

A Church for the Community:
A Model of Church-Based Community Development
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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	5
A Church for the Community: A Model of Church-Based Community Development	6
Chapter 1: Defining Poverty and Community Development	9
1.1. Conceptualizing Poverty	9
1.1.a. Poverty in Economic and Material Terms.....	9
1.1.b. Poverty in Relational Terms.....	10
1.1.c. Poverty as Unjust Systems.....	11
1.2. Defining Community Development	12
1.2.a. Development as Freedom.....	13
1.2.b. Social Welfare and Human Development.....	14
1.2.c. Transformational Development.....	14
Chapter 2: Foundational Principles: The Church and Community Development	16
2.1. What is “the Church”? : The Universal Church and Local Churches	16
2.2. Church Engagement in Community Development	17
2.2.a. Why Churches Should Engage in Community Development: Biblical Basis.	18
2.2.b. How Churches Should Engage in Community Development: Best Practices.	21
2.3. Examples of Church Engagement From the Literature	25
2.3.a. Churches as Natural Fits for Development Work.	25
2.3.b. Contemporary Examples of Church Engagement (From the Literature).....	26

Chapter 3: Case Study of Delft, Cape Town, South Africa	31
3.1. Profile: Cape Town and Delft	31
3.2. Zoe Family Church.....	33
3.3. Zoe Incubation Centre (<i>formerly Zoe Academy of Skills</i>).....	34
Chapter 4: Towards a New Model of Church-Based Community Development.....	37
4.1. Church Engagement in Community Development: A Model From Delft	39
4.1.a. “Come and See”	39
4.1.b. Build Real Relationships: Let Their Joys and Sorrows Become Yours.....	42
4.1.c. Be Curious.	43
4.1.d. Listen Well.....	44
4.1.e. Be of and for the Community, Long-Term.....	46
4.1.f. Work to Transform Mindsets.....	49
4.1.g. See Solutions, Interrogate Everything.	52
4.1.h. Value Wisdom, Character, and Faith.	53
4.1.i. Embrace Brokenness.....	55
4.1.j. Take Care With Power.	56
4.2 What Inhibits Community Development?: The Commuter Church Phenomenon.....	58
4.3 Summary: Principles for Church-Based and Holistic Development.....	60
Chapter 5: Conclusion	62

Abstract

Within our globalized society, churches have unique roles to play as agents of social change. In the context of the author's fieldwork in South Africa, this thesis investigates the idea that God calls His Church—as His representatives—to engage in long-term social action to alleviate poverty and bring about transformative change in communities. I begin with definitions of poverty, community development, and “the Church”. These definitions are followed by an exploration of Biblical reasons for engaging with social change, an examination of current best practices for carrying out such engagement, and a survey of examples from the academic literature of contemporary church engagement. Next, a case study of a church in the Cape Town suburb of Delft will be presented, followed by a model of church-based community development (consisting of 10 principles) drawn from the case study. This paper will demonstrate that local churches, as God's gathered people within a community, are called to seek the welfare of their communities. By engaging in holistic efforts to alleviate poverty in local and global settings, they can become conduits for transformational community development.

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A Church for the Community: A Model of Church-Based Community Development

The overarching structural framework of the 21st century can be understood as globalization. No country, community, or individual seeking to survive in the current “survival of the fittest” global landscape can escape it. Communities and individuals must either adapt or risk becoming extinct. Although the globalization system provides benefits, the policies and practices underlying it are often unevenly applied in ways that primarily benefit those in power. Globalization has failed to level the global playing field or help many citizens of developing countries achieve economic prosperity. Thus, billions of people globally still live in economic poverty. Within this context, the Church—represented by Christians and churches in local communities around the world—has a unique role to play as an agent of social change.

I grew up in an evangelical Christian family in New York; going to church was the expected and normal Sunday activity. For most of my life, I had little exposure to poverty or the complex impact it has on every aspect of a person’s daily existence. Although the stories of Jesus healing the sick, feeding the five thousand, and caring for those in need became familiar, the only real life experiences I could connect them to was the periodic fevers or colds that I and people I knew suffered from. My first significant encounter with poverty came in college, when, in a period of doubt, I spent a year away from the church interning for a campus-based non-profit on its hunger and homelessness campaign. When I encountered friends from church during the course of conducting an educational or advocacy campaign on campus, their response was often to shy away from me with an awkward hello; their perception of me as the “liberal tree-hugger” was one they did not know how to reconcile with evangelical Christian

faith. From this experience and my first job in a non-profit working in a public housing community, I came into increasing contact with the issues surrounding poverty, homelessness, and oppression. I also began to notice the many passages of Scripture calling God's people to care for the poor and those passages in which Jesus demonstrates tangible compassion for the poor and oppressed. As I read these passages, I could not help but also become aware of the dissonance between what I read in the Bible and what I experienced in churches. If God calls His people to care for the poor, and Jesus demonstrated this care throughout his ministry on Earth, then why were the Christians I knew so uncomfortable with my involvement in poverty-related issues? Why did I have no exposure to these issues in 18 years of attending various churches?

My experiences in college and from my first non-profit job launched me on what is a lifelong path to reconcile the tension between Biblical teaching on social action and what I perceived as the Church's lack of desire to participate in affecting social change. Churches have had an uneven history of participation in social change efforts that target poverty alleviation, for example. Beginning with the World Congress on Evangelism's Berlin Congress in 1966, which affirmed the need for the Church to respond to areas of social concern but set no guidelines for action (Christian, 2011), similar gatherings of global Christian leaders have approached the Church's role in social action with varying emphases: Embracing social concern while maintaining the primacy of preaching, declaring that social responsibility and evangelism go hand in hand, and affirming that evangelism and social involvement are both necessary expressions of Christian faith (Emedi, 2010). In the 1980s, a major event on evangelical social action resulted in a document that proposed considering transformation as the Christian

alternative to development; this same document devoted significant effort to understanding the causes of poverty (Christian, 2011). This evolution of the Church's approach to social action is evidence that at differing points in evangelical Church history, social action has been understood as contradictory to, tangential to or separate from the core mission of the Church.

In the contemporary United States, churches engage predominantly in charity-based transactions: giving money, holding large fundraising events, and doing periodic community service days. However, they often do not take time for deeper reflection on ways they can act to bring about lasting transformation. Giving money, in particular, can create dependency and conflict, eroding the dignity of the "poor" recipients as they come to view themselves as charity cases for the wealthy (Lupton, 2011). John Perkins (1993), founder of the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), wrote that charity is but a beginning point and not the final solution to urban poverty. He argued that, by themselves, "acts of charity can be dangerous because givers can feel good about actions that actually accomplish very little, or even create dependency...Their sense of satisfaction takes away any motivation to seek more creative long-range development strategies" (Perkins, 1993, p. 23). Yet, as this paper will demonstrate, God calls His Church—as His representatives—to engage in long-term social action as agents of eternal and transformative change in the world.

Focusing on the issue of alleviating poverty through community development efforts, this paper will aim to answer these questions in the context of the author's ethnographic fieldwork in Cape Town, South Africa: What is the role of local churches in community development? What can churches in the United States learn about seeking the welfare of our

communities from Christians in the developing world? The author will begin by defining what is meant by poverty, community development, and “the Church”. This will be followed by an exploration of Biblical reasons for engaging with social change, an examination of current best practice principles for how such engagement should be carried out, and a survey of church engagement examples from the academic literature. Next, a case study of a church in the Cape Town suburb of Delft will be presented. Finally, a model of church-based community development drawn from the author’s experiences in Delft will be offered. Local churches, as God’s gathered people within a community, are called to seek the welfare of their communities (cf. Jeremiah 29:7). By engaging in holistic efforts to alleviate poverty in local and global settings, they can become conduits for transformational community development.

Chapter 1: Defining Poverty and Community Development

1.1. Conceptualizing Poverty

It is useful to begin an exploration of poverty alleviation and community development with an understanding of key terms. Definitions of poverty should be unambiguous as possible, in order to establish a common platform upon which to build poverty alleviation strategies. Nevertheless, poverty is a complex term that does not fit easily into any single category or definition. This section will focus on three aspects of poverty: poverty in economic and material terms, poverty as relationships that do not work for well-being, and poverty as unjust systems.

1.1.a. Poverty in Economic and Material Terms.

The most common definition of poverty is in economic and material terms. Such a definition often begins with income categories. In its most recent *Global Monitoring Report*, the

World Bank (2015) identified four income categories (note: all figures are in U.S. dollars): Extreme poor (those living on less than \$1.25 a day), Moderate poor (an income of \$1.25 to \$4 a day), Vulnerable (an income of \$4 to \$10 a day), and Middle class and rich (an income of more than \$10 a day). Similarly, Sachs (2005) distinguished between three types of poverty: extreme (or absolute), moderate, and relative. Extreme poverty is characterized by the chronic inability to meet basic survival needs, such as accessing food, health care, safe drinking water, shelter, clothing, and affordable education (Sachs, 2005, p. 20). Moderate poverty is characterized by the ability to just barely meet basic needs, while relative poverty refers to those with a household income below a certain percentage of average national income and lack of access to goods required for social mobility (Sachs, 2005, p. 20).

Poverty may also be understood as a product of the distribution of wealth. The Credit Suisse Research Institute (2014) found that the bottom half of the world's population owns less than 1% of total global wealth, while the richest 1% of the population owns 48.2% of global wealth. In addition, it estimated that global median wealth has decreased every year since 2010 while the wealth of the top 10% has remained relatively unchanged (Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2014). These conclusions hint, not only at rising global wealth inequality, but also at the stagnating growth of wealth among the world's poorest residents.

1.1.b. Poverty in Relational Terms.

Poverty can also be understood in the context of relationships. This seems natural, since human beings are relational beings. It is important to consider that all relationships involve power dynamics and varying distributions of power. Thus, within a relational framework,

poverty can be understood through the lens of how power impacts individual and communal identity, as well as agency (Myers, 2011). In this view, poverty is a lack of power—both internal (psychological) and external (social structures). This lack of power impacts each of what Myers (2011) described as the five major human relationships: relationships with ourselves, our communities, those we call “Other”, our environment, and God. The Bible states that all human beings are marred by sin (Romans 6:23); thus, it follows that poverty is caused by sin. This sin leads to distortions and brokenness in all five human relationships. In this way, poverty is characterized by relationships that do not work and that isolate, devalue or abandon some individuals (Myers, 2011).

In addition, poverty also involves a distortion or loss of an individual’s true identity. Because we all suffer under the marring effects of sin, this conception allows for a view of poverty that encompasses the materially wealthy. Thus, the materially wealthy also suffer from a relational poverty. This type of poverty leads them to believe that their dominant socio-economic positions and material possessions are earned, and that they can thus use their advantages for their own well-being or to “play god” in the lives of others (Myers, 2011). They fail to recognize the common humanity of the materially poor and their responsibility to use their resources to care for others. This responsibility is reflected in Jesus’ assertion that “everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required” (Luke 12:48).

1.1.c. Poverty as Unjust Systems.

In addition to its economic and relational definitions, poverty can also be understood from a systemic perspective. It is embedded within the world’s social, economic, political,

cultural, and religious systems. Those who are poor are trapped inside a larger framework of disempowerment within which each of these interacting systems contributes to their poverty (Myers, 2011). These systems are bolstered by unjust structures. The wealthy often use these unjust structures—ones that they designed to generate wealth for themselves—to oppress the poor and increase their wealth. The structures treat the poor as objects to be manipulated rather than people to be inspired to create their own change (Lopez, 2009). Thus, the wealthy take advantage of unjust structures at the price of increasing poverty. Lopez (2009) argued that poverty in developing nations:

is not the product of compulsively lazy and hopelessly incapable people who lack the imagination to generate wealth. It is the product of selfish people who use unjust structures to increase their wealth, buy support and votes to maintain their privileges, and continue their accumulation of wealth. (p. 153)

The practices he described are perhaps most pronounced in developing nations that depend on wealthy nations for significant financial support. As the rich accumulate wealth and buy the ability to preserve their socio-economic privileges, the extent and rate of poverty increases.

1.2. Defining Community Development

Community development is one response to the conditions created by poverty. In a broad sense, community development involves a process of ongoing positive change (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). It starts “from the power in the powerless, from the literacy (and oracy) in the illiteracy, from the ability in disability...In other words, it sets out from where people are” (Carmen, as cited in Onwunta & August, 2012, p. 2). At its best, development is holistic. It aims

to effect change in the whole of human life (materially, social and spiritually); it is concerned with building and cultivating people and communities as wholes (World Council of Churches, 2011; Onwunta & August, 2012). Although development theories and definitions have emerged from numerous sectors, three definitions will be highlighted: development as freedom, sustainable human development, and transformational development.

1.2.a. Development as Freedom.

All human beings, by nature, have certain inherent freedoms. Sen (2000) believed that development involves removing the major sources of “unfreedom”, which include poverty, poor economic opportunities, and systematic social deprivation. He recognized five major types of freedoms: political, economic, social, transparency guarantees, and security. The poor often lack many—if not all—of these freedoms; they are trapped in “unfreedoms”. Thus, development should target the removal of “unfreedoms”, thereby bringing about increased opportunities for the poor to participate more fully in community and economic life. The freedom to participate in the market equally with others, for example, should be recognized as among the basic human freedoms (Sen, 2000). Similarly, freedom to participate in the market should include equal access to the open labor market for all of a country’s residents.

Sen (2000) asserted that poverty creates and exacerbates economic unfreedom, increasing a person’s vulnerability to the loss of other freedoms. To paraphrase Martin Luther King, Jr., unfreedom in one area of life is a threat to freedom in all of life. On the other hand, enhancing freedom in one sphere of life can have a catalytic and strengthening effect, for “freedoms of different kinds can strengthen one another” (Sen, 2000, p. 11). Ensuring all types

of freedom for a country's residents, then, is both the primary end and the means of development (Sen, 2000).

1.2.b. Social Welfare and Human Development.

Development can also be understood from the social welfare and human development school of thought. This perspective defines the work of development as increasing choices in all areas of human life. Martinussen (1997), in his summary of social welfare and human development theorists, pointed out that the social welfare perspective creates a link between expanding income and expanding choices; the strength of this link depends on the distribution of economic growth. Thus, a more even *distribution* of economic growth and better *use* of available resources matters more than numeric growth alone (Martinussen, 1997, emphasis added). A contemporary expansion upon this school of thought adds the idea of sustainable human development. Sustainable human development focuses on the importance of sustaining all forms of capital and resources—physical, human, financial, and environmental. Its goal is to enhance three areas of opportunities: to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge, and to access the resources needed for a decent standard of living (Martinussen, 1997).

1.2.c. Transformational Development.

Transformational development is an understanding of development based upon biblical principles. At its core, it is concerned with making human relationships right. It is clear, even to the casual observer, that we live in a world where human relationships with each other, God, and the natural world are broken. The Bible identifies this brokenness as the result of sin, and sheds light on the pervasive presence of oppressive powers and authorities. Yet, Christ's death

on the cross involved disarming these powers and authorities; thus, transformational development must involve redemption, declaring the good news of “the possibility of both personal and corporate liberation and redirection toward God” (Myers, 2011, p. 75). In Christ, God promises not only freedom from the oppression of sin and other powers, but restored relationships with ourselves, Himself, and His creation. Restored relationships are characterized by individuals who take seriously the words of Jesus, who, reiterating the Old Testament text, stated that God’s greatest commandments are to love God and love one’s neighbor (Matthew 22:37-39). Thus, loving God and neighbor are foundational to a Christian understanding of transformational development (Myers, 2011).

Transformational development, in the form of restoring right and just relationships, is also evidenced in the presence of what the Bible described as shalom. Shalom is fundamentally a relational concept that conveys the biblical ideal for human flourishing; it carries a sense of belonging to an authentic community (Myers, 2011). At its best, development that is truly transformational points to this vision of God’s future kingdom. Myers (2011) summarized what it means to do the work of development with this kingdom vision in mind:

The kingdom vision...is summarized by the idea of shalom: just, peaceful, harmonious, and enjoyable relationships with each other, ourselves, our environment, and God...whatever heals and restores body, mind, spirit, and community, all can be part of the better future toward which transformational development should point. (p. 175)

Chapter 2: Foundational Principles: The Church and Community Development

2.1. What is “the Church”? The Universal Church and Local Churches

To understand the role of churches in community development and social change, it is important to first explain what is meant by “the Church” and “churches”. Christians are a community of believers who, by confession, are part of a universal Church that represents Christ in the world. This Church was God’s idea; Jesus himself pointed forward to it when he told the apostle Peter that “on this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18) and the apostle Paul referred to Jesus as “the head of the body, the church” (Colossians 1:18). The universal Church, then, consists of people saved by Jesus and called *out* of the world to obey Jesus’ commands to carry out His mission *back into* the world—to make disciples and be Jesus’ witnesses to the world (cf. Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 1:8). Thus, the capital-C Church can be understood as the body of people all around the world who claim to follow Jesus, regardless of denomination (Stearns, 2010).

Individual Christians, however, also belong to churches that are embedded within local communities. These lowercase-c churches are the visible gathered people of God within a community. Though a local church may consist of people who do not believe in Jesus, in general it may be understood as a company of people professing to be saved through faith in Jesus who gather regularly to worship God, bear witness to the Gospel, fellowship through studying the Bible and through prayer, and look forward to the return of Jesus (Emedi, 2010). Nevertheless, it is easy to forget that these things we do during weekly services in church buildings, though good, are not the essence of what a church is. As Claiborne and Perkins (2009) reminded us,

“we don’t call a building ‘Church’. Rather, we are the Church. It is who we are—the Body, the Bride, the living incarnation of Jesus in His people” (p. 203). Our worship practices, then, are activities that people who belong to the Church do together while gathered in a local building.

2.2. Church Engagement in Community Development

In the United States, it often seems that “going to church” has replaced “being the church”, and little thought is given to the practice of approaching church like a consumer—shopping around for the church that best meets our needs and, if we are not satisfied with the product we get, simply getting up and changing churches (this trend and practice is expanded upon in Section 4.2). To “be the church” in a community, however, requires a different approach to church: one of seeking to belong to a community of God’s people that works to “promote change and growth within communities leading to sustainable change and transformation, where and when people are motivated and equipped to solve their own problems” (World Council of Churches, 2011, p. 331). This sense of sustainable transformation with community ownership of problems is the essence of transformational development. Within communities in which economic poverty and similar forms of injustice exists, then, churches need to be uncomfortable with the status quo that accepts these injustices as an inevitable part of our world; they need to embrace their identities as Jesus’ hands and feet. As God’s people and Jesus’ representatives located within communities, churches must return to the foundation of what Jesus meant His Church to be. This foundational purpose is articulated in multiple ways throughout the Bible.

2.2.a. Why Churches Should Engage in Community Development: Biblical Basis.

Hope, along with the will to keep struggling to end poverty and other injustices, are best sustained by a community of God's people. Such communities, expressed primarily through local churches, must hold forth God's redemptive hope by working for the good of all their neighbors. While the Israelites were exiled in Babylon, God instructed them to "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare" (Jeremiah 29:5-7). As God called Israel to seek Babylon's welfare, tying Babylon's welfare to its own, so He calls local churches and the global Church today to seek the good of their communities and world. Jesus' people are to be local churches and a united global Church that is "no longer the church against the world or the church in the world but the church for the world" (Groody, 2007, p. 187). The Church was God's idea; He designed it as a key strategy for transforming the world and building His kingdom. When we fail to recognize this, we miss the power that God releases when His people act collectively to channel—in an organized fashion—the assets of the whole body of Christ; we also compromise our ability as Christians to impact the world (Stearns, 2010).

God's people today are much like the ancient Israelites. We spend our energies on visible expressions of worship, thinking that our worship services and religious practices are what God wants. Yet, God's words to Israel indicate how He views true religion and reflect the centrality of justice to His character:

Is not this the fast that I choose, to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yolk, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your

bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? (Isaiah 58:6-7)

These are also God's words for His people today. He sees our religious practices and, in the absence of justice and compassion for the poor, says He hates them; instead, He commands His people to "let justice roll down like the waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24). Groody (2007) noted that Amos, in associating justice and righteousness with water (something Israel depended on for crops) is saying that "without justice, Israel's life would be a totally barren landscape; without concern for the poor the people of God are spiritually dead" (p. 39).

God did not limit the injunction to do justice and care for the poor to the Old Testament. Early in His ministry Jesus declared the substance of His own mission on Earth in Luke 4:16-21, where He stood up in the synagogue in front of the religious leaders of the day and read a prophecy about Himself from Isaiah 61:

And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set a liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." ...And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

(Luke 4:17-19, 21)

In one explanation of this passage, Stearns (2010) noted that this passage—Jesus’ “mission statement”—demonstrated that the gospel is much more than a proclamation of the good news of salvation; the *whole* gospel also includes a tangible compassion for the sick and poor, along with a commitment to justice (Stearns, 2010, p. 22). If we claim to follow Jesus, then, we must embrace and seek to live out His mission; His mission needs to become the Church’s mission. Jesus later taught that the way we treat the least is the way we treat Him: “As you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me...as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me” (Matthew 25:40, 45). Myers (2011) observed that Jesus’ words are not a call for “a warm and fuzzy sense of concern, but a command to stop, cross over to the other side of the road, and change the circumstances of someone who has been wronged” (p. 54). Jesus-followers are called, not just to right belief (which can remain internal) but to tangible, just action on behalf of those who are poor or wronged.

Part of Jesus’ call to follow in His footsteps also includes seeking justice through actions that redeem other domains of society. God’s intentions to transform all areas of society can be seen in passages such as Romans 8:19-22:

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.

In this passage, Paul spoke of God's whole creation as in captivity—or under the burden of—corruption and pain. He reminded his readers that the corruption and pain that fills God's created world is connected to the people of God; its freedom depends upon the revealing of God's children in all our sinless glory. At the end of the Bible, the apostle John gave us a picture of what a creation freed from bondage would look like when he described the city that is part of the new heaven and the new earth to come: It exudes God's glory, is radiant like a jewel, is made of pure gold, is adorned with twelve types of jewels, has no night, has nothing unclean in it, and contains the glory and honor (the best) of the nations (Revelations 21:10-13, 18-27). John's vision of a glorious and perfected future creation gives us something to strive for in the present. It gives us a future hope, something we can contribute to by working towards restoring and healing the broken pieces of our societies and the distorted elements of creation. Our work to restore the brokenness and heal the distortions around us thus becomes an expression of our faith and an embodiment of our God-given calling. Roberts (2007) captured this idea well:

Until our faith engages the whole of society, we will not see transformation...until our vision is expanded beyond what makes me feel good and successful to what brings the most glory to God, we'll just be piddling around playing church and being religious, all the while missing what God has called us to do. (p. 47)

2.2.b. How Churches Should Engage in Community Development: Best Practices.

The Bible gives God's people a clear call to engage in caring for the poor, addressing injustice in all its forms, and transforming creation. Since churches are a central part of God's redemptive work, they must be leaders in community transformation and development. As

transforming churches, they are to be “in love with God and with all [their] neighbors, celebrating everything that is for life and...telling the truth about everything that is against or that undermines life” (Myers, 2011, p. 177). By doing so, they demonstrate to those around them that God is active, He can bring life into any circumstance, and He is for life. The Church as a whole must be who it wants the world to be. It must embody the justice it hopes to bring about in such a way that its words are credible to a world full of injustice (Groody, 2007); any local church that does not do so risks becoming “a church that has lost its relevance in the world” (Stearns, 2010, p. 193) and one that misrepresents Christ. Ultimately, the silence of local churches in the face of injustices caused by economic and political powers can be perceived as complicity in these unjust systems (World Council of Churches, 2011). However, as churches lead in transformation and justice work, they reflect God’s heart; then, they can become known for they are for, rather than what they are against.

In their work to bring about transformation and justice, local churches must begin by recognizing that they exist for the community, not the other way around (Delph, 2005). As such, they need to be relevant in the ways they engage their communities, being aware of cultural, generational, and historical contexts. Lack of relevance leads to churches that are disconnected with the community; thus, “relevance is a prerequisite to real, tangible, and lasting community transformation” (Delph, 2005, p. 241). Furthermore, as they seek to work with their communities in contextually relevant ways, their efforts need to be undergirded by a focus on building relationships of authentic parity and trust with those they serve. This process of relationship building over time is the foundation of effective community development efforts.

Strong relationships must also be based upon principles of mutuality and reciprocity, in which churches do not give to a community without wanting (or being willing to) receive something from the community in return. Onwunta and August (2012), speaking from the South African context, noted that reciprocity in building relationships means accepting “that others have something to offer, for no one has the monopoly on knowledge” (p. 3). This type of reciprocity in relationships of parity leads to holistic community involvement that embraces mercy and justice. Both mercy and justice are necessary ingredients for transformation, for “mercy without justice degenerates into dependency and entitlement, preserving the power of the giver over the recipient” but “justice without mercy is cold and impersonal, more concerned about rights than relationships” (Lupton, 2011, p. 41). Genuine relationships with the poor serve to correct the “we-will-rescue-you mind-set” and replace it with a sense of mutual admiration and respect (Lupton, 2011).

Genuine relationships based upon trust also require that churches see and value the contributions that the poor—those they are trying to serve—can make to effecting change in their communities. In light of the fact that the largest Christian communities in the world today are in Africa and Latin America (Livermore, 2013), this is particularly true when churches from the global North (e.g. North America and Western Europe) seek to work with churches from these areas of the global South. Regardless of whether American churches are entering a community within the United States or in another country, they must avoid paternalism, taking care that they do not do for the poor what the poor can do for themselves. Lupton (2011) noted that, “when we do for those in need what they have the capacity to do for themselves,

we disempower them” (p. 3). Paternalism can come through a tendency to pour financial or material resources into a situation of immediate need, assume that (wealthy) Christians have a lot to teach the poor about God, assume that we have the best ideas about how to do things, do work for people that they can do themselves, or try to do things with a mindset of speed and efficiency (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012). When churches working in cross-cultural contexts value the contributions of the poor in communities, on the other hand, they acknowledge that the power and resources to effect change reside within the communities themselves. Interventions that increase and enhance meaningful community ownership of social change efforts thus serve to affirm community members as the best sources of solutions to their community’s problems (CCDA, 2012).

An asset-based and relational approach towards development efforts can also lead to sustainable development. Gran (as cited in Martinussen, 1997) alluded to this in one tenant of what he termed people-managed development—giving decision-making power to citizen organizations within the local communities. He argued that such localized decision-making power increases citizens’ influence on their own living conditions and will thus “stimulate, more than anything else, their willingness to take greater responsibility and make self-sacrifices—to the benefit of socially broad-based development” (Gran, as cited in Martinussen, 1997, p. 337). In a description of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model, Kretzman and McKnight (1993) concurred, noting that sustainable and significant development “takes place only when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort...Development must start from within the community” (p. 4). When seeking to

increase local ownership of and investment in development projects, churches also need to understand that local ownership is “more than inviting participation or asking for input. It means the local churches actually direct and shape what we do in our cross-cultural efforts; they ask *us* if we want to be involved rather than vice versa” (Livermore, 2013, p. 94). When churches are invited by a community to be involved in a development effort, they can choose to focus on assets and on what is right with the community (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012; Lupton, 2011); their strategies for helping then become solution-focused, driven by strengthening existing potential rather than combating problems (Lupton, 2011). This solution-focused, strengthening approach is the key to transformative and sustainable community development.

2.3. Examples of Church Engagement From the Literature

2.3.a. Churches as Natural Fits for Development Work.

Churches, and the Christian values they embrace, are natural fits for community development work. Many similarities exist between the evangelistic and church planting functions of churches and the work of community development practitioners. Missionaries, for example, have long recognized the importance of establishing local churches to create supportive communities for new believers; likewise, contemporary secular development workers understand that individual human rights require supportive community contexts (McGinnis, 2007). Since churches already practice the value of community for individual spiritual growth, this practice can be applied to the development activities of seeking individual rights or change in the context of community. Corbett and Fikkert (2012) commented on the Church’s “fit” for development work, noting that Christ designed the Church to be in the

business of developing people through long-term discipleship; hence, “churches are well-placed in terms of mission, programmatic focus, financial resources, relational skills, and basic giftedness for the long and sometimes grinding haul required for development work” (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012).

Like other religious bodies, churches exercise significant influence in many developing countries. In these contexts, they likely have a long-standing history in their communities, may be among the most respected institutions in the country, and may have a better understanding than secular non-governmental organizations (NGOs) of the local context (Lipsky, 2010). As such, they are well positioned to act as agents of change in the development arena. Similarly, Hipple and Duff (2010) argued that, because of weak states, religious leaders in many African countries have credibility and “unparalleled reach, scale, and influence...with the relative permanence of their institutions at the local level also potentially adding a significant degree of sustainability” (p. 370). Improving linkages between religious groups and public institutions that lead or regulate social need activities can thus enhance sustainable development.

2.3.b. Contemporary Examples of Church Engagement (From the Literature).

Historically, churches around the world have engaged in a range of development and social change efforts in varying degrees and at varying levels. Contemporary efforts in the U.S. have encompassed housing and economic development projects, HIV/AIDS education and prevention programs, political advocacy on social issues, participation in interfaith efforts to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the integration of environmental justice practices into church life. Development work in South Africa has ranged

from active participation in the anti-apartheid movement to the operation of feeding programs, creation of AIDS-sensitive churches, the provision of between 40-70% of healthcare services across the region (Lipsky, 2010), and engagement in racial reconciliation efforts.

Black churches in the U.S. have long been involved in social action and community development. The Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) (2012), for example, noted that the Black church has initiated most substantial community housing and economic development efforts (Church-Based section). Such endeavors have included shopping centers and senior housing units developed, and many communities transformed as a result (CCDA, 2012, Church-Based section). In addition, Fulton (2011) analyzed the involvement of Black churches in HIV/AIDS programming. His data, drawn from 1,506 congregations, showed that churches that were engaged with their external environments were also more likely to have existing HIV/AIDS programs (including prevention, education, and support) than those that were internally focused. This held true for all churches that were active in their communities, regardless of whether a congregation identified as ideologically conservative or liberal.

Churches have also been engaged in social change through connections with other faith-based organizations. McMillin (2011) studied the relationship between American churches and faith-based social service agencies across periods of socio-historical change. He found that, though churches sponsoring faith-based social service agencies often have only loose ties to these agencies in financial areas, they tended to have strong ties as far as sponsorship authority; churches then would use these agencies as channels through which they took political stances on social policies that conflicted with church doctrines (McMillin, 2011). These

political views, however, were often expressed with individualism and individual rights rhetoric rather than rhetoric of social citizenship or the common good. Faith-based organizations in general have also partnered with those of other faiths and multi-lateral development agencies to achieve the United Nations' MDGs. One approach to such interfaith social action is the Center for Interfaith Action on Global Poverty (CIFA), located in Washington D.C. CIFA seeks to build the capacity of faith communities by creating structures that partner with state structures on systems-level change in health and poverty-related issues (Hipple & Duff, 2010). For example, CIFA convened the Nigerian Interfaith Action Association, which works with the Nigerian National Malaria Control Programme to train Muslim and Christian leaders to give targeted malaria messages at religious services (Hipple & Duff, 2010).

Faith-based institutions as a whole have also added to holistic engagement in social action through implementing actions that address environmental issues. One researcher noted that these actions are aligned to religious values of Spirit, Stewardship, and Justice (Harper, 2011). Such actions have included integrating nature into worship services, worshipping outdoors, implementing religious education programs that focus on a theological basis for the environment or address issues of consumption, using renewable energy in places of worship, and partnering with community organizations to engage in environmental advocacy (Harper, 2011). Such a focus on environmental justice can enable religious communities to include an environmental dimension to their understanding of poverty (Harper, 2011).

Outside of the U.S., churches in countries such as South Africa play a key role in society. In 1996, 80% of South Africans claimed to be Christian (Miller, 2009). Within this context,

churches are influential in arenas such as post-apartheid reconciliation and HIV/AIDS work. Although one author argued that reconciliation has long been on the church's agenda and is at the heart of church witness in South Africa (Maluleke, 2007), the streams of Christianity in South Africa have differed in their engagement with this and other social issues. The Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa, for example, was at the forefront of championing apartheid using a "biblical" justification. In contrast, Christian leaders such as Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu have spoken out against apartheid. Tutu (1984) used the international platform afforded him by the Nobel Peace Prize to employ Christian rhetoric against the injustices of apartheid, stating that apartheid has "ensured that God's children, just because they are black, should be treated as if they were things, and not as of infinite value as being created in the image of God" (p. 396). Similarly, after the 1959 Sharpeville Massacre, the South African Council of Churches (SACC) began to take a more active role in national reconciliation efforts. SACC provided a space for support and protest, and ultimately originated protest initiatives such as the 1982 World Alliance of Reformed Churches' declaration of apartheid as heresy, the Standing for Truth Campaign of the 1980s, the National Peace Accord of the early 1990s, and the call to prayer in June 1985 for an end to the unjust rule of the white apartheid government (Maluleke, 2007).

As it is in the work of reconciliation, the legacy of apartheid continues to be evident in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among township residents (who are non-White and among the poorest residents of South Africa). In the HIV/AIDS struggle in South Africa, Christians have the opportunity to act out of mercy and compassion towards their brothers and sisters who suffer

from HIV/AIDS. One way that churches have been addressing the epidemic of HIV/AIDS in their communities is through “AIDS-sensitive churches” (Miller, 2009, p. 33). Such churches employ social workers who work with pastors to support those living with HIV/AIDS through counseling, leading support groups, forming a choir consisting of members living with the disease, organizing a farming cooperative, and providing material support for those dying from the disease and their family members (Miller, 2009). These churches also allow time during services for congregants who have AIDS to share with others their experiences of living with the disease.

HIV/AIDS education is part of one church in the Cape Town community of Maitland. As part of its social involvement, this church operates both intentional events and ongoing ministries. Events have consisted of an awareness day to educate the community about HIV/AIDS, a back to school campaign to provide school provisions for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and Christmas parties for the poorest in the community (Emedi, 2010). The ongoing ministries the church runs include a feeding scheme that provides food and counseling (along with other supports) in squatter camps, a foundation that sends kids on fun trips, a soccer club, a young women’s mentoring program, a business development program for the financial empowerment of church women, and a women’s club that offers financial management services to church women (Emedi, 2010).

The public role that churches play in the larger communities that surround them is evident. As part of this role and the varying strategies they employ to meet the needs of their communities, churches can also become moral and ethical custodians. Vorster (2012) contended that churches are called to be public witnesses, moral opinion-makers that advocate

compassion, voices for the poor, watchdogs of governments and corporations, and custodians of truth and fairness (Vorster, 2012). Finally, Western Christians can learn much from churches in the developing world about the connection between the spiritual and earthly worlds. African Indigenous Churches, for example, accept and celebrate an intimate connection between the spiritual world and mundane earthly existence (McGinnis, 2007).

The examples cited above reflect the varying types of engagement that churches in the U.S. and South Africa have had with community development and social issues. In the following section, I will present a case study of a church in the Delft township of Cape Town that has adopted a thoughtful approach to community development. From this case study, I will offer a new model for church-based community development. The principles within this model can be applied in U.S. churches that wish to become churches that are *for* their communities.

Chapter 3: Case Study of Delft, Cape Town, South Africa

3.1. Profile: Cape Town and Delft

Cape Town is a city of great contrast. Millions of tourists each year visit its beaches, winelands and high-end shopping districts. Despite a wealthy urban area, those living below the poverty line comprise 35.7% of the population and, of those who are of working age, 23.8% are unemployed (City of Cape Town, 2012a). The city's poor are concentrated in townships, settlements created by the apartheid government to separate non-Whites from Whites. Although apartheid was dismantled over 20 years ago, the economic underclass it created has fragmented the society along lines of geography, socio-economic status, and race (Bowers Du Toit & Nkomo, 2014). For example, in the area surrounding the township of Delft, 76% of the

population lives below the poverty line and 45% of working age persons are unemployed (City of Cape Town, 2012b). These numbers reflect a disturbing trend of widening inequality in South Africa as a whole. Between 2001 and 2007, the number of unemployed Whites decreased dramatically, while the number of unemployed Blacks and Coloureds (the local term for mixed race persons) continued to increase—despite already being very high (Bowers Du Toit & Nkomo, 2014). For a month during my fieldwork, I lived between the lines drawn by apartheid. Although I lived in comparative luxury, in a quiet community within an almost all-White Cape Town suburb, I conducted fieldwork in a predominantly Coloured community where the roofs of homes often leaked or blew off during windstorms and where gang violence was common.

Delft, where my fieldwork was completed, is a community that even some locals who live outside of the townships shun. Many call it a dangerous place and advise those who go there to be careful. Local restaurants will not deliver food there, and banks consider it too risky to lend to homebuyers who want to live there. It is not considered a “good” place to live, and very little exists by way of businesses, or even social services. It is known in the local news for unemployment, gang activity, and taxi violence. Groups of people, mostly young men, wander the streets during the daytime due to lack of employment. Their ubiquitous presence can be perceived as either laziness or a symptom of the government’s failure to support job training and generate jobs for lower-skilled residents. Lines form at shaded outdoor areas for the weekly distribution of government checks; these checks are given to the unemployed, low-income, and others in need. Although official census figures list the township’s population as somewhere in the range of 180,000 residents, a local pastor says that this figure is based upon

an average number of residents per living unit and the real figure is closer to 700,000 or more (C. George, personal communication, July 20, 2014). In Eindhoven, the subsection where Zoe Family Church and Zoe Incubation Centre (formerly Zoe Academy of Skills) is located, there are plots of empty land overgrown with grass and dotted with patches worn down by the people who walk across them each day.

3.2. Zoe Family Church

Zoe Family Church (henceforth termed “Zoe Church”) is a church of about 150 members located in Delft, a township within Cape Town. It meets in a small building across the street from the Zoe Incubation Centre (henceforth termed “the Centre”); the main auditorium space has built in theatre-like seats and is just large enough to house, with the addition of several rows of folding chairs, the 150 or so attendees each Sunday. In addition, the building contains one small room towards the back of the auditorium and a set of bathrooms. Because of the building’s small size, the children’s classes on Sundays and some mid-week groups or events are held in the Centre’s building across the street. Both buildings are owned by the church. Church members are predominantly Coloured, though there are also many Black members. There are several young families, a dozen or so high school-aged youth, a number of singles of all ages (including single-parent families), and some two-parent families with adult children. About 90% of the 25 staff at the church-affiliated Centre, along with the majority of church members, are from Delft or its surrounding communities (J. Stoffels, personal communication, July 21, 2014).

The church offers home cell groups, which are smaller groups of people who meet either at someone’s home or at the church for mid-week fellowship and prayer. It also has been

conducting a number of spiritual and personal growth courses, including Positioned for Blessing (which will be discussed later in this paper), Steps for Excellence, and Men of Honor. Steps for Excellence is centered around mindset shifts necessary for growth in character and achieving God's purpose for one's life. Men of Honor is focused on helping the men of the church manage self-development as a man, husband, and father of honor in their families and communities. Pastor Delecia George spearheads the women's ministry, which includes women's mentoring groups, a couples tea and celebration, and annual events on National Women's Day. Finally, there are youth and children's ministries. These ministries include youth community outreach events, youth morning prayer during the weekdays, and a Sunday children's program.

Over the course of the four Sunday services I attended at Zoe Church, I was struck by the nature of the congregation's prayers. The pastors' and church members' hearts for the community, and their faith in God's power to change Delft, is clear in their prayers. They pray in faith for the drug lords, gang-involved youth, unemployed, and single moms; *not*, as churches in the U.S. might, for the generic "poor". The congregation prays together about the greatest challenges in its community; this type of specific, community-centered prayer seems to be lacking in many American churches.

3.3. Zoe Incubation Centre (*formerly Zoe Academy of Skills*)

Many of the buildings in Delft are older, marked up with graffiti and run-down for lack of care. Residences vary from homes the size of a large one-bedroom apartment to shacks with thin tin roofs. One building in particular, the Centre, stands out. There is a gate surrounding this building, and the flag of South Africa flies proudly from the rooftop. In front of the building

stand two stone fountains and, to its sides and back lies a large garden. In the building, mindsets are uprooted and replaced, and those enslaved to beliefs of inferiority and despair are set free. People walk out with life and technology skills that offer hope that they can pursue bigger dreams. As the tagline on the organization's website reads, "We found fortune at the bottom of the pyramid" (Zoe Incubation Centre, 2014). The staff cares so much about what they are doing that several gave up corporate jobs and downsized their lifestyles for jobs that pay very little—and sometimes, when the organization's finances are tight, do not pay at all.

One such staff member is Johnny Aries, one of the facilitators of the Centre's Core Training Programme (discussed below). Before coming to the Centre, Johnny worked as a staff trainer for a local taxi company and then as an inspector-operator for a machining company. When he was invited by another Centre staff person to work for the Centre, he took the position out of the joy he experiences while talking in front of people. During my interview with Johnny, he spoke about taking a significant pay cut, having just enough for his family (which includes his wife and 3 children) to scrape by each month, and doing odd jobs on the side to supplement his income (J. Aries, personal communication, July 28, 2014). His passion for his work was clear in what he told me next, though: "If you want to know how a person can lead, you have them volunteer...I enjoy being able to have influence on individuals [in my current job]" (J. Aries, personal communication, July 28, 2014).

Along with the Core Training Programme that Johnny staffs, the Centre houses computer training classes, a sewing and embroidery business, a small catering business, a garden project, a Reading Room that operates senior programs and after-school tutoring, and a

new community Wi-Fi project. There is also a bakery training program and rape victims outreach project in development. Each of these projects and programs address multiple community needs. Most of the computer training classes, for example, utilize the online International Computer Driver's License (ICDL) courses that allow students to receive certifications after completing different levels of coursework; levels include Silver, Gold, and Platinum. These certifications are recognized at business across South Africa, as well as in several other countries. A web development class that will support a new website design business has been piloted with youth in Delft, and will soon be offered to adults. The Centre aims to increase students' marketability for jobs by increasing their technology skills.

In a similar vein, the Core Training Programme is a series of classes held across 4-5 months that teaches basic literacy, numeracy, career planning, customer service, occupational health and safety, and other job skills. Pairs of trained facilitators alternate teaching modules of the program for 6 hours on most weekdays or on a modified evening schedule. Graduates of the programme receive assistance from the staff in locating jobs; staff estimate that 85-90% of graduates now hold jobs (N. Jacobs, personal communication, July 15, 2014). The sewing, embroidery, catering, and bakery training serve multiple purposes. All aim to provide sources of income for the Centre, which also receives funding from the Western Cape Government and Zoe Church members. In addition, they offer opportunities to partner with businesses and governments; such partnerships open doors for staff to offer the Centre's other training courses to businesses and other community organizations. Finally, these income-generating programs become opportunities for Delft residents to learn practical job and business skills.

Across the street from the Centre building, attached to Zoe Church, is a building that houses the Feeding Scheme program. Here, 3-4 ladies cook large pots of food to distribute to the 26 public schools throughout Delft and to the community at large. The raw ingredients used to cook this food come from the vegetables grown through the Centre's Garden Project and the supplies of local public schools; any additional ingredients needed are purchased on a weekly basis from grocery stores. For many students attending Delft's public schools, the food supplied by the Feeding Scheme may be the only meal they eat all day. In exchange for the food, the schools allow members of the church's School Ministry Team to come to school assemblies once every month or two to pray and share a message from the Bible.

All of the projects and programs at the Centre and the Feeding Scheme operate under the auspices and leadership of Pastors Charles and Delecia George, a couple who have felt called to Delft for almost 20 years. The Georges have become the community's "parents"; they are well-loved and well-respected. Their adult children volunteer or work with the Centre and are also a fixture in Delft, though all family members live in other parts of Cape Town. The rest of the Centre's staff are mainly drawn from the community and church, though some are from outside Delft and several are not Christians (J. Stoffels, personal communication, July 21, 2014).

Chapter 4: Towards a New Model of Church-Based Community Development

Zoe Church and the Centre are examples of the varying roles that one church plays in a materially poor community. Its leaders recognize the unique position churches occupy as institutionalized communities that can offer members holistic support for not only spiritual needs, but also needs in the emotional, mental, relational, and physical realms of human life.

For one month this past summer, I lived, learned, worshipped, worked, and loved among the people connected to Zoe Church and the Centre. When I left for Cape Town, I held within me three main things: mental pictures of Delft and the Georges, trepidation at what the townships would be like after being warned about their dangers, and research questions driven by a passion for seeing local churches engage in social change. My desire was to understand the local model for how a church engages in social change and the factors necessary for churches to engage communities in holistic transformation. I learned, though, that transformation comes unexpectedly and in ways that defy models and categories of what is “necessary”. Furthermore, I lived the truth that a church *for* the community must first be a church *of* the community.

It is from these lessons of community transformation that I propose the following model of church-based transformational community development. This model, depicted in Figure 1, consists of 10 principles that U.S. churches can adopt to move towards becoming a “church for the community”. Each principle is described in detail in the first section, supported by examples from my fieldwork as well as from the work of researchers and development practitioners. The principles are followed by a section that expands upon a trend in U.S. churches that impacts a church’s engagement in community development. The chapter concludes with a summary of why this church-based, holistic model of development is important.



Figure 1. Transformational Development Model: A Church for the Community. This figure depicts 10 principles of transformational community development derived from the author’s fieldwork in Delft.

4.1. Church Engagement in Community Development: A Model From Delft

4.1.a. “Come and See”.

When I began my 1 month stay in Cape Town, I had been forewarned by a local and those who had visited about the dangers facing a foreigner in Delft. I was told to never be in the community by myself and to take extra care with my valuables, because attacks against females and violent thefts were common. I was also told to not be there in the evenings, when gang violence was rampant. After I arrived, though, I realized that fear of danger—not the actual danger itself—is what keeps people from entering communities like these and seeing them for themselves. This can be just as true for residents of a city, who fear certain neighborhoods, as for outsiders. After ending a phone call with a potential vendor who expressed fear at coming to Delft because it was “dangerous”, for example, the Centre’s Project Administrator lamented in frustration that people just need to *come* to Delft and see it for themselves instead of being

afraid of it (J. Stoffels, personal communication, July 31, 2014). This is the first and most basic principle for followers of Jesus and all community development practitioners who want to effect transformational change in materially poor communities: Resist fear, which can sometimes be deceptive, and “come and see” for yourselves.

Jesus Himself called those who follow Him to resist fear: “Do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more they can do” (Luke 12:4). Rather than give in to fear, we are to have the same confidence the author of Hebrews expressed when he wrote, “So we can confidently say, “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?” (Hebrews 13:6). Then, when we resist fear, we are freed to “come and see” for ourselves the communities of material poverty others—without having spent significant time in them—may tell us to be afraid of. “Come and see” was Jesus’ invitation to His first disciples when they asked Him where He was staying, and it remains His invitation to His Church today. If you never “come and see” a community before trying to do something to “help” it, you will never know what the community really needs; but, more importantly, you will miss the chance to discover that your fears have been based, not on experience or reality, but on unfamiliarity. As one professor said, we often confuse danger with unfamiliarity; we label certain neighborhoods or people “dangerous”, when what we really mean is that they are unfamiliar (R. Ruthruff, personal communication, September 11, 2014). I found this insight to be true for my experience in Delft. Because I entered the community with the Georges, who introduced me to everyone we encountered and told me the stories of the neighborhoods and buildings, Delft became familiar to me. And, since I was always within sight of my new friends and carried few valuables,

I never felt unsafe or in any danger. When we give in to the confusion between danger and unfamiliarity, our efforts to “help” do more harm than good. This is because we do not experience for ourselves what the community’s real issues, needs, and strengths are. Our efforts are based upon a distant view of a community’s deficits, rather than on its strengths.

Accepting the invitation to “come and see” does not mean there are no real dangers or that we should not take some precautions. Taxi and gang violence still happened while I was in Delft. It does, however, mean that we refuse to let fear of harm keep us from stepping into and participating in cross-cultural situations that cause us discomfort. Bornstein (2005), in reflecting upon her experience of being mugged while completing research in Zimbabwe, described the metaphor that this experience offered for an outsider’s ability to understand a new context:

The constant threat of “mugging”, of being robbed of one’s precious possessions, of one’s cultivated objectivity and guarded truths, informs and challenges the status of the anthropologist as pure observer. This real-world hermeneutics, this fusion of horizons...becomes the only way to understand a phenomenon. (p. 44)

It is through refusing to let fear and discomfort define our choices, including our choices about how to engage with a community, and opening ourselves up to being “robbed” of safe objectivity and our closely held “truths” that we can come closer to understanding the contexts, capacities, and needs of a community. Above all, such refusal of fear and openness to experience means that we allow our hearts to be captured by both the beauty and the brokenness of the community. From this heart posture emerges a second principle for churches engaging in transformational development.

4.1.b. Build Real Relationships: Let Their Joys and Sorrows Become Yours.

Churches that would hope to participate in transformative community change need to allow the joys and sorrows of the community to become *their* joys and sorrows. As Perkins and Claiborne (2009) asserted, “the pain of others has to become our pain...as we move closer to the suffering, the problems and struggles become our own” (p. 48). I saw the Georges embrace this principle in every endeavor they took on, including in the prayers they prayed from the pulpit on Sunday mornings. Though they do not live in the community, the deaths (4 while I was there), imprisonments, HIV/AIDS occurrences, unemployment, and sicknesses in the community became their own. This, too, is a biblical principle, for Christians are told to suffer and rejoice when other parts of Christ’s body suffer and rejoice, and to carry each other’s burdens (1 Corinthians 12:26, Galatians 6:2).

But how can we in local churches allow the needs of a community to become our own? We can only do so if we have real relationships with those who live there. These relationships are enhanced as we stay and do life with those who are part of the community. Staying and doing life with people takes time. This does not mean, though, that we are all called to move into a community for the rest of our lives (though it may mean just that for some). It does mean that, for however long God allows us and our churches to be part of a community, we must take every opportunity to spend time with and among the people of that community. Have supper with a local family, play with their kids, ask about their studies, go to the places they go to, and offer to help them clean up after supper. I have found that it is in these moments, doing these seemingly mundane and “un-ministry-like” activities, that the richest conversations and

the most honest learning take place. As Bornstein (2005) observed while engaging in field research in Zimbabwe, “the “real” action did not take place at office sites, rural sites, donor offices, but in the relations between such spaces...The most fertile research spaces were the intervals between physical destinations” (p. 38, 40). Most of our lives are full of these everyday, unexciting, un-notable activities; so, it seems logical that it is through these activities that lasting relationships are built. Nevertheless, it is easy to allow these activities to become another thing to “check off” in a church’s attempts to build relationships with community members. The key to minimizing this attitude is intentionality; that is, engage in these “un-ministry-like” activities with an intentional effort to become aware of and understand the real joys, challenges, and sorrows of community members. It is only through building these types of deeper, authentic relationships within the context of daily life and a local community that transformational community development can happen. Such community development, like anything else worth doing, often happens in the small moments that may even go by unnoticed; these moments have cumulative effects over a long period of time.

4.1.c. Be Curious.

Curiosity, like the kind that children have, goes a long way towards helping you build relationships within a community. It is easy to read about a community before going into it and assume that, because you have traveled many times or done work in similar communities, you know what to do and understand the local culture. But entering a community with this attitude is like putting blinders on when you drive. You think you know what you are doing, but you do not see that you are about to crash and burn. Curiosity, however, is an open frame of mind that

sees uncertainty and unfamiliarity as opportunities to learn, to ask questions, to observe, to make friends, and to appreciate a thing or place from many different perspectives.

Curiosity takes a certain humility and willingness to become like a child, whose eyes are always noticing, hands are always trying things out, mouth is always tasting, nose is always sniffing, feet are always wandering, and ears are ever listening for things they do not recognize. It takes a willingness to be a constant and open learner, being aware of what is happening in a community (Corbett & Fikkert, 2012; Delph, 2005). Lupton (2011) summarized this open frame of mind well, stating that “the best way to assure effectiveness is to spend enough time as a learner, ask enough questions, and seek wisdom from indigenous leaders to gain an accurate picture of both existing realities and future aspirations of the community” (p. 175). The Church must be humble enough to be curious, and it must be curious enough to humbly learn. Pastor Eugene Cho (2014) reminded us that “we have much to learn from the poor, marginalized, and oppressed...We have much to learn from our neighbors who do not look like us, think like us, or act like us” (p. 52). The Church can take a cue from Jesus who, though He did not need to be “curious” in the human sense, as a child spent several days in the temple courts asking questions of and engaging in dialogue with local religious leaders (cf. Luke 3:41-17). Through his example, Jesus demonstrated the value of asking others questions in order to learn from them.

4.1.d. Listen Well.

Curiosity and a willingness to learn are only effective if we listen well. We in the West seem to value talking and sharing above listening, and to elevate those who can assert themselves and voice their opinions. But, the ability to listen well and to observe thoughtfully is

perhaps the most key principle for churches engaging in any kind of transformational change or development work. It is, in fact, the foundation of every other principle offered so far. The Christian Community Development Association (CCDA) (2012) listed “listening to the community” as one of the 8 key components of its Christian Community Development philosophy. It stated that Christian Community Development “is committed to listening to the community residents, and hearing their dreams, ideas and thoughts...Listening is most important, as the people of the community are the vested treasures of the future” (CCDA, 2012, Listening to the Community section, para. 1).

What does it say when all we can offer as a response to tragedies like the recent spate of police-instigated violent deaths, school shootings, or terrorist attacks in Nigeria is a “moment of silence”, a 30 second prayer, loud protests that involve storming the streets, and money? It is as if we are afraid to take more than the few seconds that a moment is usually made up of to listen and reflect before we act—afraid that, if we wait too long before we act, we will be too late to “fix” the problem. We carry this fear and urgency to act into our community engagement work. However, the fear and urgency to act can cause us to initiate projects in a community before we have taken the time to listen to the community. These projects become band-aids for the immediate, visible problems that we see. Like all band-aids, though, they only absorb the flow of blood; they do not necessarily stop it, nor do they heal the underlying wound or take away the pain. Such approaches resemble relief, rather than development.

Although relief efforts are necessary in emergency and crisis situations, the long-term engagement required for development to occur can be best achieved through the process of

listening to the community. Through listening, we can affirm the dignity of individuals and encourage the community to use their own resources to carry out sustainable change; an example of how this is carried out is through the Asset-Based Community Development model mentioned earlier in this paper. We can do this with the belief that “the people with the problem have the best solutions and opportunities to solve those problems” (CCDA, 2012, Listening to the Community section, para. 6). A pastor who consults with Zoe Church in Delft echoed this belief when he emphasized that engaging a congregation in community development begins with the recognition that the gifts exist within the congregation; then, the idea is to identify those with the gifts and help them to start and run community development projects (N. De-Lange, personal communication, July 23, 2014). One example of what can be achieved when a church listens to its community can be found in the Fraijanes community of Costa Rica. There, Pastor Ray Soto’s (2009) church listened to the cries of the people in the community; as a result, the church worked with the community to build a community center that consisted of a vocational training school where marginalized individuals who had been shamed for their lack of education could now gain skills for specific careers.

4.1.e. Be of and for the Community, Long-Term.

As we learn to listen well, we begin to build the community that is necessary for any lasting change. Organizations in the United States, including churches, tend to start with a vision; they then build an organizational structure and hire people to fill that structure. The Centre, on the other hand, began with relationships; it is upon those relationships that community was built. Only now, 15 years after the Feeding Scheme (the oldest community

project) opened and 4 years after the Centre was established, is a formal organizational structure being implemented. There is wisdom in this way of working that seems antithetical to accepted American practice: Only when true community exists can structure bring freedom and become a conduit for releasing individual gifting. It is the people we surround ourselves with, after all, who can lift us up and free us to be the best versions of ourselves or bring us down and confine us to shadows of who God created us to be. In Delft, I found Christ-followers who were a church *of* the community that lives out a mission *for* and *with* the community.

Churches that are *of*, *with*, and *for* the community can be havens of rest, restoration and healing to those who come to them and hands of blessing to the rest of the world. They can be more than institutions of worship, for worship often tends to be equated with singing and other internally focused practices. Rather, they can be bodies of people who embrace a broader definition of worship that recognizes acts of social change as part of our worship to the God who created societies and communities. This is a mindset shift that is beginning to occur in many contemporary American churches. Nevertheless, there is an instructive practice that churches can adopt as they seek to build a broader sense of community: Find intentional ways to integrate long-term involvement in community development or social change efforts into church life. This is about more than the tokenism or charity that American churches are already skilled at giving in a “charity of the month” kind of manner. Rather, it is about building intentional long-term relationships with community members and organizations that serve the community, and talking about these relationships at regular gatherings so the congregation feels invested in your work. If these efforts are to be integrated into a church’s congregational

life, they must first be modeled by church leaders. In a study of several wealthy congregations in Cape Town, Bowers Du Toit and Nkomo (2014) observed that the churches that were most involved in the lives of the poor had two common characteristics: Practical, hands-on involvement by top leadership in the lives of the poor and leaders who were “consistently teaching and motivating the congregation towards a biblical response to the poor” (p. 7). The community involvement and teaching of leaders had an effect on the congregation, whose members began in large numbers to reach out to the poor (Bowers Du Toit & Nkomo, 2014).

As churches build long-term relationships with community members and organizations and bring these relationships to the forefront of their congregants’ minds, they ensure that leaders and staff are not the only ones who know about this work, and that their congregations hear about it more than once or twice a year at “mission moments” or special offerings. They should build in specific and intentional ways for attendees to engage with and develop authentic relationships of mutuality with community members. These types of relationships begin by every person who is part of a church (not just church leaders and staff) being present at the gatherings, events, celebrations, funerals, and related functions that are important to the community the church is located in. Lupton (2011) encouraged church members to:

Meet the school principal, the city council representative, the police-precinct captain, local merchants...Find out what is happening in the community from their unique perspectives. Attend community-association meetings, public hearings, church services, high school athletic events, local art and musical performances...Immerse yourself in every aspect of community life. (p. 160)

His approach reflects the incarnational approach of Jesus, who, being God, came in the flesh in order to identify with humans and our needs; it also “encourages the Church to enter into the life of the community and become partners with the community in addressing its needs” (Onwunta & August, 2012, p. 3). By being present at community functions, you show the community that you care about the things it cares about, that you exist and do everything you do for its maximum benefit. Here, I think of the community-wide free Wi-Fi that Pastor Charles and his team has launched in Delft. As of October 10, all subsections of Delft have access to limited free monthly Wi-Fi. People who may not have been able to afford Internet service now have access to global tools and educational materials that can be leveraged to advance their livelihoods. This is one way that Zoe Church and the Centre are demonstrating their commitment to providing maximum benefit to the community in all their endeavors. Similarly, the members of Pastor Soto’s (2009) church in Fraijanes were intentional about inserting themselves into their community’s public life through picking up garbage, asking neighbors about their needs, receiving prayer requests, building a sheltered bus stop, and becoming active participants in community decision-making.

4.1.f. Work to Transform Mindsets.

Over my first two weeks in Delft, I spent many hours talking with the Georges and the staff at the Centre. Whether they were speaking of their skills training programs, feeding scheme, small business development efforts, or church ministries, I heard repeatedly that their work is fundamentally about changing mindsets: “As a man thinks, so he is”. If a young person grows up around violence and that has worked for them, as an adult he will fight with violence

(N. Jacobs, personal communication, July 15, 2014); if a man believes that the government owes him because of the injustices of apartheid, he will stay in a shack in Delft because it is free and fail to exercise motivation to improve his conditions (even if he is able to do so) (D. George, personal communication, July 31, 2014). And so transforming a community begins with transforming the mindsets of those who live in the community. Many Delft residents live with a mindset that causes them to live hand to mouth, reaching only for that which satisfies in the present and that which brings immediate reward. The Centre staff's work is simple, yet laborious and sometimes resisted: uproot old mindsets of resignation to poverty, and plant new life-giving mindsets that dare to believe the *zoë* life is within one's reach. Their work echoes the Apostle Paul's injunction to "not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind" (Romans 12:2). Such a mindset change also leads to an embracing of one's self-worth, dignity, value, and ability to contribute to the community. The Georges often repeated to their congregants and staff these words taken from Deuteronomy 28: "You are the head and not the tail". So how does one go about changing what has become a survival mindset, one that by necessity has become deeply rooted in many who live in chronic poverty?

One way that the Centre's staff work to change old mindsets is through the free Wi-Fi project mentioned in the previous section. This project, funded by the Western Cape Government, brought Wi-Fi towers to the 26 public schools in Delft. The goal was to increase the community's access to technology, which then would drive up the value of property and homes in Delft. Naaiham Jacobs, Manager of the Core Training Programme, said that the project is about even more than that. It is about changing the mindsets of the people, such that

they believe they need and can learn technology skills in order to gain access to decent jobs; it is about helping residents see an opportunity to do better for themselves and their families, to see that their futures can be brighter than life in Delft, and to see that they can reach for the jobs they want rather than the just the jobs that they can or have to do (N. Jacobs, personal communication, July 29, 2014). The messages that both Pastor Charles and Naaiham seemed to be giving me sounded like this: Lifting the materially poor out of poverty begins with changing poverty mindsets, along with spiritual change or recognition of spiritual poverty; changing poverty mindsets leads to visions of hope for the future, a future that technology can facilitate and that leads people into the jobs that can bring them out of poverty.

This message was reinforced from a spiritual perspective through a course entitled “Positioned for Blessing” that Pastors Charles and Delecia took all the members of Zoe Church through. The course focused on the ways a person’s personal characteristics, past experiences, and relationships have uniquely positioned them to receive God’s blessings. Members of the church gathered in groups to work through lessons intended to unearth past hurts that needed healing, explore the impact of one’s experiences and relationships on present circumstances, and consider lifestyle changes that would position a person for greater spiritual revelation and blessing. At the end of the course, each attendee received stones marked with their first names, a cross, and the date the class ended. The stones were a reference to the Old Testament passage when, to commemorate Israel’s crossing of the Jordan, God commanded each Israelite to take a stone across the river with them to the other side. In this way, the people were to remember who they had become and God’s promises to them. For those who

completed the course, the stones became tangible mementos of the healing that God had begun to bring about in their lives and the future blessings He desires to bring to them. The stones were given out during a symbolic “Crossing Over” ceremony that recalled the Israelites’ crossing. The course, and the symbolic ceremony that ended it, reflected the importance of paying attention to spiritual healing and growth as part of holistic community development. As Myers (2011) stated, transformational development must include restoration of relationship with God, self, others, and the environment, along with verbal proclamation of God’s Word. Scanning the curriculum and supporting the “Positioned for Blessing” course convinced me that the pastors’ intentional efforts to take every church member through the course was evidence of the spiritual aspect of community development work; it was also evidence of their desire for Zoe Church to be a transforming church in this materially poor and broken community.

4.1.g. See Solutions, Interrogate Everything.

Transformation also comes, I found, in the approaches to the day to day work of the organization that staff members take. When Pastor Charles goes in to the Centre building and faces the day’s meetings and tasks, he sees solutions, not problems (C. George, personal communication, July 15, 2014). There are many problems in Delft, but his choice to view the community through the lens of solutions was both subtle and inherently transformative. This way of seeing, for example, seeped through to his staff of about 25; nearly every day I was at the Centre I witnessed another staff member or volunteer share a new idea about what the Centre could do to better serve the community. Creativity and innovation abounded there,

aided by a solution-focused approach that embraced two core beliefs: Nothing is impossible for God, and everything should be interrogated. As such, nothing is off limits.

When I asked Pastor Charles why change is happening in Delft and not, as he stated, in other poor communities in Africa, he said this: Other churches inherit their churches and ministries from those before them and keep doing things the way the people before them did it, without questioning *why* they are doing what they are doing, and if what they are doing works (C. George, personal communication, July 17, 2014). Many churches, he argued, do a lot of things that are not Biblical or scriptural but do not interrogate these practices. He interrogates everything, asking, “Does it work? Is this the best way? Is it Biblical?” (C. George, personal communication, July 17, 2014). Most people, ministry leaders, and churches buy a “house”, then rearrange the furniture without looking at the property as a whole; so, the furniture and inside looks different, but the house itself has not changed. The Zoe model is this: Tear down the house, rip out the foundation, lay a new foundation, and rebuild from there.

What happens to all these new ideas and this constant flow of creativity? Pastor Charles believes in actually *listening* to and *acting* on the ideas. Rather than ask “how” things will get done—which limits possibilities by subjecting every idea to an endless process of logistical analysis that can kill it—he sees opportunities, interrogates them to see *why* they might contribute to the organization’s work, and then just *does* things.

4.1.h. Value Wisdom, Character, and Faith.

We in American institutions, including the American Church as a whole, often seem to cling to obsessions with structure and status. When taken together, these twin obsessions place

limits on transformation and on what an all-powerful, almighty God can do in a community. Yes, God *can* work in any situation and *nothing* actually limits Him; however, He will never force Himself on those who put what they think He can do into their small boxes. The people at Zoe think less of great knowledge, university credentials, work experience and what is practical; they appreciate and admire these things, but recognize that sometimes these are the things that put constraints on deep and lasting transformation. Instead, they value wisdom above knowledge, character above experience, gifting above credentials, and faith above human practicality. Pastor Charles often reminded me that there are those who have a lot of knowledge without wisdom, and others who have wisdom though they may lack knowledge (C. George, personal communication, July 16, 2014). To create positive change—to not just *have* good ideas, but to implement them so they work—we need the true wisdom that comes from God. Wisdom, along with character, gifting, and faith, is the true seed of transformation.

It is easy, as community development practitioners with graduate degrees, to think that we hold the knowledge about what a community needs in order to thrive. After all, we have spent thousands of dollars educating ourselves to become “masters” of our discipline. Yet, the more I study community development, the more I realize that becoming a “master” in this field is about growing in humility and finding God’s wisdom in unexpected places. It is about embracing these truths about what God values and whom He chooses:

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are. (1 Corinthians 2:27-28)

4.1.i. Embrace Brokenness.

The Church is called to be the hands and feet of Jesus in a desperate, hungry, searching, lonely, and hurting world. Every day, we see people grasping at solutions for the desperation and hunger they feel inside of them. Jesus, during His time on Earth, sought out the broken and those on society's margins because He knew that their efforts to find solutions to their pain only amounted to chasing after the wind. And, the broken and desperate ones sought Him out because they saw that He himself was the solution to their needs. Little did they know that He too would become broken, in His own way, to become the eternal solution to their brokenness. Henri Nouwen (as cited in Eckert, 2007) spoke about Jesus' solution to our brokenness this way: "Who can take away suffering without entering it?...No God can save us except a suffering God" (p. 216). Herein lies another principle for the church desiring to engage in transformational development: Embrace and live into your brokenness.

The thought of embracing brokenness seems contradictory to the picture we may have of development workers as capable, strong, solution-focused professionals. We may very well be all of those things. Nevertheless, it is our brokenness (and each of us has different areas where the cracks show more) that enables us to identify with the brokenness in the communities we are trying to serve. Pastor Charles says, for example, that growing up poor and with a dad who abandoned the family after having an affair enables him to identify with the issues that those he ministers to in Delft are struggling with (C. George, personal communication, July 16, 2014). His approach to ministry is to tell those in the community that he, too, was poor—so poor, in fact, that even the poor people called his family poor—but then

to show that he didn't stay trapped in his poverty. God brought him out of it, and He can bring them out of it as well. His approach to ministry demonstrates that, many times, it is our cracks and wounds that enable us to do the best community development, for it is our cracks that enable us to most identify with the core humanity of those we want to serve. Eckert (2007) invited us to allow our wounds to teach us and become a source of healing to others, and to continually seek opportunities to let our wounds become avenues through which we can connect more authentically with others. If we do not take the time to find these points of identification, what long term good can we hope to achieve? For, as I have heard said many times before in social services work, people do not care what you know or how you want to "help" until they know that you care.

4.1.j. Take Care With Power.

The Church also must take care with the power it holds. It sometimes seems that followers of Jesus forget that Jesus came to turn the power structures of the world upside down. When we consider poverty, do we associate it with power, or lack thereof? The language of "helping" that we use betrays what we really believe. We say that our goal is to "empower" community members, but we may not fully understand what this word means. Merriam-Webster (2015) defines "empower" as "to give power to (someone)" or "to give official authority or legal power to". But, if a church seeks to engage the needs of the community, who is really giving the power to whom? Who has the "official authority? It is the community that gives permission, power, and authority to the Church to act on its behalf. So, it is the community that gives the Church the power and official authority to bring about community

development. Yet, churches often get this wrong. Churches claim to be providing solutions to the needs of the communities they seek to work with and to want to empower its members. But, to claim to empower community members is to imply that they did not have power or authority in the first place—that they needed the Church to give it to them. Thus, such use of the word becomes an exercise in our own perceived superiority and in devaluing the resources, experiences, and power that exists in the community. Rather than claim to empower communities, local churches should ask their communities to empower them. They must acknowledge that, though they sit in positions of authority as community institutions, they have been given such authority and position in order to steward it in such a way that the existing power of the community is maximally displayed.

Jesus gave us a picture of what exercising authority in His kingdom looks like: We are to exercise authority by being among a community as ones who serve, by becoming the least, and by elevating “the least” into positions of greatness (cf. Luke 22:27, Luke 9:48, Mark 9:35). The Church needs to heed this startling and upside-down way of engaging with a community; God’s people need to enter a community believing that they have as much, if not more, to receive as they have to give and that serving must come before “lording” expertise. Perhaps that was the irony I faced in Delft: I was 2 semesters away from finishing my second Master’s Degree, working in a community where only 6 people I knew had any education beyond high school. Yet, on their turf, they were the masters and I became “the least”. I was reminded that, in the United States, we elevate position and equate it with both power and authority. Do we do this, though, at the risk of ignoring the voices of the *real* experts—the community members who live

their reality day by day? Herein is another principle I gleaned from Delft related to the care we need to take with power: Do not fall into the trap of equating authority and power with position. Rather, look for authority and seek to capitalize on the power that exists among those the world has forgotten, ignored, marginalized, and pushed aside. It is among those people—who, to the world may look like the smallest of seeds—that the transforming power of God’s Kingdom has the most room to grow. It is to these that the Kingdom of God is being given.

4.2 What Inhibits Community Development?: The Commuter Church Phenomenon

American churches seem to be trending towards a “commuter church” phenomenon. We have increasingly become what Lupton (2011) called “commuterized churchgoers” (p. 170): People who do not go to church in their own neighborhoods or communities. Instead, we “shop around”, as if church were something we were buying and thus need to experience “customer satisfaction” with, and look for the type of church that best suits our needs. When we find that church, we may stay long enough to get what we need out of it until it, like any other product we purchase, wears out or starts becoming less useful. Then, the shopping trip commences anew. But, this trend inhibits community development. As the principles in the previous section have made clear, it is by staying (as the Georges have, for almost 20 years) that we learn what the community the church is part of is really like, and that we become invested in the highs and lows of that community. American Christians in our contemporary age tend to treat church as something to go to, rather than a community to be invested in. So, we often use weekly services as a time to escape from our communities, to disengage from the places we call home.

How does this trend inhibit community development? As a result of this consumer mentality towards church, “most churches have lost their community roots, with little connection to the geography surrounding their buildings” (Lupton, 2011, 170). Thus, development is becoming something that happens “out there”—somewhere outside of our home communities, in a foreign country, another city, or another state. When development happens “over there”, we unintentionally enhance the distinction between ourselves and “the Other”. We don’t see those we are “helping” as part of our own community, unless we move and live among them long-term. Claiborne and Perkins (2009) reminded us that we need to “grow roots in the neighborhoods and make sure the people that live there are at the table, or even leading the conversation” and noted that when we are “right there in the midst of the people all the time, [we] become one with them” (p. 161, 216). If we do not adopt this practice of growing roots and being consistently present within a community over time, we may—despite our best intentions—enter the community as outsiders in a position of offering some form of “expertise” to a community that we perceive has a need for such expert assistance. We thus enter in positions of superiority.

What if, however, we were to do community development by beginning in the communities in which we live, work, shop, play, go to school, and generally do life? What if we stopped looking at development as something we do “over there” and start viewing it as caring for the immediate community or communities within which we find ourselves? I imagine this kind of development as represented by ever growing concentric circles, with the smallest circle representing a person’s home community and each subsequent circle representing the larger

spheres of influence the individual has. As we each invest in the communities immediately surrounding us, then, our efforts have ripple effects on the larger communities that encompass those. In Delft, for example, the free community Wi-Fi project has garnered local attention and surrounding towns and suburbs are already requesting that Wi-Fi towers be set up for them as well. Perhaps the lesson here is that development starts at home.

It is often easier, though, to take our development efforts elsewhere—somewhere that is not so close to home, where we do not have to be face to face with the problems that surround us on a daily basis. We may justify this tendency by saying that the needs are greater in Third World countries, for example, or even by saying that God has called us to a particular country. And, these reasons may indeed be true. Nevertheless, it is instructive to take a step back while we are giving our reasons for taking our development or social change efforts abroad and examine whether there is something in our local communities that we are not seeing, or something we are afraid to face.

4.3 Summary: Principles for Church-Based and Holistic Development

Whether in a global or local setting, a church-based approach to community development is distinctive in its ability to promote holistic development. Holistic development helps the Church overcome the dichotomized secular and physical versus spiritual and Christian worldview that plagues many local churches (Mangayi, 2014). Zoe Church—a church located within a community where the houses are mostly run-down square houses the size of a medium-sized one-bedroom apartment with tin roofs, inhabited by perhaps 15-20 people—exemplifies the sort of Christian community I have sought all my adult life. The people in it are

not perfect; they still manipulate each other, sometimes say or do hurtful things, and act selfishly. But, they know the joy and hope that comes from Jesus' love and redemption. Above all, many express a profound dependence upon God for *all* they need and do, speaking of how they seek the Holy Spirit's guidance in personal decisions and for the Centre's resource needs. The spiritual community they have embodies the spiritual element necessary for community development that is truly holistic and transformational. CCDA (2012) stated that "it is practically impossible to do effective wholistic ministry apart from the local church...Probably the greatest sustaining power of community development is the community building of a local church" (Church-Based section, para. 1 & 5).

All the things I have been learning in graduate school about transformational, holistic, co-powering community development, Zoe Church and the Centre are already doing. They are doing these things with a staff of just 25 and a congregation of just 150 adults. It is not size that makes a difference in doing effective community development, but faith in and obedience to a God who has the power to transform whole communities whether through many or through few. Each of the 10 principles outlined in this chapter—"come and see", build real relationships, be curious, listen well, be of and for the community long-term, work to transform mindsets, see solutions and interrogate everything, value wisdom (along with character and faith), embrace brokenness, and take care with power—can enable churches to implement community development practices that address the relational, mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of communities. It is by addressing these interwoven areas of life that true transformation, which leads to the wholeness of life God intends for all creation, can occur.

Desmond Tutu (1984), in his Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, eloquently summarized the goal of holistic, transformational, and biblical community development:

God's Shalom, peace, involves inevitably righteousness, justice, wholeness, fullness of life, participation in decision-making, goodness, laughter, joy, compassion, sharing and reconciliation. Unless we work assiduously so that all of God's children...will enjoy basic human rights, the right to a fulfilled life, the right of movement, of work, the freedom to be fully human, with a humanity measured by nothing less than the humanity of Jesus Christ Himself, then we are on the road inexorably to self-destruction, we are not far from global suicide; and yet it could be so different (p. 400).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Community development within the context of globalization must work towards a world in which those living in economic poverty are able to share equally in the abundance of prosperous times. Armstrong's (2009) admonitions brought clarity to the importance of this goal: "If we don't manage to implement the Golden Rule globally, so that we treat all peoples—wherever and whoever they may be—as though they were as important as ourselves, I doubt that we will have a viable world to hand on to the next generation". Similarly, Tutu (1984) exhorted global citizens to recognize the common humanity among all people:

When will we learn that human beings are of infinite value because they have been created in the image of God, and that it is a blasphemy to treat them as if they were less than this and to do so ultimately recoils on those who do this?...We can be human only in fellowship, in community, in koinonia, in peace. (p. 400)

Myers (2009) noted that there is no transforming community without a transforming church in its midst. I believe that, if churches are not moving towards and engaging their local communities in transformational change, then the best community development can only produce surface-level results. When the church is a voice for and enactor of change in its community, then it becomes a true representative of Christ in the world. It is in this way that it fulfills its deepest calling, and lives out an existence that looks like Jesus. We are, each of us as individual Christ-followers, called to be voices of hope in a world that is so full of darkness—a world that is begging for light and panting after a new way of living. We are called to be that light, to hold out the hope of a better future. For, without hope, what good can we truly accomplish in this world? What can we look forward to? To what end is all our striving, and all our efforts to effect change, if we cannot offer the world something better than the status quo: poverty, racism, injustice, oppression, suffering, hopelessness, apathy, hate, fear, and sadness?

We are Jesus' Church, and Jesus said that He came to bring life to the fullest. He preached a Gospel that is not only about personal salvation, but that matters "also for God's pursuit of restoration, redemption, and reconciliation of the entire world...A gospel that not only saves but restores the dignity of humanity—even in the midst of our brokenness and depravity" (Cho, 2014, p. 42). If we cannot offer this Gospel to the world, then what good is our faith, and what good are all our thinking, money, and resources? As Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, "Any religion that professes to be concerned with the souls of men and is not concerned with the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them, and the social conditions that cripple them is a dry-as-dust religion" (as cited in Cho, 2014, p. 47). Let us, as

Jesus' Church and individual local churches, be fearless and tireless voices for change, showing the world what is possible. Let us show others that what *is* does not have to be and that nothing is impossible for those who follow God, because nothing is impossible for God. And, let us remind ourselves regularly that transformational community development will not happen overnight; it will require us to persevere over the long haul. Such development has often been compared to the Biblical image of the Christian life as a race: It is a marathon, rather than a 100 meter sprint. It is about laboring day after day, month after month, and year after year with slow changes (or, at times, no obvious changes at all) that are punctured by the rare large victories. It is about embracing our work with determination, bolstered by the faith that—even when it seems that no change is happening—God is working in and through us to bring about community transformation and justice.

As Christians, and particularly Christian community development practitioners, we need to be different, to do differently, to pray differently, and to love and live as if the world we dream of is actually possible. Only this kind of “different” living can bring about the sustainable and lasting transformation the world so desperately needs. Let us begin living differently by entering communities, both locally and globally, with humble hearts and minds that are open to what God would want to teach us; let us enter with a willingness to stay for as long as God calls us to stay. Let us actively reimagine power dynamics as we serve others. And, as we work to find solutions to challenging human problems and bring about positive change in communities, let us also pay attention to how God is changing us.

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