

Northwest University

Social Enterprise: Enabling the  
Church to Better Transform Communities

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## Introduction

While the Christian Church has taken many structures and denominations throughout the United States' 243 years, the Protestant Evangelical Church has been constant. Puritans and Pietists set the tone for the revivals of the Great Awakening led by orators such as Jonathan Edwards. In the Nineteenth Century, Antebellum America experienced even more revivals, with Baptist and Methodist congregations paving the way for the Second Great Awakening. Evangelists like Billy Graham helped usher in "the most impressive renewal of Protestant religious thinking since the days of Jonathan Edwards" during the Twentieth Century (Balmer & Winner 66).

Despite its extensive influence in American history, white Evangelical Christians have fallen short of their biblical commands of helping the poor (Matthew 25) and reaching the spiritually lost (Acts 1:8). According to Poverty USA, nearly 41 million Americans lived in poverty. Christians have created so much divide, especially regarding gender and race, that it rivals the gap created by Great Schism<sup>1</sup> (Volf 26), and church members gradually leave congregations. In order to fulfill its missional call and re-establish its purpose, the American Evangelical Church must change. It can incite this change by taking hold of social enterprise. When the church first seeks to change itself through social enterprise, it can more effectively open the door for transformation to occur in its community.

## Context

If you scroll through various different non-profits' pages on Facebook or Instagram, you see posts imploring for donations. Almost every church has a "Giving" section on their website menu. When a missionary comes to a church, along with prayers, they ask for something.

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<sup>1</sup> The Great Schism of 1054 was the separation that formed the Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Money. Missionaries, churches, and non-profits all need it and, usually, are at the mercy of donors, contributors, or external grants. What if there was a way for churches, missionaries, or non-profit organizations to become somewhat self-sufficient so that the dependence on external contributions was reduced? This curiosity spurred an investigation into social enterprise within the American Evangelical Church (AEC). A plethora of churches addresses social inequalities in some form of with ministries such as food pantries, clothing pantries, financial literacy training, or housing construction. Unfortunately, so few resources exist and so few churches take part in any type of social enterprise.

In order to discover more about social enterprise within the church, I conducted qualitative research at Victory Mission. Victory Mission is a Christian ministry that addresses homelessness, particularly with men, in Springfield by providing “emergency and educational services that lead to long-term reconciliation, rehabilitation and re-entry into society” (“Purpose & History”); the organization provides many of these services through its social enterprises. At Victory Mission, I began with examining financial self-sufficiency, but as time progressed, I noticed a much more crucial issue. The AEC has been wavering in its commitments. It has not been as diligent in following the ways of Jesus Christ and the Early Church, who consistently helped the poor and hurting and spoke about redemption. Churches have been building walls against those in need, particularly those outside their church. A search for financial independence revealed a degree of hypocrisy within church and paved the way to see social enterprise as a solution for the AEC.

## Terms

### *The Church*

In order to avoid confusion, any discussion on the church requires a clarification into what the term “church” actually means. Commonly, people associate the church as a gathering of “believers” that occasionally live for God, often meeting together only on Sundays for a few hours. The definition of a revitalized church passionate for reaching the lost and hurting, however, is a group of believers in Christ *zealous* about meeting another’s needs with resources God has given them, “proclaiming good news and showing love to their communities” (Rusaw & Swanson 126). This definition is further supported by Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert in *What Is the Mission of the Church?* They write, “Christians are to be people of both declaration and demonstration, and that our churches are to be communities of both declaration and demonstration” (223). DeYoung and Gilbert further support their definition with the Bible:

“We do good works to obey God, whom we love” (1 John 5:3; 4:19).

“We do good works because we love our neighbors” (Matt. 22:36-40).

“We do good works to show the world God’s character and God’s work” (Matt. 5:16).

“We do good works because they are the Fruit of the Spirit’s work in us” (Matt. 7:16-20).

Other Scripture further supports the call for Christians to love God:

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus *for good works*” (Eph. 2:8-10; emphasis added).<sup>2</sup>

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen:

to loose the chains of injustice

and untie the cords of the yoke,

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<sup>2</sup> Here, Paul writes to the church in Ephesus, encouraging them on their faith journey.

to set the oppressed free

and break every yoke?

Is it not to share your food with the hungry

and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—

when you see the naked, to clothe them,

and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

Then your light will break forth like the dawn,

and your healing will quickly appear;

then your righteousness will go before you,

and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard.

Then you will call, and the Lord will answer;

you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I” (Isa. 58:6-7).<sup>3</sup>

“But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jer. 29:7).<sup>4</sup>

“Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share” (1 Tim. 6:18).<sup>5</sup>

Currently, many Christians lack the fervor to fulfill both the proclamation and demonstration of love.

Søren Kierkegaard reduces the Christian’s responsibility to seeking *first* the Kingdom of God. Seeking first the Kingdom of God consists of loving God and loving others, including the poor and hurting. Something to note about these Scriptures is the collectivist nature of all the

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<sup>3</sup> Isaiah admonishes the Israelites for their unrighteousness, crying out for them to turn from their wickedness.

<sup>4</sup> Jeremiah writes to the Jewish exiles in Babylon, encouraging them to do good in their city, despite their situation.

<sup>5</sup> Paul writes to Timothy, located in Ephesus, telling him to encourage the rich, commanding them to share what they have with the poor in the community.

texts. The commandments to love one another are written not to individuals but to groups of people. Bob Roberts writes, “the Great Commission was and is given to the church, not just individuals” (49). The church is one group of followers of Christ, eager to meet others’ needs, whether they be physical or spiritual, with their God-given resources in order to be the words and actions of Christ. While this definition may not accurately depict the AEC, it sets a baseline for what a group of Christians should look like.

### *Social Enterprise*

While social enterprises have existed for several decades, only recently have scholars and practitioners created resources exploring and explaining the concept of social enterprise (Social Enterprise Alliance xxi). This makes defining the topic of social enterprise quite controversial. The greatest distinction deals with social enterprise versus social entrepreneurship. In their book *Social Entrepreneurship: What Everyone Needs to Know*, David Bornstein and Susan Davis define social entrepreneurship as:

... a process by which citizens build or transform institutions to advance solutions to social problems, such as poverty, illness, illiteracy, environmental destruction, human rights abuses and corruption, in order to make life better for many. (1)

In contrast, Christian Seelos and Johanna Mair define social enterprises as “established organizations that enact a primary objective of catering to important social and environmental problems of disadvantaged people and communities” (1). Noga Leviner et al. write that many erroneously combine the ideas of social entrepreneurship with social enterprise. Not all social enterprise involves social entrepreneurship, though (93). The social enterprise must bring change, and the social entrepreneur plays an important part in envisioning this change. Ashoka founder William Drayton describes the social entrepreneur in this way: “[The social

entrepreneur] finds what is not working and solves the problem by changing the system, spreading the solution and persuading entire societies to take new leaps” (93).

### **Forms of Social Enterprises**

The lack of a clear definition allows for a variety of forms of social enterprises. Mal Warwick, fundraising and nonprofit expert, describes two models of social enterprises. One seeks to generate revenue and the other to solve problems (Lynch & Walls 41). The social enterprises seeking to earn money may do so to reduce operational costs in other programs. Victory Mission does this through Victory Coffee Company, providing a necessary service at a comparable price with the added bonus of providing mental health counseling for its program participants. This model, however, has pitfalls; it can easily lead to focusing too much on money, forgetting those the money is actually meant to serve. Peter Olutayo Adewunmiju writes that the service motive must dominate the profit-making motive (6). Adriana Negut of the Research Institute for Quality of Life agrees: “Long-term sustainability may also be endangered by excessive pressure to obtain short-term profit, which causes side effects such as the harming of trust relationships with customers or tainted reputation” (28). Such motives can lead to a skewed interpretation of social enterprise, such as that taken by Compartamos, a microlending organization that is known to charge interest rates as high as 195% (Roodman). Muhammad Yunus, one of the early champions of social enterprise, challenges this model, saying, “When you are maximizing profits, you care about your profits, not your people” (“Who's Making Money?”). Tom and David Kelley describe this dilemma as a seesaw with the heart and money on opposite ends. They must both be kept in balance, but the heart will always carry the most authentic meaning (150-52).



The second model of social enterprise that Warwick describes, problem-solving, seeks to improve the well-being of others. One organization that does this is Mimi Silbert's Delancey Street Foundation. The organization uses moving and trucking, landscaping, and catering to encourage convicts to bring about change in their lives ("New Heroes"). While Delancey Street does incredible things to bring change to lives in San Francisco, this model of problem-solving can develop into reductive seduction where the "developers" turn themselves into saviors (Martin). They exalt themselves as conquerors of poverty and despair.

Another form of social enterprise, not described by Warwick, aims to form and develop community. Adewunmiju writes:

The church should seek for [both] "economic and social structures which maximize fellowship and cooperation, rather than the autonomy and isolation of the individual and the belief that the individual enterprise is the most important goal." (Adewunmiju 10)

Quakers uphold this principle, as well. *Quaker Faith & Practice*, a religious guide for Quakers, shows that Quakers who do business should do so for "the good of others and of the community at large." A social enterprise focused on revenue or solving problems usually just focuses on those tasks, but a social enterprise grounded in bringing people together can both bring in profits and improve people's lives, fulfilling both of Warwick's models. Cornerstone Pizza in St. Ignatius, Montana does just this. The pizza shop, begun by Cornerstone Faith Center, creates a safe place for students to enjoy lunch, donates profits for school supplies at the nearby elementary school, and provides much needed jobs on the Flathead Indian Reservation (Merrill). The AEC must seek out this model of social enterprise in order to more adequately address poverty and need in its communities.

## The Problem

People have lost faith in religion, and the AEC, in turn, has lost its cultural relevance. Still, it does almost nothing to reach out to the “spiritually dead” (Eph. 2:1-2). Compared to other generations, such as the Greatest, Silent, Boomers, and Gen X, Millennials report the lowest on religion’s importance (11). Bob Roberts Jr., author of *Transformation*, discovered that people just do not care about the church (18). Trent Sims of Victory Mission notices that attendance in some Springfield, Missouri churches is dropping. Overall in the United States, church attendance dropped 6% from 1991 through 2002 (Rusaw & Swanson 27). A Gallup Survey more recently shows the number of Protestants declined by 12% from 2008 to 2018 (“Religion”). Matt Overton, a pastor at Columbia Presbyterian Church in Vancouver, Washington, sees that parents’ fear for their children’s economic futures and “feel pressured to enroll them in activities they believe will enhance that future.” Families do not see any importance in going to church. Wim Dreyer of the University of Pretoria writes that the church has been the cause of this exodus and “deconversion” of people from Christianity (1). The church has faded from the importance it once held. Some see Christianity coming to an end (Malone 27), while others have outright declared “that Christendom is dead and we are living in a Post-Christian age where the older forms of evangelistic outreach no longer work” (McIntosh 109).

Even when given the opportunity, the church fails to welcome people in as part of the tribe. Richard Beck writes that people do this through the establishment of boundaries because of disgust (14). When church members look upon the poor with contempt and disgust, they establish boundaries between themselves and the poor. These boundaries create a rift between the poor and the church as a whole. The church, then, effectively turns itself into a self-righteous haven, safe from the “impure” and “wicked” (Rusaw & Swanson 25). Mahatma Gandhi, a great

champion of social justice in India, was repulsed by so many Christians' actions he once said, "I would be a Christian if it weren't for Christians." Gandhi saw the potential for Christian beliefs but rarely saw anyone practice them.

Not only do people care less about the church, they do not expect the church to help reduce poverty in practical ways. Others even see the church as a hindrance to society. In 2006, the mayor of Stafford, Texas declared that there were too many churches in the city; they "give nothing of visceral, tangible value back to the community" (Towns, Stetzer, & Bird 131). Many claims like this are not unwarranted. Instead of bringing purpose and value to the community, the AEC pushed welfare onto the government (Bradley & Lindsley 15). Governmental welfare has never quite worked though.

Within 300 years of Publius Clodius offering free wheat to all Romans, people expected government help, but heavy taxes to support this welfare crippled the Roman government (53). Something similar occurred in the Soviet Union. A state-run economy created incredible dependency and led to the eventual collapse of the superpower. Even transnational government cannot satisfy. After World War II, the World Bank tried to solve poverty in low-income countries, "lending them money on generous terms to promote economic growth and poverty reduction" (Corbett & Fikkert 49). The World Bank's efforts did not work; from 1951 to 1976, the percentage of Indian's living in poverty rose from 47 to 56 percent (Fox 1). The incomplete Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), proposed by the United Nations in 2000, were replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015. Before the change, however, the estimated cost for the MDGs rose to somewhere between \$82 and \$150 billion (McNair). In May 2018, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had little good news to report on the SDGs. World hunger had increased, sea levels rose, and public access to information had barely

changed (Leone). This leads to a society that must either put its hope in unreliable government or an absent church.

### **The Solution**

The AEC is failing its communities. If the church is to actually make a difference in a suffering world, as it should, it must change. It needs to reach out beyond its self-constituted walls in creative ways. Robert Sirico writes of this need in his chapter “The Moral Potential of the Free Economy”:

We need a vocational encounter between the entrepreneurial vocation – distinguished by its creativity, willingness to risk, and insight into the wants and needs of customers – and the pastoral-religious frame of reference, with its priority of tending to the needs of the most vulnerable out of the love with which God has first loved us. (Bradley & Lindsley 257)

Churches need something that will entice communities to *want* “churches because of the community transformation they bring” (Towns, Stetzer, & Bird 131).

Social enterprise fits this vital role of social justice with direct participation in the community. It enables the church to show people that it can contribute to society as well as the church community. It will bring community transformation, appealing to those eager for something fresh and different, those eager for another world. Sarah Hopkins, director of Matryoshka House writes that this other world is possible; among other things, it requires a big idea, “a belief that God works through us for His redemptive purposes and our human flourishing,” collaboration, openness to change, measurable progress, and the use of new economic models (14). Christians must become social entrepreneurs. They must do this by “engaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning” (Zeitlow 20). The

AEC faces a painful challenge, but social enterprise is a logical tool that improves society and the Christian community.

### *Society*

Business (in this case, social enterprise) is a practical way to help people overcome poverty. Sirico writes that in the past two centuries nothing has rescued as many people from direst poverty than jobs. He also writes this about jobs in the free market: “where people are free to pursue enterprise and connect to regional and global markets, the economy develops and great masses of people rise out of poverty” (48). Victor Claar and Robin Klay write that not only does a market economy encourage responsibility, but it allows human beings “to fully explore partially hidden (and everchanging) callings within their families, work environments and communal relationships” (24). Many believe that capitalism encourages greed, but Jay Richards counters the erroneous belief by explaining entrepreneurs. Rarely do entrepreneurs hoard their money; instead, they believe in their neighbors, partners, society, and employees, anticipating their needs (Richards 130). Social entrepreneurs help elevate those around them, leading to a better society.

Social enterprise also improves society by restoring dignity. Discussing business requires understanding the destiny and nature of mankind as they relate to work (Miller 1:58-2:05). As a gift from God, business and work help preserve mankind’s dignity. Adewunmiju writes, “work gives man dignity and a sense of fulfillment. It affirms human worth and serves to meet physical and spiritual needs” (5). In Leviticus 19:9-10, God commands the Israelites to not reap the edges of their fields, to leave the gleanings of their harvest, to not strip their vineyards bare, and to leave fallen grapes. He commands them to do this “for the poor and for the sojourner.” By leaving doing this, the Israelites were leaving room for the poor to work for their help. When the

AEC implements social enterprise, not only does it encourage growth, it enables the restitution of dignity.

Intentional community business by means of social enterprise also has the ability to promote change in local economies (Weber 427). Five women entrepreneurs in Cedar County, Nebraska demonstrate this through their microenterprise, the St. James Marketplace. At the Marketplace, rural farming women offer products both to supplement income and foster community in a once stagnant area (430). The Marketplace resulted in the small community's name being placed back on the map, becoming a Nebraska non-stock Agriculture Marketing Cooperative and being awarded a Value-Added Agricultural Product Development Grant. The Marketplace currently houses over sixty active artisans and an annual Heritage Fest attracting visitors. The Marketplace has also earned several awards, including The Nebraska Preservation Award, the Outstanding Tourism Attraction Award, and the Pioneer Award ("St. James Marketplace").

### *Christian Community*

Another issue plaguing the AEC is activism without action. People will gladly march the streets with red Xs on their hands to cry out against the institutions enabling modern slavery.<sup>6</sup> Few will actually work with those institutions and teach them alternatives to enslavement. With the tool of business, "social entrepreneurs work to ensure that sensible ideas take root and actually change people's thinking and behavior across a society" (Bornstein & Davis 21). Business in social enterprise has the ability to encourage action in the Christian community, not just outrage or emotion.

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<sup>6</sup> The End It Movement seeks to illuminate the injustices of sexual trafficking.

As interconnectivity among nations increases in the form of globalization, business enables the church's reach to far exceed that of the immediate surrounding area. Roberts advocates that business and globalization allow for endless possibilities to affect locally and globally (Roberts Jr. 14). A Global Teen Challenge center located in Poland uses globalization and business to its advantage, raising snails to sell to France and wood-framed insulated windows for a profit in Norway (Larson & Flores 28). With social enterprise, Christians can reach out to those in neighboring communities that may not have a Church presence.

### *A Logical Approach*

Social enterprise is not a new venture for Christians. Historically, social justice and social enterprise have played a role in the church in one way or another, so it makes sense for the modern AEC to use. Jerry Pillay writes of the Early Church's involvement in *politeia*, or public life. Early Church members were taught to have a civic consciousness, and they were taught to do so as a group, as seen in 1 Timothy 6:18 (2). Although a Roman emperor, Constantine also promoted various reforms in favor of "dependents, women, children and slaves," ensuring they were cared for responsibly (3).

The Medieval Church witnessed the greatest explosion of market intervention by believers. Guilds and confraternities would create and sell goods. Instead of seeking profits, these parachurch organizations focused more on the spiritual wellness of their fellow man (3). These confraternities, arranged by church members, directed nearly all organized charity. One person of note during the Medieval Church period is Saint Benedict of Nursia. His vows of poverty and work paved the way for monastic communities such as the Cistercian order. Cistercian order members would live void of luxury but still work fervently. In order to avoid wastefulness after giving to the poor, they would sell their surplus, purchasing new land that they

would in turn lease to tenant farmers. These farmers were employed and earned skills and wages, a portion of which they were expected to give to the monastery. Not only did the Cistercian monks improve local economies and communities, they put their efforts into developing technologies such as the waterwheel to increase production (Bradley & Lindsley 25-27). Another monastic system that incorporated a similar socially entrepreneurial system is the Medieval Celtic Christians who followed Saint Patrick. When these Celtic missionaries would enter a community, they would enjoy life with people, engaging them in quotidian life. Once they ministered to the people and established a church, their community would consist of people working together for the needs of all, even strangers (Hunter III 16).

Even though the Christian church faced much strife and quarrel in the Sixteenth Century, the Reformation displayed a commitment to social justice and the poor. Martin Luther not only advocated for new theology, but he also advocated for “the formulation of new social policies to deal with major economic and social change.” These included taxes to support the poor and low-interest loans and subsidies for education and training for the poor (Pillay 6). John Calvin, concerned with commerce and economic justice, also helped turn Geneva into a center of social enterprise (8). One social enterprise within the church that displayed the greatest potential was the “General Hospital.” The Genevan General Hospital would take in the poor, children, orphans, and the elderly, teaching many how to work the farms surrounding the city. Hospitals would then train others in the mills, teaching them to grind flour. Yet others learned to bake with the flour, creating a system of partnership within the church. This bread was then distributed to those unable to work (Bradley & Lindsley 28).



### *Sustainability*

Social enterprise also presents a solution to dwindling financial resources of the AEC. Decreasing numbers of church attendees put stress on budgets, budgets for pastoral support, ministries, and missions. Churches require funding. Real Life Church in Clermont, Florida provides for its outreach programs through a café, begun through a partnership with a local restaurant. Proceeds from the café, The Fork, go directly into supporting the church's food pantry, summer lunches for kids, counseling, and overseas missions trips. Becca Stevens created the bath-and-body-care company Thistle Farms as a way to provide for women recovering from the abuses of prostitution in Magdalene Residential Services (MRS). Thistle Farms then uses profits to support MRS, to provide livable wages to Magdalene residents, and to provide continual support to MRS graduates ("Our Mission"). In Denver, Colorado, Bud's Warehouse sells recycled construction and home improvement materials. Bud's Warehouse then provides job training, loans, and technical assistance to those "rebuilding lives from addiction, homelessness, and prison" ("Belay Enterprises History and Mission"). Social enterprises within the AEC do not require grandiose business plans or intricate social networks, but the financial rewards can benefit a vast number of the community.

Many churches and nonprofit organizations seeking to bring change to their communities must rely on benevolence and external funding, such as grants from foundations or governments. Often times, though, funders overlook Christian organizations, "making decisions based on anecdotal evidence, personal preference, or political exigency" or their funding comes with many stipulations and regulations that limit how the organization can use the funds (Bornstein & Davis 63). Social enterprise, however, removes the pressure from the church to rely as heavily on outside funding, whether it be tithes or grants. In their book *Building Social Business*, Yunus and

Karl Weber criticize the inefficiency and unreliability of depending on charitable donations. Instead, they advocate that social business helps create sustainability, “increasing the benefits they can deliver to the poor or to others in society” (6). Additionally, J.B. Schramm, founder of PeerForward/College Summit says that “charity just does not scale.” Business helps ensure the church’s coffers remain full to help those in need.

### **Obstacles**

Simply implementing social enterprise will not create immediate change in the AEC and society. In fact, social enterprise within the church faces many obstacles that can prevent or hinder transformation. They include a fear of the free market, neglecting the Gospel, complacency, and a disregard for culture.

#### *Fear of the Market*

As mentioned above, many Christians have a fear of business and capitalism. As a whole, the AEC views the market as immoral and “worry about any system that is based on self-interest rather than on the good of the community as a whole” (Blank & McGurn 3). This is without surprise as advocates of capitalism, such as Ayn Rand and Ivan Boesky, have claimed that greed is a healthy virtue (Richards 2). Even looking at the Bible, Christians see texts such as “The love of money is the root of all evil” and see too much money as dangerous (1 Tim. 6:10). Sirico writes that many even confuse the market economy with consumerism which focuses on materialism and careless spending (3-4). Many in the AEC refuse to acknowledge the benefits of a free market, and their arrogance keeps them from encouraging necessary economic development.

### *Missional Drift*

Missional drift occurs when the church continues to lose focus of or even intentionally neglect the Gospel. Jesus spoke of the greater theme that resulted in spiritual restoration for all. Slavery and segregation in the United States are key examples of this missional drift. Only 50 years ago Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated for his advocacy for racial inclusion and unity. Still today, many Christians negate racism and cover up the wounds the AEC has caused on both Christian and secular components of society (Fulkerson and Shoop 8). Christians that deny this responsibility forcibly cause a rift between the Church and community.

This failure also comes when church members do not “consistently practice their faith in their personal lives and allow their values to be shaped by biblical principles” (Towns, Stetzer, & Bird 140-41). Altogether this leads to a disregard for *koinonia* (community), *kerygma* (proclamation), *diakonia* (service), and *martyria* (witness) (Ireland 39). These components, however, are necessary to any church’s mission. Christians that abrogate *koinonia*, *kerygma*, *diakonia*, and *martyria* fail to carry out their mission.

### *Complacency*

When the matter of social welfare rises to the surface, many Westerners assume the responsibility of caring for the poor rests on the government, national and/or transnational. After all, governments have access to incredible resources, financial and social, and to almost every component of society (Yunus 8). In Christian circles, some even advocate that the State should redistribute wealth, similar to the Ancient Israelites (Leviticus 25) or the early Christian community in Acts 2-5 (Bradley & Lindsley 92). While passing on the responsibility of dealing with the poor may seem appealing, this complacency led to the need for social enterprise. The AEC removed itself from social justice, finding the idea of sharing poverty unattractive (Douthat

79). If it wishes to return its influence, the Christian community must take back the responsibility of the poor.

### *Contextualization*

Any community development initiative must consider the culture of the context in which they work. Culture simply plays too great a role in a community for social entrepreneurs to neglect. Geert Hofstede et al. provide an intricate analysis of the vast characteristics that make up a culture, such as power distance, individualism, and uncertainty avoidance. The local church must consider all these factors in order to develop a firm foundation for understanding how a community functions. A lack of understanding on how the community's culture works can hinder cross-cultural social entrepreneurs better prepare for and address the needs of the community.

The local church may not need to focus as much on cultural dissimilarities presented by Hofstede et al., but Tommy Hawkins and Sims say that the needs of a community also affect culture. A particular approach may have worked in a similar context, but that does not mean the same approach will function in a separate context. Church communities must ask what kind of poverty its community faces and respond accordingly. Janelle Kerlin writes that different cultural contexts can focus on different needs and how these needs can be met with social enterprise. For example, social enterprise within Western Europe includes the civil society and the state, but Zimbabwe and Zambia use a market and international aid approach to meet the needs. If a social enterprise plans to provide job training for adults, it must train them for jobs that will provide stability and financial sustainability. Training for minimum wage jobs does not help provide lasting change; it simply keeps participants in a cycle of insufficiency. Preparing participants for

jobs that can provide enough income and benefits to succeed, however, can lead to a productive social enterprise.

### **Confronting Obstacles**

The AEC may have relinquished its role in addressing social justice, but with social enterprise, the modern church can still reach both the physical and spiritual needs of the poor. It can confront and overcome the obstacles discussed above. Hawkins believes that the modern church has the ability to rid the world of nonprofits; it just needs to re-insert itself into the world. The church can re-insert itself into the world not through Bible thumping or flashy lights but through intentional and personal investment. Rusaw and Swanson describe this as “[moving] words and [trying] to embody the message we are proclaiming” (65). This Good News and these good deeds are what the church stands for. They are what the church is. When the church fulfills its divine mandate, stepping out, sharing their faith and performing good deeds, it benefits others, glorifies God, validates an evident and observable faith, helps people encounter Jesus in a personal way, and helps establish a better reputation with those in the community that do not know of the benefits the church can offer (116-20). This reputation enables church members to go out and *be* an embodiment of change. They do this through collaboration, using the church community, foregrounding community, embracing relationships, encouraging mentorship, and taking risks.

### *Collaboration*

In order to bring change, a social enterprise-minded church should collaborate with local nonprofit organizations to maximize its efforts in helping the poor. In Springfield, Missouri several church organizations, referred to as parachurches, work with one another. The Drew Lewis Foundation at the Fairbanks brings together Life360 Church, Redeemer Church,

Springfield Community Gardens, and The Northwest Project to bring change to the most impoverished zone of the city. At Victory Mission, Mark McKnelly developed Restoration@TheSquare, a 12 to 18-month program, to “transform men’s lives through a holistic approach of developing spiritual, personal, relational, vocational, and financial areas of life” (“Victory for Men”). To fulfill these goals, Victory Mission partners with The Master’s Craftsmen (TMC) twice a week to provide valuable woodworking training. At TMC, program participants begin with thirty minutes of online woodworking training. A meal and devotion time follow the training. Once the spiritual growth segment has concluded, the men make their way to the shop for two hours of practical, hands-on training. During one of my visits to TMC, one program participant, JP, practiced routing, and John, another program participant, worked on creating coasters to sell. JP says he hopes to get a job in some form of construction once he completes the Restoration@TheSquare program. He would have been unable to learn these skills without the collaboration between Victory Mission and TMC.

TMC also partners with other nonprofits, like Elevate Lives, to bring about change in the lives of those in need. While Elevate Lives approaches poverty in several different ways, TMC participants became involved in the remodeling of a home for single mothers. Measuring, trimming, and nailing mold and trim, TMC members were not only learning valuable skills for a job in construction, they were playing a part in helping others work their way out of poverty. Ron Showers, TMC founder, says that genuine change flourishes on this model built on collaboration and helping others.

To succeed at social enterprise, a church truly intent on reaching people must also partner with existing ministries and agencies “already accomplishing a shared mission in the community” (Rusaw & Swanson 30). In Springfield, Victory Mission, the Salvation Army, the

Green County Sheriff's Department, and Crosslines all partner together at Christmas time for the sake of the community. Each organization, whether nonprofit or parachurch, serves as drop-off and distribution points for food, clothes, and toys, helping community members who may not have the means to get to one of the main distribution sites. Not only does partnering with other nonprofit organizations benefit the people of the community, but it also reduces the strain on any single entity, enabling longevity and impact. Some organizations might already have a strong relationship with a community; in such cases, the church should serve as a partner, reinforcing these ties.

### *Community*

Another critical tool the AEC can use to bring change through social enterprise is involving the local community. Ana María Paredo and James Chrisman write that the community should be the starting point in social enterprises because the community knows the assets and existing social structures (310). Community members formed Unity Enterprise in Glasgow, Scotland because they recognized the voids in their local government and stepped up to provide “training, work experience, guidance and support, personal development, education, and social activities for young people and adults experiencing disabilities and/or social disadvantages” (Roy et al. 62). The Early Church also demonstrates the significance of community; it grew because people spent time with one another (Rusaw & Swanson 93-94). Cynthia Moe-Lobeda writes that Jesus was incessantly reaching out in love to those around him (173). He reached out to the Samaritan woman at the well, lepers, and the poor. He spent time with his disciples and many outcasts of society, such as prostitutes and tax collectors, pure filth to the religious leaders of Jesus' time.

Just as the AEC needs the support of those in its communities, a community absent of the church “cannot be healthy, and all that God wants it to be, without [the church’s] active engagement and involvement in its life;” they are vital to a community’s health and well-being (Rusaw & Swanson 25; Ott). In the Northwest International Community Development Program, we refer to this as “copowerment,” or “a dynamic of mutual exchange through which both sides of a social equation are made stronger and more effective by the other” (*Leadership*). As with most relationships, when the church shows love and becomes involved in the community, the community often gets involved with the church: “when customers rave about how much they love doing business with a company, developing partnerships with them as a way of contributing to the community flows naturally” (Hammel 9). Throughout the Seventeenth and mid-Twentieth Centuries, Christian missionaries in Tibet became involved in the community through common language and business to build relations with people that would probably never hear the Gospel (Bray). Victory Mission’s social enterprise Street Chef Catering (SCC) does this by partnering with the community under a similar vision: helping the hurt find healing (Moses). Similarly, *Faith Communities Today* reports that “congregations with strong commitments to social justice and with direct participation in community outreach are more likely to be growing” (Rusaw & Swanson 27). As churches grow, their impact on culture also grows. When the AEC puts community at the forefront, it not only seeks to better the community but itself as well. Katie Willis refers to this method of active participation directly in the community as grassroots development (113).

Often, a church is already well-integrated into a community and has the ability to access resources and connections already present (Boucher 171). The church, frequently connected with a variety of people in a community, then possesses the social capital necessary for a grassroots



approach. The Celtic community of the Medieval Church frequently did this by reaching out to village leaders, eager to bring about both social and religious change (Hunter III 17). Community members demonstrated this when they visited Victory Coffee Company's (VCC) open house at Suddenlies, a local business that agreed to support VCC's coffee sales. The community plays an invaluable role in accessing social structures and encouraging the church's passion for restoration. The AEC must access those in direct proximity if it wishes to perform holistic and effective ministry, and it can do so by forming relationships.

### *Relationships*

Social enterprises require a human-centered design in order to function well and lead to creative solutions (Kelley & Kelley 18). In order to better discover how to create better human-centered designs, the AEC must use relationship. Relationship through social enterprise enables the church to reach out and include the poor. Suzanne Hurst, a missionary with Assemblies of God World Missions (AGWM), writes that the best development projects are community-based, people-centered, people-owned, and participative; they all include people (Ireland 81).

When the church builds social capital and relationships, it not only supports people, but the church supports itself. Amish entrepreneurs in Lancaster, Pennsylvania have notoriously low failure rates while 75 percent of most American business fail within three years. Researchers Kraybill and Nolt attribute the meager four percent failure rate to Amish communities' vast networks (Lights 671). These Amish entrepreneurs focus greatly on relationships with those in their community, and their success demonstrates it. Relationship consists of finding "other people to join in benefiting others" (Hynson). This comes naturally in market encounters. People have a need for a service or product, and genuine relationship leads to more business interactions. Rusaw and Swanson write that relationship can also lead to service, and, in serving,

“[the AEC] can listen and connect, and ultimately *[the AEC] can be heard*” (Rusaw & Swanson 107). Not only does the church have the ability to foster relationships, it carries a divine commandment. AGWM missionary Dakota Marsh says, “Jesus has spoken through Scripture to His followers to love people and make disciples.”

Relationship does not solely cause growth; it helps build credibility in the community. Svetlana Papazov does this through her business incubator, Real Life Center for Entrepreneurial and Leadership Excellence. Here, she offers space to entrepreneurs and creates relationship with local entrepreneurs. Her personal and business relationships with these entrepreneurs help instigate conversations outside the church, increasing her reach (Huffman 28-29). Bill Crooks and Jackie Mouradian of Tearfund, a British Christian relief and development agency, write that church members are suited to these types of growth-promoting relationships:

One of the church’s greatest strengths is the importance it gives to relationships. This makes it very able to provide relational support. It acknowledges people’s inner hurts and griefs and responds with hospitality and pastoral care. The church recognizes that people have spiritual and emotional needs and should be treated with dignity. (26)

The AEC must foster relationships in order to best implement social enterprise to bring about change.

### *The Laity*

Church members also play a crucial role in overcoming the obstacles the AEC faces. Social enterprises require skilled laborers to teach and invest in others. These do not have to be pastors and ordained ministers. The AEC is full of diversity in gender, race and ethnicity, and education, and nearly every person has a valuable skill they can help others learn. The church is full of people with a variety of skills and abilities, from medical professionals to cooks and

accountants to construction workers, all of whom can provide valuable technical and interpersonal insight to those in need. When church members contribute to others, change and restoration can occur. Johan Cilliers and Cas Wepener believe that when church members become more involved in their communities the following occurs:

Relationships of trust are formed here, and these relationships in turn facilitate communication and the co-ordination of activities in society and contribute towards the well-being of participants. Individuals, as well as the broader society, benefit from this. (Pieterse 4)

The church requires these relationships to be fruitful and fulfill its missional calling.

In the early Nineteenth century, people like Anthony Ashley Cooper of Shaftesbury advocated “the use of lay people—lay agents—in the Lord’s work” (Bradley & Lindsley 130). Today, the church has a wealth of people available to do this type of work. According to a 2013 Gallup poll, 65 percent of Americans volunteered for a religious organization, and 83 percent committed financially (Ireland 75). Church members are ready and willing to participate in their church’s activities. The AEC consists of a great plethora of talented individuals; these individuals must simply make their talents available for teaching and training (Peredo & Chrisman 319).

### *Mentorship*

The church, in its venture to utilize social enterprise, must also realize mentorship. According to Daniel Harkavy and Steve Halliday, a coach, or mentor, “helps others win by helping them to discover the knowledge, strategies, Action Plans, inspiration, and accountability they need to excel and to reach even greater levels of success” (35). In order for true development to take place, change must happen, and mentors can help incite and maintain that

change. In the Bible, people like Barnabas filled this role. He “intentionally looked for evidence of grace and encouraged the people to continue their spiritual progress and remain committed to their faith” (Reiland 60).

In the context of developmental social enterprise, skills play an incredible role. These skills can consist of either interpersonal, such as communication, or technical skills, such as farming. At Homeboy Industries, one of the United States’ most renowned social enterprises, navigators, or mentors, work alongside trainees. Kusema Thomas, a navigator, says, “it gives them the sense that you care enough to do the same work that they do so that they too can understand the importance of it” (“What Is a Navigator?”). TMC uses mentors like Randy and Aaron, proficient in woodworking, to train program participants. Victory Mission’s SCC plans on using former program participants, trained in culinary skills, to mentor sous-chefs. When people have mentors to help develop and cultivate skills, they increase their employability; they learn to listen and understand effectively; they have increased organization skills; and they become leaders, bringing groups together for productive outcomes (Hawkins; Maqueira 144-47).

The church can also act as a source for mentors willing to deliver spiritual guidance. Bryant Myers describes poverty as a spiritual matter that requires a spiritual end (144). Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby write, “Spiritual ends require spiritual means, and spiritual means come only by the Holy Spirit” (38). Mentors cannot solely provide technical guidance, but they must also provide spiritual guidance. Thomas Chalmers, a minister to the Glasgow parish of St. John’s in the 1800s, encouraged his deacons to spend an hour each week with families, forming a Scripture-based system on personal relationships and self-help (Bradley & Lindsley 128). One conversation with a Restoration@TheSquare participant revealed that even though his busy schedule helped keep him from relapsing, he appreciated having someone to keep him

accountable, such as Kevin Stratton, Victory Mission's PLPC (Mike). Mentors that have experienced similar life circumstances and have similar cultural backgrounds can also better serve (Greene 35). Mentors can relate on a superficial level, and they can speak in what Peter Lai calls their heart language. Lai also writes, "Those who speak the heart language of people are more effective in evangelism" (129). Heart languages help people to draw others closer and minister more effectively. Dale from TMC sees his past as an alcoholic as a tool that helps him to relate to other men going through the program who suffer from substance abuse. He uses a similar heart language to build reputation and understanding.

One way mentors can help trainees grow spiritually shows itself through conscientization, or "elevating their personal situations to a level that they seek to reach" (Abdeljawad, 2013 12). Emily Schmal's research on Jubilee REACH's Heart and Home shows that having someone who believes in you can make "all the difference in the world" (Schmal 37-38). Blackaby and Blackaby support this philosophy of development, writing that mentors help "notice, command, and reward people for their efforts" (289). Tim Elmore adds that mentors provide instruction, models, opportunities, and assessment (118-19). Mentors can bring change to the root of someone's problems through the application of spiritual development.

Mentors should not attempt to cure or solve their mentee's problems. Mentorship does not aim to solve crises, being the solution to their problems, but it is about grooming and helping people reach *their* potential. They are then prepared to address their crises and problems. Jesus rarely evangelized and did missions, although he very well could have. Instead, he developed and groomed his disciples and followers to do that work. In his presentation "Why Good Leaders Make You Feel Safe," Simon Sinek says, "If you get the environment right, every single one of us has the capacity to do these remarkable things, and more importantly, others have that

capacity too.” Mentors should want to create environments where people do extraordinary things for the good of mankind and, especially, for their neighbors. They serve to help people overcome fear; they willingly create a safe place where those they mentor can trust someone (Hawkins).

Mentees’ lives may not be the only ones to change because of mentorship, for this collaboration could also result in copowerment. Mentors’ lives could radically change through their involvement in mentorship. Howard Hendricks of Dallas Theological Seminary says, “We begin to grow when we take responsibility for the growth of another person” (Rusaw & Swanson 81). Rusaw and Swanson write that ministry and service to others have a positive effect on spiritual growth, is as beneficial or more beneficial than other spiritual disciplines, and a greater satisfaction in spiritual growth (82-83). When mentors commit to change and restoration in an individual, they too will benefit from their work. Most importantly, though, is change in the community. This occurs best when mentors can help affirm people’s worth and play a part in meeting physical and spiritual needs (Adewunmiju 5).

These mentor-mentee relationships do take time. They require patience, trust, time (Hawkins & Sims). They also require what Helen Colley calls “emotional labour,” or the management of personal feelings (153). All these commitments ensure that mentors are truly invested and have sincerely committed to empower and help bring about change. When mentors and mentees both commit to change and investment, mentorship can “close the gap between potential and performance” (Elmore 117).

### **The End Result**

The AEC clearly falls short of its intended purpose to bring good and change to the world. It must change how it approaches outreach and evangelism, and social enterprise is a valuable answer. This discussion incites a key question: After using partnership, community,

relationships, lay people, and mentors to overcome hurdles, what does it look like when the church actually uses social enterprise? When the AEC turns to social enterprise, it will create a safe space for people to find restoration and shalom, or just, harmonious, and enjoyable relationships, with society, themselves, and God (Myers 97).

### *Shalom with Others*

The aim of the church's social enterprises should not be to create a system of dependency, but they should teach participants they can be valuable parts of society, both economically and spiritually. Participants in church-based social enterprises should come out asking the question, "Am I a neighbor?" and seeing other people's needs (Odel 8). Eventually, they should consider how they "personally participate in the practices and ways that produce poverty and maintain divisions" and challenge those practices and ways (10).

Through social enterprise, the church can create safe channels for people to reintegrate into society as valuable members. Restoration@TheSquare does this by providing support systems and employment through Phases I and II. This helps teach proper interpersonal relationships for knowing, trusting, and relying. Then, in Phase III, Victory Mission provides temporary housing while men become involved in full-time jobs. Harbor City Services (HCS), a social enterprise dedicated to persons with mental health and substance abuse issues, also creates a safe place resulting in shalom with others. HCS creates a system of trust and relationship and encourages people to recover after a relapse (Herron, Gioia, & Dohrn 1140). A goal of social enterprise in the church is to create a safe environment where failures can be addressed and worked towards. These failures, once corrected, can lead to restoration with others in society.

Social enterprise within the AEC can also repair broken relationships such as those created by racism and racial inequality. One such organization is Voice of Calvary Ministries

(VOCM). Raised in a violently racist Mississippi in the 1930s, John Perkins went on to begin VOCM to “bring education and support” to Jackson, the state’s capital (“Our History”). As prejudice increased, Perkins and his wife, Vera Mae, worked harder to recruit volunteers from a variety of “diverse cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds” (“VCOM History”). VCOM now partners with over 15 different organizations and 30,000 volunteers to serve and bring change to the city (“VCOM History”).

### *Shalom with Themselves*

The church and social enterprise also have the ability to help individuals find restoration with their own selves. This takes shape in confidence and character. When mentors pour into participants’ lives, they empower. This empowerment helps develop confidence, or security, in themselves. It also increases competence, developing abilities. Their character also grows; they become men and women of integrity. Eventually, they also become agents of change, influencing the lives of those who share similar pasts (Elmore 124). Mentors should implement transformational leadership, exhibiting behaviors that appeal to participants’ sense of values and encouraging “them to exert themselves in the service of achieving that vision” (Caldwell et al. 347). Through their exertion and commitment to change, they will naturally find restoration with themselves.

### *Shalom with Christ*

Restoration with the self and restoration with others play key roles in church-driven social enterprises, but the culmination of all social enterprise within the church is the restored relationship with Christ. Myers writes that “through Jesus Christ there is a way out of sin toward transformation” (145). Genesis 2 shows that mankind was made for Creation, to live and flourish with God. Since creation, mankind was created to be with God. He commands his followers to



love. They must be in community with Him (Odel 4). While the church can facilitate restoration between mankind and God, it falls short. The purest full and final form of shalom comes only “through the death and resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus” (DeYoung & Gilbert 200). Social enterprise within the church simply enables Christians to more effectively open door to Christ’s forgiveness and redemption. By opening this door, Christians create a way to maximize the potential for positive impact.

### **Conclusion**

The AEC has failed to fulfill its role in the world. It has strayed from helping the poor and spiritually lost. It has removed itself from a place where it can impact culture. American Christians have shrugged off the responsibility of caring for the poor onto governments. They have even disregarded the devastating effects their racism and gender inequality has caused on their brothers and sisters.

Social enterprise has proven to bring about societal change, and the AEC must use social enterprise to bring about a difference in its own communities. The Church should recognize and relentlessly pursue new opportunities to partner with the community and local organizations and allow mentors to rise up and lead others towards shalom. It can further open the door to community development by using lay people, extending its reach and bringing people together. When Christians take risks and act, relationships with community members will strengthen. These strengthened relationships copower the church to overcome any obstacles it faces and take the necessary risks to expand its influence for the good of mankind. Overcoming these obstacles allows the church to fulfill its missional call of helping the poor through economic growth. Christians will also realize its second missional call of better reaching the spiritually lost. As the Church fulfills these missional calls, true community development follows.

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