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Guided Thesis

Community Development Principles for Justice and Mission at Refuge Church

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## **Essay 1: Contextualization**

### **The Importance of Contextualization**

“Context, context, context!” exclaimed Dr. Kim, a former theology professor at Colorado Christian University. Dr. Kim would repeatedly say this phrase to his students, especially those enrolled in his Interpreting the Bible class. To this day, his students, myself included, remember him for these words. He was passionate about us understanding the time, place, history, and culture in which the Bible was written. To take the Bible at face value was to not only neglect the understanding of the original context and audience to which it was written, but also dismissed the deeper work God was and is doing across space and time. Not to say one cannot read the Bible without extensive commentaries, but understanding the context is crucial in understanding its deeper meaning. The same is true regarding international community development (ICD). It is impossible to engage in effective and sustainable community development if one does not take the time to understand the context in which they work. It’s one thing to observe a need, crisis, or problem in a community, but it is another thing to understand the “why” behind a community’s current state and implement sustainable solutions.

From a young age, I developed a love for other countries and cultures. When I was twelve years old, I remember visiting Juárez, Mexico and learning the importance of understanding the history, culture, and the people of Juarez. Experiencing a different country for the first time opened my eyes to the broader context in which I lived. I wanted to learn about people and cultures from all over the world and made it a point to do so. I have traveled to multiple countries over the years for ministry trips, humanitarian aid work, and tourism. Looking back, there were moments when I completely neglected learning about the context of a culture, usually for the sake of my own comfort. I forsook opportunities to learn in order to cling to what was familiar.

Contextualization entails taking the position of a learner. It is to not assume one's own agenda or propose solutions to perceived problems, but to take the time to understand how a culture makes sense of their lives. Looking back on my international experiences, this is something I wish I was taught sooner. Bryant L. Myers, author of *Walking With the Poor*, explains that "when we fail to listen, to see what we can learn, we are in fact telling [the poor] that they are without useful information, without contribution. By dismissing what they know, we further mar the identity of the poor. Our good intentions deepen the poverty we seek to alleviate" (213). While Myers speaks to his readers in regards to the poor, this principle applies no matter the community's demographic. Listening is key to good contextualization.

Failing to do so can result in great harm. Steve Corbett, the author of *When Helping Hurts*, highlights the tendency Christians have to collect donations and help those in need, but often lack the knowledge of how to do so in a contextualized and sustainable manner. Similar to Myers, Corbett challenges his readers to ask more questions and to not assume answers that do not come from the people of that community (51). Christi Renaud from Plant with Purpose, a community development organization focusing on communal, environmental, and spiritual renewal, explains that she and her coworkers have been referred to as "experts as grassroots mobilization" because they "do not come in with an outsider's approach, [they] just meet people where they are." This approach is exemplary in contextualization and more churches would do well to adopt this attitude.

Because my thesis project focuses on the role of a church in community development, my understanding of the importance of contextualization has largely been shaped around this topic. Attempting to understand a context can be difficult, and I found myself having to continually check my own assumptions and biases throughout my fieldwork as I worked in a familiar

context. However, by using ethnographic qualitative research methods and continually checking in with my biases, I was able to gain a greater understanding of the context of my fieldwork.

### **Contextualization Applied in my Project**

The authors of *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America* state, “our churches must require a greater understanding of the culture if we are to engage with the culture” (xvii). At the beginning of my fieldwork, I asked the broad question, “How does Refuge Church, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, participate in community development?” To answer this question I needed to understand and engage in the culture of Refuge Church and the surrounding community. As Charles Vogl describes in his book, *The Art of Community*, I needed to talk with the community to understand what its members valued (21). This entailed understanding the community of Refuge Church as well as the greater context of Albuquerque. I did this by looking at macrocultural and microcultural contextualization by considering Hofstede’s Indices and attempting to understand the values of the smaller local community.

Refuge scores lower on Hofstede’s Power Distance Index, meaning “power is shared and is widely dispersed, and that society members do not accept situations where power is distributed unequally.” While there are hierarchal positions on staff, Refuge is a congregational church, meaning decisions are made by the congregation, not by the lead pastor, executive pastor, or staff alone. The larger context of Albuquerque lands in the middle of Hofstede’s Individualism versus Collectivism Scale. While there are many individualistic aspects in the culture such as emphasis on individual choice and preference, due to Albuquerque’s Hispanic and Native American roots there is also a large emphasis on relationships. Relationships and who you know are valued above knowledge and educational degrees. Understanding this larger context was crucial in understanding the smaller local context of the West Side area and Refuge Church.

When it came time to do my research to understand the local context of Refuge and the surrounding area (microcultural contextualization), I did several interviews and ethnographic observations to understand the local community. A culmination of these activities helped paint a more comprehensive picture, but there were a few interviews that significantly helped me understand the context.

I am usually at the Church every Tuesday for meetings and made it a point one week to do a two-question survey with employees working in the shopping center where Refuge is located. The questions were simple: “What do you think is the greatest need in this community?” and “What do you think is missing in the community?” I asked the ladies who worked next door at the Family Dollar, the employees at Pizza Hut and Subway, the community center personal across the street, the dental technicians next door, as well as a few other businesses in the area. I received answers that were all across the board, with only two answers relating to one another regarding more help for the homeless population. I was somewhat disappointed by the lack of commonality between people’s answers; however, it did lead me to a discovery about the people and the context of the community. There were not only a variety of issues people in the community are concerned about, but there was also diversity in what people perceive to be the greatest need.

There are multiple needs present in Taylor Ranch, the neighborhood where Refuge is located, but the fact that each person thought differently about what was the greatest need revealed a strength about the community— the diversity of opinions could mean potentially addressing multiple needs as different people were passionate about seeing the community grow in different ways. This coupled with insight from other interviews with congregants about the ways they desired to better their city helped me understand that it is not one program or one outreach initiative that Refuge Church should engage in, rather they have the opportunity to

foster an environment of creative problem solving that empowers locals to address the needs of their community.

In Myers research, he highlights Francis Bacon's work of elevating "ordinary people" to develop creative solutions to their community's problems. Myers explains that this fundamental change in community development practices was in "how human beings understood their world and in their ability to change it" (25). Working off of Bacon's framework, I wanted to foster an environment where seemingly average church congregants could become more aware of the needs around them and have the support to develop creative solutions to meet those needs. This framework coupled with principles of copowerment serves as the premise on which Missional Grants was built upon, which can be found in Appendix A.

### **Contextualization and Creativity**

Creativity and innovation are some of the best ways to practice community development in a contextualized manner. Conquergood exemplified the necessity of creativity during his fieldwork in a refugee camp. Conquergood saw the need to address hygiene practices, but did so in a creative and contextualized manner. He explained that creativity was crucial and that "any communication campaign that ignored the indigenous cultural strengths of performance would be doomed to failure" (180). He also made it a point to ask the elders of the community for feedback and critique in order to become more contextualized in his practices. For Conquergood, creativity was essential in practicing effective and contextualized community development.

While some organizations have been known to parachute into communities, offering services in an attempt to solve pressing issues, they often do not take the time to think through how those services could be received in the given context or the long-term damage they could be causing. Katie Willis, author of *Theories and Practices of Development*, suggests greater inclusion and participation can help protect against these mistakes. She argues that community

development “agendas need to be set by the communities involved, rather than outside agencies deciding on the priorities to be addressed and then working with local people to achieve them (114). Essentially, aid agendas need to be formed at the local level where the people can speak to their own needs.

However, Kelley and Kelley, authors of *Creative Confidence*, take this idea even further by claiming that creativity can lead to the development of more contextualized practices. They challenge their readers by asking “Why not set up a process or system of participation that allows those budding innovators to express their ideas?” (209). These processes could ultimately lead to creative solutions initiated at the local level and give greater dignity and value to community members.

Researcher, Ruby K. Payne capitalizes on this point in her book titled, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, concludes, from studying poverty in the U.S. for over thirty years, that the poor must be viewed not as victims, but as creative problem solvers who have valuable information and experience which the greater community can benefit from (190). This approach not only ascribes greater dignity to marginalized community members, but also encompasses principles of copowerment which are essential to sustainable and contextualized community development practices.

Community Developer and leader of an Asset-Based Community Development organization, Cormac Russell argues that many organizations, businesses, and governments cause unintentional harm resulting from a deficient-based community development approach. He quotes Harvard scholar Rosabeth Moss Kanter saying “when we do change to people, they experience it as violence, but when people do change for themselves, they experience it as liberation” (00:50-00:57). When people are viewed not as clients of a service, but as members of



a community who have agency to create change, creative and sustainable solutions begin to surface.

### **The Role of Contextualization in my Vocation**

I am currently working in Albuquerque, New Mexico on the outreach team at Refuge Church as well as working for a local non-profit called Shine that addresses family development and generational poverty. Contextualization in both of these places is extremely important. I am glad that my thesis project has applied to an area in which I work every day (at Refuge) and is something I get the privilege of seeing come to fruition. My thesis lined up with the launch of Refuge's Justice and Mission arm, meaning much of my research is being used in laying the foundation of this new ministry. Beyond the ICD program, I have also been able to work alongside incredible coworkers who have challenged my research throughout this process and helped me create a more contextualized approach. I do not doubt that contextualization will continue to be part of our conversations and will be something we think through in any new projects or ministries we help launch.

In my work with Shine, I am finding that contextualization is not only key to the success of our programs, but also to build my understanding of a community in which I have only stood on the outside of for most of my life. I often feel unqualified for this job and feel my privilege puts a barrier between myself and the families I work with. However, I am learning the best thing I can do is listen, ask questions, and continually put myself in the position of a learner, just as I have been taught throughout this program. If it were not for learning principles like contextualization and copowerment over the past two years, I do not think I would qualify to be in my current position with this non-profit.

Contextualization was a familiar term to me before enrolling in the ICD program, however, my knowledge and practice of implementation have grown significantly. I hope to

continue in these two lines of work and eventually transition to something similar but in an international or cross-cultural context for a time. Having lived in other countries than my own, I know how important understanding the context of a culture is, but my understanding has expanded that much more over the course of this program. No matter my future vocation, contextualization will be something I think through and strive to understand not only at the onset of a new position, but continually throughout my work.

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## Essay 2: Qualitative Inquiry

### What is Qualitative Inquiry?

Qualitative inquiry (QI) is characterized by attempts to understand the experience of another person, community, or culture. Whether researching the experience of a migrant worker from Mexico or a suburban family's views on race, qualitative inquiry allows a researcher to enter into the story of another, getting a glimpse into their world. QI takes the position of a learner who does not come to the table with a hypothesis, but investigates why things are the way they are. In the words of scholars Merriam and Tisdell, the purpose of this kind of research is to "achieve an *understanding* of how people make sense out of their lives" (15). This perspective is crucial in community development as it seeks to understand the deeper meaning beneath the perceived meaning of a community or people group.

Rather than using numbers and statistics to draw conclusions, words are the main form of data used in qualitative inquiry (Merriam and Tisdell 6). QI methods will conduct experiments against their hypothesis to draw conclusions, but in qualitative inquiry, data gathering is done through interviews, observations, and participation. The research process itself is a vital part of understanding a context.

The researcher must be aware of the biases they bring to the table and carefully think through the questions they want to ask. The process is inductive, meaning "researchers build toward theory from observations and intuitive understandings gleaned from being in the field" (Merriam and Tisdell 17). A researcher is tasked with the sole goal of understanding, not predicting nor problem-solving, though QI might lead to those things, making it an ideal approach for community development research.

## Qualitative Inquiry and Community Development

In the world of International Community Development, qualitative research methods find themselves at the core. Good community development does not start with hypotheses, but curiosity, listening, and flexibility. In the following paragraphs I will unpack each of these while drawing comparisons between them in ICD and QI.

Curiosity means recognizing that the present moment is a culmination of history, culture, environment, and nuance. The researcher must be curious enough to understand the deeper meaning beneath the perceived meaning. Curiosity is not just about asking questions, but also participating and immersing oneself in the world of another. This could mean lingering beyond formal events or gatherings, participating in seemingly mundane activities, and observing the in-between moments that often go unnoticed.

Listening entails asking unassuming questions, often leaving things open-ended for people to express what they are thinking and feeling. This also includes self-control to stop oneself from interjecting their own opinion. Researcher and economist, Amartya Sen encourages his readers to take a position of openness in their research by saying “Nor let us be resentful when others differ from us. For all men have hearts, and each heart has its own leanings. Their right is our wrong, and our right is their wrong” (22). Qualitative inquiry is an exercise in giving priority to the other person by hearing their voice and opinions more than one’s own. The researcher need not dismiss their personal reactions to their discoveries, but rather examine them and take note of how their own experience plays into the interpretation of the qualitative data. Good listening also entails recognizing the communication taking place beyond words spoken. Nonverbals can give just as much, if not more, insight as words.

Flexibility is to approach the research process with an understanding that it will not be linear. One could draw conclusions from their research, but also find they must go back and ask

more questions to get a clearer picture. It is a process of discovering and rediscovering. In action research (AR), a type of qualitative inquiry, “People will find themselves working backwards through routines, repeating processes, revising procedures, rethinking interpretations, leapfrogging steps or stages, and sometimes making radical changes in direction” (Stringer 9). The researcher must be flexible enough to adjust their project based on new discoveries and be open to continued growth.

These three values are applicable in qualitative inquiry methods as well as community development principles. A good community developer does not look at problems in a community and ask, “how do we fix this?” but discovers why things are the way they are through a posture of humility, an emphasis on understanding, and a willingness to enter into another’s experience.

Additionally, the researcher has the opportunity to understand themselves better through exploring their reflexivity. Researchers Gary and Holmes state that “reflexivity is the concept that researchers should acknowledge and disclose their selves in their research, seeking to understand their part in it, or influence on it (2). It is impossible to have an unbiased approach to qualitative research, but the point is not to rid oneself of all opinions and positions, rather to understand one’s own perceptions and unique influence they bring to the research process. This concept reigns true in QI and ICD as the researcher and community developer has the burden and opportunity to discover unique aspects in a community that another researcher might not notice.

### **Qualitative Inquiry Applied in My Project**

For my fieldwork, I wanted to understand the Church’s role in community development. I knew community development had a role to play in my faith, or perhaps vice versa. I struggled to see how Christian evangelical churches in the U.S. engage in community development in a way that didn’t reflect a savior complex. I entered my fieldwork with many questions, wondering about sustainability, holistic approaches, and how a multicultural/multiethnic influence could

impact an American church's methods of "doing outreach." I also wondered about my own church's role in community development and the ways I could invite them into the conversation.

I decided to conduct a qualitative ethnographic research project that incorporated aspects of appreciative inquiry and action research. I did this by dividing my research into two parts. I spent the first half researching two multicultural/multiethnic churches participating in exemplary community development by using appreciative inquiry. For the second half, I spent time researching the context of Refuge Church using action research to "Look, Think, and Act" resulting in principles and practices in which Refuge could participate in community development (Stringer 9).

### *Appreciative Inquiry*

Appreciative inquiry (AI) assumes that "in every organization something works and change can be managed through the identification of what works and the analysis of how to do more of what works" (Hammond 3). This was my approach when visiting two multicultural/multiethnic churches. The first being Mosaic Church in Little Rock, Arkansas and the second was Imago Dei in Portland, Oregon.

Mosaic is situated in a low-income neighborhood amid a busy shopping center situated near a fast-food joint, a Walgreens, and a few other small businesses. Paul, the Director of Vine and Village, the church's community development organization, welcomed me to participate in their week of various activities. The most impactful activity I took part in was their food distribution program called "The Orchard." It's not rare for a church to have some sort of a food bank, but The Orchard is in a league of its own.

I walked through Mosaic's office door on a Tuesday morning at 9 am and was greeted by two women sitting behind the front desk –one behind a computer screen with glasses and blonde hair, the other with mismatched clothing and blue streaked hair. Paul introduced us to Kelsie, the

receptionist, and Christi, who Paul spoke of highly as he esteemed her key role in the Orchard program. As we proceeded to walk through church offices into the warehouse, Paul shared that Christi is homeless and has been part of the Mosaic family for quite some time. She benefits from the food bank, but she also helps run it.

As we walked past large wooden pallets of food and a line of enormous freezers, Paul introduced us to Scott. Scott smiled at us through missing teeth and thanked us warmly for coming to help. Throughout the day we heard more of Scott's story, learning that he lived in the nearby forest, but had keys to the church and is the point person for the warehouse. Paul later shared with us about his friendship with Scott and the deep trust they had with one another. As the day went on and I met other volunteers, I found that many of them have benefited from the food bank at one point or currently do. The food bank is largely run not by the upper or middle class, but by the very people who benefit from it.

Observing and participating in the food distribution that day gave me key insights into copowerment in a way that an interview with Paul could not have. By asking questions about the strengths of the church and Vine and Village, I was able to learn key principles through appreciative inquiry that helped me build a framework of copowerment for Refuge Church. These insights can be found in Community Development Project Proposal for Refuge Church in the Appendix.

Similarly, at the second church I visited, Imago Dei Community Church in Portland, Oregon, I was able to get a glimpse into their community development initiatives through an appreciative inquiry approach. Like Mosaic, Imago is exemplary in their approach to community development as they suppose the answers to the problems in their community will come from the very people experiencing them. I wanted to know how they created an environment that fosters this kind of mindset. According to Hammond, An appreciative inquiry approach focuses on



“doing more of what works” (23). In order to understand what my own church could learn from Imago’s example, I decided to investigate Imago’s context through interviews, ethnographic observations, and participation in their activities.

As I talked with Ruben, Imago’s Director of Justice and Mission, I came to find that they may have used an appreciative inquiry approach in their own community development initiatives. Things like art and justice are largely emphasized in Portland, so Imago focuses on what Ruben calls, “windows of redemption” to capitalize on cultural aspects that reflect the message of the Gospel. I also found that Imago’s leadership has done much work to be contextualized to their location. Ruben shared that “Imago is a church for the city. It would be a miss if only the congregation missed us if we were gone. We want our neighbors to be impacted by our presence, and we want to be impacted by what they have to offer.” Principles of copowerment and contextualization are woven within almost everything Imago does. By giving their congregants agency and support to start initiatives to better their city, they are able to create sustainable ministries that are appropriately contextualized and not dependent on church staff alone. Through learning about what they do well, I was able to leave with ideas of how similar principles could translate into my own context at Refuge Church.

### ***Action Research***

The second half of my fieldwork was spent in Albuquerque, New Mexico in the context of Refuge Church. I implemented methods of action research to gain a deeper understanding of the context and propose a way forward for Refuge to engage in community development. Refuge is a familiar context to me, as I have worked there for almost two years now, which meant I had to be aware of the biases I brought into my research. Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater state, “all fieldworkers, even those who investigate local cultures and subcultures, risk projecting their own assumptions onto the groups they study. They must be ready and willing to unpack their own

cultural baggage and embark on a collaborative journey with those they study” (4). Entering into the action research process helped me to continually check in with my own biases and assumptions and pushed me to take a deeper posture of curiosity in familiar setting.

According to Stinger, an AR researcher for the sake of change, not just information alone (9). The researcher expects something to happen as the result of their research. Because of this, an action researcher must continually “review (look again), reflect (reanalyze), and re-act (modify their actions)” in order to implement effective and sustainable solutions (Stringer 9). Planning, implementation, and evaluation are done all along the way while continuing this “Look, Think, Act” routine.

Action research also allowed me to take what I learned from Mosaic and Imago and implement some of their principles at Refuge in a contextualized manner. While there is temptation to copy the success of others, action research invites the researcher to consider the importance of context. Stringer states that “action research...is based on the proposition that generalized solutions, plans, or programs may not fit all contexts or groups to whom they are applied and that the purpose of inquiry is to find an appropriate solution for the particular dynamics at work in a local situation” (6). Going through the “Look, Think, Act” process helped me create a community development project proposal for Refuge that reflected their unique context and culture.

### **Program Evaluation**

The Community Development Project Proposal that resulted from my research is designed to foster an environment where community development principles can take root among Refuge church congregants, leading them to start community development initiatives. To measure the effectiveness of the project, a program evaluation must be conducted.

A program evaluation using qualitative data can seem more ambiguous and less straightforward than a program evaluation using quantitative data. However, researcher, Tricia Wang emphasizes the value of qualitative data verses relying on big data to gain understanding. She explains that:

Once you predict something about human behavior, new factors emerge because conditions are constantly changing. And that's why it's a never-ending cycle. You think you know something and then something unknown enters the picture. And that's why relying on big data alone increases the chance that we'll miss something while giving us this illusion that we already know everything. (07:45-07:57)

While quantitative data can, and does, give valuable information qualitative data, especially in the realm of community development, offers a deeper understanding of the nuance and dynamism a culture possesses.

Evaluation questions such as “Is the project reaching (or did it reach) those with greatest need? If not, why not?” and “Did the project effectively and appropriately invest its time and budget to conduct its activities?” can help the researcher understand the effectiveness of their program (Culligan and Sherriff 2). Part of measuring the effectiveness of a project is also being able to identify and measure outcomes. To measure the impact of my project, I intend to measure the following outcomes over a period of two years:

- Participation from church congregants in Justice and Mission initiatives
- Use of ICD vocabulary among church congregants
- Number of Missional Grant applications submitted
- Number of ministries/projects launched as a result of Missional Grants
- Testimonies from community members about the impact of Missional Grants

Program evaluations help ensure effectiveness and sustainability. I know that my role at Refuge Church may one day be passed on to someone else, so it's important to look forward and measure the impact of the practices implemented if the program is to exceed me. This is to ensure ministries and projects that are started will serve the community in the most positive and effective way. I believe that the work I have done is just the beginning, and it is my intention for Refuge Church to adjust, modify, and adapt the project based on the context and needs of the community of Taylor Ranch and the larger Albuquerque area.

### **Conclusion**

Qualitative approaches make a community developer a more impactful agent of social change as they leave room for the unquantifiable; taking into account the dynamism and nuance that exists in every community while valuing the experience of the individual. This approach allows the community developer to delve deep into the world of another to understand the deeper meaning beneath the perceived meaning. Qualitative inquiry and International Community Development share principles such as curiosity, listening, and flexibility, making them an ideal pair in creating positive and sustainable change. This approach guided me through my fieldwork and lead me to discover new insights in a hands-on and exciting way.

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### Essay 3: IDC Values

#### Introduction

In preparation for this essay, I went and back reread the very first paper I wrote for this program. I found myself in amazement that it's been almost two years since I turned in that assignment. In a season of feeling exhausted, as if I am crawling to the finish line of this semester, the words I wrote in that first paper gave me perspective and reminded me why I wanted to get my master's in International Community Development (ICD) in the first place. Here are a few lines from that paper:

Palmer writes that vocation lies “not in what the world needs (which is everything), but in the nature of the human self, in what brings the self joy, the deep joy of knowing that we are here on earth to be the gifts that God created” (Palmer 17). As I dive into this graduate program and attempt to discover who God has made me to be, it is my hope that I would be mindful of Palmer's admonitions and let my life be an overflow of pressing deeper into my authentic self. (3)

Reading these words reminded me of the excitement and eagerness I had at the beginning of this program. I was eager to learn more about community development concepts and how they could be applied in the work I was doing. These words also challenged me to reconsider the questions, “have I been pressing deeper into my authentic self these past two years?” and “have I been operating out of what brings me joy or the pressing needs of those around me?”

Despite this semester feeling like treading water, as I reflect on the past two years, I can confidently say that I have grown deeper into my authentic self as Palmer describes and do operate more out of what brings me joy. In this paper, I will explore more of my journey over the past few years, the ways I have grown during this program, and some of the most prominent things that I will take with me into my future as a community developer.

## **Process of Personal Transformation**

I began my journey in the field of community development in 2012 when I decided to study Global Studies and Intercultural Ministry during my undergraduate degree program. I was passionate about learning other cultures, being part of the work of the global Christian Church, and had hoped to work for a non-profit in the future. I participated in several short-term mission trips and loved engaging in international aid work. As I look back now, some of those trips were harmful to the local communities and were not sustainable from a community development standpoint. I was challenged in my classes and by my experiences to understand my role in international ministry. Though I did not feel like I had all the answers, I knew I wanted to move overseas after graduation.

After I graduated, I moved to Athens, Greece to work for a Christian college ministry. I was struck by the large number of refugees residing in Athens and felt a disparity between the emphasis I had on meeting the spiritual needs of people in the city while often neglecting the physical needs of those I walked by on the street every day. I remember riding my regular bus route and passing the same families begging on the street, wondering how to be more holistic in my approach to ministry. I wanted to work more with refugees in Europe while embracing my entrepreneurial side, so I decided to join a small team in Madrid, Spain to develop two small businesses that would employ refugees. There were many ups and downs during those years. Regardless I still experienced radical hospitality and shared countless meals with families and individuals and I learned another side of ministry that felt more holistic than pure evangelism in words. I began to see the relationships I was forming to be mutually transformative and interdependent. Copowerment was having its work in me before I knew what copowerment even was.

During my time in Spain, I met an ICD grad and was intrigued by her description of the program. I felt so hungry to learn more about the ICD concepts she described. I had a deep desire to grow in my understanding of holistic ministry and found the ICD program to be the place where I could expand my understanding of international aid work. Little did I know that I would embark on a journey that would redefine many of my preconceived ideas, including my views of justice, my relationships with those I served, and my overall philosophy of ministry. In this paper, I will explore each of these things and how what I have learned has prepared me for my future as a community developer.

### **Social Justice**

Social justice is a term often shied away from in Christian circles as some associate it with liberal political agendas. I was taught growing up that there was a difference between mission work and social justice work and that one was appointed by God and the other was a non-Christian approach that attempted to solve the world's problems. However, social justice does not have its roots in politics or liberalism, but in the life and teaching of Jesus.

Julie Clawson, author of *Everyday Justice* states, "Justice, at its very core, deals with relationships –our relationships to God, to each other and to the world" (20). She goes on to say that "to act justly, then, is to represent God's love to each other and thereby honor the image of God in the other person as well" (20). By participating in justice, one is not fulfilling liberal political agendas, but acting in accordance with the life and teachings of Jesus.

Moe-Lobeda furthers this point in her book, *Resisting Structural Evil*, as she asks her readers, "If we fail to recognize the injustice that is damaging neighbor, and hence fail to address it, are we not defying the call to love?" (57). Moe-Lobeda draws a connection between justice and love here by emphasizing their interconnectedness. Indeed, to participate in justice is to



participate in loving one's neighbor as the Bible teaches – "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (ESV Bible, Mat. 22.39).

Over the course of my four years working in Europe, I found that many Christian churches participated in the kind of justice that Clawson and Moe-Lobeda talk about more so than churches I had been a part of in America. It seemed that the term "justice" was not one they shied away from, but embraced as their role in the community. One church I was a part of in Athens, Greece embraced the refugee population in ways I had never experienced in American churches. They renovated their church offices into housing for families seeking asylum – something I, in my experience coming from an American Evangelical megachurch, did not even conceive of a church doing. Initiatives like housing foreigners were left to other organizations despite the Bible's words of instruction to be hospitable towards foreigners – "The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God" (ESV Bible, Lev 19.34). My experience at that church made me question if the American church was the one that needed Greek missionaries to come and teach about what it means to love one's neighbor.

While it can be tempting to point fingers at the American Evangelical Church, the need for church engagement in community development and justice initiatives is present worldwide. Barna conducted a qualitative study in the UK asking Christians and non-Christians alike if they thought local churches were making a positive impact on their communities. 35% of non-Christians responded that they disagreed while 44% of non-Christians said they didn't know (Barna Group). While data shows a gap in the Church's engagement in community development and justice initiatives specifically in the UK, it's important to recognize the ways in which the Church can grow in its community development practices on a global scale. A cross-cultural and cross-denominational conversation about the gaps in the Church's role in community

development would benefit communities as a whole. As one article points out from Martin Luther King Jr.'s Letter from Birmingham Jail, King concluded, "a church that has lost its voice for justice is a church that has lost its relevance in the world" (Ling). The Church must dialogue with Christians in the global north and south to learn how to engage in the matters that concern the people of their communities.

While a church cannot address every pressing need in its community, it does play a significant role in community development and should not dismiss non-spiritual needs to other organizations. Alvin Sanders, author of *Uncommon Church* states "I'm often asked, 'What's the biggest need of impoverished neighborhoods?' I reply, 'Healthy local churches.' 'Not food, clothing, or housing?' 'No, none of those.'" (13). He goes on to conclude that healthy churches are "major players advocating for raising the quality of life" in their neighborhoods (Sanders 13). When a church makes the community's concerns, their concerns, the church participates in justice by entering into relationship that has the utmost concern for neighbor.

### **Copowerment**

The word "empowerment" is thrown around a lot in the non-profit world. I remember writing about a philosophy of empowerment that was a driving force behind a ministry I used to work for. I felt convinced that empowering others was essential in non-profit work and should be one of the main focuses of ministry. It wasn't until this program that my perspective was challenged as I was invited to consider the concept of *copowerment*. Copowerment is a term coined by Dr. Inslee which is defined as "a dynamic of mutual exchange through which both sides of a social equation are made stronger and more effective by the other." While empowerment focuses on one side of the equation giving something to the other side, copowerment entails a symbiotic relationship where both sides are benefited.

Copowerment can manifest itself in many ways, but its foundation is built upon a posture of humility. In ministry, non-profit work, social justice initiatives, and humanitarian aid work, the worker can often develop a savior complex. By having a posture of humility, however, one can open themselves up to learning from the very people they are attempting to help rather than trying to save them from something. This was a convicting concept for me to learn about as I can recognize the ways in which I neglected to listen and learn from the people I was attempting to help during my time in Europe. Throughout this program, I have learned ways to slow down, listen more, and be disciplined by those who are marginalized by society instead of trying to come up with a bunch of solutions for them. This particular concept has shaped the way I see my current and future work as a community developer and one that I talk about often with coworkers, friends, and fellow church members.

### **Philosophy of Service**

My philosophy of service has changed significantly over the past five years. While I perhaps had good intentions in my desires to help marginalized people groups, I often went about it in a way that diminished the voices of those people rather than holding them in reverence. It was not until experiencing a more holistic approach to ministry and learning ICD principles that my philosophy of service started to reflect a more holistic Gospel in which I believe.

When I started the ICD program two years ago, I was reading a book called “*Tattoos on the Heart*” by Father Greg Boyle, a Jesuit priest who works with gang members in Los Angeles. If there was any book to help prime me for what I would learn in this program, it was coincidentally this one. Boyle has shaped my views on kinship and what it means to walk alongside people. Here are a few lines from one of my favorite chapters of his book:

Mother Teresa diagnosed the world’s ills in this way: we’ve just ‘forgotten that we belong to each other.’ Kinship is what happens to us when we refuse to let that

happen...Serving others is good. It's a start. But it's just the hallway that leads to the Grand Ballroom. Kinship—not serving the other, but being one with the other. Jesus was not 'a man for others'; he was one with them. There is a world of difference in that. (192)

I am continually learning how to take on this philosophy of kinship. This framework has heavily influenced my decisions of what kind of organization to work for and helped me to clarify my own desires in what kind of community development work I want to be involved in. No doubt, the principles I have learned in this program have also fostered this mindset of kinship and will help propel me forward into my future as a community developer.

### **Conclusion**

I've written countless papers, read thousands of pages, and studied late into the night pouring myself into this program, yet I feel my journey as a community developer is just beginning. As I reflect on what I've learned over the past two years, I can see the ways in which my perspectives on ministry, non-profit work, social justice initiatives, and humanitarian aid work have shifted from helping people to walking alongside them. Additionally, as a Christian, I am continually challenged to participate in justice as part of my faith and help rediscover my own church's role in participating in justice and community development. I know I have been well prepared as I move forward from this program, not because I think I now have all the answers to practice international community development, but because I have been taught how to listen, learn, and walk alongside others in a way that joins God in the restorative work of his creation.

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
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Appendix: Thesis Project

Community Development Project Proposal  
For Justice and Mission at Refuge Church

By Kathryn Loeppke  
Student of Community Development



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## Introduction

The recent launch of the Justice and Mission arm at Refuge Church has been a culmination of research of the context of Albuquerque and the Refuge congregation, as well as some influential community development initiatives exemplified by other churches. There is an opportunity to formally cast vision for Justice and Mission and to establish ways for congregants to lead initiatives that help their neighbors and city at large. In order for Refuge Church to effectively meet the needs of Albuquerque in a way that reflects the organization's values, they should implement, guidelines, values, and principles of copowerment to help launch contextualized and sustainable ministries. This document includes a formalized proposal of the philosophy behind Justice and Ministry at Refuge Church as well as a short guide to contextualized community development and copowerment principles. Also included is a project proposal called "Missional Grants" which is one tangible way in which Refuge Church can foster these principles of contextualization and copowerment in their congregation.

Many churches across America have the desire to meet the needs of those in their city. Refuge Church, located in Albuquerque, New Mexico, is no exception. However, how is this done in a way that does not promote a "savior" mentality or an "us" and "them" divide that is often present among American evangelical churches? There is an opportunity to redefine how churches like Refuge "do outreach" by capitalizing on principles of copowerment. With Refuge's recent renaming of their outreach department to "Justice and Mission," they are already making strides towards a different way of thinking about the church's involvement in the community. To come alongside the work Refuge is already doing, I have formalized their vision and propose one way they can implement their values. This thesis includes a project proposal consisting of guidelines, values, and principles for ministries started within the Justice and Mission (JAM) department of Refuge Church. These will be written and proposed for publishing



on the Refuge website and on a printed brochure for congregants to refer to along with a recommended reading list. These documents may be used for internal or external use according to the staff's needs. Additionally, this proposal also includes the design, development, and implementation of Missional Grants—a grant awarding program for congregants to start contextualized ministries in Albuquerque.

### **Background for the Project**

While the values of Justice and Mission have been developing over the course of a year, there is an opportunity to put these expressed values on paper, therefore becoming the backbone of Justice and Mission beyond the founding members of the JAM arm. These documents will help create sustainability that will transcend beyond who is in leadership. When I asked the Director of JAM, Toshi Jamang, about the necessity of documenting these values, he responded by saying:

We can keep on starting programs and have a great model for copowerment and ministries without writing it down; however, the danger is that when I and the founding members are not here anymore, the negligence of formally writing down what is felt and valued in our hearts, minds, and bones, would cease to be seen by those who come after us. (Jamang, 6 Dec. 2021)

In my interview, Toshi referred to a griot, an African storyteller, whose job in a village is to preserve the stories of previous generations and communicate them future generations. In this culture, when the griot dies, it is as if a library burns down. They are considered to be more important than a village chief. Coming from an oral culture himself in northeast India, he explains it is easy to tell stories and help shape the congregation's view of those on the margins while he and the founding members are still at Refuge. However, the hope is that by finding

words that encapsulate the values of these stories, it will help future staff to understand the heart of those stories through the reading of a few sentences.

### **Vision of Justice and Mission at Refuge Church**

The following values statements and vision statements reflect the organization of Refuge Church based upon my qualitative fieldwork at Refuge Church, drawing from sermons, ethnographic observations, interviews with staff, congregants, and the JAM research and development team. These statements may be used for internal or external use, such as content for the website or meeting with congregants interested in getting involved in the JAM arm of Refuge Church.

### **Values Statements**

- **Presence**—We believe that God is present and at work in our neighborhoods, the city of Albuquerque, and our world. It is our desire to join Him in that work by being attentive to the Holy Spirit’s leading and living our lives in such a way that embraces those often marginalized by society.
- **Contextualization**—We do not bring our own agendas— assuming the needs of others, but listen, learn, and act in the name of Jesus according to His example and the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- **Kinship**—We recognize that our sanctification is tied to those whom we serve. We desire to walk *with* people, not at an arm’s length. By entering into relationship, we are taking steps to break the “us” and “them” divide. In the words of community developer, Greg Boyle, “The strategy of Jesus is not centered in taking the right stand on issues, but rather in standing in the right place—with the outcast and those relegated to the margins” (72).

- **Copowerment**—When we join God in his work, it is not just His people who benefit from our service. We participate in copowerment, which is defined as “a dynamic of mutual exchange through which both sides of a social equation are made stronger and more effective by the other” (Inslee). As we step into service, we recognize that God is the only Savior, and that by participating in his kingdom that mutual transformation takes place and we too are refined in His image.

### **Vision Statements**

The Director of Justice and Mission, Toshi Jamang states in his sermon titled “Justice”, asks “Why justice? We pursue justice because it is in the very heart of God. If we are a church that wants proximity to God, then we should be in proximity with the people who are closest to his heart, because it is there we will find him, suffering alongside them” (Jamang 25:30-25:52). Drawing from lessons in this sermon by Jamang, below I have developed three vision statements that sum up Refuge’s desires for JAM.

- **TO SEE:** To become people who no longer just look, but truly *see* our neighbors.
- **TO LISTEN:** To become people who no longer just hear but *listen* to our neighbor’s hurts and pains.
- **TO ACT:** So that by seeing and listening, we will become a people *on mission*, stepping into spaces where God is already present.

These statements are to be used for the Refuge website and printed brochure, which can be found in Appendix A. The purpose of these statements is for congregants to understand the vision of Justice and Mission in a simplified manner that’s easy to remember.

## **A Short Guide of Principles of Community Development for Staff and Congregants of Refuge Church**

The purpose of the Short Guide of Principles of Community Development for Staff and Congregants of Refuge Church is to help members gain a better understanding of principles that serve as the foundation of Justice and Mission. The guide is not an end-all be-all, but a starting point to get members to think differently about the way Refuge Church contributes to the community. The guide can be found in Appendix B. It will also be helpful for Missional Grant applicants to read before submitting their project proposals, which I'll expand upon in the subsequent paragraphs.

### **Missional Grants**

The following proposed structure is based on the research of a similar program taking place in Portland, Oregon at Imago Dei Community Church, where I did a portion of my fieldwork. The program being proposed here is similar in nature yet contextualized to Refuge Church and adapted to reflect their expressed values and mission.

Missional Grants (MG) are just one way Refuge Church can foster principles of copowerment and innovation in its congregants. Kelley and Kelley in their book, *Creative Confidence*, ask the question, “Why not set up a process or system of participation that allows those budding innovators to express their ideas?” (209). Missional Grants are set up to foster that exact environment. Bryant L. Myers, author of *Walking with the Poor*, also gives emphasis on elevating “ordinary people” to come up with creative solutions to the problems around them. This framework, developed by Francis Bason, is perhaps one of the most profound changes in the history of community development practices. Myers states that “the most fundamental change, however, was in how human beings understood their world and in their ability to change

it” (25). Missional Grants are designed to foster these kinds of principles, helping church members to notice the needs of others in their everyday lives and think of creative solutions to the pressing problems of our city.

Not only do Missional Grants foster ownership for the congregant, but it moves the congregant’s expressed faith into action beyond the church walls. This is also an opportunity for congregants to participate in community development in their own city in a way they may have not thought of previously. By giving congregants the opportunity and potential resources to start ministries, the staff is handing over power to the congregation, giving them ownership and space to think of creative solutions to real problems. Kelley and Kelley state that “In a world filled with so much creative potential, it is dangerous to assume that all the good ideas are found at the top” (208). Since Refuge is a congregational church, it is ideal for a project like this, as it puts the congregants in the position of leadership versus the staff initiating new ministries.

The dynamics of the program not only foster principles of copowerment between staff and congregants, but also between congregants and those they are attempting to serve. By providing applicants with mentorship and resources to work out their ideas, the staff has the opportunity to cast vision for how a member can learn from those who are often marginalized by society, not just “serve” them. However, having a clear understanding of the roles of each stakeholder will be key so that the grant recipient is properly supported and the board can process through feelings if the project or ministry they have funded does not happen in the way they may have hoped. The Director of Justice and Mission along with their team should serve as bridgebuilders in these situations to help facilitate conversation to ensure both sides are heard and valued.

## **Purpose and Context**

### **What are Missional Grants?**

Missional Grants are a way to support Refuge congregants who have an idea to meet the needs of others, but may not have the resources to get their idea off the ground. Once a year, one or multiple Missional Grant Applicants will be awarded a designated amount of money along with the support of the Director of Justice and Mission and staff to make their idea a reality. Missional Grants have the potential to support local initiatives concerning justice, benevolence, relationship building, relief and recovery, evangelism, hospitality, reconciliation, love of neighbor, and beyond.

### **Why Missional Grants at Refuge?**

Refuge is a congregational church, meaning they “are autonomous and self-governing” (Strand). Because a congregational church like Refuge bases much of its governance and decision making on the congregation, it makes sense to implement a ministry which is primarily congregationally led. From interviews with staff about the years previous structure of outreach, which was encouraged to take place within their community groups, there is a desire for congregants to lead the way in serving others as opposed to the staff launching ministries and then recruiting church volunteers. Missional Grants are one way to foster the kind of environment that the staff hope for and give congregants the opportunity to practice principles of copowerment.

### **What’s the Purpose of Missional Grants?**

God is working in and through the people of Refuge in creative and unique ways. Missional Grants are just one way in which the staff can come alongside and support the congregant’s ideas of community engagement. Justice and Mission initiatives should be driven and owned by congregants for the sake of creativity, contextualization, discipleship, and sustainability. With congregants spread across the city, they see the needs of those in their

unique spheres of influence. Instead of staff starting ministries and projects, there is an opportunity to encourage congregants to take ownership, develop leadership skills, and put their faith into action by starting Justice and Mission initiatives, while having the support of staff.

## **Missional Grant Board Structure**

### ***Purpose and Function of the Board***

The Missional Grant Board has the task of choosing which applicants will be awarded grant money, the amount of the grant, and provide feedback to all applicants, awarded or not, to help them further consider and develop their ideas. For applicants who are awarded a grant, the Board commits to assisting the applicant by providing feedback and walking alongside them to bring their idea into fruition. For applicants who are not awarded a grant, the board also has an opportunity to help them work out their idea further, giving the applicant a chance to reapply for a grant the following year.

### ***How Board Members are Chosen***

The Missional Grant Board is to be made up of four to five active members of Refuge Church who support the vision of Missional Grants. The invitation to be on the board will be extended by the Director of JAM as previously agreed upon with the rest of the Refuge staff. It is recommended to have a diverse board with members who have experience and expertise in various circles of life. This could be business owners, educators, ministry workers, stay-at-home moms and dads, engineers, non-profit workers, entrepreneurs, retired workers, active community members, and more.

Each board member will be invited to read the article “Resolving To Take On The Implicit Bias In How Grant Awards Are Decided” as a requirement. The author of this article, Christine Essel, states that, “By its very nature, there is bias in grantmaking. Sometimes that bias

is good, and we are explicit about calling it out...However, the problem occurs when the "good people" of philanthropy exhibit biases that they do not even know about or intend to exhibit." The intention behind this required reading is to educate board members about their realized or unrealized biases if an effort to award grants fairly.

A member's position on the board is a two-year commitment. After those two years the position can be renewed or terminated by the JAM Director after conversation and consensus with the Refuge staff. If a board member is no longer fit for the position or does not have the ability or capacity to serve on the board, then they must meet with the JAM Director, the Lead Pastor, and the Executive Pastor to discuss their next steps.

## **Missional Grant Awarding Policy**

### ***Applicant interviews***

Each applicant who completes an application will be contacted by the Missional Grant Board for an interview. These interviews will last between 30 to 45 minutes and are intended for the applicant to present their idea verbally and for the board to ask questions. The questions asked during this interview will be dependent upon the board's initial thoughts from the applicant's application and will be specific to the individual and their proposal.

### ***Funding and Budget***

The funding for Missional Grants is to be raised during the Advent season as a special giving campaign to support local Justice and Mission initiatives. This amount will likely vary year-to-year; however, it is recommended that Refuge seek to raise at least \$800 for the first year to launch Missional Grants.

The amount of money given to an applicant is dependent upon the number of applicants to be awarded that year, the amount needed for the launch of their particular project or ministry,



and the amount raised during the Advent giving campaign. The board will decide how to award the money to applicants based on the need and resources available each year.

***Criteria for awarding applicants***

In order for applicants to be eligible for a Missional Grant, they must align with the following criteria:

1. Applicants should be active members of the Refuge Church community. Curious to know what that looks like? Go to <https://www.refugeabq.com/membership>
2. Missional Grants are aimed at supporting ministries and projects that serve the local community of Albuquerque, New Mexico by helping with capital costs. For ministries and projects that have an international focus, please contact the Justice and Mission Director for further conversation.
3. Projects and ministries that are awarded a missional grant should invite other church attendees to join in the work, encouraging the church body to put action to their faith.
4. Grants are awarded once a year and cannot be awarded to the same person twice, unless thoroughly approved of by the board under special circumstances. However, applicants can reapply if they have applied for a grant in the past and were not awarded one.

**Questions for Potential Applicant to Consider:**

- What are some of your personal values when it comes to ministry?
- How will your ministry embody the Gospel?
- What is the goal of your ministry? What would change if your vision came to be?
- Are there other similar ministries that might already exist? Is there a way to partner with them instead?
- How will your ministry be sustainable beyond you? Who else is involved?

- What are your start-up costs?

### **Implementation Timeline**

The following is a proposed timeline in which Refuge could introduce and implement Missional Grants in the year 2022:

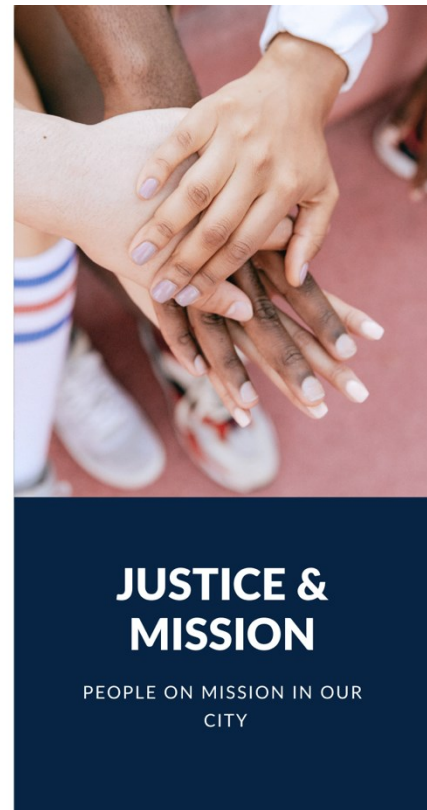
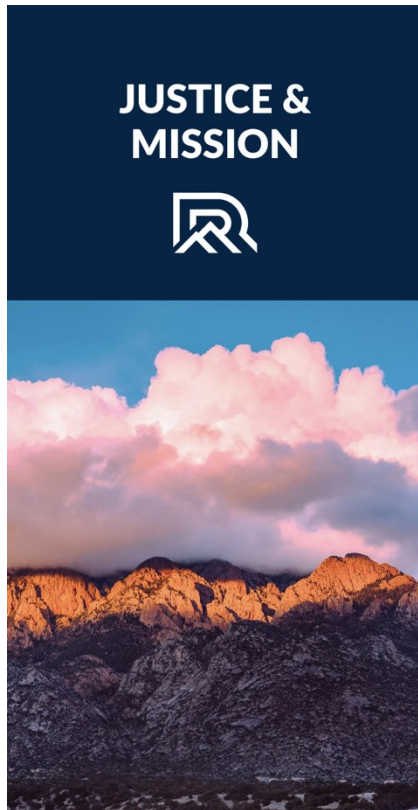
- **September 2022:** Introduce and cast vision for Missional Grants to the entire Refuge Staff. Get the staff's input on who might make a good MG board member. Emphasize the Advent giving campaign and schedule specific dates to introduce the concept to the congregation. Welcome the staff's feedback and make adjustments as needed.
- **October 2022:** Meet with Refuge Church Board to set up a separate fund for the Advent giving campaign. Explain and invite designated members to be on the board for Missional Grants.
- **November 2022:** Introduce the Advent giving campaign during Sunday services and launch the Missional Grant web page.
- **December 2022:** Remind the congregation about the Advent Giving campaign and introduce and cast vision for Missional Grants to the congregation. Have the JAM Director and MG board members available after services for questions.
- **January 2023:** JAM Director and MG board members meet to finalize MG schedule for the spring. Announce to the congregation that applications for MG are open and posted on the website.
- **February 2023:** MG are promoted to congregation through February.
- **March 2023:** March deadline for MG applicants. The MG board looks over applications as a group and schedules interviews for the month of April.

- **April 2023:** MG Board holds applicant interviews. Board meets a few times during April to finalize who will be awarded the Missional Grant(s).
- **May 2023:** MG Board awards grant(s) to designated applicant(s). Applicant(s) will launch their ministry depending on the ministry or project they are proposing and will communicate that schedule to the board.
- **June - September 2023:** MG board and JAM Director meet with awarded applicant on a monthly or bimonthly basis to provide support and track/document their story to inspire future applicants in 2024.

## Conclusion

The formalization of ministry philosophy for Justice and Mission along with the Missional Grant project are not intended to be the end all be all of ministry initiatives at Refuge Church. However, they serve as a starting point to foster community development principles among staff and congregants that are contextualized, holistic, and put principles of copowerment into practice. At the beginning of 2021, Refuge Church asked themselves “what kind of church do we hope to be? Their answer: “We see a people stepping out in faith, living radically open-handed, using their God-given gifts and passions in their vocations throughout the week...together we are pursuing Jesus, seeking justice and righteousness in every sphere of life, expecting to find God on the margins” (Vision for Refuge Church). This project serves Refuge in a way that reflects this hope, that joins alongside the work God is already doing through them and encourages a faith that practically lives out the words of Jesus, “Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (ESV Bible, Mat. 6.10).

Appendix A: JAM trifold Brochure



## Questions?

Contact -

**Toshi Jamang**  
 Director of Justice & Mission  
 toshi@refugeabq.com  
 www.refugeabq.com

## A Short History

### WHY JUSTICE AND MISSION?

Our hope is that we won't be a church that only seeks to do relief programs, meeting the immediate needs of our neighbors.

But rather, by the Grace of God, we will become a church that not only does **Relief**, but seeks **Reform** in our city to reflect that of the Kingdom of God.

A church that not only does Outreach, but seeks Justice.



### THE VISION

**SEE:** to become people who no longer just look, but see our neighbors.

**LISTEN:** to become people who no longer just hear but *listen* to their hurts and pains.

**ACT:** so that by seeing and listening, we will become a people *on mission*, stepping into spaces where God is already present.

## Values

### CO-POWERMENT

We don't just believe in empowerment but co-powerment. As we step into service, we recognize that by participating in His kingdom, mutual transformation takes place and we too are refined in His image..

### KINSHIP

We recognize that our sanctification is tied to those we serve. We desire to walk with people, not at an arm's length. By entering into relationship we are taking steps to break the "us" and "them" divide.

## Values

### PRESENCE

We believe that God is already present and at work in our neighborhoods, in the city of Albuquerque, and in our world. When we say YES, we aren't bringing God into a space, but rather we are stepping into a space where God already is.

### CONTEXTUALIZATION

We don't bring our own agendas, assuming the needs of others, but listen, learn, and act in the name of Jesus according to his example and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

## On-Going Ministries

### SHINE PARTNERSHIP

We are partnered with our local elementary school Marie Hughes, to build relationships with the teacher and families that live in our neighborhood so that we may celebrate with them in their victories, and show up in their needs.

### CHANGE FOR A DOLLAR

Do you have a neighbor or friend outside of the Refuge Community who's hurting? Change for a Dollar is here to help. Learn more about it at [www.refugeabq.com/change](http://www.refugeabq.com/change)

## Want to start one?

### PRAY

We believe it is the Holy Spirit who puts burdens on our hearts to meet a need in our city. Pray and listen to how He is calling you to act.

### MEET

Meet with Toshi, the Director of Justice and Mission. He would love to hear more of your story and see how we can partner together.

### PARTNER

Starting a ministry can be intimidating and scary. That is why we believe that every ministry should be developed in partnership. We will be here to support you every step of the way.

**Appendix B: A Short Guide of Community Development Principles for Staff and Congregants of Refuge Church**

# A SHORT GUIDE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

FOR STAFF & CONGREGANTS OF REFUGE CHURCH



**JUSTICE AND MISSION**

## CONTEXTUALIZATION

Understanding one's context and place in time and history is crucial in creating meaningful and impactful ministries. Volg, in his book, *The Art of Community*, cites psychologist Roy Baumeister, explaining "his research indicates that 'meaningfulness' comes when we reflect on what came before and how we're connected to the future...Meaningfulness comes when we integrate now with the future and [the] past" (49). This is important to understand on a historic, global, and theological level.

South African community developer, the late Steve de Gruchy said that "Unless theological reflection on the ground remains in dialogue with previous generations of Christians, as well as with Christians from other cultures and contexts, it can become something less than theology" (Clifford 10). Preachers know the importance of understanding the context in which Scripture is written, but it is also important for those who desire to live missionally in their community to recognize the greater narrative in which they find themselves. This could be as broad as considering the history of the role of the church in North America or as narrow as learning the ways in which the homeless population of Albuquerque has changed over the course of the last five years.

No matter the ministry or project a congregant might aspire to launch, it is crucial to first ask the following questions:

1. Why are things this way?
2. What are people saying about it?
3. What is the need?
4. What do I have to learn from scripture, history, and the global Church about this issue?
5. How might my own biases influence my perspective on this issue?

By engaging in qualitative research, research methods that are aimed at "understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their words, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences", staff and congregants can better understand and help meet the needs of those around them (Merriam and Tisdell 6).



JUSTICE AND MISSION

## COPOWERMENT

Copowerment is defined as “a dynamic of mutual exchange through which both sides of a social equation are made stronger and more effective by the other” (Inslee). Different from empowerment, which is defined by Meriam-Webster as “the granting of the power, right, or authority to perform various acts or duties”, copowerment does not just focus on giving power, right, or authority but exchanging it for mutual benefit and transformation.

This kind of thinking combats the “us” and “them” divide that can often happen in ministry. By recognizing one's own need for Christ, and the opportunity to learn something from their neighbors, one can participate in the mutual transformation which God invites his followers into.

It is desired to see ministries at Refuge Church have a motive of service that is not just “for” people, but “with” people, understanding that one’s sanctification is tied to those they serve (Jamang). Copowerment can be considered a shift in mindset in this way, but it is also a change of practice.

For example, if Refuge identifies, based off their qualitative research, that there is an opportunity to support and partner with a local homeless ministry, then their involvement should come from a mindset of “I have something to learn from people experiencing homelessness.” When it comes to interactions, Refuge congregants could intentionally listen more than they talk or invite someone experiencing homelessness to help them do a task at the ministry. Copowerment can manifest in many ways and the hope is that Refuge congregants will be creative in their thinking of how to live this out not only in ministry contexts but in their everyday lives.



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## HOLISTIC

To have a holistic approach to ministry is to recognize God's presence, care for, and authority over aspects of life that are often deemed as less-spiritual. Myers, author of *Walking with the Poor* sums up this point by saying, "The biblical worldview is holistic in the sense that the physical world is never understood as being disconnected or separate from the spiritual world and the rule of the God who created it" (8). While one ministry cannot address every aspect of life, Refuge desires to foster ministries that value the person as a whole, not separating their physical, spiritual, emotional, or social needs from one another, but understanding that these are all interconnected.

One area where this divide is often made is in evangelism. However, Jesus himself didn't make this divide in his own life (Mat. 21:14, Mark 2:23-27, Luke 6:6-11, John 6:10-14). He proclaimed the Gospel in every area of life and invited his followers to let the Gospel permeate every area of their lives. While each ministry started at Refuge will have a specific focus, and of course cannot address every need, congregants are invited to take on a holistic mindset, recognizing God's care for the whole person whether that be their physical, spiritual, emotional, or social well-being.



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## SUSTAINABILITY

When creating and implementing projects and ministries, it is important to ask the question, “How is this sustainable?” Sustainability has to do with the longevity and consistency of a ministry that transcends the person(s) who may lead it. It is important to have a sustainable ministry model in place that is not dependent upon one person. Ideally, multiple people will take ownership of a project or ministry and continually be training new leaders to replace themselves.

Sustainability can also mean adapting to the need. A ministry won't be sustainable if it is not relevant or contextualized to a need that is changing.

One example of this is disaster relief efforts such as food boxes. Circumstances may continually change and evolve so relief efforts must constantly reevaluate what the needs are and the best way to meet them.

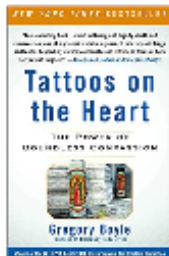
Lastly, sustainability does not mean that a ministry must always exist. Good sustainability planning can also mean transitioning or ending a ministry or project (Project Management 73). In any case, sustainability must be thought through and executed appropriate to the need.



JUSTICE AND MISSION

# COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDED READING

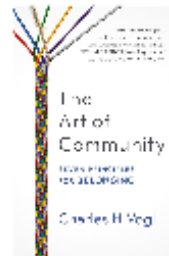
**TATTOOS ON THE  
HEART**  
BY GREG BOYLE



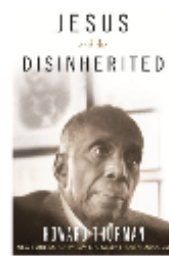
**WALKING WITH THE  
POOR**  
BY BRYANT MYERS



**THE ART OF  
COMMUNITY**  
BY CHARLES H. VOGL



**JESUS AND THE  
DISINHERITED**  
BY HOWARD THURMAN



**REAL HOPE IN  
CHICAGO**  
BY WAYNE L.  
GORDON



**WE WERE WRONG**  
BY KEITH STEWART



**MAKING  
NEIGHBORHOODS WHOLE**  
BY WAYNE GORDON &  
JOHN PERKINS



**BEYOND CHARITY**  
BY JOHN PERKINS



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This guide was written and designed by Kathryn Loeppke.

Appendix C: Missional Grant Application Form

# MISSIONAL GRANT APPLICATION

NAME

DATE

PHONE NUMBER

EMAIL

ADDRESS

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN  
ATTENDING REFUGE?

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A  
MEMBER OF REFUGE?

ARE THERE OTHER PEOPLE  
INVOLVED/APPLYING FOR THIS  
GRANT WITH YOU? IF SO, WHAT  
ARE THEIR NAMES?

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF:

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOUR FAITH JOURNEY

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR OWN VALUES WHEN  
IT COMES TO MINISTRY?

WHAT PROJECT OR MINISTRY ARE YOU  
PROPOSING?

WHY DO YOU WANT TO DO THIS?

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF YOUR PROJECT OR  
MINISTRY? WHAT WOULD CHANGE IF YOUR  
VISION CAME TO FRUITION?

# MISSIONAL GRANT APPLICATION

HOW WILL THIS PROJECT OR MINISTRY EMBODY THE GOSPEL?

WHO DOES YOUR MINISTRY OR PROJECT HOPE TO BENEFIT?

HOW WILL YOUR MINISTRY OR PROJECT REACH SUSTAINABILITY? WHO ELSE IS INVOLVED?

WHAT ARE YOUR START-UP COSTS? WHAT MATERIALS DO YOU NEED?

WHAT IS YOUR TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MINISTRY/PROJECT?

WHAT OTHER DETAILS DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD KNOW?

THE MISSIONAL GRANT BOARD WILL BE IN CONTACT WITH YOU UPON THE COMPLETION AND SUBMISSION OF YOUR APPLICATION.

IN THE MEANTIME, PLEASE CONTACT THE DIRECTOR OF JUSTICE AND MISSION WITH ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.

IF THERE ARE ANY DOCUMENTS THAT YOU HAVE THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO ATTACH TO YOUR APPLICATION, YOU ARE WELCOME TO DO SO.

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