining a ship used to capture and transport slaves. Ultimately, he comes to abjure that life and occupation, repenting of his atrocities. The song has a powerful stanza, "I once was lost, but now I'm found." Being lost is a state every man, woman, boy, or girl experiences at some time in their life. Therefore, helping people find their place and not be lost is the epitome of faith formation to transform/renovate The Urban Black Church developed through Black Cross-Generational Ecclesial.

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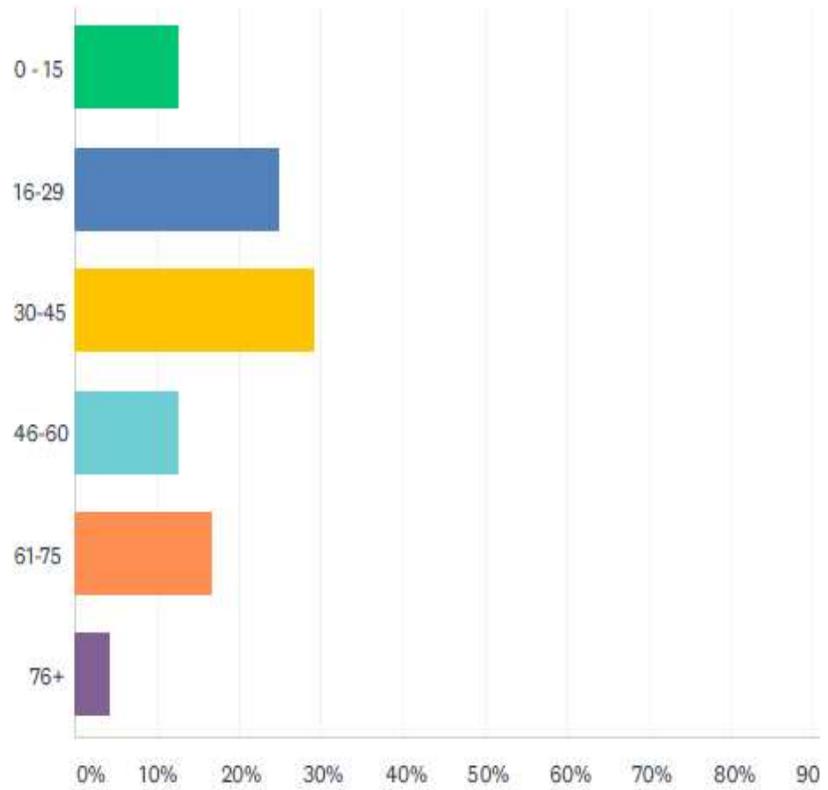
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TABLE 1: AGE DEMOGRAPHICS  
**Q2 Age**

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

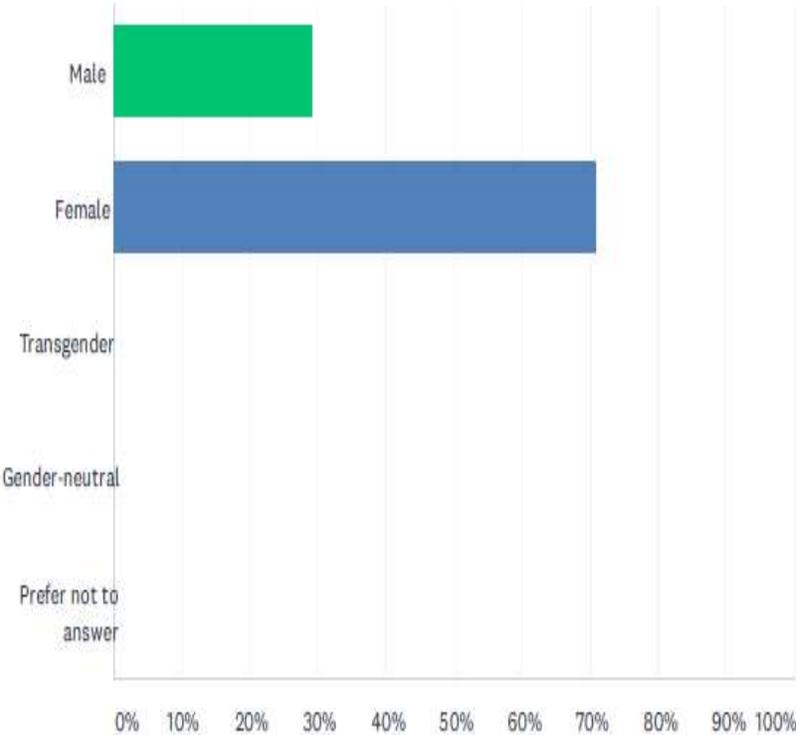


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
0 - 15	12.50%
16-29	25.00%
30-45	29.17%
46-60	12.50%
61-75	16.67%
76+	4.17%
TOTAL	

TABLE 2: GENDER DEMOGRAPHICS

# Q3 Gender

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

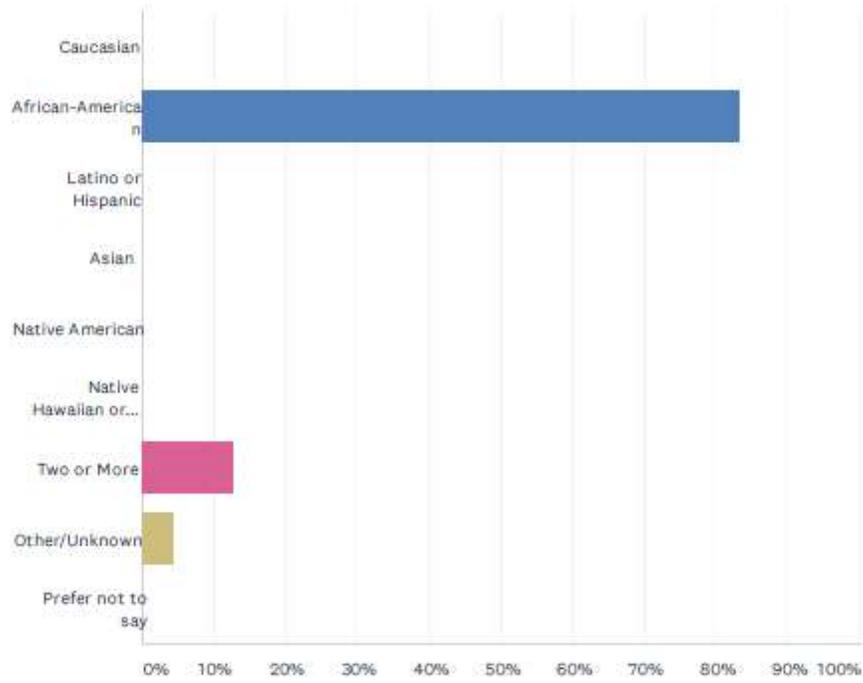


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Male	29.17%
Female	70.83%
Transgender	0.00%
Gender-neutral	0.00%
Prefer not to answer	0.00%
TOTAL	

TABLE 3: ETHNICITY DEMOGRAPHICS

### Q4 Ethnicity

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Caucasian	0.00%
African-American	83.33%
Latino or Hispanic	0.00%
Asian	0.00%
Native American	0.00%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.00%
Two or More	12.50%
Other/Unknown	4.17%
Prefer not to say	0.00%
TOTAL	

TABLE 4: PARTICIPANTS ZIP CODE DEMOGRAPHICS PART ONE

### Q5 Where is your home in the Greater Kansas City Metropolitan Area?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

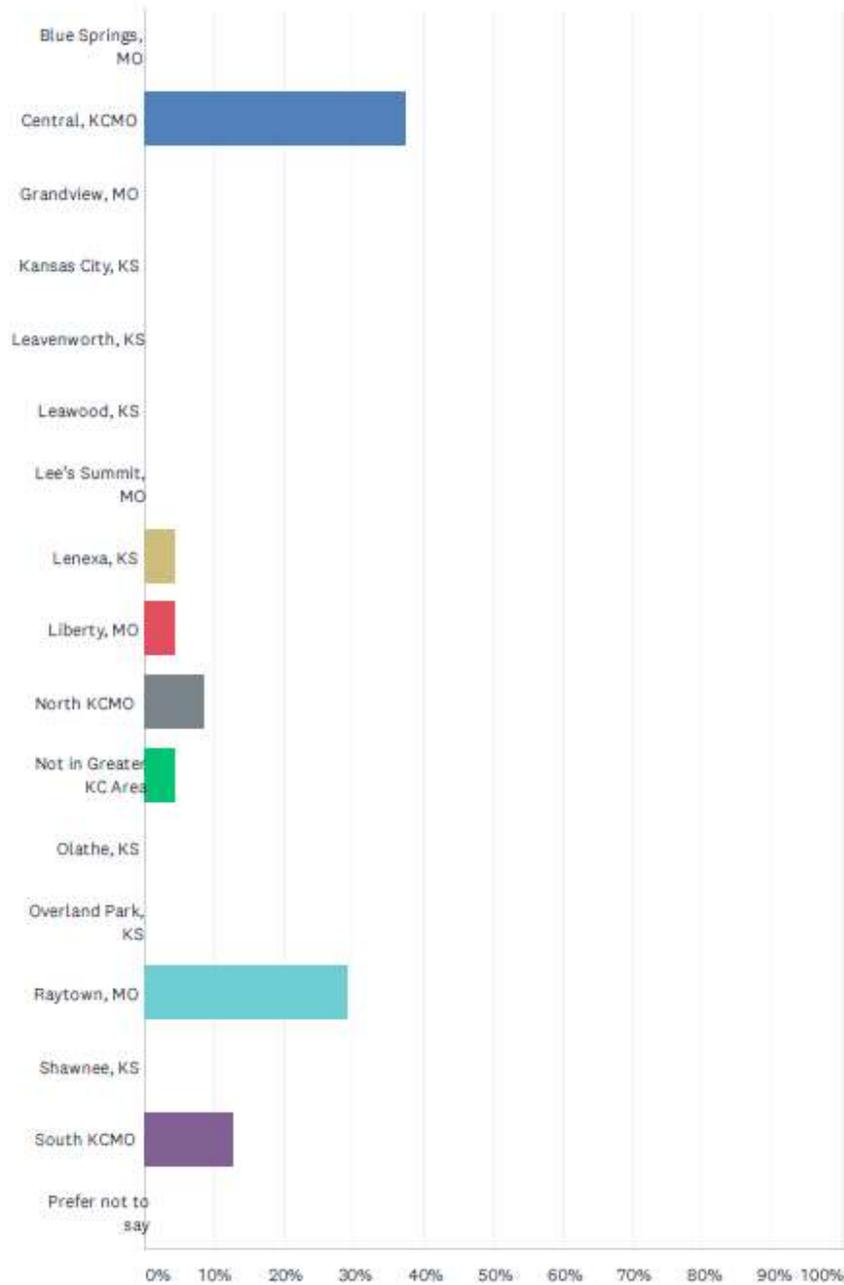


TABLE 5: PARTICIPANTS DEMOGRAPHICS PART TWO

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Blue Springs, MO	0.00%
Central, KCMO	37.50%
Grandview, MO	0.00%
Kansas City, KS	0.00%
Leavenworth, KS	0.00%
Leawood, KS	0.00%
Lee's Summit, MO	0.00%
Lenexa, KS	4.17%
Liberty, MO	4.17%
North KCMO	8.33%
Not in Greater KC Area	4.17%
Olathe, KS	0.00%
Overland Park, KS	0.00%
Raytown, MO	29.17%
Shawnee, KS	0.00%
South KCMO	12.50%
Prefer not to say	0.00%
TOTAL	

TABLE 6: RESIDENTS ZIP CODE OF PARTICIPANTS DEMOGRAPHICS

### Q5 Where is your home in the Greater Kansas City Metropolitan Area?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

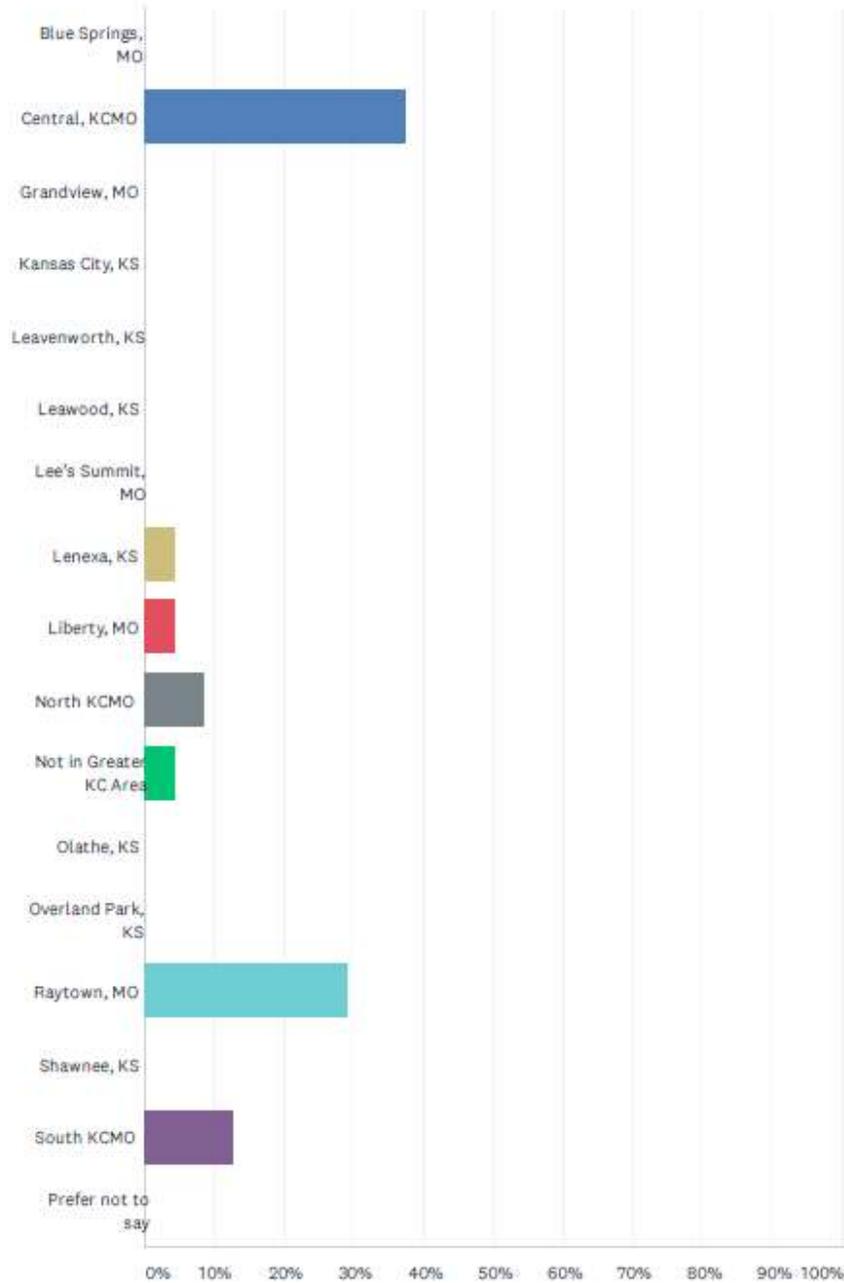
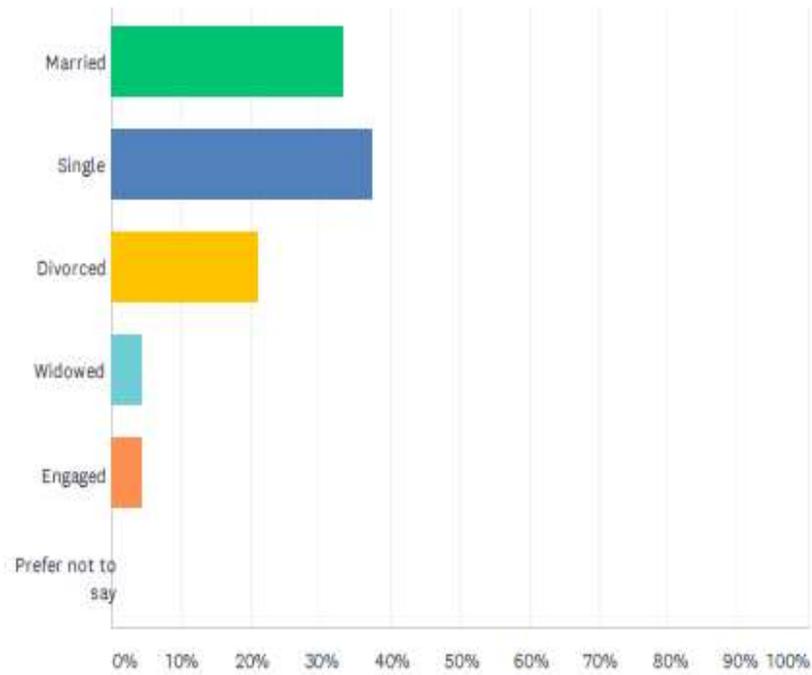


TABLE 7: MARITAL DEMOGRAPHICS

### Q6 Marital Status

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

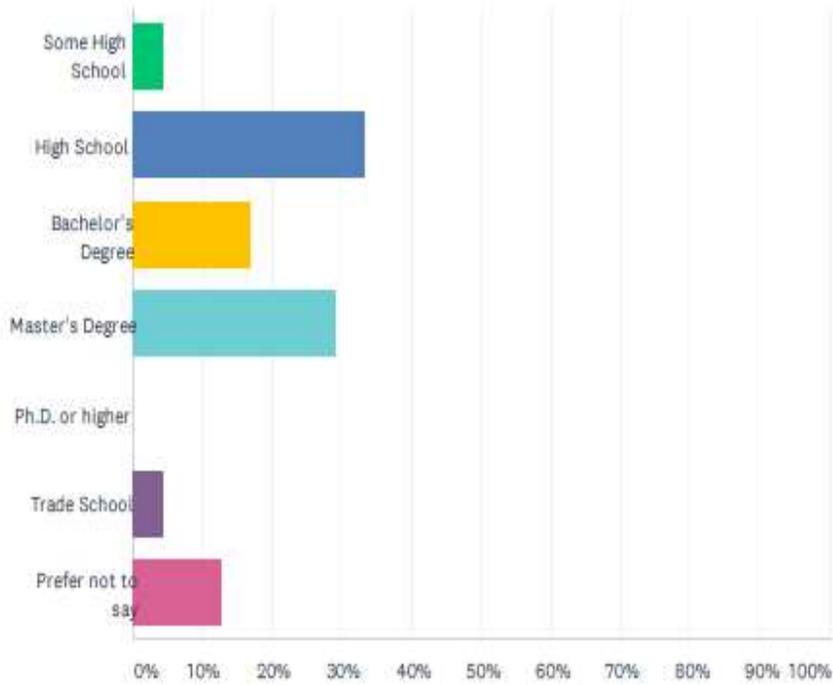


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Married	33.33%
Single	37.50%
Divorced	20.83%
Widowed	4.17%
Engaged	4.17%
Prefer not to say	0.00%
TOTAL	

TABLE 8: EDUCATION DEMOGRAPHICS

### Q8 Education

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

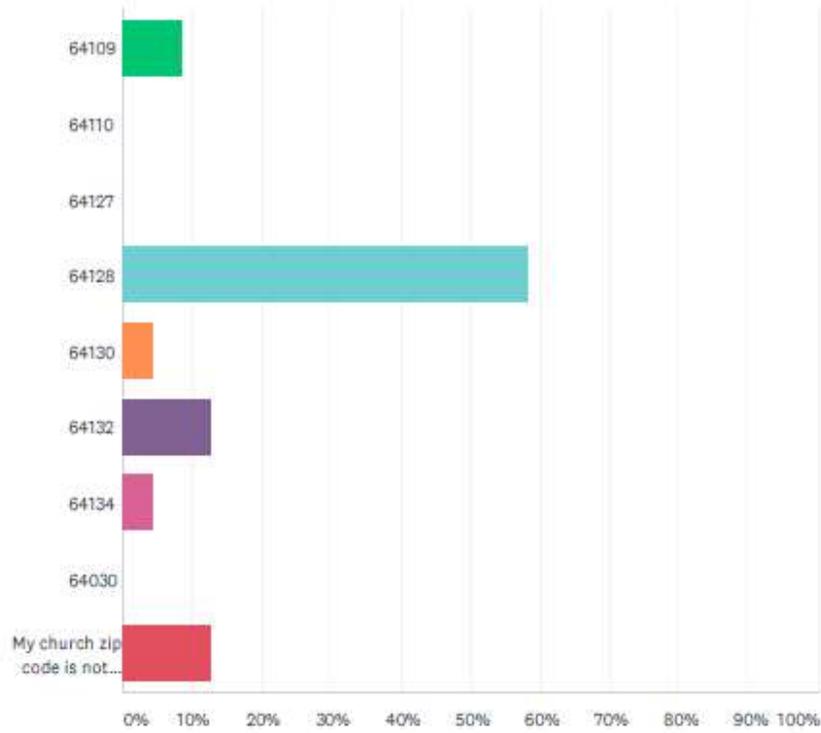


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Some High School	4.17%
High School	33.33%
Bachelor's Degree	16.67%
Master's Degree	29.17%
Ph.D. or higher	0.00%
Trade School	4.17%
Prefer not to say	12.50%
TOTAL	

TABLE 9: CHURCH ZIP CODE

### Q7 What is your church's zip code?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

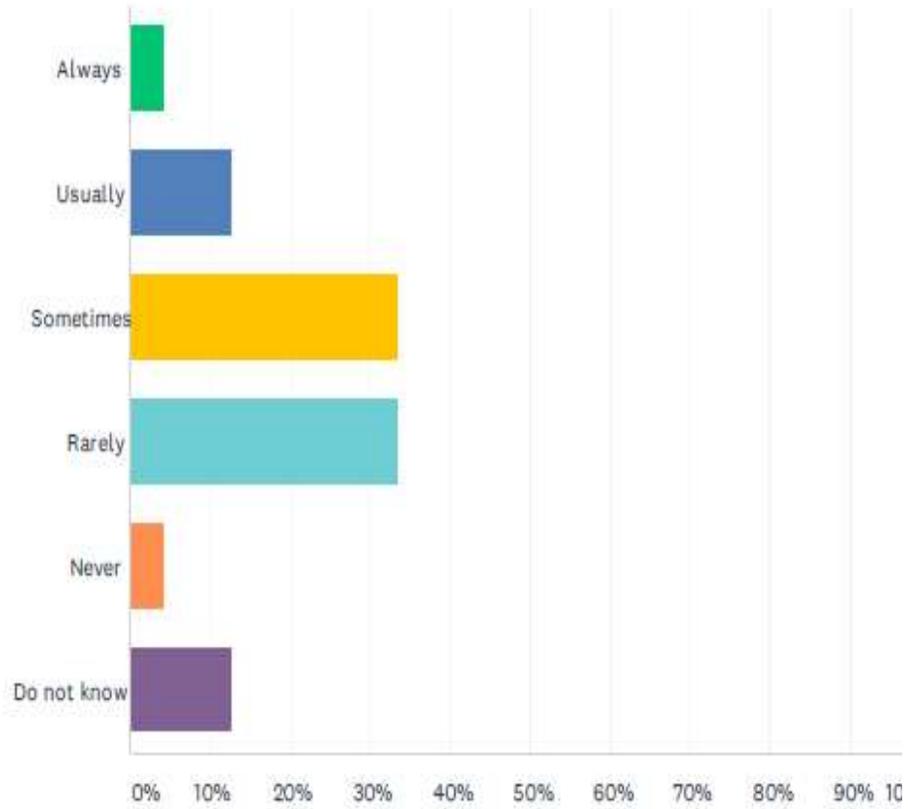


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
64109	8.33%
64110	0.00%
64127	0.00%
64128	58.33%
64130	4.17%
64132	12.50%
64134	4.17%
64030	0.00%
My church zip code is not listed.	12.50%
<b>TOTAL</b>	

TABLE 10: HELP FOR TRAUMAS

## Q9 Does the urban Black Church provide help for traumas experience in America?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Always	4.17%
Usually	12.50%
Sometimes	33.33%
Rarely	33.33%
Never	4.17%
Do not know	12.50%
<b>TOTAL</b>	

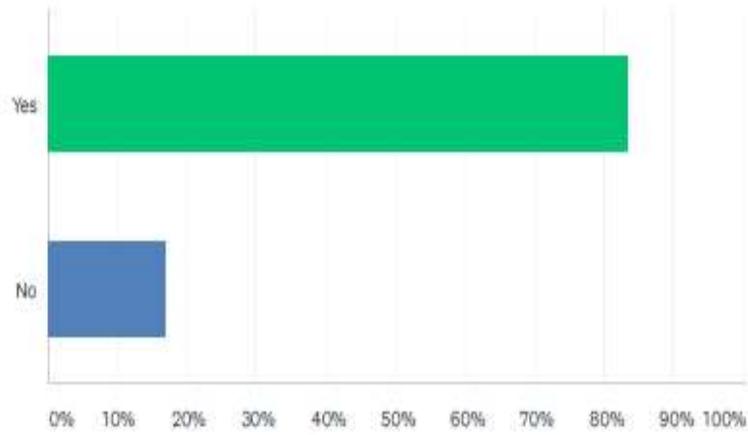
TABLE 11: AWARE OF DISPARITIES ON EASTSIDE

Lynn Miller Focus Group Survey

SurveyMonkey

Q10 Are you aware of the disparities and demographics on the Eastside  
Kansas City?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

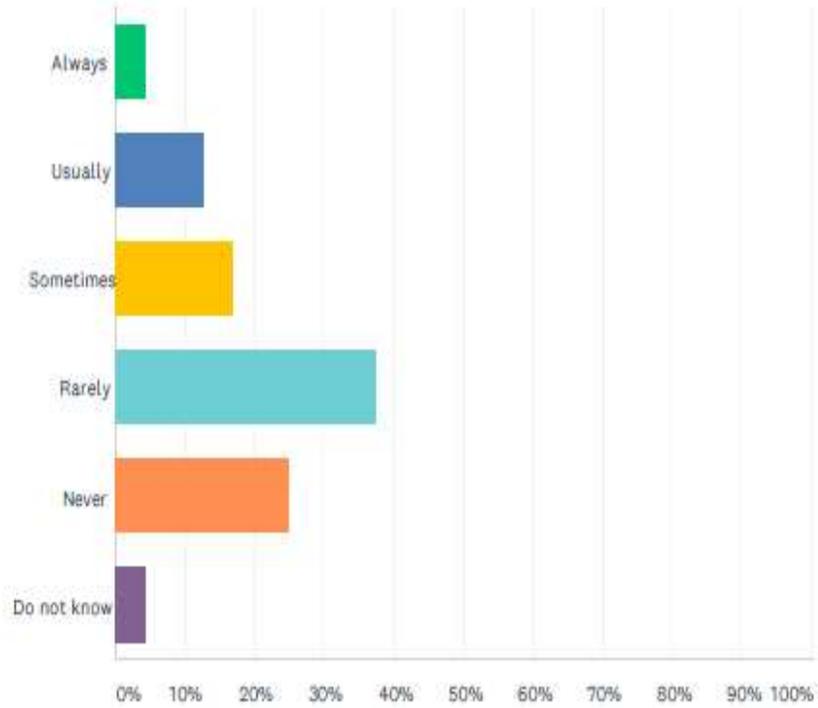


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	83.33%
No	16.67%
TOTAL	

TABLE 12: BLACK CHURCH HISTORY

### Q11 Is the history of the Black Church in Kansas City taught in the church?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

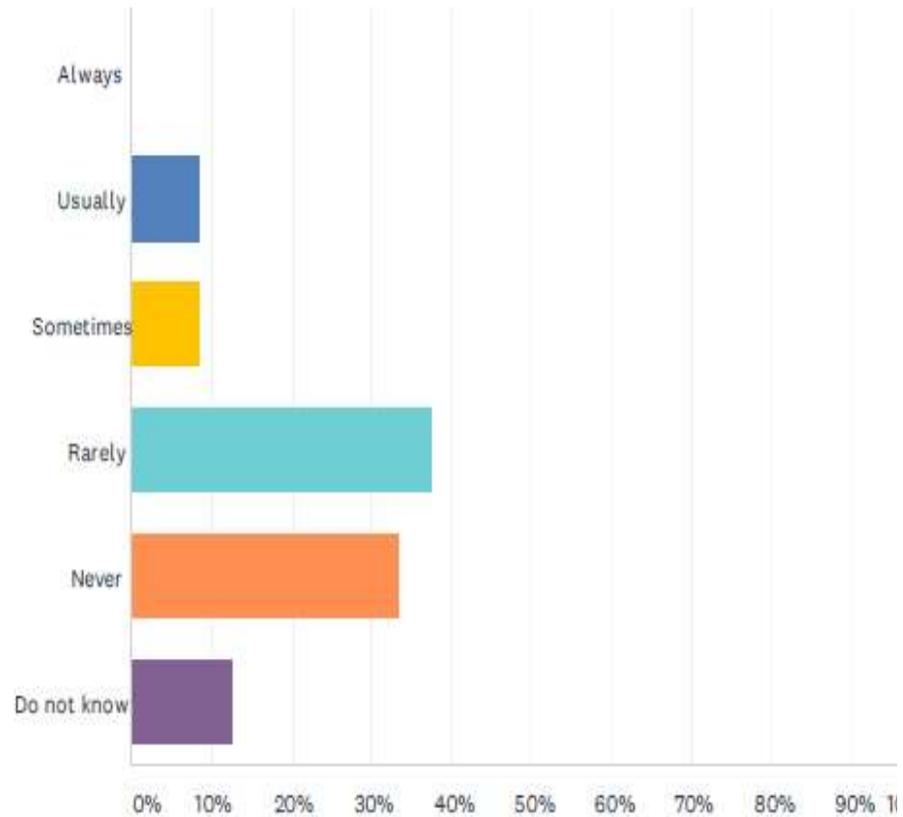


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Always	4.17%
Usually	12.50%
Sometimes	16.67%
Rarely	37.50%
Never	25.00%
Do not know	4.17%
TOTAL	

TABLE 13: BLACK THEOLOGY

## Q12 Is Black Theology explained in the urban Black c

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

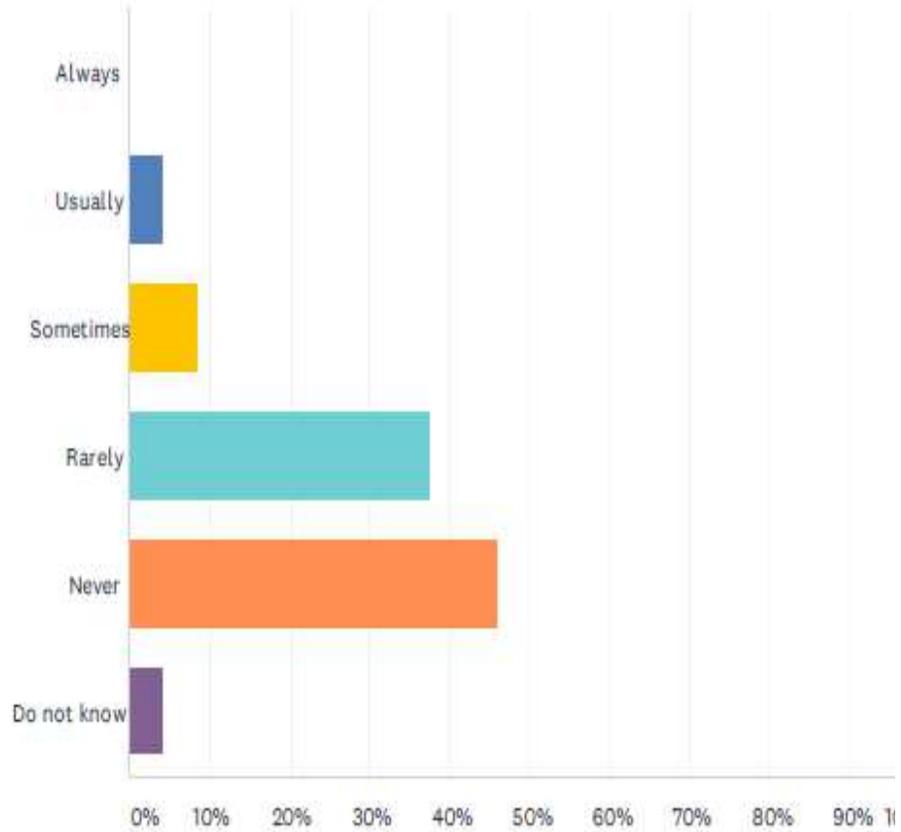


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Always	0.00%
Usually	8.33%
Sometimes	8.33%
Rarely	37.50%
Never	33.33%
Do not know	12.50%
TOTAL	

TABLE 14: WHY YOUNG ARE MOVING FROM URBAN COMMUNITIES

## Q13 Does the urban Black Church discuss why young people leave urban communities?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

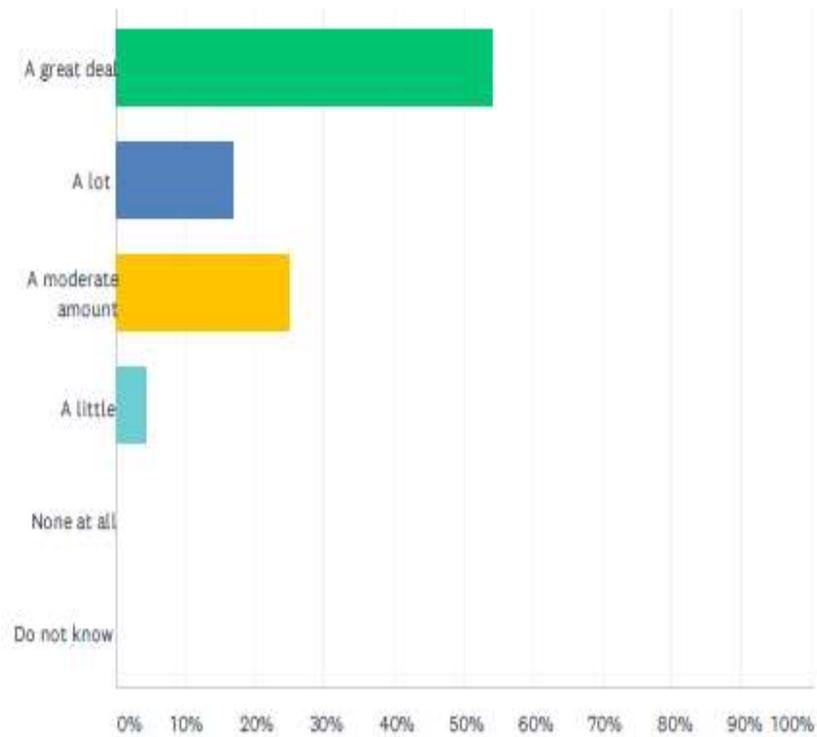


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Always	0.00%
Usually	4.17%
Sometimes	8.33%
Rarely	37.50%
Never	45.83%
Do not know	4.17%
TOTAL	

TABLE 15: INTEREST IN LEARNING HOW TO BE  
IMPACTFUL

Q14 If given the opportunity, would you be interested in learning how your family could be more impactful in building unity, spiritually, socially, and culturally?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

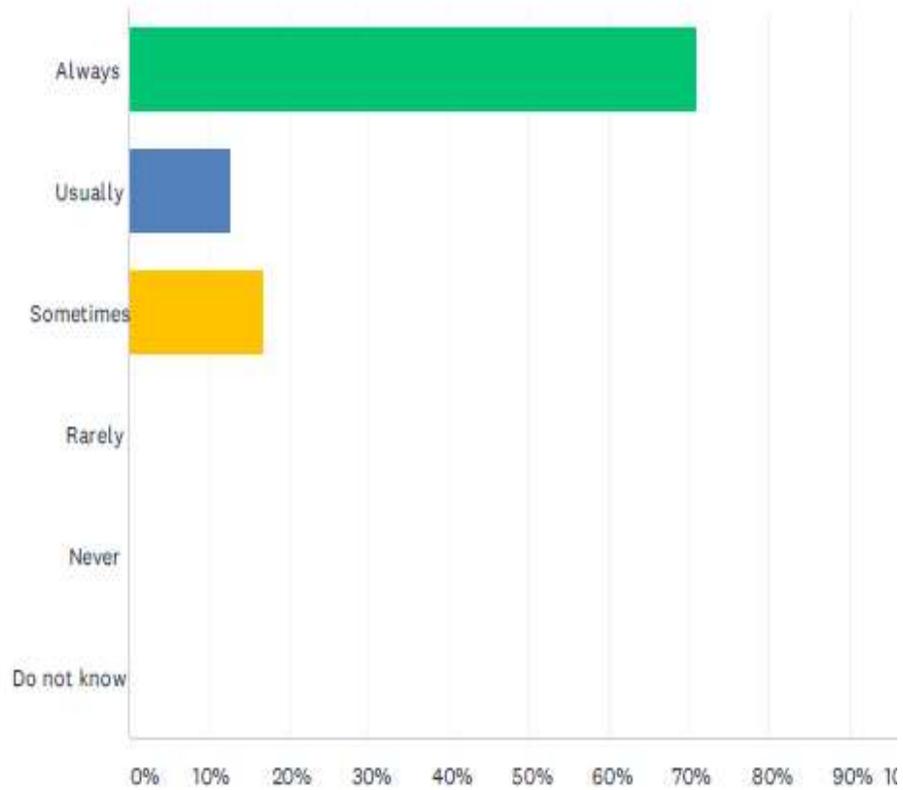


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
A great deal	54.17%
A lot	16.67%
A moderate amount	25.00%
A little	4.17%
None at all	0.00%
Do not know	0.00%
TOTAL	

TABLE 16: YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS HAVE A VOICE IN CHURCH

## Q15 Should all youth or young adults have a voice in church administration in the Black church?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

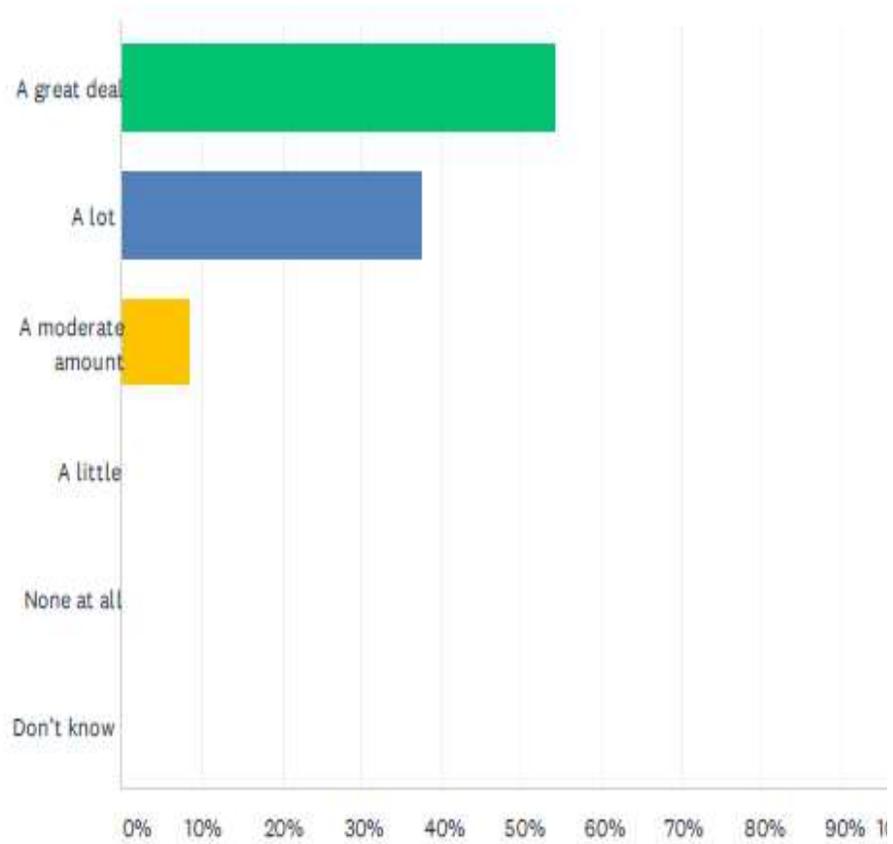


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Always	70.83%
Usually	12.50%
Sometimes	16.67%
Rarely	0.00%
Never	0.00%
Do not know	0.00%
<b>TOTAL</b>	

TABLE 17: PASTORS CONSULT WITH YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

## Q16 Should pastors consult youth or young adults in the B

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0

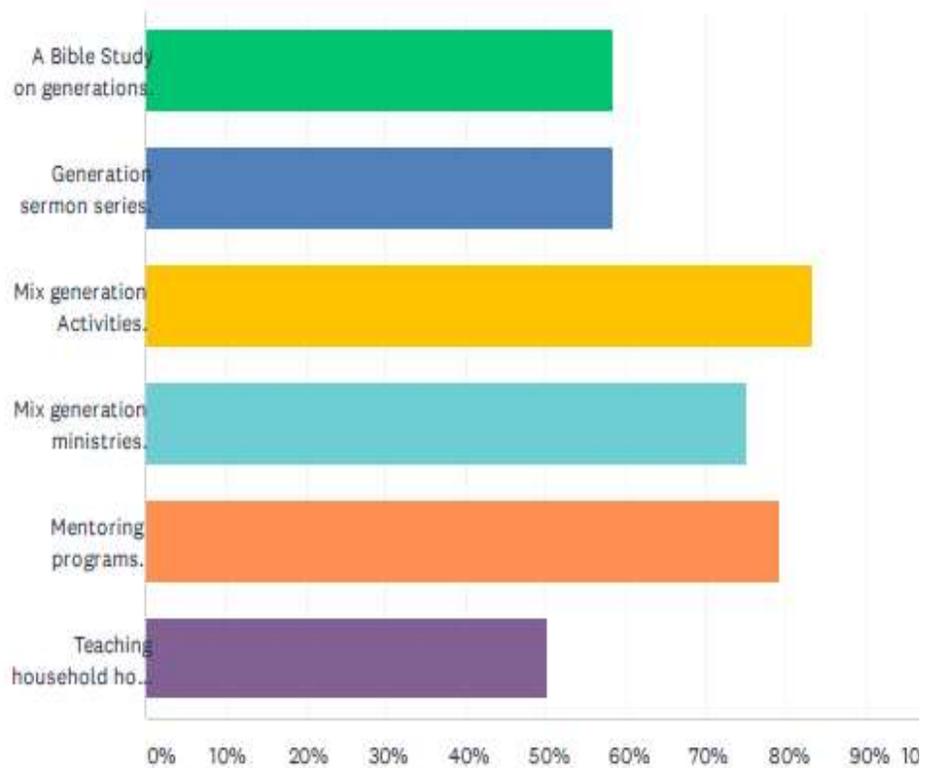


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
A great deal	54.17%
A lot	37.50%
A moderate amount	8.33%
A little	0.00%
None at all	0.00%
Don't know	0.00%
TOTAL	

TABLE 18: BRIDGING THE GENERATION GAP

Q17 What would bridge the gap in the Black church between younger attendees? Check all that apply.

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSE
A Bible Study on generations.	58.33%
Generation sermon series.	58.33%
Mix generation Activities.	83.33%
Mix generation ministries.	75.00%
Mentoring programs.	79.17%
Teaching household how to do mission.	50.00%
Total Respondents: 24	

**APPENDIX A:**

"THE FOCUS GROUP TOOL GUIDE TO AID CHURCH LEADERS"  
TOPIC OF DISCUSSION:  
CROSS-GENERATIONAL MINISTRY UTILIZING BLACK CHURCH HISTORY  
AND BLACK THEOLOGY  
*"THE TRANSFORMATION/RENOVATION OF THE URBAN CHURCH: DEVELOPED  
THROUGH BLACK CROSS-GENERATIONAL ECCLESIAL"*

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## INTRODUCTION

To be An Urban Black church that ministers cross-generationally is a church that recognizes the place and provision of Black Church History and executing a practical Black Theology. Mary Clark Moschella reveals that "the secular and sacred, like the intellect and the spirit, and like theology and practice, dwell in us together." The Urban Black Church's future should correlate Black Church history, Black theology, and the Cross-Generational engagement to create a transformative communal awareness.

A church without a plan for the next generation's existence is a church whose ministry practices could be considered questionable. In Psalm 78:4 (KJV), David wrote, "We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done." What path should a church leader take to begin the process toward creating a plan for at least the next twenty years? Leadership should take the path of change. Hence, a church with an active mission ministry is a transformative church because mission and transformation go hand-in-hand. A mission is "to start and finish with a commitment to the God that we are called to share." Mission, transformation, and renovation related to the commitment to sharing God's ideas at the risk of making changes to address its church context. Alvin Toffler, the author of "*Future Shock*," founder of Toffler Associates, and "world-renowned futurist," work foreshadowed the full effects of rapid technology development on people, businesses, and governments; famous quotes is, "Change is the process by which the future invades our lives."

The writer's awareness of black cultural and theological contexts has become increasingly strengthened by studying Black Church History, Black Theology, and Cross-Generational Ministry. This research journey began with many questions. The lack of knowledge on the three focus topics above created a desire to learn what others thought about the topics. To test that hypothesis, the author created a focus group to make this determination. The Focus group's goal was learning if other African Americans (in my context) were knowledgeable about the above three topics to enhance the Black Church's transformation/renovation of cross-generational ecclesial ministry.

The next consideration for the study included the participants that would compose the focus group. Individuals from the three generations were considered for the Focus group. The goal of the writer was to obtain the perspectives of the selected question from the three generations in this research Baby boomer (ages: fifty-five to seventy-five), Millennials (ages: twenty to forty), and Generation Z (ages: zero to twenty). Generation Z and Millennials were the two largest age groups of the Focus group, with a combined percentage of 66.67%, a total of nineteen persons.

In America's changing cultural landscape, The Urban Black Church is at a place where understanding Black Church History and Black Theology should provide substantial support toward engaging the next generation. To accomplish this understanding, a pastor or the church leaders would have to meet with practically every member, which would be time-consuming. Nevertheless, the utilization of a Focus group of selected members within the congregation would provide access to a starting point. The goal of this guide is to unfold a tool for the Urban Black Church and its leaders.

## DEMOGRAPHICS FOR FOCUS GROUP

**Recruiting for Focus Group for Lynn Miller**

**Black** *History*  
*Church*  
*Community*

Hello Friend. This is Lynn Miller and I need your help. Would you consider participating in a **Focus Group** for my doctoral dissertation? The topic is *The Transformation/Renovation of the Urban Church: Developed through Black Cross-Generation Ecclesial*.

It will include a survey, an interview, Pre/Post-test on information you will learn through the Bible Study and sermon. Implemented in the order below:

1. The Survey has 11 questions on Survey Monkey.
2. The Interview will be a 1-on-1 approximately 90 minutes on Zoom (at your convenience).
3. The Pre-test on Survey Monkey.
4. The Bible Study a 1-hour Group Zoom session.
5. The Sermon a 20 - 30-minute video
6. The Post-test on Survey Monkey.

If you are willing to participate, please contact me by July 31, 2020 for more details as we will begin next month.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

*Lynn Miller*  
**[lmilr3619@gmail.com](mailto:lmilr3619@gmail.com)**  
**816-797-6937**

7/21/2020

Miller

Recruiting for Focus group for Lynn



The approach for selecting

participants for this Focus group began with a flyer sent to over twenty-five individuals, which were the maximum number of participants needed. Two adults in the group were selected because their household included teenagers who represented the Post-millennial generation. Here is a sample of the original flyer that was sent out to potential participants. Revisions were made concerning the Bible Study and Sermon, which the

Powerpoint/Video replaced for participants who could not be on the Zoom Presentation detailed later in this tool guide.

Once twenty-four persons committed to participate in the focus group, the following flyer, and a consent letter were provided. The "Thank You Flyer" informed the participants how and where their instructions would be obtained.

The consent letter included the information below:

- They were asked to participate in the Focus group, which was voluntary, and they could stop without penalty.
- Why is this study being done?
- How many people will be in the study?
- What will they be asked to do?
- The time frame of the study. (Four weeks)
- The benefits of the study.
- The risks of the study.
- The cost of the study.
- Their option not to participate.
- The confidentiality procedures.
- Compensation for this study.
- Who to contact if they have any questions or concerns

The data for the age groups are: zero to fifteen 12.50% (three), sixteen to twenty-nine 25.00% (six), thirty to forty-five 29.17% (seven), forty-six to sixty 12.50% (three), sixty-one to seventy-five 16.67% (four), and over seventy-five 4.17% (one).

Gender wise, the group was 70.83% (seventeen) female and 29.17% (seven) male. Women dominated the number of attendees in the African American Church; consequently, this was also an intentional design of the writer to model The Church. The group was predominant, African American by 83.33% (twenty), with 12.50% two or more (three) ethnicities, and 4.17% (one) Other/Unknown.

Knowing where the participants reside in contrast to where they worship is essential for this research. The participant's home zip code validates that a "large percentage of African Americans attend church not in their neighborhood and commute fifteen to twenty minutes one way to get to church." Living in Central City is the largest population of members 37.50% (nine), followed by 29.17% (seven) in Raytown, 12.50% (three) in South K.C., 8.33% (two) in North K.C., and 4.17% (one) in Liberty.

This group's marital status is 37.50% (nine) single, 33.33% (eight) married, 20.83% (five) divorced, 4.1% (one) widowed, and 4.1% (one) engaged. The education of this group is 4.1% (one) has some high school, 33.33% (eight) have completed high school, 4.1% (one) trade school, 29.17% (seven) have master's degrees, and 12.50% (three) prefer not to say.

The most provocative statics of this group is the location of the churches they attend. The participants live all over in greater KCMO, yet they predominately attend churches in the urban neighborhood zip codes (Eastside) with 58.33% (Central K.C. - fifteen) in 64128 and 64130, 12.50% (South K.C. - three) in 64132, 8.33% (Central K.C. - two) in 64109 and ending with 4.17% (Grandview - one) in 64030.

## **CHALLENGE**

The Black Church's challenge is to develop opportunities to "build the why's of

Black theology" and what's of Black Church History by spending time with people from different generations and providing unprecedented learning opportunities. This tool provides socialization for black youth and spiritual, theological, and psychological praxis. Streaty-Wimberly discusses the rootedness of preserving the rich heritage that stems from teaching Black youth the truth about their history and provides holistic ministries "must be intentional within the Black Church." This pedagogical experience with cross-generational ministries is the catalyst for this investigation. Witnessing the senior members experience learning from teen members' technology skills to use their mobile devices; teen members learning from older members self-control in specific settings; senior members learning from young adult members on how to multitask, and middle-age adult members learning from the innocence of the children on how to trust God. Jessica Stolling, in *Intergenerate*, lists five principles to break down the walls and give all generations a place to belong together. They are unlocking understanding, unlocking appreciation, unlocking collaboration, unlocking communication, and unlocking wisdom sharing.

Unlocking these principles demonstrates cross-generational ministries' power to open doors and paths to life on the other side of the decreasing and declining participation that we are experiencing, and some have predicted will happen to The Black Church.

The Church members in context include people from every generation, from broad social, cultural, and institutional influences, while ministering in the urban community. One essential fact about ministry is never to do it alone. Ministry requires the called to seek help, support, love, experience, and expertise from others. It also requires knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the team. In cross-generational ministries, the

challenge is understanding each generation's dynamics, the broad influences they have encountered, and how these dynamics are perceived in urban communities.

The members of the focus group agree with Walter Fluker's description of the "narcoleptic church." Both the Group and Fluker admit the best solution is creating an atmosphere where knowing the history should be as prevalent as understanding faith because they are intertwined. Fluker calls this tool of reflection "remembering, retelling, and reliving our stories, that parallels a correlated conceptual movement of memory (past), vision (future), and mission (present)." The commonality between change, trauma, and faith determine the impact on the lives of the Focus group members.

Conceding to the realities of the disadvantages and disparities of the communities that surround The Urban Black Church, trauma is illuminated by the Focus group comments below. Therefore, Black Church leaders must receive training and education on ways to get in touch with these realities to adequately minister to their congregants and community, effectively using the power of God's Word as a priority as Anyabwile shared along with cultural analysis, also discussed in Chapter One of this document.

As a Black person raised in The Black Church, the experience has been inspiring, liberating, and empowering. J. Deotris Roberts says, "It is the responsibility of Black theologians to remind Black families of the moral and spiritual resources inherent in the Black family tradition, without which we may not survive." Growing up in The Black Church gave this writer purpose, position, and self-esteem. When other children were trying to find their niche in the world, The Black Church was providing young members the platform to express themselves, the opportunity to take risks, and the support needed to know that accomplishing anything was feasible with hard work. James Cone says,

"Revelation is a black event – it is what Blacks are doing about their liberation."

Thabiti Anyabwile wrote an article titled, "Why Focus on African-American churches?" There are four (4) challenges for the majority Church and Black Church cultures to consider. It says:

1. We recognize that many people know very little about the historic Black Church.
2. We are also children of The Black Church, the womb and cradle of our spiritual birth. It is still the home of the vast majority of African-American Christians.
3. We believe The Black Churches has a right to exist.
4. The African/Black Church is the greatest miracle in American Christianity!

Other great writings to consider to gain a deeper understanding of the Black Church are:

- Brooks, Jonathan. *Church Forsaken*. Illinois: IVP Books, 2018.
- Francis, Leah Gunning. *Ferguson and Faith Sparking Leadership and Awakening Community*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2015.
- Foster, Charles R. and Shockley, Grant S. *Working with Black Youth: Opportunities for Christian Ministry*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- Dale P. Andrews, Robert London Smith, Jr. Editor. *Black Practical Theology*. Baylor University Press, Waco, Texas. 2015.
- Mitchell, Henry H. *Black Church Beginnings*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2004.
- Lincoln, C. Eric and Mamiya, Lawrence H. *The Black Church in the African American Experience*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1990.
- Wilmore Gayraud S. and Cone, James H. *Black Theology A Documentary History, 1966 – 1979*, Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1979.

Incorporated in this Tool Guide are Reflection forms for the Church Leaders to use in conjunction with the topics and structure established in this tool guide. The purpose of these forms is to help the leaders contemplate why they choose to create a focus group, what outcomes they expect to achieve, and their next steps. The topics with reflection forms are: Challenge, Focus group, Survey, and "What is the Black Church?". As an investigator about Black Church History, Black Theology, and Cross-Generational Engagement, these general themes are given due consideration.





### *Why A focus group*

When selecting members for a focus group, be sure to include people who are considered "unusual voices." Those are not apparent leaders and those who are perceived to be outsiders or in opposition. The typical selection process is to engage those who view, believe, and consider ideas from a similar leadership perspective. Leadership is encouraged to take steps outside of the comfort zone and intentionally include those unexpected, unusual, and challenging people.

To move forward will require leadership to establish a focus group to gain insight into the thoughts, ideas, and basic knowledge of the church's membership as they reflect on the questions asked in the introduction. Because the focus is generational, this project's implementer will need to engage the top three generations of this day: Baby Boomers, Millennials, and Post-Millennials. Below are some general descriptions of those generations.

### *Meet America's Generations*

Six living generational cohorts are existing in America today. There are various titles given for each group, but the list below provides a basic description. From oldest to youngest, the generation years and titles are:

- 1900 to 1924: G.I. Generation
- 1925 to 1945: Silent Generation
- 1946 to 1964: Baby Boomers
- 1965 to 1979: Thirteeners or Generation X
- 1980 to 2000: Millennials or Generation Y
- 2000 to present Post Millennials/Generation Z/Centennials

### *Baby Boomers*

The Baby Boomer cohort grew up in the post-World War II area, 1946 – 1964,

ages fifty-three to seventy-one by most distinctions. Baby Boomers are people who had to postpone many things because of the Depression and World War II. They were "eager to start families and looked forward to having children because they were confident that the future would be one of comfort and prosperity." Additionally, during this time, many "Corporations grew larger and more profitable, labor unions promised generous wages and benefits to their members, and consumer goods were more plentiful and affordable than ever before. As a result, many Americans felt certain that they could give their families all the material things that they themselves had done without."

### *Millennials*

The Millennial cohort, born after Generation X, includes Generation Y from the 1980s through the mid-2000s. There are 69.2 million Millennials (ages: 18-35 in 2016) that matched or equaled 69.7 million Baby Boomers. Many market research groups study generations to understand their thinking as consumers. The Millennials are considered as those born into the world of technology and social media from various sources. Another essential attribute of the Millennials is their racial and ethnic diversity.

Data shows that millennials, unlike their parents' generation, are ushering in an age when minorities will lead the U.S. population. They do not desire to marry early; they are the most educated generation, as well as having a majority that remains undereducated. Millennials have entered the workforce amid a sluggish economy are underemployed, and despite those hard realities, they are optimistic about what their future holds.

### *Post-Millennials*

The final focus generation cohort is Post-Millennials. Post-Millennials or Centennials are born during the turn of the century from 1997 to the present. This generation has many names. A few other common descriptive names for this Post-

Millennial cohort are Generation Z (Gen Z) or iGeneration. This generation is characterized as the generation that lives in a world of continuous updates; therefore, they can process information faster than other generations, thanks to apps like Snapchat, Vine, and Tiktok. This group's attention spans might be significantly lower than Millennials. They have the tech ability to create documents on their school computer, do research on their phone or Tablet, take notes on a notepad, and then finish in front of the T.V. with a laptop face-timing a friend. Gen Z's can quickly and efficiently shift between work and play, with multiple distractions going on in the background; they are more likely to go straight into the workforce, opting out of the traditional route of higher education, and instead of finishing school online. Gen Z's are more entrepreneurial than Millennials; they were born into a world overrun with technology; therefore, what was taken as amazing and inspiring inventions, are now taken as a given for them. Gen Z is big on individuality, and they are global."

**FOCUS GROUP FORMING REFLECTIONS:**

What are some commonalities between the three-generation cohorts? (Consider the information above about characteristics of each generation and list below your ideas.)

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**CREATING A SURVEY**

To initiate the focus group, create for them a survey to help develop an understanding of their diversity (having demographic questions) and knowledge base. Using the website such as SurveyMonkey.com or Google Forms. Create analysts and statics for the Focus group and review the results. The above websites are excellent for this process. Demographics are definitely needed when developing a survey. They are valuable tools for learning how the different groups consider the topics based on the church's congregants' diversity. The ability to measure the group's attributes will help to determine the best overall outcome desired.

*SUGGESTED DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS*

- Age
- Gender

- Ethnicity
- Marital Status
- Your Church zip code?

*SUGGESTED SURVEY QUESTIONS:*

Using the answer options such as: Always, Usually, Sometimes, Rarely, Never, and Do not know, are:

- Are there ministries at The Church that assist with trauma(s) of the Black experience in America?
- Are you aware of the disparities in your church community?
- Is Church History taught and discussed?
- Is Black Theology discussed or taught regularly?
- Do generations work together in ministries?

The survey's object is to create questions for the Focus group that guides the process of learning what members of The Church know about the topics of concern for ministry improvement.

The survey results highlight three foci of this research: first, Black Church History's importance with regular discussions and presentations in The Church study. Second, Black Theology needs to consistently teach congregants to bridge the gap between generations and address African Americans' systemic trauma in this nation. Third, Cross-Generational Engagement to learn about each other's lives, recognize each other's values and establish best practices to engage Black youth in every facet of The Church. The results summarize that help through a traumatic experience is split between doing and rarely or never done, Black Church History is 62.50% rarely or never taught, Black Theology is 83.33% rarely or never explained, the lives of Black youth is 87.50% rarely or never addressed, ways to be impactful spiritually, socially, and culturally are 70.84% desired. 83.33% of those in this group believe youth's voices should be heard on







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- Most manageable issues to achieve.

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## **"WHAT IS THE BLACK CHURCH?"**

The "What Is The Black Church?" video presented by Louis Love, Thabiti Anyabwile, and Tony Carter on "The Front Porch" highlights pastors, church leaders, and parishioners' understanding of The Black Church and its historical existence.

A general expression of Christian Theology has not always included adequate inclusion of the Black Church. Some may think that discussing the existence of The Black Church is not essential for Christian growth. Often it is expressed that it does not mirror the universal church described in the book of Revelations 7:9, "After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands." For many, including this author, the joy of experiencing celebration to God by all people groups is something to look forward to and establish here on earth, "Thy Kingdom Come." Nevertheless, to expect that celebratory praise without addressing the reality of the separation of the ethnic Church and The Black Church's legitimacy is to ignore American and Black History, which is a significant part of The Black Church's education.

Including viewing this video as an instrument to educate participants about The Black Church's history is impactful. Consider the questions below to stimulate conversations with participants following the viewing of the video. The questions may be presented in a discussion group or as a handout with fill-in-the-blank participatory form

learning with the video and using technology to provide participants with links to the needed information.

## **PART 1: "WHAT IS THE BLACK CHURCH?" DISCUSSION VIDEO FILL-IN-THE-BLANK**

Below is a fill-in-the-blank form for leadership to provide to the Focus group to use for discussion. This form can be distributed by email to participants as a resource as they watch the video. *Part One is the form without answers; Part Two is the answer sheet that contains additional information for discussion.* Part One: FILL-IN-THE-BLANKS while listening and viewing the YouTube video, "What is the Black Church?" Click on this link: <https://youtu.be/qiZSpAWD5vY>.

*(This form was created from results presenting this video to the Focus group selected by this investigator.)*

1. Name of one African-American congregations that are part of predominantly white denominations: Black \_\_\_\_\_ Baptist Church.
2. The Black Church is the place where the preacher is \_\_\_\_\_, the music is \_\_\_\_\_, the mother's are \_\_\_\_\_, and we \_\_\_\_\_ all day.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ Church became the first black denomination.
4. The Black Church has been \_\_\_\_\_ as long as the Church. It has been around biblically speaking, with the Church in \_\_\_\_\_.
5. In the United States, The Black Church was birthed out of \_\_\_\_\_. This is one of the things that has given its \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Here, the African Church at its best and for most of its history is the expression of Christianity with the \_\_\_\_\_ in this country.
7. The African or Black Church was:
  - a. concern for \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. marrying of \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. proper with \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. concern for \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ slavery
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_ for civil rights.
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_ for neighbor
  - h. shaped by \_\_\_\_\_
8. When the primary driving force behind The Black Church becomes \_\_\_\_\_, the Church begins to \_\_\_\_\_ at its

9. It was \_\_\_\_\_ that forced Absalom Jones and Richard Allen out of the Methodist Church and put African Americans in the balcony even after raising funds to build a building.
10. The African Church is the \_\_\_\_\_ in American Christianity.

## **PART TWO: ANSWER AND DISCUSSION FORM**

This Answer Sheet and Discussion Form may be used as a handout emailed to participants for a separate Black Church History discussion. This suggestion should enhance the information's absorption and provide clarity, listed as a comment during the evaluation from the initial presentation. There are more references to the video in this form than questions asked in Part One to allow leadership to dive deeper into the video's material. Questions and answers in Part One are in **RED**.

- Name those African-American congregations that are part of predominantly white denominations:
  - Black *Southern* Baptist Church
  - Black PCA Church
  - What does PCA mean? Presbyterian Church of America
- The Black Church is the place where the preacher is black, the music is the gospel, the mothers are praying, and we stay all day.
- The Black Church is not monolithic.
- The Black Church was birth through a hush harbor Christianity in the south.
- What is a hush harbor Christianity? The religious worship that slaves practice not under the eye and the supervision of white masters and plantation churches.
- Independent Black congregations sprang up in the late 1700s to 1816.
- The AME Church became the first black denomination.
- AME is the abbreviation for what words?
- The Black Church has inputs from many sources.
  - Slave resistance
  - The Institutional Church, which borrows a lot from white evangelical churches.
  - Influences of other cultural kinds of patterns, i.e., Africanisms or developments in African-American history.
  - All those things are kind of tributaries to what we call The Black Church.
- The Black Church has been around as long as The Church has been around biblically speaking, with The Church in Africa and Northern Africa in the Middle East.
- In the United States, The Black Church was birthed out of suffering and

- oppression. These experiences give The Black Church its longevity and strength.
- The language of liberation is complex. Another way of looking at what is seen is that hope for justice and hope for liberation and freedom. What sustains it is not as political praxis. It is a hope in God.
  - Here, the African Church is best and, for most of its history, is Christianity's expression with the most integrity in this country.
  - The African or Black Church was:
    - concern for *justice*
    - marrying of *theology*
    - proper with *ethics*
    - doing those things in a *very sound Orthodox biblical way*.
    - concern for salvation
    - endured slavery
    - marched for civil rights.
    - cared for neighbor
    - shaped by scripture.
  - When the primary driving force behind The Black Church becomes a political-economic agenda, The Church begins to *crumble* at its foundation.
  - The way back restores the foundations of the Word of God itself, allowing that to be our *primary* driving force.
  - In The Black Church, we have broad camps that look at each other with critiques.
    - We all ought to hear each camp.
    - The camp with God's Word as its foundation will be the most irrelevant to the more significant number of black life issues.
  - Why racialize the church?
    - There is no problem with the ethnic expression of the church.
      - There is no problem with an ethnic church in Mongolia.
      - We do not have a problem with ethnic churches among the Saudis in Saudi Arabia.
      - There is no problem with an ethnic African-American church in the broader American context.
    - White folks created the African-American.
      - It was racism that forced Absalom Jones and Richard Allen out of the Methodist Church and put African Americans in the balcony even after raising funds to build a building.
      - It is that prejudice that created an African-American church.
      - The Black Church's legitimacy is born out of its genuine faith despite racism.
      - The Black Church is born out of its desire to worship God in a

context where people were trying to circumscribe that.

- **The African Church is the greatest miracle in American Christianity.**
  - The descendants of slaves came to saving faith in the slave owners; God is amazing.
  - The Black Church does not need an excuse to exist.
  - The more questionable Church is The Church that forced The Black Church into existence by failing to love its brother through its racism and sin.
  -

### **THE PRE-TEST**

Following the viewing of the video, participants will take a Pretest. This test's purpose is to continue the pedagogical approach of hands-on-minds-on learning. The Pre-Test questions reflect information discussed in the video and items specifically on Black Church History, Black Theology, Trauma in the urban community, The Church's community engagement, and the membership's knowledge of these concerns.

Below are questions asked in the Pre-Test from the Focus group used to develop this workbook. The questions include demographic reference, academic reference, local historical reference, and the previous paragraph's topics. Some questions are about issues never discussed. Inserting unprecedented topics broadens the participants' perspective and allows leadership to interject other concerns or reference points. Note the final question grants participants to select dates for Zoom Sessions.

#### *Pretest Questions*

- Age
  - 0 - 15 years old
  - 16 - 30 years old
  - 31 - 45 years old
  - 46 – 60

- 61 - 75
- 75+
- Prefer not to answer
- Gender
  - Male
  - Female
  - Transgender
  - Neutral Gender
  - Prefer not to answer.
- What description below reflects the State of The Black Church today?
  - Technology deficient
  - Acutely traumatized
  - Narcoleptic
  - All the above
  -
- What do the letters ACE stand for?
  - African Colored Episcopalians
  - Adverse Childhood Experiences
  - The Hardware Store
  - American Christian Effects
- What should be the focus of the Urban Black Church today?
  - Preserving Black Culture
  - Social and political engagement
  - Community engagement
  - Making disciples
- Select the environmental factors that affect the health of the resident's K.C. Eastside?
  - Prevalence of poverty,
  - Older housing stock
  - Unavailable employment
  - Low graduation rate
  - Lack of transportation
  - Food desert
- Which District in Kansas City is the "Blackest"?
  - District 2
  - District 4
  - District 6
  - District 3
- What were freed Black called when they arrived in Kansas City after the Civil

War?

- Slaves
- Monarchs
- Exodusters
- Stragglers
- What is Black Theology?
  - The study of Black preaching
  - The value of The Black Church for oppressed people
  - The study of a Black God
  - A phrase that alludes to the contemporary Black Church
- What does every generation desire?
  - National unity
  - Homeownership
  - Successful future
  - Healthcare
  -
- Select the statements below that defines the purpose of cross-generational ministries.
  - To create generations that are free to be vocational
  - A congregation's intentional gathering of generations in mutual serving, sharing, or learning to live out being the body of Christ to each other and the greater community
  - Focus on the mission of the church and stay in step with each other
  - Look for new, innovative, and creative ways to breathe life into the church
  - Allow families to develop and create lasting disciplining ministry opportunities leadership in their homes
- Select the date and time below to be on a Focus group Zoom Session? (Example below)
  - Saturday, August 15th, 5 pm—6 pm
  - Sunday, August 16th, 2 pm—3 pm
  - Tuesday, August 18<sup>th</sup>, 7 pm – 8 pm
  -

### **FOCUS GROUP POWERPOINT/VIDEO PRESENTATION**

The focus group participants lived throughout the Greater KCMO Metropolitan area. Three Zoom sessions were scheduled to allow the participants to select dates and times that fit their schedule. The focus group Zoom session's value is the leader's

presentation of all the material, to allow participants to ask questions about issues and concerns, and to provide interaction between participants. To compensate for their location and accessibility, a Zoom Session replaced the bible study and sermon. Later this after all the Zoom sessions were completed, a pre-recorded Powerpoint/Video was made. Using this technology maximized participation in a group for individuals set. If a participant could not attend the Zoom Group Session, sending the pre-recorded Youtube Video link of the presentation by email or text message opens the opportunities for one hundred percent participation.

The average student's attention span for lecturing is between ten to fifteen minutes before it begins to decline. "Teachers must do as much as possible to increase students' motivation to 'pay attention as well as try to understand what students are really thinking about during class." The presentation should last no longer than thirty minutes, followed by questions and answers, and information concerning the following steps, taking the post-test. Including books, videos, and references are extremely useful to the participants. The link to Cross Generation Engagement Utilizing Black Church History and Black Theology may be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/Bz0jFmkd0P0>.

### **THE POST – TEST**

Succeeding the focus group Zoom session is the post-test. A successful PowerPoint presentation will increase the percentages of participants, making properly selected answers. It is suggested having participants complete the post-test immediately following the Zoom Session, guaranteeing that they take the Post-Test. Explaining the

process for taking the Post-Test during the Zoom session will prepare the participants to pay attention to the presentation and know to expect to take the Post-Test at the end while still in the Zoom session.

The pre and post-test goals and the outcome help the participants begin to understand the "brave space" being created to hear from them their personal experience in this group activity. The brave space discovered through testing will guide the One-On-One Interviews with the participants.

Interviews launch the crucial step of learning what works and what will not work in the congregation. It is a time of confession. The participant's experience is center stage as an expert, revealing leadership and ideas they are attempting to grasp.

### **ONE – ON – ONE INTERVIEW**

The interview is a vital and personally rewarding aspect of the project for this researcher. Having a conversation confidentially and privately with each participant highlighted an ascension toward a more in-depth insight into framing best practices for developing an effective cross-generational ministry in line with the congregation and community's needs.

The key is asking the questions and allowing the respondents to answer from their perspective. Leadership must begin by sharing disclaimers or guidelines for the interview.

Below are statements shared with participants in the Focus group on this project:

1. Participants are not limited to give responses in relationships to what they have learned or heard during the project.
2. If they disagree with any issues, this is where their voice is heard.
3. If they agree, this is their opportunity to tell leadership why.

4. If they have any additional resources, feel free to share that information.

Providing the participants with the questions in advance helps them write down their responses and formulate their thoughts. Be advised that some participants will not become familiar with the questions, but others will.

When creating the interview questions, make sure they reflect the survey questions and the Pre and Post-Tests. Ask open-ended questions that will require the participant to list their thoughts and not respond, saying yes or no. Below are the interview questions used in this project for review.

1. *What does change, trauma, and faith have in common?*
2. *How have these variables contributed to "Black Flight?" (Why black people move out of the city.)*
3. *What are the reasons some young people leave The Church?*
4. *What would be an exciting topic for discussion on Black Church History?*
5. *What would be an interesting topic(s) on Black Liberation Theology to discuss?*
6. *What topic(s) would you like to discuss with older/younger church members, and why?*
7. *How could the pastor provide opportunities for youth and young adult to voice their ideas about church policy and administration?*
8. *Do you feel there is a generation gap in the Black Church? Why or Why not?*
9. *What topics could a pastor preach/teach to help bridge the generation gap?*
10. *What could The Urban Black Church do to be faithful cross-generationally to both congregants who commute in and the urban community?*

Ending the project with the interview questions builds a relationship between the leadership and the participant. It puts into practice all the proper steps needed to make the change, address trauma, and build faith in the persons selected for this project and, subsequently, other forthcoming projects. It shows the participants the new way of communicating and listening to the congregants. It is the last word and last connection

(which is only the beginning of a new connection) the member will have with leadership and this program's process. It is the most empowering, transformative, innovative, and creative action step of this entire project.

## EVALUATION

Below are the nine evaluation questions presented using Survey Monkey to the participants. The evaluation's final two questions asked the participants if they felt there were better processes for presenting this information—the benefits that an evaluation provides aid in improving the project's questions, activities, and presentations. Without an evaluation, the participant's conclusion could be incorrect based on the developer's biases.

- Did you learn about Black Church History?
- Did you learn about Black Theology?
- Did you learn about Cross-Generational Ministry?
- Did you learn about trauma in the African American community?
- Were you able to express your idea(s) on youth and young adult participation?
- Do you believe you were heard when given your concerns about the generation gap?
- Do you feel the topics of discussion were relevant and beneficial to The Black Church?
- Are there any changes that need to be made in the presentation?
- Are there any inclusions that need to be added to the presentation?
- 

## WHY CROSS-GENERATIONAL ENGAGEMENT?

### *WHAT IS CROSS-GENERATIONAL MINISTRY?*

In Holly Catterton-Allen's book, "*InterGenerate*" is the definition of cross-generation ministries as: "A congregation's intentional gathering of generations in mutual serving, sharing, or learning to live out being the body of Christ to each other and the greater community."

*Why do Cross-Generational Ministries Work*

Baby Boomers were "eager to start families...and looked forward to having children because they were confident that the future would be one of comfort and prosperity." , Millennials are optimistic about what their future holds." Gen Z is big on individuality, and they are more global." Interestingly, all generations want the same thing a successful future. They differ in how to obtain it. Anne Streaty-Wimberly states," When we celebrate together and care for one another, we are in hope-building vocation because, by our actions, we affirm and offer the promise of hope in a persons' life." Many elders in The Urban Black Church congregations have invested hope into the next generation's life. Building this hope was a crucial factor in their existence. This training provides socialization for Black youth and spiritual, theological, and psychological praxis. Streaty-Wimberly discusses the rootedness of preserving the rich heritage that stems from teaching Black youth the truth about their history and provides holistic ministries "must be intentional within the Black Church." For Anne E. Streaty-Wimberly, in *Soul Stories* discovering "liberation and vocation evolve from communal awareness and demonstration of celebratory and caring kinship" is the purpose and impact of cross-generational ministries!

### ***REFLECTION ON CROSS GENERATIONAL ENGAGEMENT***

- *Begin asking: How did you learn what success looks like?*
  - Use proverbs or storytelling.
    - Link your stories using scripture first.
    - Link your stories using African American heritage stories second.
    - Link your stories using everyday life situations last.
  - Use topics gleaned from your survey and interviews.
- Recognize the "Seven Dimensions of Liberation," told by Anne Streaty-Wimberly
  - Spiritual Liberation – the difference between doing things man's way or

God's way.

- Ethical Liberation – seeing ourselves and others through God's eyes.
- Material Liberation – liberation from material need to material sustenance
- Socio-Political Liberation – taking seriously civic duty
- Psychosocial Liberation – liberation from denigration and dehumanization to positive self-valuing as individuals, families, and ethnic, cultural group
- Educational Liberation – liberation to active learning and a vision for living
- Communal Liberation – seeing life as a gift worthy of sharing
- Jessica Stolling, in *Intergenerate, Chapter Seven*, lists five principles that pastors and church leaders use to break down the walls and give all generations a place to belong together. The sixth principle is of the writer's opinion.
  - Unlocking understanding – is a leader who identifies with every member bringing their perspectives together for the benefit of all
  - Unlocking appreciation – adapt to meet your members where they are.
  - Unlocking collaboration – grouping people of similar age is appropriate, but it should balance with opportunities to learn and grow with other generations by:
    - Creating cross-generation committees
    - Developing cross-generation ministries
    - Multiple age group worship, classes, small groups, and discussions
    - Include people of various ages on your boards, leadership teams.
    - Create a learning curve for younger members.
  - Unlocking communication – use a variety of messaging
    - Digital
    - Storytelling
    - Videos
    - Questions and Answers times that allow people to relate the issues personally
    - Branding
    - Make the message understandable to all people
    - Modeling to help share your story. Asking:
      - Why are you having this conversation/meeting? (Intent)
      - What action steps will be needed? (Behavior)
      - How will you know you are successful? (Results)
  - Unlocking wisdom sharing – institute reverse mentoring, where learning opportunities are gathered from younger members. Allowing them to be an expert.
    - Have youth interview the older members
    - Create forums for wisdom sharing (budgeting, cooking, car

maintenance, mobile phone tips.) Any person with a skill can be a leader

- Help young people discover their identity, talent, passion, and calling
- Celebrate Milestones
- Promote Responsibility
- Create a Cross-Generation Rite of Passage
- Help Young people as they wrestle with:
  - Who Am I? (Identity)
  - Where Do I Fit In? (Belonging)
  - What difference do I make? (Purpose)
- Unlocking the church (*the writer's interjection*) – pastors must serve the community as passionately as the membership. Implementing this principle builds growth in the church and a broader measuring tool discussed in Chapter One. The pastor is leaving the ninety-nine and going after the one. (Matthew 18:12-14, Parable of the Lost Sheep) The pastor can leave the ninety-nine (Church) because of the pastor/shepherd's teaching and training to understand their gifts and purpose while the "one" (those struggling in the community) needs to learn the teaching and gain the training. Suggestions for going to the "one" for a pastor could be:
  - Substitute teaching at neighborhood school
  - Counseling at homeless shelters, women's shelters, prison, and immigration programs
  - Coaching sports teams
  - Tutoring and working with students not reading on grade level
  - Support programs at college campus Student Unions
  - Prioritizing relationships at places where youth and young adults gather.

As stated in the introduction that deserves repeating, unlocking these principles demonstrates cross-generational ministries' power to open doors and paths to life. On the other side of the decreasing and declining participation that we are experiencing, others have predicted it will happen to The Black Church. Is it possible that today, just as in John Wesley's time, The Church is not challenging the membership?

1. New disciples just do not walk through the church's front doors on Sunday mornings.
2. The focus of the congregation must move beyond membership to discipleship.

3. Some people will never become "members" of a congregation. Yet, they will grow into contagious and committed disciples of Jesus Christ.
4. Moving the Church's focus from information overload to transformational engagement allows new people to find their place in the congregation.

Another challenge by Powe and Smothers is that the church must address and overcome the "youth or next-generation getting on the nerves of adults" syndrome. Powe and Smothers offer five ways to address this challenge. First, allow young people to be The Church right now. Second, teach the youth their Christian legacy. Third, recognize that today's youth are not being "brought up" in The Church. Fourth, give youth a voice in The Church. Finally, determine an agenda for what the youth need to know.

### **SURVEY RESULTS FOR BRIDGING THE GAP**

The survey results highlight three foci of this research: first, Black Church History's importance with regular discussions and presentations in The Church study. Second, Black Theology needs to consistently teach congregants to bridge the gap between generations and address African Americans' systemic trauma in this nation. Third, Cross-Generational Engagement to learn about each other's lives, recognize each other's values and establish best practices to engage Black youth in every facet of The Church. The results summarize that help through a traumatic experience is split between doing and rarely or never done, Black Church History is 62.50% rarely or never taught, Black Theology is 83.33% rarely or never explained, the lives of Black youth are 87.50% rarely or never addressed, ways to be impactful spiritually, socially, and culturally are 70.84% desired. 83.33% of those in this group believe the voices of youth should be heard on policy and administration issues. Consultation of the pastor with youth and

young adults should occur a great deal or a lot 91.67% of the time. To further address these concerns, this Focus group was interviewed to obtain ideas and suggestions to enhance these finds.

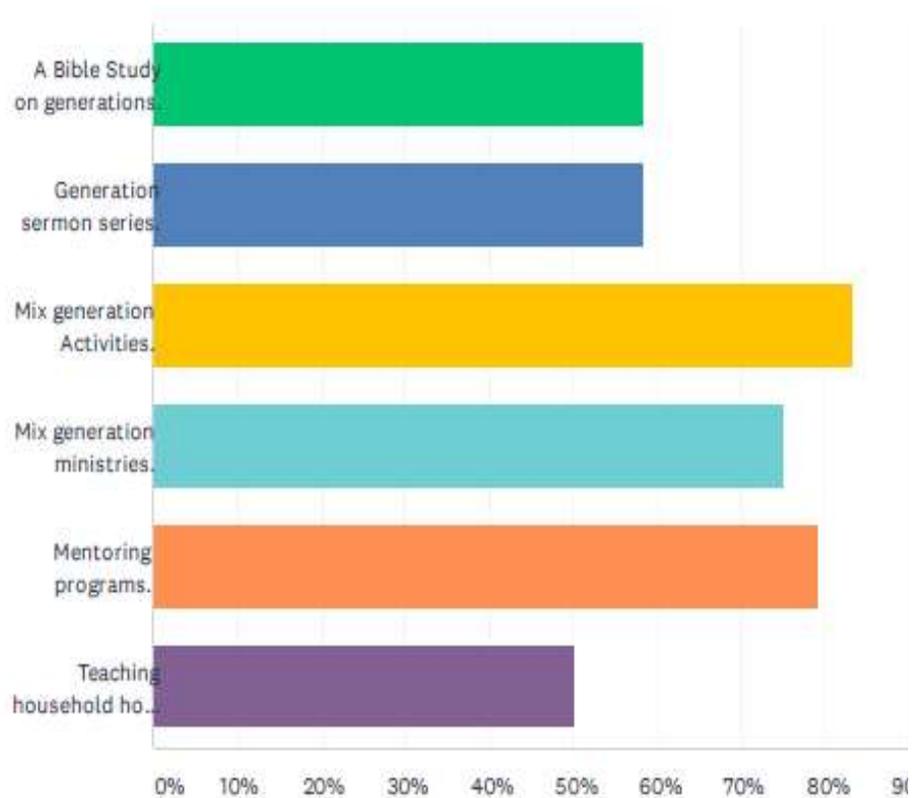
In the graph below are the results of the survey taken by the focus group. They selected developing mix generational activities and mentoring programs as the top two ways of bridging that generation gap. These two ways support the importance of giving youth and young adults a voice that will provide leadership with ideas on approaching, educating, and involving the next generation. "Living in your own skin is not something that happens quickly. It takes what it takes," says Father Gregory Boyle in his book *Tattoos On the Heart*. As the founder of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles, CA, Boyle ministers to ex-offenders. Father Gregory helps his constituents recognize "the slow work of God is through being compassionate to friends, family, enemies, and their kids." Like Boyle, the Focus Group emphasizes the need for compassion and authenticity among Black Church pastors and leaders to minister to the next generation. Here are more focus group suggestions that define the two ways:

- Be open, educate, and be transparent.
- Create a safe environment for discussion.
- Put youth and young adults on the Pastor's Board.
- Have a suggestion box with topics from each generation.
- Value the views and opinions of each generation. Help different generations see where you are coming from.
- Create textile hands-on, building communication, and dialogue groups. Have frequent surveys.
- Create a Focus Group.
- Open up internship experiences for teens and young adults and provide a tiny stipend.
- The pastor must ask the young people their opinions.
- The pastor should hold church meetings after bible studies so people can ask questions.

- Use technology with surveys and round table meetings.

## Q17 What would bridge the gap in the Black church bet younger attendees? Check all that apply.

Answered: 24 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESP
A Bible Study on generations.	58.33%
Generation sermon series.	58.33%
Mix generation Activities.	83.33%
Mix generation ministries.	75.00%
Mentoring programs.	79.17%
Teaching household how to do mission.	50.00%
Total Respondents: 24	

## **APPENDIX B: BRIDGING THE GENERATION GAP**