Guided Thesis Project

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"Unaware that our culture has subverted our faith, we lose a place from which to judge our own culture… We need to see ourselves and our own understanding of God's future with the eyes of Christians from other cultures, listen to voices of Christians from other cultures so as to make sure that the voice of our culture has not drowned out the voice of Jesus Christ, 'the one Word of God'."

—Miroslav Volf

THESIS PROJECT ESSAY INTRODUCTION

For the American evangelical church to fulfill its part in the Great Commission, the command from Jesus to go and make disciples, church leaders must seek to transform the landscape of modern-day missions from a send-and-support system to a find-and-support system designed to equip and empower native missionaries to sustainably evangelize their own people. When local churches seek to sustainably equip and empower native missionaries, previously untapped potential is released, transforming both the American church and those supported worldwide. Deriving lessons learned through fieldwork at Advancing Native Missions (ANM), this thesis project will focus on equipping local churches to take part in this global missionary movement through practitioner-level training and connecting them with indigenous pastors and missionaries around the world. To this end, I propose creating a series of informational and promotional videos for local church leaders to help them better grasp the benefits of a paradigm shift from send-and-support mission framework to the context of find-and-support missions. This series of videos will explain the history of present-day missions; recognize the factors indicating the need for transformation in missions; and identify the fundamental stages of an effective, collaborative, context-sensitive process of external support for indigenous missionaries, from initial contact to eventual financial disengagement. Through these videos, the ANM Church Mobilization Team will be better equipped to help these local church leaders transition to a new global missions paradigm.

There must a paradigm shift for American church leaders to approach the Great Commission to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Bible Matt 28:19). Biblically, the word *nations* does not refer to political countries or national boundaries as we understand them today. Instead, it means

ethnicities or other groups with their own unique language and culture. The mission Jesus gave the church is clear: take the good news, the Gospel, to every nation, to every ethnic group, in every language, until *everyone* has access to the transforming power of the Gospel. The goal for every ethnic group to have a body of Christian believers living among them and reaching out to transform their community is at the heart of Christian missions.

MISSIONS BACKGROUND

For nineteen centuries, missionaries, mostly from the West, slowly spread the Gospel around the world and established Christian communities among 4,000 of the world's 17,000 ethnic groups (Advancing Native Missions). In the last 50 years, indigenous Christians have begun to take ownership of the Great Commission to reach especially remote groups with whom it is costly or impossible for Western missionaries to live and work. Sitting in my new shared office with Oliver Asher, the president of ANM, he explained that

> In the last 50 years, native or indigenous missionaries have reached more people groups with the Gospel than were reached in the prior nineteen centuries. Six thousand additional people groups were reached with the good news of Jesus Christ. This is because native missionaries are strategically placed and called to fulfill the Great Commission, to reach the nations. (Asher)

While walking the long, paved driveway at the offices and speaking with Andrew Needham, one of the main writers for ANM, Andrew commented on the long-term effectiveness of native missionaries, saying:

> They persevere in the face of hardship because their mission field is also their home. They are fulfilling the great commission by simply loving their neighbors and sharing the

> good news with them. They don't have an escape plan, or a backup plan, because in many of their cultures, their reputation is on the line and everything they do will be attached to their reputation. They cannot escape it; it's all or nothing for many of the native missionaries we support. (Needham)

Traditionally, American churches have focused on sending American missionaries all around the world, a very costly and time-consuming investment. In many instances, these missionaries would spend years learning the culture, language, customs, and social intricacies of a given population before they could make any progress towards building relationships to fulfilling the Great Commission. Then, increasingly, American missionaries received little to no external support besides meager monetary support, and they would often burn out. Emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and physically, these missionaries faced daunting obstacles, and they often had no choice but to furlough for long periods of time just when relationships were being cultivated. Many would never return the field for fear of further personal damage. The paradigm shift from sending American missionaries to supporting indigenous missionaries provides many solutions that the traditional method of missionary support failed to deliver. Native missionaries already know the language, culture, and customs and have no "escape plan" if things do not turn out as desired. They are committed for the long term. Indigenous missionaries are called, equipped, and positioned to establish churches in the most remote and harshest regions. The Christian non-profit ANM exclusively provides support for these indigenous missionaries.

FIELDWORK CONTEXT

In performing my fieldwork at ANM and simultaneously training as the next chief operations officer, I learned much about the effectiveness of native missions. Advancing Native Missions's

ultimate goal is to provide access to the Gospel message of Christ to all people everywhere, through supporting native missionaries. Advancing Native Mission's purpose statement is to:

> Seek out, evaluate, and support native missions' organizations that have a clear evangelical statement of faith, are open and transparent in their finances, and aim to primarily work among unreached people groups in their region. We intentionally strive to increase financial support to those organizations we choose to partner with and thereby increase the number of unreached people groups they are collectively engaging in. The missionaries we support through our partner organizations are evangelists, church planters, teachers, and community developers. (ANM Website)

Nestled at the base of the Blue Ridge Mountains, near the University of Virginia, ANM is located in Afton, Virginia. My first impression of the metal building as unassuming and simple belied the fact that the leaders of a massive paradigm shift for the Evangelical Church were located there. With over sixty employees, many of whom work remotely and report to the office on a monthly basis, the office space had a warm, home-like feel that immediately felt like family. Upon being well received, I went through new staff orientation with Victor, the resident chaplain, and was able to ask many questions. While sitting in a rather small and studiously decorated office space with Victor, I quickly understood that ANM was in a phase of learning how to grow. Victor stated, "We are strategically seeking to double our impact in the next five years. We feel as though God has shown us that we can either remain the same and scale back on a few positions, or we can seek to drastically grow our impact. We chose to grow" (Victor).

While I was sitting in the uncomfortable swivel chair listening to Victor spell out the plan of growth, I was immediately reminded of the two pieces of invaluable advice that Lynch and Walls, the authors of *Mission, Inc.* provide on the subject of growth. Both of these pieces of

advice can be valuable to an established organization like ANM. The first piece of advice starts where the authors write, “Avoid the seduction of growth for growth’s sake. Grow only for the right reasons” (142). It is well-noted that when strong, visionary leaders feel stuck, they will seek to expand to new territories or create new programs with the intention to grow. But when the core motivation becomes reigniting a fire that went out due to unexamined causes, the leader is not making an unwise move necessarily, but rather a move that will spread the cause of the error to other locations. Oftentimes this kind of thinking will ensue with what Lynch and Walls refer to as a “big gorilla customer”: “It’s a good problem and one that any enterprise without it would love to have: the mixed blessing of a big gorilla customer” (147). At ANM, I would identify the big gorilla customer as a new program or department that is causing much excitement and initial growth. The fire has been re-lit, or so it seems. The problem with this situation is that the focus is diverted away from the main issue. Without addressing the cause of the mistake in the first place, it gets buried under a false sense of success and will eventually bleed out into the culture of the staff. This leads to the second portion of the advice, creating the right culture. Lynch and Walls write, “The greatest of ideas with the most abundant of resources will fail if the culture is not conducive to success. You will want to be proactive in establishing your culture such that it is aligned with your mission, objectives, and the message you want to deliver through your marketing” (153). A strong culture is the difference between long-term success or failure. Lynch and Walls write, “the moment of growth and expansion is when your culture will be most put to the test” (153). The culture of negativity and perfectionism, which can be masked under the term “excellence,” has translated into individualized fear of failure for each staff member across the whole organization. This has shut down creativity, has stifled personal and staff development and growth, and resulted in a mediocre team effort.

RESEARCH METHODS

In conducting my fieldwork, I utilized the qualitative research approach, through ethnographic interviews and observations, with questions fashioned with the appreciative inquiry approach. The interviews were conducted using a preset list of questions. Since I am utilizing an ethnographic approach in an appreciative inquiry study, the questions were not extremely rigid, but rather were adjusted to each participant based upon personal variables. The questions listed in the following section were designed to gather answers to help me better understand the fundamental stages of external support for indigenous missionaries, from initial contact to eventual disengagement. This was a unique opportunity as I was an outsider entering into a new organization as an employee and fieldworker. I worked hard to maintain an air of professionalism, not just for the role I will play as an employee and co-worker for those I interviewed, but for the research I conducted as well. I had to play the role of the *participant-observer*. On this subject, Wolcott addresses two main questions and answers them in his book *Ethnography, A Way of Seeing:*

> How much participation is participation enough? If at one extreme a fieldworker can be too aloof, might one also become so involved as to make observation itself impossible? There is an inherent paradox in the role of a participant observer. As a general guideline, it seems preferable to stay on the cautious side, becoming only as involved as necessary to obtain whatever information is sought. Operating with that level of restraint allows a researcher to help everyone else to remain conscious of the research *role* as the work progresses, rather than risk having someone later complain about having been misled by a pretense at involvement. (Wolcott 51)

During the research and through interviews with my fellow ANM teammates and missionaries, I had to be careful to maintain the role of the researcher during this study so that I did not give anyone reason to feel like I was misleading them with my questions. Wolcott describes the approach I used for the interviews as "a more person-centered approach that allows for, and benefits from, good narrative" (107). In adopting this style of research and asking people about their personal opinions and experiences, the possibility that they would feel misled was high because of my position at ANM. They may have felt like I was probing for less than academic reasons, so I had to make sure that I was clear with my objectives in my interviews and that any sentiments the interviewees reported, either positive or negative, were used for my study. This is also one of the main reasons I chose to take an appreciative inquiry approach so that people felt more comfortable answering the questions in an honest fashion. In *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry,* Sue Annis Hammond writes, "Appreciative Inquiry suggests that we look for what works in an organizations, that we appreciate it. The tangible results of the inquiry process are a series of statements that describe where the organization wants to be, based on the high moments of where they have been" (Hammond 6). I sought to help the interviewees to understand that their answers to the questions could be the catalyst that will allow ANM to flourish in supporting indigenous missionaries.

Interview Questions

As both a participant observer and a new employee at ANM, the following question served as my main focus, which allowed me to learn more about the organization and get to know the staff: *What are the fundamental stages of an effective, collaborative, context-sensitive process of external support for indigenous missionaries, from initial contact to eventual disengagement?* This question has been divided into multiple sub-questions that allowed for my

interviews to use a guided appreciative inquiry process. The questions were worded in a way that is reflective of the eight assumptions of appreciative inquiry, and the interviews were recorded using a detailed ethnographic approach.

1. *What are the practices that ANM utilizes to support indigenous missionaries?*
2. *How do current practices promote and encourage initiative and independence?*
    1. *How did these practices come about?*
    2. *What are the underlying values that these practices stem from?*
3. *Do current practices pay attention to and respect cultural context and values? How do they do so, and how do they fall short?*
4. *What do the indigenous missionaries say would be their ideal process?*
5. *How will a process that includes disengagement impact Western supporters' views and eventual commitments?*
6. *Is education for the Western churches a necessary element for effective disengagement?*
7. *How would you define disengagement?*

Connection between Fieldwork and Thesis Project

I am very interested in exploring the best practices for native missionary support by creating a training program for interested local churches to provide turn-key mission trip opportunities with established indigenous partners. My hopes going into the fieldwork was to develop a foundational work for my upcoming thesis project through gathering ethnographic insights into the world of supporting indigenous missionaries so that I could create a training program for local churches to engage locally and globally.

MY PERSONAL CONNECTION

Given that there are close to 7,000 ethnic groups with no access to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, as described by Oliver Asher, president of ANM, and the mass majority of missionary work is being done in already evangelized groups, there is a great need for the proper training for local churches to have a global impact (Asher). Native missionaries and pastors already know the culture and language, and they are already accustomed to the political and physical environment where they wish to reach these people groups. Indigenous pastors and missionaries are often accustomed to the standard of living of those they serve and are able to "minister on a fraction of the resources. Since it doesn't take them years to learn the language and culture, they can begin their work after minimal training and preparation. Finally, because they are working among their own family, friends, and neighbors, they are committed to the long-term work of missionary endeavor" (Advancing Native Missions Website).

While working in multiple small churches that wish to have a deep, lasting impact not only in the community in which they are located but also on a global scale, I have experienced the frustrations that pastors have due to lack of quality missional resources. I have experienced firsthand the whole-hearted, yet half-educated attempts of pastors and leaders alike to fulfill the felt need to take the Gospel to the nations. In my experience, this has resulted in unrealistic expectations for the pastor and the leaders of what a short-term mission trip should look like, what it should include, and what should be accomplished. I have spoken with pastors and missionaries in third-world nations that have received church missionary teams that instead of supporting and furthering their mission, have actually caused more damage than good. In our conversations, oftentimes lasting late into the night, these pastors and missionaries have

lamented even allowing certain groups and teams to help them, stating, “the lack of character and love has given us a black eye with the very people we have been working so hard to reach” (Sanchez) and “due to the insensitive comments and desire to work on their [the short-term mission teams’] own schedule and desires while here, I have had twice the amount of work than I started with. The ways they built certain things, and the ways they disregarded our culture makes me hesitant to allow more teams over” (Sanchez). Even though Pastor Sanchez, of Ecuador, voiced his frustrations, he also shared some sage advice for future teams:

> I think with a little understanding of our culture and changing the focus from being about international experience, to serving the people of Ecuador—all of this can come about through proper training and preparation, you know—I think these week-long teams would have a much greater impact, the impact they probably started off hoping to achieve. (Sanchez)

This is just one example of a number of indigenous missionaries and pastors I have spoken with throughout my time leading short-term international teams of youth and adults. Thankfully the pastors were not speaking of my particular teams, but of previous groups, some that had left just a few weeks before we arrived. Every indigenous missionary and pastor I have had the pleasure of working with has personally invited us back, not because of some special bond we have with them (although I do cherish the relationships and friendships I have built over time), but because my teams were always well prepared and knew what was expected of them. I spent a great deal of time working with each of the team members to help them understand how our culture is different from the culture we were entering and how we can learn just as much as we can teach.

Yet, after working in local church ministry for a decade now and having led over a dozen mission trips to multiple countries, my outlook on international missions began to grow dim. I

did not see what we were doing as sustainable. We were making a difference, but the difference felt like a drop in the bucket. I began to wonder if there were a way that we could do this at scale… and the answer is yes. Each church has to rethink its mission's strategy and the sustainability and scalability of it; once a church does this hard work, in my estimation, they will come to the same dim, yet exciting conclusion as I have—there must be a better way. The better way that I have discovered is by supporting native missionaries. They already know the language, culture, and people; frankly, they also tend to love the communities more, because they are working among their own people. This is how I arrived at the research question above, I simply want to utilize globalization in the most effective and efficient way for our benefit instead of trying to continually fight against modernization.

In helping people understand the importance of expanding their mindsets, the authors of *Social Entrepreneurship* compare people to a bonsai tree, where the container controls the growth: "A person deprived of education or opportunity is like a bonsai. The constraint isn't the seed, it's the pot" (Bornstein 112). Seeing the need to change the way American churches carry out missions firsthand drove me to find a new "pot," a new way of thinking that would allow church leaders like myself to make better decisions with our resources to be more impactful in the international mission field. Throughout my fieldwork at ANM, I found that this new way of thinking, a paradigm shift from sending and supporting missionaries to finding and supporting native missionaries, was the answer to my deep desire to find a better way of leading international mission trips.

THE NEED

I sought to spend time doing my fieldwork at ANM with the goal of learning how to help local church leaders shift their thinking and understanding of international mission trips, and my experience at ANM further exemplifies how great this need is. Throughout my fieldwork and interviews, the common theme of crafting methods of educating Western church leaders on this paradigm shift in world missions became clear. This theme first came about when discussing the support process that ANM offers with Chris Chappell, the Southeast Asia regional director. During this time, I asked Chris if the Western church leaders he knows and visits as part of his job understand the scope of ANM's mission. His response was,

> Many of them understand the need to do missions, but very few understand the need to reach the unreached, and I think it reflects in the overall giving that churches provide towards world missions. Historically they have sent missionaries, and that is all the majority of churches have known as the way to do missions. It takes a while to win them over to supporting native missionaries, and in some cases, even though I may win over the leader, nothing will change, because they are set in the old model. (Chappell)

Despite the incredible generosity of missional giving through the church, only about one percent of giving goes towards supporting native missions. The most significant reason for this large giving gap is that the church is simply unaware of the work of native missions. There is a lack of education and advocacy on behalf of the little-known native missionaries. While I was sitting in the office of Dick Prins, volunteer CEO for ANM, amidst a desk full of disheveled yet somehow organized stacks of papers and books, Dick passionately shared the organization's role in meeting this need:

> ANM fills this gap, this lack of understanding that the Western church has about its sisters overseas. There are significant cultural, language, even political barriers between the church here and the work being done by native missionaries. ANM is the bridge between the Western church and the most fruitful native missionary agencies who are proving to be most effective (Prins).

The need that this project seeks to meet is educating Western church leaders.

THE PROJECT

I am taking to heart Lynch and Walls's advice in *Mission, Inc.*: "You will need to establish two points: that people want what you have to offer and that they are willing and able to pay you what you need to be paid for it" (Lynch 111). Deriving lessons learned through the interviews and conversations with staff at ANM, this project will focus on equipping the local church to take part in the global missionary movement through practitioner-level training and connecting local churches with indigenous pastors and missionaries around the world. To this end, I propose creating a series of training videos to help church leaders better grasp the benefits of a paradigm shift from a send-and-support mission framework to the context of find-and-support missions. This series of videos will explain the history of present-day missions; recognize the factors indicating a necessary transformation in missions; and identify the fundamental stages of an effective, collaborative, context-sensitive process of external support for indigenous missionaries, from initial contact to eventual financial disengagement.

Why Videos

After learning of the geographic spread of ANM's church partners, I began to seek a way to inform and train church leaders that was not burdensome and was low cost. The idea of making a series of videos arose, and since the organization already has a marketing department with videography professionals, there would be little to no added cost to the marketing budget. Additionally, having a series of educational videos on hand would benefit the organization in a myriad of ways: they are easy to share via email, social media, in churches, in small groups, and in meetings of all sorts. They can also be adapted to use as promotional material. I have taken Kelley's advice from *Creative Confidence* that "Innovation is all about quickly turning ideas into action" (146), as I have already formed a team to make this project a reality.

Project Resources

This project will require little to no additional resources for ANM. As mentioned above, it will require the time, energy, and dedication of an interdepartmental task force, led by a project manager. Neal Whitten, the author of *Neal Whitten's No-nonsense Advice for Successful Projects*, writes, "Too many project managers complain that there is little they can do to improve the application of project management practices on their projects" (Whitten 104). In essence, one must learn from past projects and implement the necessary changes. The project manager I would like to lead this project is Amber Parker, the interim vice president of marketing and vice president of staff development. Amber has proven in many ways what she has learned from past projects and how to implement those changes efficiently and effectively. Along with Amber as the project manager, in the following table, I have outlined the project team and their roles and contributions to the project.

Table 1

Name	**Department/ Team**	**Skills**	**Project Contribution**
Amber Parker	• Staff development vice president • Marketing director • Executive	• Project manager • Writer/editor	• Help create a project timeline • Project management
Nathan Bowen	• Marketing	• Video design and editing • Graphic design	• Video design
William Zodiates	• Marketing	• Graphic design	• Graphic design for print materials
Andrew Needham	• Marketing	• Writer • Editor	• Write script • Edit script
Lynn Parker	• Donor relations vice president	• Donor perspective	• Collaboration for understanding the donor perspective
Brian Mullins	• Donor relations • Church mobilization director	• Church leader perspective	• Collaboration for understanding the church leader perspective • Narration for videos
Krista Darcus	• International vice president	• Native missionary perspective	• Collaboration for understanding the native missionary perspective

Video Series Outline

The following outline will provide the necessary foundation for the project team to begin collaborating, planning, and acting. This outline is designed to evoke conversation that will result

in creative collaboration. Each video will take 4-6 weeks to complete and will take a narrated animation format.

Video 1.

a. History of present-day missions
    i. The Great Commission
    ii. Early church history
    iii. The historical need for sending missionaries
    iv. The historical effectiveness of sending missionaries
    v. Why American churches send the way they do now
    vi. The history of supporting native missionaries (For the purpose of this section, I will focus only on ministries doing this at scale.)
        1. Christian aid
        2. Advancing native missions
        3. Advancing indigenous missions
    vii. The present day need for supporting native missionaries
    viii. The historical effectiveness of supporting native missionaries

Video 2.

a. Factors that indicate a necessary transformation of missions
    i. Globalization
        1. Cell phones
        2. Internet
        3. Travel
    ii. Cost effectiveness
        1. Health care
        2. Retirement
        3. Travel expenses
        4. Expectations
    iii. Language barrier
    iv. Culture barrier
        1. Food
        2. Sleeping arrangements
        3. Nuances
        4. Acceptability
    v. Longevity Barrier
        1. Native missionaries do not have an “escape plan” when things get rough.

Video 3.

a. Fundamental stages of effective external support for indigenous missionaries
    i. Clarify the parameters that the stages take place within
        1. What effectiveness looks like
        2. What collaboration looks like
        3. What contextual sensitivity looks like
    ii. What this looks like in reality
        1. Share success stories
        2. Share failure stories
    iii. The fundamental stages of support

Video 4.

a. Critical challenges to adopting this new system
    i. Long-held tradition
        1. Churches do not want to see that the investments they have made in American missionaries as a "waste." They are not a waste, but they are not the most effective investments.
    ii. Educating the effectiveness of native missions

Video 5.

a. Practical strategies
    i. Utilize the educational material provided
    ii. Partnering with a mission organization that is already doing this
    iii. Take key leaders on "vision" trips to see effectiveness
    iv. Sell merchandise and goods produced by missionaries to support them
        1. Coffee
        2. Jewelry

CONCLUSION

American evangelical leaders are facing a paradigm shift in world missions, one that will necessitate a change in church leaders' perspective towards sending American missionaries. While the traditional way of sending Western missionaries to foreign countries to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ was effective and necessary, the foundation was laid for the citizens of

those countries, native missionaries, to receive the same support in reaching their communities that foreign missionaries received.

Working with ANM, I have experienced firsthand the important role that native missionaries play in sharing the Gospel with communities that have no access to it. Serving as the bridge between native missionaries reaching the remaining unreached people groups and the Western church, ANM serves a unique role that is widely unknown. Creating a series of videos as outlined in this proposal will provide a low-cost, high-return way of educating Western church leaders on the new paradigm of find-and-support instead of send-and-support missions. Through these videos, church leaders will be able to broadly educate their congregations to share in the passion of supporting native missionaries.

Through the financial support that will come from the successful creation and subsequent marketing of these videos, the native missionaries on the frontlines of Christianity's goal to evangelize the world, as stated by Jesus in the Great Commission, can be even more productive in transforming their communities with the benefits that come from a life-giving relationship with Jesus. This will ultimately strengthen the global church by bridging the divide between the Western church and the rest of the world.

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CONTEXTUALIZATION ESSAY INTRODUCTION

In social sciences contextualization is king. It connects the heartfelt desire to make a difference with the implications of this desire becoming a reality. Contextualization is the tether between brilliant ideas and successful real-world impact, and often stands between progress and failure. No matter what area of influence, work, or interest, understanding and operating within the context of the intended audience is key to long-term success for all parties involved, as the outcomes are felt by all parties, not only the development worker. Without contextualization, a development worker may be able to celebrate a success story, but it will be at the expense of those receiving support. Understanding the context in which one is operating in the discipline of community development, and especially in my specific work of supporting indigenous Christian missionaries around the world, is the difference between success and failure.

I am especially interested in this topic as a Christian operating in Advancing Native Missions, an organization that supports 10,425 indigenous missionaries, serving among 858 unreached ethnic groups across 91 countries. Contextualization is fundamental to the success of this development work. This thesis essay will begin with an explanation of the Christian worldview that energizes and directs the work mentioned above and in what ways contextualization is foundational to this worldview. I will also examine the definition of contextualization and its importance within community development in general and, more specifically, within my fieldwork and continuing community development work in Advancing Native Missions. Next, this thesis essay will present examples of contextualization at work within my thesis project.

THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW CONTEXTUALIZED

What Is a Worldview?

The value of contextualization in community development is more than a necessary focal point of scholarship; rather, it is foundational. Contextualization in development should take a holistic approach, which includes the emotional, psychological, and historical contexts adjacent to the cultural existential context. Coauthor of *When Helping Hurts,* Steve Corbett, writes, “humans are spiritual, social, psychological, and physical beings” (Corbett 57). I believe that people are not merely the summation of random chance or evolutionary hierarchy, but that each person is created in the very image of God. Out of this divine reflection, all the contexts mentioned above originate, especially the cultural existential context. Because of this, I believe that understanding and defining the Christian worldview is fundamental to understanding and applying contextualization, as this worldview provides a framework in which all human life is holy, and infinitely, inherently valuable.

Every person has a worldview because each human being is internally confronted with existential inquiries on what reality truly is. A worldview is the framework based on which humankind interprets reality. This interpretation affects how people make sense of the world; therefore, it affects and directs their actions. Paul Hiebert, the author of *Transforming Worldviews,* defines the term *worldview* as, “The fundamental cognitive, affective, and evaluative presuppositions a group of people makes about the nature of things, and which they use to order their lives. Worldviews are what people in a community take as given realities, the maps they have of reality that they use for living” (Heibert 15). Furthermore, the founder of *Prison Fellowship Ministries,* Chuck Colson, states, “every worldview can be analyzed by the way it answers three basic questions: where did we come from and who are we? What has gone

wrong in the world, and how does man account for evil? And what can we do to fix it?" (Colson 45). Understanding the worldviews of others is paramount to enacting change.

The Christian Worldview

The words *Christian*, *God*, *Jesus*, and other conventional religious terms may entail many views depending upon the worldview of the reader. I use these words to refer to the Judeo-Christian God and belief system, as revealed through the Biblical texts, Christian church tradition, and, equally importantly, in the well-recorded lives of men and women whose love for God motivated their sacrificial love of others. When I write that people are created in the image of God, I do not mean a direct resemblance of God in the sense of a woman gazing into a mirror at her image, or as a son resembles his father, for these would provide the basis for both inclusion and exclusion based upon physical or other material characteristics. Alternately, the word *image*, as Dr. Paula Clifford details, can be better understood "as a divine spark rather than human resemblance, that becomes a basis, not for exclusion but inclusion. To be human is to reflect the divine, and that is the basis of our relationality" (Clifford 21). Clifford furthers this thought through quoting the Malaysian theologian, Fr. Jojo Fung, referring to these relationships as the "reverential beholding of the other, which leads him [Fung] to advocate honoring the differences between people of other faiths and which, he suggests, enables the church to discover the omnipresence of God" (Clifford 21). This understanding is essential because the Christian worldview is fundamentally rooted in contextualization, in recognizing others as inherently deserving of being known.

Christianity and Contextualization

From the onset of Christianity, the struggle for contextualization was intertwined in the very fabric of both the first-person accounts of Jesus' story (known as the Gospel accounts) and the inception of weekly gatherings of Jesus' disciples, known as the Christian Church. The author of

Contextualization that is Authentic and Relevant, David Hesselgrave provides a clear understanding of Christian contextualization:

> Christian contextualization can be thought of as the attempt to communicate with message of the person, works, Word, and will of God in a way that is faithful to God's revelation, especially as it is put forth in the teachings of Holy Scripture, and that it is meaningful to respondents in their respective cultural and existential contexts. (Hesselgrave 115)

Useful contextualization is rooted in understanding other worldviews and cultural contexts. Author and professor of cultural anthropology at Asbury Theological Seminary Darrell Whiteman provides a robust and concise description of the historical significance contextualization plays in Christianity. "Contextualization captures in method and perspective the challenge of relating the Gospel to culture. In this sense, the concern of contextualization is ancient going back to the early church as it struggled to break loose from its Jewish cultural trappings and enter the Greco-Roman world of the Gentiles" (Whiteman 2). Christianity has wrestled with contextualization since its onset.

CONTEXTUALIZATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Goal of Contextualization in Community Development

In order to better understand contextualization within community development in general and, more specifically, within my fieldwork and continuing community development work at Advancing Native Missions, it is first essential to understand the goal of contextualization. The goal of contextualizing in community development is to bring to fruition the change the aid worker seeks to enact without causing damage to the intended beneficiary. Seeking to understand

the culture as objectively as possible is crucial. In their work *Cultures and Organizations,* authors Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov state, "in daily conversations, in political discourse, and in the media that feed them, alien cultures are often pictured in moral terms, as better or worse" (Hofstede 25). It is vital to maintain an objective or relativistic view when contextualizing, yet this can be a challenging task because the development practitioner is a product of her own culture. Anthropologist A. Scott Moreau writes, "[culture] is not innate, but learned… Culture is man's medium; there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture" (Moreau 122). The development practitioner needs to be aware of her cultural views and understandings, along with those of the people whom she hopes to impact; this is a complicated and arduous task, one which necessitates sensitivity while entering into a self-examination process. Knowing oneself—both personal biases and preferences—and those of the intended beneficiary is the beginning of proper contextualization.

Contextualization in the Development Worker's Life

Suffice it to say that many, if not all, development workers enter the field to make a better future for others—to serve others. Bryant Myers, author of *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*, seeks to help development workers clarify their deep-seated desires for change. Myers poses what he calls critical questions, "What better future? What are the goals of transformation? What process of change? What is sustainability? In what ways do we need to think holistically?" (Myers 173). As people dedicated to establishing lasting, effective change, development workers must work hard to answer those questions, yet not entirely by themselves, but also with the communities in which they work. The development worker's outcomes will be the stories that these communities will tell long after the worker is gone. Writing specifically about working with the poor, yet relating it to development work as a

whole, Bryant Myers states, “We must be ready to let our concepts, theories and ideas go when our experience with real poor people says otherwise. The poor are people and we must begin there,” and “We must be clear as to whose story it is” (109-110; 173). In Myer’s particular focus, to simply acknowledge that the poor are people, that they have emotions, desires, and needs, that they have or have had dreams, hopes, and aspirations contextualizes the poor and helps develop solutions. Humanizing them contextualizes their lives in the lives of others.

Not only is this essential in serving the poor, but within all development work; this is contextualization at work within the development worker, which is the way development workers must think. Development workers must see beyond themselves to the people they yearn to help and realize that it is not about their own ego—their story—but about being a part of many stories, and ultimately about being a positive change agent for others. Realizing this is difficult because it challenges the oft-unchecked ethnocentric bent, which is at odds with contextualization.

UNCHECKED ETHNOCENTRISM PREVENTS CONTEXTUALIZATION

Ethnocentrism Is a Mental Habit

Many believe being ethnocentric is one of several options, but from what I have deduced, there is no choice in the matter; there are merely varying degrees to which one can display one’s preference of one group over another. In his book, *Us Against Them: Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion*, Donald Kinder wrote, “Ethnocentrism is a mental habit. It is a predisposition to divide the human world into in-groups and out-groups. It is a readiness to reduce society to us and them. Or rather, it is a readiness to reduce society to us *versus* them” (Kinder 8). Because ethnocentrism is a mental habit, it can serve either a positive function or a negative function, but it cannot be eliminated.

Defining Ethnocentrism

Theodor Adorno, the author of *The Authoritarian Personality* defines ethnocentrism as "Prejudice broadly conceived" (Adorno). Mankind will remain prejudiced regardless of his or her desire to do so; it is the natural state of humanity. One cannot be entirely objective. The further one tries to remove ethnocentrism from one's attitude and behavior, as Richard Beck has so plainly proven, the deeper one finds, "the fissures of infrahumanization running through every human heart" (Beck 105). When unchecked, ethnocentrism will squash any desire to see from another's perspective or to understand another in his or her context. In describing the dangers of ethnocentrism, author of *Exclusion and Embrace* Miroslav Volf writes, "what we should turn away from seems clear: it is captivity to our own culture, coupled so often with blind self-righteousness" (Volf 37).

CONTEXTUALIZATION AT WORK

Contextualization at Advancing Native Missions

When it comes to designing and implementing programs, processes, and interventions, the work of contextualizing is difficult; we must acknowledge our ethnocentric tendency towards being captive to our own culture in order to see the beauty of another. In *The Human Universals of Culture*, author Scott Moreau writes, "It has long been recognized by the social sciences that we are creatures made for culture and by culture… Culture is man's medium; there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture" (Moreau 120). Recognizing cultures at work is where creativity and innovation figure into the contextualization process. While simultaneously conducting my fieldwork and working at Advancing Native Missions (ANM), I had the privilege of witnessing first-hand the value of a context-sensitive process of external support for indigenous missionaries. Advancing Native Missions creatively advocates for these

missionaries through blog posts, business-as-mission opportunities, a strong social media presence, and communicating with donors regularly. In supporting over ten thousand missionaries across 91 countries, innovation is especially essential to the success of Advancing Native Mission's development work.

Advancing Native Missions' philosophy in engaging native missionaries is simple: the native missionary is the expert in his or her context. Advancing Native Missions simply tells these missionaries' stories to gather support and funding for their vision, while providing context-sensitive accountability based upon the missionaries' plan. Native missionaries already know the language and culture of their people. They are already familiar with the physical climate, environment, and political situation. Their standard of living is also comparable to those they serve, which is often vastly different from that of a foreign missionary; therefore, they can live and minister on a fraction of the resources.

CONTEXTUALIZATION IN THE THESIS PROJECT

The Problem

Throughout my fieldwork and interviews, the common theme of crafting methods of educating Western church leaders on this paradigm shift in world missions became clear. This theme first emerged when discussing the process of support that ANM offers with Chris Chappell, the Southeast Asia regional director. During this time, I asked Chris if the Western church leaders he knows and visits as part of his job understand the scope of ANM's mission. His response was,

> Many of them understand the need to do missions, but very few understand the need to reach the unreached, and I think it reflects in the overall giving that churches provide towards world missions. Historically they have sent missionaries, and that is all the majority of churches have known as the way to do missions. It takes a while to win them

> over to supporting native missionaries, and in some cases, even though I may win over the leader, nothing will change, because they are set in the old model (Chappell).

The continued growth of ANM in supporting native missionaries is partially contingent upon educating Western church leaders.

The Project

Deriving lessons from this fieldwork, my thesis project focuses on equipping local churches to take part in the global missionary movement through practitioner-level training and connecting them with indigenous pastors and missionaries around the world. To this end, I propose creating a series of training videos to help church leaders better grasp the benefits of a paradigm shift from a send-and-support missions' framework to the framework of find-and-support missions. This series of videos will explain the history of present-day missions; recognize the factors indicating the necessity of transformation in missions; and identify the fundamental stages of an effective, collaborative, context-sensitive process of external support for indigenous missionaries, from initial contact to eventual financial disengagement.

Contextualization in the Project

According to Hofstede's cultural indices, the United States has "one of the most individualist cultures in the world…" with a score of 91 out of 100 on the scale of individualism (Hofstede). Understanding how Western church leaders view relationships, especially relationships with other church leaders around the world, will help to shape the content delivery of the videos. Hofstede describes individualism as a culture in which "everyone is expected to look after him or herself and his or her immediate family" (Hofstede 92). Through recognizing the individualistic mental programming of the majority of Western church leaders, I will work with the ANM marketing department and the relationship development department to determine the best use of

visuals and language to play to this strength. In addition to working with these two departments individually, I will gather a specialized cross-departmental team to utilize the different skill sets and wisdom they have to offer.

Once assembled, the team will begin to research the best ways to provide these videos to church leaders. Emailing video links or the videos themselves, sending DVDs or thumb drives with the videos on them, tagging and posting on social media accounts, or other ways to share the videos with church leaders are to be determined. The goal is to design these videos for local church leaders to use within their context. Another consideration is to design multiple versions of each video with the different denominations and regions in mind. Doing this will ensure that those who receive these videos will experience the new framework of find-and-support missions in their context.

CONCLUSION

Creating programs, processes, or interventions within or for a culture outside of one's own is especially challenging. To ensure success for all communities involved, the development worker must seek to understand the context of the recipient culture while maintaining an understanding of her cultural influences on the development process. Then the goal of contextualization within community development—to bring to fruition the change an aid worker seeks to enact without causing damage—can be realized. The best way to understand another culture is to understand the worldviews held within it. However, one must first understand one's own worldview. To this end, I explained the Christian worldview, which energizes and directs the development work I am involved in at ANM. Through my fieldwork at ANM, I was able to identify the necessity of contextualizing the shift from a send-and-support system of missions to a find-and-support system for local church leaders through a series of animated videos.

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"There are those who seek knowledge in order to serve; that is love."

-Bernard of Clairvaux

QUALITATIVE INQUIRY ESSAY INTRODUCTION

Research is key to discovering information that can inform action. Research should always inform and direct community development workers' actions to enact real and lasting change for all people involved. There are two primary forms of research methodology, each designed to convey a different aspect of the subject's story depending upon the desired outcome. Quantitative research seeks to gather large swaths of data expressed in numerical form to provide insight into broader trends through determining characteristics such as market size, demographics, and key motivators. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods provide much-needed information for the development practitioner to make informed decisions, creating necessary change in communities.

The use of quantitative data often drives many processes in noble community development endeavors. While useful to a degree, quantitative research limits the researcher as it does not provide an understanding of the contexts of those in need. In describing this limiting aspect of quantitative research, the authors of *Accounting for Sustainability* write, "The problem is that concentrating on indicators-in-themselves fails to bring into question the nature of the human relationships, including the interweaving of the objective and the subjective, that go into creating and reproducing a community on sustainable terms" (Scerri 42). Although both kinds of research methods are necessary for the development worker to utilize, when seeking to understand the contexts of the needs within a community best, qualitative research methods allow the researcher to dive deep into the lives, environments, and social structures of the

community members. In conducting my fieldwork at the native missionary support organization, Advancing Native Missions (ANM), I experienced the depth of contextual understanding that qualitative research methods allow. Ethnography, program evaluation, action research, and appreciative inquiry are all rooted in a desire to understand the contexts from which needs arise, seeking to appreciate the inherent values within those contexts and working collaboratively to discover sustainable solutions. In this essay, I will describe the importance of qualitative research approaches and methods and the distinctive characteristics of qualitative research within community development. I will conclude by expounding upon the proposed thesis project video series as a case example.

QUALITATIVE APPROACHES AND METHODS

Introduction to Methods

The primary reason for community development workers to use qualitative inquiry and research methods is that it involves immersing oneself within the culture of the subjects, which contextualizes their needs. It involves deep observation, interviews, and environmental awareness. As a form of social research, qualitative inquiry takes place in a social context. Being concerned with exploring, developing, and testing theories and answering questions, qualitative inquiry is both theoretical and empirical: theoretical because it seeks to find answers to theories or questions previously posed about a subject, and empirical because those answers are based upon observations and perceptions of reality. Qualitative research seeks to discover non-numerical and unquantifiable elements of a culture, its values, and the history which impacts the current behaviors of the communities in question. It is both exploratory and inductive, seeking to explore with an open mind to what the results may reveal. The authors of *Strengths and Weaknesses of Quantitative and Qualitative Research*, McClain and Madrigal, share the unique

opportunity that this form of research offers: "Qualitative research studies can provide you with details about human behavior, emotion, and personality characteristics that quantitative studies cannot match" (Madrigal 1).

Different Methods

At the heart of qualitative research are four characteristics that are critical to understanding its very nature. Merriam and Tisdell, authors of *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, define these four characteristics as follows: "the focus is on the process, understanding and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive" (15). These characteristics help clarify the nature of qualitative research, which has three main approaches, one of which has shaped my thesis project fieldwork. The three main approaches to qualitative research are phenomenology, grounded theory, and ethnography. The developer of the concept system, a way of understanding qualitative research methods, William M. K. Trochim, describes the uniqueness of each approach in his web-based textbook, *Research Methods Knowledge Base*. Trochim describes phenomenology as "a school of thought that emphasizes a focus on people's subjective experiences and interpretations of the world. That is, the phenomenologist wants to understand how the world appears to others" (Trochim). He also writes that grounded theory's purpose is "to develop theory about phenomena of interest… Grounded theory is a complex iterative process. The research begins with the raising of generative questions that help to guide the research but are not intended to be either static or confining." Concerning the ethnographic approach, Trochim writes, "The emphasis in ethnography is on studying an entire culture. Originally, the idea of a culture was tied to the notion of ethnicity and geographic location (e.g., the culture of the Trobriand Islands), but it has been broadened to include virtually

any group or organization" (Trochim). While performing my fieldwork at ANM, I utilized the ethnographic approach, immersing myself in the culture of the organization.

Within community development work, it is best to choose a research type and approach that is designed to involve the community members in multiple ways to help discover problems, solutions, and, more importantly, the undiscovered reasons why the problems have persisted. Many of the difficulties that communities and organizations like ANM face are complex and diverse, and the answers are not always apparent. It is essential to immerse oneself within the context of the community to discover root issues. Ethnography is the best approach to achieve such contextual immersion.

Ethnographic Approach

Harry F. Wolcott, the author of *Ethnography, A Way of Seeing*, describes this qualitative research approach as finding "its orienting and overarching purpose in an underlying concern with cultural interpretation" (72). Hammersley, the author of *What's Wrong with Ethnography*, states, "The task [of ethnographers] is to document the culture, the perspectives, and practices, of the people in these settings. The aim is to 'get inside' the way each group of people sees the world" (Hammersley). In ethnography, the goal is to merge the researcher's story with that of the subjects, the people being observed, in a way that sheds light on the subjects' life details and how they can help influence the story of others. Often the subjects are a small, widely unknown group of individuals whose story has a very different perspective to offer others. Other research methods try to be as objective as possible, but the nature of this methodological approach calls for participant observation. This type of observation is experienced as naturally occurring events and demonstrates the value of qualitative research versus quantitative research in the work of ethnography. There is no truly objective way to study a group of people or individuals without

the ethnographer being affected by the relationships that are formed. In my fieldwork at ANM, I sought to gather insights to help me better understand the fundamental stages of external support for indigenous missionaries from initial contact to eventual disengagement. Wolcott explains this unique role:

> How much participation is participation enough? If at one extreme a fieldworker can be too aloof, might one also become so involved as to make observation itself impossible? There is an inherent paradox in the role of a participant observer. As a general guideline, it seems preferable to stay on the cautious side, becoming only as involved as necessary to obtain whatever information is sought. Operating with that level of restraint allows a researcher to help everyone else to remain conscious of the research role as the work progresses, rather than risk having someone later complain about having been misled by a pretense at involvement. (Wolcott 51)

Through understanding the role of participant-observer, I was prepared for my fieldwork at ANM.

Participant Observation

While in the participant-observer role during my fieldwork at ANM, I was able to discover its rich history, which led to a deeper understanding of its missionary support system. The first time I arrived at the office building, I was greeted by a serene-looking elderly lady wearing a broad smile on her face. She introduced herself as Lucille, and I quickly learned that she was the keeper of the archives. Lucille had been with ANM since the beginning and was in charge of all international communications; as it is an organization that solely exists to support native missionaries, this was no light assignment. Entering her office, I immediately knew that I had struck archival gold! Her office was adorned with artifacts from many different cultures. From

hand-painted images of Christ to hand-woven garments and one-of-a-kind hand-crafted jewelry from deep within nations that Westerners are unwelcome, I was overwhelmed with the sheer magnitude of the history represented. With grace and a mind like a computer, Lucille proceeded to describe how she archived the international communications from the missionaries whom she referred to as "my children." As she recounted story after story, I found myself unable to keep up with the amount of correspondence that has occurred over the years. Entering the personal archives of ANM with the help of this smiling gatekeeper, I learned very quickly that I was in over my head! Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater helped verify my experience with the following statement: "digging through any archive can be as overwhelming as entering a field site for the first time" (Sunstein 317). Though I found the experience to be quite overwhelming at first, upon reflection, I am quite impressed with the excellent organization of the archives and the full range of resources that Lucille had collected throughout the years.

From photographs to bookmarks, from jewelry to hand-made garments and paintings, from emails to hand-written manuscripts for books, ANM has a maintained a well-organized treasure trove of archives waiting to be discovered. I was thrilled to have access to such a well-kept archive. Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater write of the importance to "examine and consider a wide range of sources" (323). With all these stories of triumph, need, and personal loss along the way, I had an overwhelming sensation of being inundated with more information than I could process. Throughout my fieldwork, I was able to use these archives to discover the initial stages of contact with native missionaries. To my surprise, ANM rarely has had to seek out new partners, but rather they have organically grown out of the small network of missionaries that the founders maintained with when starting ANM. This network grew to include other trusted contacts in their area, resulting in field visits from the regional directors. These regional directors

follow a set list of questions and interviewing techniques, much like the ethnographic approach, to observe potential partners' behaviors and mannerisms in their settings. The goal of this observation is to determine whether the potential partners are genuine in their missionary endeavors, as many people fraudulently seek financial support. This kind of participant observation the regional directors perform provides deep insight into social practices that are often unseen in other forms of research.

In general, qualitative research also allows ethnographers the unique ability to potentially identify certain social phenomena which may go unnoticed at a cursory glance. Ethnography illustrates the value of contextualization, which is at the heart of the International Community Development program; this is due to the nature of qualitative research that goes into being an ethnographer. Merriam and Tisdell write, "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (6). Contextualization and ethnography both seek out the individual stories found within larger constructs. Practitioners of both seek to break down the social barriers that often prevent people from having their stories expressed to a broader audience—stories that sometimes are drowned out by popular opinion. Community development practitioners have the responsibility of presenting others' stories to an audience of people who otherwise, without the diligence of research and time spent with the people they seek to know and help, would never have their stories known publicly. The marginalized, the forgotten, and stigmatized of society—the unheard—are those whose stories, when shared, have the power to change a culture. Advancing Native Missions does this through supporting native missionaries to share their stories with the broader Christian community around the world.

Program Evaluation

These qualitative research methods and approaches are all centered around one main goal: sustainable, collaborative, and contextualized solutions. All too often, when the international community becomes aware of a crisis, there is little to no response. When there is a response, it is frequently reactionary, conventional, and short-sighted. The unsettling aspect of reactionary approaches to helping communities in other cultures is that whether it is a positive outcome or negative outcome, one is interfering with the only culture and way of life these communities know, while simultaneously shaping their perspective and views of other nations. This harmful interference has profound ramifications that will shape future generations and their understanding of the world. Michael Hobbs, author of *Stop Trying to Save The World*, wrote about just such a reactionary project that caused more harm than good, called PlayPump. The goal was to install merry-go-rounds that powered water pumps to provide clean drinking water at low cost and play areas for children. After raising $16.4 million and grandiose publicity from everyone from the US president to popular rappers, the results were less than anticipated. Hobbs describes the findings after only two years: "[Frontline] discovered pumps rusting, billboards unsold, women stooping to turn the wheel in pairs. Many of the villages hadn't even been asked if they wanted a PlayPump, they just got one, sometimes replacing the handpumps they already had" (2). While Hobbs takes a pessimistic outlook towards development ideas, he does inadvertently convey the need for the values that inspire qualitative research, which are so crucial to development practitioners. Qualitative research is not merely another method to utilize in order to make rational decisions; it is a value system to be taken seriously, as our actions have profound effects on others. Just as project implementation needs to be grounded in qualitative inquiry, it is as crucial to establish an evaluation process based upon these same values.

Evaluation is necessary for every area of an organization, especially when it comes to program management and implementation. If a program aims to be successful, evaluations must be regular, thorough, and unbiased. Evaluation done well provides accurate feedback, not only from development workers but also from community members as well. This allows all those involved to see the progress or lack thereof and should allow input that points towards solutions that will lead to the desired outcomes. An evaluation provides everyone involved the ability to peek above the trenches of the day-to-day operations and determine whether they are succeeding at what they set out to do. The worst programs are not those that fail to achieve their desired results, but those in which the leaders are ignorant of reality. Often these leaders experience success without knowing why they are succeeding, whether it be because of their involvement or some other factor. This is significant, as when something does not go as planned or the experience of success begins to wane, the development practitioner should be able to determine the issue quickly. Clarity is particularly significant in the area of community development because of the inherent danger of creating more complications than solutions.

Melvin Mark, author of *Evaluation: An Integrated Framework for Understanding, Guiding and Improving Policies and Programs*, states that "evaluation exists to improve the way that programs and policies function by providing information that can be used in democratic institutions to advance social betterment" (Mark 49). Qualitative evaluation benefits everyone involved and reveals the real impact of the development process. Evaluation is necessary for sustainable success within community development and is key to future growth. It is development practitioners' responsibility to be aware of the process that can shape the outcome of solution-based projects through context-sensitive qualitative research methods. Development practitioners must position themselves in places of influence where they can shape the

foundational approaches that mold the outcomes. It is their responsibility to work in copowerment, or in cooperation towards empowerment with communities in need to make sure any action taken is contextualized for that community and to responsibly wield the power of being change makers. All of these qualitative approaches are action-oriented and utilize elements of action research.

Action Research

Action research is a method generally used to engage community members as active participants throughout the development process. Merriam and Tisdell describe this process as follows: “one engages with the participants, and together researcher and participants decide on next steps working toward coming up with solutions to the problem” (49). Action research helps shift the typical power structures from those in charge dictating solutions to those experiencing need while allowing them little to no voice. Stringer, the author of *Action Research*, writes that action research “provides a means for people to more clearly understand their situations and to formulate effective solutions to the problems they face” (8). While this is an excellent approach to community development, the focus in action research is on problem-solving.

International Community Development Program Values

Instead of focusing on what is wrong, missing, or not working, appreciative inquiry takes an in-depth look at what is working, what is fruitful and ultimately life-giving. This is a collaborative and copowering process, which reflects the core values of the International Community Development (ICD) program at Northwest University. The profound values that drove the creation of the ICD program are also deeply entrenched in the research methods mentioned above. Contextualization, copowerment, and collaboration values which have shaped the courses and content of the program has resulted in deep theoretical grounding and the development of

practical skills through experiential learning. Ethnography, program evaluation, action research, and appreciative inquiry are all rooted in a desire to understand the contexts from which needs arise, seeking to appreciate the inherent values within those contexts and working collaboratively to discover sustainable solutions.

THESIS PROJECT AS CASE EXAMPLE

The Problem

During my fieldwork, I found that many of the regional directors (the staff who work directly with the missionary partners in their region and subsequently meet with many local church leaders to garner support) were frustrated at the slow pace at which church leaders are coming on board. After interviewing five of the nine regional directors, I was able to discover what they felt was keeping more church leaders from joining ANM's vision. Far East Regional Director Dan Reichard said it best:

> The thing that ANM does best is support native missionaries. That is what's working here. There are a few things that sometimes confuse this, like doing all these different causes, which make people think we have multiple focus points. Pastors are confused on what we do. Our main working focal point is loving, encouraging, challenging, supporting native missionaries. That's what we do best; that's what we need to continue to focus on. (Reichard)

There is some confusion among local church leaders about what ANM does, which leads to missed opportunities to involve churches at scale. Due to the paradigm change in conceptualizing missionary work from send-and-support methods to find-and-support methods, it is critical for ANM to clarify their process in order for churches to come aboard.

Proposed Project Focus

Copowering local churches at scale to support native missionaries is the driving force behind my thesis project. My thesis project will equip local church leaders to take part in this global missionary movement through practitioner-level training and connecting them with indigenous pastors and missionaries around the world. To this end, I propose creating a series of training videos to help these church leaders better grasp the benefits of a paradigm shift from a send-and-support mission framework to the framework of find-and-support missions. This series of videos will explain the history of present-day missions; recognize the factors necessitating this change in approach; and identify the fundamental stages of an effective, collaborative, context-sensitive process of external support for indigenous missionaries, from initial contact to eventual financial disengagement. The ANM Church Mobilization Team will distribute these videos and help local church leaders create a smooth transition plan for their churches as they engage in this new paradigm. In a hypothetical future evaluation of this project, the three outcome markers to evaluate the progress of this project are listed below.

1. Increase in demand to get involved.
2. Increase in field visits to meet missionary partners.
3. Increase in church donations.

If requests to get involved, vision trips, and church donations increase, I will be able to use both qualitative and quantitative methods to measure these outcomes. Measuring the frequency of requests, trips, and donations will allow ANM leadership to evaluate the effectiveness of these videos. Church leaders will be asked what led to their interest in ANM in the region they want to visit, and the reason they provide will allow ANM to apply qualitative evaluation to this project.

MY ROLE AS CHANGEMAKER

Qualitative approaches in community development allow development practitioners, such as myself, the freedom to shrug off standard institutionalized restraints of using cookie-cutter, unimaginative methods to understand contexts of need. These approaches not only empower me to bring my full self to the problem-solving table, but they allow all people involved to be present at the table as well. Within world missions, there is one overwhelmingly common approach to bringing the Gospel message across—sending foreign missionaries. However, there is a much more effective, sustainable approach—supporting native missionaries. The former approach typically allows for the foreign missionary to dictate invasive ways in which they interact within the given people and culture, whereas in the latter approach, the native missionary is a product of the culture and knows the nuances of operating within in it. This second way is steeped not only in the values of the ICD program but also in those of the qualitative approach: seeking contextualized collaborative copowerment for the native missionary. This way of seeing the world makes me a more impactful agent of change.

CONCLUSION

While there are many different research methods, they fall into two types, qualitative or quantitative. The development practitioner needs to utilize both types, but too often, the use of quantitative data has been the driving force in well-intentioned community development endeavors. While useful to a degree, quantitative research limits the researcher as it does not provide an understanding of the contexts of need. Although both kinds of research methods are necessary for the development worker to utilize, when seeking to understand the contexts of need within a community best, qualitative research methods allow the researcher to dive deep into the

lives, environments, and social structures of the community members. Organizations seeking to make a meaningful impact, such as ANM, are as intricate and complex as the issues they face. Qualitative research methods allow the development practitioner to discover hidden solutions. Lasting positive change can only come through the depth of contextual understanding that qualitative research methods allow.

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ICD VALUES ESSAY INTRODUCTION

The human experience is predicated upon trust: trust of self, trust of others, trust of a higher power, and trust of the environment. Trust is the foundation of any relationship, and relationship is central to the human experience. Without trust, there can be no genuinely healthful, intimate relationship; there is only interaction as a basis for transaction. Deeply trusting another is arguably one of the hardest tasks for a person to undertake, because it entails the possibility of betrayal. The International Community Development (ICD) program is established upon a bountiful amount of trust in the people with whom the development worker seeks copowerment. The development worker must trust the needs being presented by the community to the same extent that she trusts her own professional opinions on the those needs. Trust, in this sense, shapes the outcome of any intervention. This form of trust entails collaboration with and copowerment among all those involved in the process of community development. This is especially true in the Christian Church and has impacted my values.

In my ICD program experience, the two major areas of impact on my personal values are a deepening of my Christian worldview on how I can best serve others as a development worker and a deeper understanding of the Church's role in social and environmental justice issues. As a former pastor and current leader in an indigenous missionary organization, the impact in those two areas also influences my current and future vocation. Before the ICD program, the challenges to my worldview came from an apologetic focus rather than from within the realm of community development. My previous experience only allowed for intellectual challenges, whereas community development not only incorporated an intellectual and academic approach, but it also deep introspection into my core, my center. My values have shifted from a focus on being able to face rebuttal to core Christian beliefs to being able to embrace the person or system

providing the reply and take an in-depth look at my own views. Instead of offering a rational answer, I have learned to offer both a rational and empathetic response. This kind of intellectual empathy for development workers is practically demonstrated as collaboration and copowerment. In this essay, I will describe the deepening of my worldview on serving others, known as the de-centered center, and I will also describe my new philosophy of service regarding the Church's role in community development through embracing social and environmental justice initiatives. I will conclude by explaining my understanding of copowerment and how it will impact my future work.

DE-CENTERED CENTER

For development workers, it is not only crucial, but fundamental to understand that every person has many needs beyond only the basic physical needs such as food, shelter, and safety. It is also necessary for them to wrestle with the concepts of inclusion and exclusion, while understanding that there are psychological, and self-fulfillment needs as well. These include the need to be known, to be loved, to be safe, to achieve, and to be independent. The key to best impacting a community is first to seek an understanding of these base-level needs within oneself. When development workers are introspective and understands how their own needs are satisfied, they can develop a strong sense of empathy towards those they seek to serve. They will begin to understand that people, including themselves, seek to satisfy these needs, either consciously or unconsciously, in healthy or unhealthy ways, until the satisfaction gives way to the need for more. Miroslav Volf, the author of *Exclusion and Embrace*, neatly describes how we act to meet these needs as, "sometimes pulled by the lure of throbbing and restless pleasures, at other times pushed by the rule of a rigid and implacable law" (70). All of the ways of meeting our needs are grounded in the universal and ultimate human need to discover "the kind of center the self ought

to have" (69). Volf's language of centering oneself mirrors the Apostle Paul's use of the term *crucifying oneself*. The language of centering oneself speaks to the profound theological truths that Paul wrote of in many of his works included in the New Testament. To be genuinely centered, one must first be de-centered and then receive a new center or become re-centered. I not only experienced this when I first placed my faith and trust in Christ, but also through the in-depth studies and challenges that the ICD program presented me with—I learned to look deeper into my theological constructs.

I now understand more profoundly that in the words of the Apostle Paul, I am united with Christ in His death and His resurrection. I have been re-centered. Volf writes, "by being 'crucified with Christ,' the self has received a new center—the Christ who lives in it and with whom it lives" (70). What a beautiful and sincere statement: Christ lives at my center, and my center lives with Christ. It is an incredible life of interdependence. Christ has chosen to provide me eternal life through a vibrant relationship with Himself, and in doing so, He has chosen to rely upon me to share this life with many others. However, I cannot do so unless I remain connected to His life-giving relationship through daily disciplines. What makes this such a beautiful and misunderstood concept for many people is that these disciplines are not a rote compulsion to please an angry god. It is a soulful response to the love, mercy, grace, and life this unexplainably glorious God has injected into my very being, not through any merit of my own, but through His pleasure to do so. God finds pleasure in providing this for us, or more accurately, in providing Himself for us. In giving humankind—so fraught with the propensity and actuality of violence, the "objective evil" of exclusion and the desire to place "oneself in a position of sovereign independence"—direct access to Himself through Jesus Christ (Volf 67, 68), He finds pleasure in subjecting his beloved Son to our judgment and absolute rejection in order to provide

direct access to not just the gifts, but to the giver; direct access to Himself seated on the high throne of Heaven. This is what having a de-centered center gains us: access to the Creator Himself, direct communion.

The de-centered center also engenders in one the desire to reach others with this life-giving message, but so often in this earnest desire, one does not consider how one's own culture and the cultures of those whom one seeks to help effect the presentation of the Gospel. I value John G. Stackhouse Jr.'s summation of how believers must live: "God has called us to lives of difficult paradox, of painful negotiation between conflicting and competitive values, of seeking to cooperate with God wherever he is at work. Such a position, full of ambiguity and irony, is also full of faith and hope" (Stackhouse). In a talk on cultural conversion, Ray Aldred describes what a de-centered center must look like: "We must go to other cultures as learners, not as the learned with everything to teach." Furthermore, development workers must resist the kind of thinking that leads to seeing others as "only useful if you become exactly like me… (a) sort of neocolonialism that is still intent on westernizing the world and does not see others as having anything to offer. If we are going to communicate on a heart level, we must share our need and our weakness" (Aldred 16:45). If Christian development workers only seek to reach out to a lost, broken world from a place of power and not a place of weakness, they not only fail to identify the deeply ingrained cultural undertones that have worked their way into their version of "Christianity," but they fail to identify them for what they are, innately evil, subtly playing God to the world's poor and unreached. This always results in the exclusion of others in some fashion.

For evil to flourish, it must generate "an ideational environment in which it can thrive unrecognized" (Volf 76). The best hiding place is in plain sight, and this is never truer than when

exclusion is at play. Humans are fickle and incredibly intuitive beings who in many ways are far more capable than we are given credit for. We are able to create manifold layers of exclusion, which without divine intervention, we would be incapable of identifying and would remain elusive. In writing this I am reminded of Proverbs 30:20, “This is the way of an adulterous woman: She eats and wipes her mouth and says, ‘I have done nothing wrong’” (NIV). Unfortunately, when we are so nefariously capable of justifying our actions by self-deception, we perpetuate the cycle of exclusion. Describing the act of self-betrayal, the authors of *Leadership and Self-Betrayal,* write that an “act contrary to what I feel I should do for another is an act of ‘self-betrayal’. When I betray myself, I begin to see the world in a way that justifies my self-betrayal. When I see the world in a self-justifying way, my view of reality becomes distorted” (Arbinger 144). However, with a divinely “de-centered center,” one finally becomes able to recognize the layers of deceit, and with the power and gentleness of the Holy Spirit, one can peel the layers back to reveal the evil that fills the gaps between people and fuels exclusion.

If Christian development workers genuinely seek to help others in the best possible way, they must first relate “on the level of human suffering… where we can share heart to heart and cross cultures” (Aldred 19:30). This is the beginning of a genuine collaborative copowering relationship with others. Christian development workers must embrace the multitudes of paradox within and without and allow God to provide for them a de-centered center to be truly useful in the kingdom of God. Only then can they truly embrace the otherness within themselves. An example of truly embracing others is a local Christian church embracing social and environmental justice issues, as these issues affect all people, and incorporating them into its commission to make disciples of all nations. Throughout the Spirituality, Culture, and Social Justice Course, the values I held about what a church can offer to its local community were

expanded to include community- and environmentally minded solutions for social justice issues. The next section outlines a vision for the Church, all of which flows from my expanded values of social and environmental justice.

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE CHURCH

The Christian faith community is called to care for all its neighbors, regardless of class, race, income, or life circumstances, as modeled in the life and actions of Jesus and his disciples. Jesus shared a parable that not only dispelled any religious or cultural barriers to helping others but also demonstrated the proper way to care for our neighbors. Jesus's teachings about the Good Samaritan provide a basis for Christians to care for others and address social and environmental injustice. Christian churches are change agents in their local communities and are called to provide a holistic and healthy worldview through doctrinally sound teaching that proclaims Jesus and His love for the world. Christian churches are the center of Christian faith communities. They are exceptionally positioned to provide wholistic biblical teachings and individual- and community-oriented ministries and utilize environmentally friendly operations in order to address and restore balance to social and environmental injustices.

Wholistic Biblical Teachings

As the cornerstone of Christian teachings and life, churches are uniquely positioned to provide wholistic biblical teachings to enact social and environmental action based upon biblical principles and doctrine. An early follower of Christ, the Apostle Paul refers to the importance of scripture, "God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (NIV). Churches have a momentous opportunity, as faith communities, to lead the charge of teaching this understanding of stewardship, to be entrusted with items of value to another and the

responsibility of proper care. At its heart, the Bible is all about Jesus and his redemption of humanity, bringing us unto himself, restoring humanity to its true calling of being in deep relationship with the Creator, themselves, others, and the Creation—becoming good stewards once again. Being a good steward also encapsulates glorifying and enjoying God's grace. In Bakken and Engel's work, *Ecology, Justice, and Christian Faith: A Critical Guide to the Literature*, they write, "Only those who experience the grace of God can radically transform their environmentally harmful lifestyles to lifestyles which give life" (41). This can take many forms, but this essay will focus on practical ways to teach this framework, which starts with the belief that all people are created in the image of God. One of the primary roles of the Christian Church is to provide a framework for the faith community to see the world around them, one which inherently puts every person on the same level, from the poorest to the richest. This core biblical understanding should permeate all teachings and aspects of Church gatherings. My understanding of this has not necessarily transformed throughout this program, but rather it has expanded through the exposure to the many meaningful teachings, especially through Julie Clawson's book *Everyday Justice*. Clawson's final chapter explains the necessity for everyone to choose justice in the daily rhythms of life within the community of other believers. Steadfastly proclaiming her desire to motivate the everyday person towards lifestyle change in small and incremental ways, Clawson writes:

> Living for just ourselves isn't an option, because everything we do impacts other people. It is up to us to decide whether we will act lovingly toward others or whether we will participate in their exploitation and harm. How we choose to put love into practice will vary for each person, but I hope these choices are ones we can no longer simply ignore. (Clawson 309)

When this is done well and consistently, the natural response is a transformation of how people interact with their communities and their environments, becoming stewards of the gift of community and home.

Individual-oriented Ministries

Another practical way in which the Church can work at restoring the balance and addressing social and environmental injustices is through providing individual-oriented ministries. Individual-oriented ministries are simply ministries and programs designed to help individual members in the local community. The following are real ministry examples of individual-oriented ministries: Celebrate Recovery, helping people recover from hurts, habits, and hang-ups; Conquering Codependency, for people overcoming unhealthy reliance upon others and restoring their worth and sense of power; and Grief Share, designed for people who have experienced traumatic loss to progress through the stages of grief in a healthy environment. These individual-oriented ministries are designed to take individuals through a biblical process of restoration, recovery, empowerment, and transformation. It is my personal experience that much micro-level social injustice stems from deep hurts and wounds that the perpetrator has never acknowledged, understood, or sought to heal and reconcile. In no way does this understanding excuse the actions of the perpetrator, yet this way of seeing seeks a more in-depth way of bringing about justice, both within the perpetrator and for those hurt.

Community-oriented Ministries

To address social and environmental injustice, the church can provide community-oriented ministries. In utilizing their spaces that are uniquely equipped to hold large or small groups of people, churches have the opportunity to host a myriad of public forums and debates outside of their regularly scheduled operations to bring about advocacy for communities facing both social

and environmental injustice. In her chapter "Countering Moral Oblivion," which is very fitting when discussing the church's role in combating injustice, Moe-Lobeda writes, "Christian faith … calls people to see the social structural roots of poverty and to engage actively in advocacy for systemic change" (255). Most church buildings accommodate large numbers of people and have a strong presence of authority in many communities. Church leaders are positioned to have the maximum effect on the community's understanding of what biblical stewardship is and how it fights and balances out social and environmental injustices.

In addition to providing space and advocacy to bring about social change, the Church also has the financial standing to enact physical changes in communities experiencing injustice. The Church can send teams of professionally skilled congregants to address physical issues the community faces. Churches can solve issues such as heating and cooling inadequacy in low-income minority housing, providing safe drinking water for people affected by environmental racism, and rebuilding homes damaged by social injustice in disaster areas are just a few of the ways the Church can help.

Provide Environmentally Friendly Solutions

The final way that I envision the Church taking its place at the table of environmental justice is through providing environmentally friendly changes to its operating procedures. Many churches that use various print media weekly could utilize alternative ways to engage their attendees, for example creating a church app that hosts all the relevant information on the church's events in a simple, cost-effective way to reduce paper and print waste. When I was a campus pastor at a thousand-member church location, I recognized that attendees were handing their weekly programs back to the volunteers, leaving them on the seats, or throwing them away at the end of the service. After reading John Cobb's writings in *Christian Existence in a World of Limits*, I

came to realize that the structure we created to serve our congregants was causing an enormous amount of waste and was going mostly unused. Cobb argues that Christ-followers should not pigeon-hole themselves to realism or eschatological views, but dedicate themselves to Christ himself, "live in readiness to subordinate our past plans and projects" to Christ today—which results in a vision for social change. Cobb calls believers to hold onto the things of life loosely and be ready to hear from Christ the change that the world needs. He also calls for Christians to inwardly disengage from the present structures in order to provide sound and lasting leadership. In embracing Cobbs's writing, I decided to change my church's operating structure, but I must preface this with the warning that change, in general, is difficult for people to embrace, much more so in an established organization such as a church.

Nevertheless, it drove me to envision a better way. I instructed my staff to count the left-over programs from each week, and we adjusted the print order from one thousand programs per week to three hundred per week. We updated the church app and began to encourage attenders to use our app for the weekly program instead of the paper one. Not only did we reduce waste through this simple change, but we saved thousands of dollars that year.

Another simple change was reducing the number of one-time-use cups and food containers. Many churches provide coffee or other beverages and small breakfast items before the service, but they do so with one-time-use disposable cups and plates. This creates much unnecessary waste. If church leaders provided free coffee to people who bring their drinking cups, this alone would reduce unrecyclable waste by thousands of tons a year. Churches that provide drinking water in disposable cups and plastic bottles, as mine used to, can look into installing water bottle filler stations that have a digital count that shows the user the number of water bottles that have been replaced through each use. Not only does this simple change

promote awareness and a change in the church leaders' environmental mindset, but this would reinforce the idea of avoiding one-time-use plastics. Church leaders could also take into consideration environmental justice issues when campaigning for a new building and in the creation of building plans. Adopting green building policies—utilizing options such as solar panels for alternative power solutions and incorporating recycling infrastructure, such as built-in chutes for materials, into their buildings—would speak volumes on the church's environmental consciousness and could become a physical beacon of the stand that the church is taking to reduce its impact. Furthermore, the church could choose not to build at all, but to rent, remodel, and utilize buildings that already exist. If Church leaders recognized the incredible amount of waste and the negative impact it has on people around the world, rapid changes would occur.

COPOWERMENT AND FUTURE WORK

The term *copowerment* is not yet a widely used or understood way of operating. Copowerment is best defined as a dynamic of mutual exchange through which each side of a social equation is made stronger and more effective by the other. Copowerment can be understood as a symbiotic relationship between two persons or groups. In most instances, one person or group has resources to help the other and helps in a way that does not harm the other group or detract from their dignity or well-being, but rather is empowering. The defining characteristic of copowerment is that the helping party is also opened to learning from and being empowered by the very group they are seeking to help. Thus, both parties are empowered. At its core, copowerment is collaborative and sustainable.

Previous Copowerment Experience

I first experienced the necessity of providing copowerment for long-term success during this program in my last position as a campus pastor of a large multi-site church. I had the

responsibility of leading a team of nine staff, a 45,000-square-foot building, and over 800 churchgoers each week. This was no easy task, especially since I had no previous experience leading a church on such a large scale. The first action I made was to build relationships with the existing staff to begin establishing my core team. Petra Kuenkel, the author of *The Art of Leading Collectively*, offers a framework for understanding leadership styles. In her framework, my leadership style is future-possibility focused, as I tend to "focus on potential or opportunities and drive change for the better…" to "inspire, enable, and awaken passion and options for change" (1596). I spent a significant amount of time working with each team member to help them see their part to play at the church and how it fits into the larger picture. My goal was to accomplish the weekly needs of the church by empowering the staff.

Current Copowerment Experience

In my current role at Advancing Native Missions, as chief operations officer, I am currently applying these lessons on copowerment to the team of four departmental vice presidents that I lead. In my first few months on the job, I focused on learning all about the vice presidents, their motivations, aspirations, and leadership styles. My goal was to learn the best ways in which I could help enhance their way of leading and provide a collaborative environment where they could learn from one another. Collaboration is best understood as a clear understanding of organizational limitations and the joining together of two groups' abilities and resources in pursuit of mutually established goals. My goal was copowerment. One statement I found myself repeating was, "I am not the expert here—*you* are. You have been here for years; you have been in the trenches. You know what works and what does not work. I need your input." This simple statement brought about dynamic engagement that otherwise would have been underdeveloped.

On the art of engagement, Kuenkel writes, “we have mastered the art of engagement when people commit when they actively drive implementation, and when new people ask to join the journey” (1682). Engagement took place as a result of allowing the team to be part of the solution by voicing their ideas. I started with weekly meetings focused on the needs and issues their departments were facing. This format brought clarity to many assumptions and confusion about the various roles and processes for handling issues. These meetings are now bi-monthly, as the communication between departments occurs organically without my intervention. I am still developing the format based on their feedback to best enable collaboration and operational effectiveness. In conversations with other executive leaders, we are considering doing away with the tiered leadership approach, namely executive leadership and departmental leadership, and combining the two into one level of executives with different roles. This is risky but could prove to be more beneficial than the standard way of operating. This is how I seek to best express the dynamic of copowerment in my current vocation.

Future Copowerment Experience

Another way I seek to provide copowerment is through my project. In providing a way for local church leaders to quickly learn about the necessary paradigm shift from a send-and-support missional system to a find-and-support program, copowerment is paramount to the entire venture. Through learning about supporting native missionaries, local church leaders can not only become more involved in a long-term relationship with native missionaries, but they can learn from their methods too. The native missionaries will be encouraged emotionally, spiritually, and supported financially, and the local church will, in turn, gain more of a global understanding of what impact they can have. The local church can also, if open-minded enough,

learn from the faith, commitment, and challenges that native missionaries face. This is copowerment in action.

CONCLUSION

The ICD program is predicated upon trust. Trust takes time to cultivate and is often an overlooked aspect in community development work due to power structures that focus solely upon results. In the ICD program, trust is demonstrated as collaboration and copowerment. Through many years of working in the Christian Church as a pastor and currently in supporting indigenous missionaries, I have often undervalued trust in favor of results. Through this program, I have learned the value of working collaboratively and of copowerment, through seeking partnerships that not only benefit myself, but fully benefit the other party as well. I have also learned the value that local churches can offer in combating social and environmental injustice. My entire outlook on my current and future vocation as a leader in the local church has shifted to one whereby, I hope to enact simple changes that address social and environmental justice issues. Churches have the capacity to shape their operating procedures, physical buildings, and ministries to meet the needs of those oppressed by social and environmental injustice. The best way to combat any injustice is through working in a copowering relationship with others.

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