Revision and implementation of ministries that rejuvenated the life and identity of Trinity Christian Methodist Episcopal Church as a change agent.

Joyce E. Brown
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REVISION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MINISTRIES THAT REJUVENATED
THE LIFE AND IDENTITY OF TRINITY CHRISTIAN METHODIST
EPISCOPAL CHURCH AS A CHANGE AGENT

By

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A Doctoral Dissertation
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REVISION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MINISTRIES THAT REJUVENATED
THE LIFE AND IDENTITY OF TRINITY CHRISTIAN METHODIST
EPISCOPAL CHURCH AS A CHANGE AGENT

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April 14, 2008
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Date

iii
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iv
ABSTRACT

CASE STUDY: REVISION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MINISTRIES THAT REJUVENTATED THE LIFE AND IDENTITY OF TRINITY CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH AS CHANGE AGENT

by

Joyce Elaine Brown

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Mission Churches in the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) denomination generally located in rural areas often acts as a change agent for its members, neighbors, and community. The church should experience growth and change as it community experience growth and change. Often this process requires a drive of resurgence for the church.

The case study reviewed the literature on concept, strategies and tactics involved in building alliances within the CME denomination. Additionally, current research on networking and collaboration with religious involvement in community activities, and faith base organization was reviewed.

Using case study methodology, this study examined a small dying church in rural North Georgia. This church is located in an area that had private sector economic revitalization plans in place but needed a church that could function as a representative to and for its community. It was the only church located in the planned revitalized area. An identity assessment was conducted for the church and denominational requirements and support were negotiated. Additionally, interviews were conducted with a wide range of collaborative organizations representing diverse revitalization agencies. Research questions addressed in this study examined the motivation for church participation in this
collaborative effort and the extent to which church and community members felt their organizational needs were met.

Major findings of the study revealed that the church sectors examined had differing organizational capacity, performance, and perceptions of social impact. Results also indicated that participants were committed to similar core beliefs and values that allowed elastic strategies for collaboration to evolve. Outcomes indicated participants recognized the multiple dimensions of social organizations. This study concluded that while much has been written about the benefits to small churches for involvement in community revitalization, little has been written about the experience of a small rural church’s processes of development involving denominational, non-profit, public, and private sectors.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this doctoral dissertation to my loving mother, Doris Brown. Her love and support throughout my life has been inspiring. This work is also dedicated to my daughter, Angela Samantha Dawson for being my motivation for desiring to excel in life. Also, I dedicate this work to my pastor, Reverend Henry Delaney for all of his spiritual guidance and assistance in preparation for ministry. Finally, to God Almighty I dedicate my life and my work for the continuous building of his kingdom.

J.E.B.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are so many ways to say thank you. To mention a few: Gratia, Gracias, Tenu, Danke, Siabonga, Arigato. But in expressing my gratitude of thanks, I simply say,

THANK YOU!

I wish to express my gratitude to Dr. Stephen Rasor for seeing the value of my work and offering words of encouragement.

To Dr. Chapman for stepping up to the challenge as my Chairperson at a moment notice, and driving me on to the finish line.

To Dr. Love H. Whelchel, who provided incredible insight at the start of my work and assisted me in deciding on which approach to take in preparing my proposal.

To Dr. Darryl Claybon, you continuously said to me, remember you are earning this doctoral dissertation, so keep working at it.

To Cecelia “Cece” Dixon who helped to calm my nerves and anxiety on many occasion through simply suggesting, “Let’s pray!”

Last, but not least, To Trinity CME Church members for working with me and allowing me the time and space to complete this doctoral work.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................... v

DEDICATION ......................................................................................................... vii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ....................................................................................... viii

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................... 1

Methodology ........................................................................................................ 4

II. THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE ........................................................................ 6

The Undergirding Clicks within the Black Religious Community ............ 8
An Actualized View of Trinity Outside/In ....................................................... 10
Members Profile ................................................................................................ 12
A Theology in Opposition of a Dead Church Faith .................................... 13
Trinity’s Organizational Structure ................................................................. 14
A Poor Interpersonal Relationship Outside the Wall’s of Trinity ............ 16
Significant Historical Events the Impacted Trinity CME Church’s
Present Situation: But Who Will Help Tell the Story? ........................... 18
Significant Information Shared .................................................................... 20
The 1936 Tornado: A Mighty Blow ............................................................ 21
A Costly Move .................................................................................................. 22

III. FRAMING THE MINISTRY ISSUE: A RIGOROUS PROCESS ............ 25

The Question ..................................................................................................... 26
Motivation for Research .................................................................................. 27
It Is How You Look At It! .............................................................................. 28
Hearing the Voice of James Cone Through Trinity’s Obstacles .............. 28
Historical Background to Trinity’s Issue ...................................................... 29
Relationship of Issue to My Model of Ministry ........................................ 31
A Contribution from Trinity to Its Neighboring Community ................. 33
To The Church Universal ................................................................................. 35
## Chapter IV. DRAWING FROM THE INTELLECTUAL MINDS, STYLES, AND PRACTICES: A HOST OF INFLUENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Congregational Resource Guide: Resources for Congregation</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical Observations</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Theological Perspective</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Perspectives on the Issue of Identity and Renewal</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery of Hope in Old and New Testament Scripture</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nehemiah 2: 11-20 as the Corner Stone Passage</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results of The Theoretical Frame Work</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Theory that is Right on the Mark</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions of the Literature Review</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter V. OUTLINING AN EFFECTIVE MODEL THAT TRANSFORMED TRINITY CME CHURCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Naming the Project</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Terms Used and Definitions</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Assumed as Terms were Defined</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Phase</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planting the Seed of Motivation</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Affects</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregation Participation</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and Implementation</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 2006-2007 Conference Year Planning Meeting</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Highlights (Selective)</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The 2006-2007 Ministries and Programs</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministries and Programs Highlights (Selective)</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter VI. EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROJECT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participatory Evaluation: Members, Neighbors, and Pastor</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Members Voice Project as A Measuring Tool</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The C.M.E Church Pastoral Report as A Evaluating Tool</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary and Conclusions</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Researchers Final Intention for the Project</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Implications for Ministry</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## APPENDIXES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Identity Questionnaire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Proposed Ministries for Trinity C.M.E Church</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. C.M.E Pastoral Report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Officers and Boards for Conference Year 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
E. Life Line Mission

F. List of Contributions

BIBLIOGRAPHY
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In many instances churches in small towns and rural areas that were once identified as the strength of their communities are now facing major declines. One particular reason is that the needs of those communities are changing due to demographic and economic growth or decline. The churches are not transforming to the pressing needs of their communities. There is an enormous fear of the church losing its established identity, which in most cases, is no longer enough of what the community may need from the church. Both small and large churches must be willing to revisit and revise their mission and vision in order to sustain their identity as a church that is continuously serving the needs of their church members and the community.

As stated by Jackson Carroll in his book, *Handbook for Congregational Studies*, “churches that hold on to their inherited identity risk never becoming a well blended church. Church seekers are looking for places of worship that are identified as churches offering various ministries and programs that will promote spiritual growth.”

Trinity Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (Trinity CME) before receiving its transforming power through a series of proposed project that included Revising and Implementing ministries was facing its doors being closed. Many other small churches in small towns, rural areas, and undeveloped areas, doors are closing rapidly and will continue unless they strive to recover through developing a new identity. Peter Steinke in his book, *Healthy Congregations* writes, “Healing is the body’s potential to repair and

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regenerate itself. The body can heal itself because it has a healing system. Healing is more a process of uncovering what we already posses. Congregations have healing capacities. Most congregations are known for renewing and regenerating themselves. Congregations live through a series of births and deaths."^{2}

In developing the proposed project as a requirement of the Doctor of Ministry degree at Interdenominational Theological Center the researcher had to be certain of her goal for the project. The researcher’s goal was to develop a viable resource tool that would assist Trinity CME church and other small churches that face similar identity issues to becoming congregations that could be clearly identified through a revised and newly implemented vision. Revising and implementing a new church vision became the hope for the church continuously claiming itself as a representative to and for its community.

However, for this project, the community and its status of existence as a social system was the determining factor in what could happen to congregations in small towns or rural areas. If there is no possibility of growth and development for that community and people begin to migrate out to the more developing areas, all institutions in the community would be negatively impacted, especially the church. The exception would be the case of those who come back to their old community to attend church services. The church needs to be in reach of people and community. The researcher has discovered through the Doctor of Ministry program that a striving and surviving church is vital to its community, especially in the Black community where the Black Church is a primary community institution.

Andrew Billingsley comments in his book, *Climbing Jacob’s Ladder*:

There is an organization, agency, or institution for every conceivable function in the black community today. They anchor the community and can be galvanized into collective action when circumstances or leadership commands. Four sets of organizations have been preeminent throughout the history of the community. These are the church, the school, the business enterprise, and the voluntary organization. All these have undergone enormous changes. Even so, a majority of African Americans belong. Fully 70 percent of the black adults belong to just one, namely the Black Church.  

Trinity CME Church was fortunate in that the neighborhood and the nearby community were undergoing a revitalization project that they were able to be apart of as the neighborhood church. Trinity hosted and assisted their County Commissioner in getting the neighbors to attend the meetings held at Trinity.

The revitalization project was an appropriately timed gesture. People had just begun to return to the neighborhood and were taking advantage of the opportunity to purchase affordable houses and participate in home renovations. Thus, Trinity was able to once again prove as a church it is the “Yes Task.” The Yes Task reinforces who the church is. And also defines Jesus as the content of the Task as described by Karl Barth in *Church Dogmatics*. Trinity’s response was yes to the community through the proposed project, revising and implementing ministries that rejuvenated Trinity’s life and identity.

In some cases of study, research, and dissertation preparation of the doctor of ministry proposed project the researcher after the introduction of the project moves into the ministry issue before describing the ministry context. In the case of the researcher in this project, she deemed it necessary to describe the context before the issue. Pertinent information before hand can be helpful to the hypothesis of the very sensitive dilemma that Trinity was faced with without premature judgment from the readers. The context

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preceding the ministry issue in the case of Trinity CME Church provides an excellent context of the political, economic, and social circumstances surrounding Trinity CME Church.

Methodology

Within social sciences, the case study is one of the most frequently applied research designs. Case Studies are extremely flexible methods of conducting social science research and it is this flexibility that contributes to the attractiveness of the method. In the chapter ‘Case Studies’ by Robert E. Stake in *The Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Stake states:

Case study is a part of scientific methodology, but its purpose is not limited to the Advance of science....Case studies are of value for redefining theory and suggesting complexities for further investigation, as well as helping to establish the limits of generalizability.

Case studies can also be a disciplined force in public policy setting and reflection on human experience. Vicarious experience is an important basis for redefining action options and expectation....The purpose of a case report is not to represent the world, but to represent the case....The utility of case research to practitioners and policy makers is in its extension of experience. The methods of qualitative case study are largely the methods of disciplining personal and particularized experience.5

For this doctor of ministry case study, the researcher followed a method developed by Robert E. Stake that draws from naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, and biographic research method. The researcher used the *intrinsic case study* method described as “a given case that we are interested in, not because by studying it we learn about other cases or about some general problem, but...we need to

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learn about this particular case." We have an intrinsic interest in this particular case. This is not sampling research. The first obligation will be to understand this case.

The first criterion is to maximize what can be learned. Since time and access to small rural churches that collaborate with private, public and nonprofit sectors is limited, the researcher chose a case that has faith based collaboration experience with all three sectors during revitalization of its church. This particular case study also had appeal because the church being studied had been cited by both the CME Georgia North district leaders and the community it is located in for its best practices.

The chapters of this doctor of ministry project are presented as follows:

In Chapter I, Part One of the Case study: The Community at Large is found. Chapter III presents Part Two of the Case Study: Trinity CME Church. Chapter IV has the Literature Review. Chapter V provides the development and implementation of the revitalization project at Trinity Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in Gainesville, Georgia between August 2006 and November 2007. In Chapter VI, demonstrates the wide array of evaluations that were conducted relating to various parts of the doctor of ministry project as a whole. The final entry is where the author provides the doctor of ministry project and the conclusions.

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CHAPTER II
THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE

In this chapter the focus was on the community that surrounds Trinity CME Church. Trinity’s theological stance, and several historical events, provided the context of this project. An extensive search yielded deeper insight for theoretical factors to almost any situation that was at hand. In the researcher’s effort to get to the core of the problem(s) that Trinity was facing, she reviewed underlying factors beginning with the demographics of the community surrounding Trinity CME Church.

Trinity is located in the city of Gainesville, Georgia. Gainesville is approximately 55 miles northeast of Atlanta, Georgia. Gainesville is the principal city of Hall County. Hall County is included in the Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Gainesville, Georgia Alabama Combined Statistical Area. Its major industries consist of agricultural, commercial, medical, and financial centers. Because of its large number of poultry plants Gainesville is known as the “Chicken Capital.”

Gainesville, Georgia is a city in Hall County Georgia with a population of 25,578 according to the 2000 census with an estimated population of 32,444 in 2005. The racial makeup of the city is about 45% white, 16% African American, and 33% Hispanic or Latino. Hall County’s population according to the 2000 U.S Census Bureau showed a

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1 For purposes of this study, Trinity Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church will also be referred to as “Trinity, Trinity CME or Trinity CME Church.”

population of 173,256. The racial make up for Hall County is 90% white, 12% African American, and 25% Hispanic or Latino.³

Considering the population information provided by the 2000 Census, it would seem as though more resources and opportunities would be presented to the larger community of Hall County.

From a religious perspective, there is a very strong religion presence in Gainesville Georgia. In reading the biography of the City Manager, Mayor Mark Musselwhite and his Council Members, the researcher found that each of them played an important role in their perspective churches and in supporting the growth of community. Hand Book for Congregational Studies, by Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney states that, “more individuals belong to congregations than to any other voluntary association, and they provide as much financial support for the work of the churches as given to all other philanthropic causes combined.⁴ It is evident that Gainesville and Hall County holds religion as a needed institution. However, the researcher was not convinced that Trinity was viewed as an important part of its community for sometime before the revitalization project was presented to the neighbors of Trinity. The developers sought Trinity for the support to get the neighbors to see the benefits of revitalization in the area.

In continued research on the Gainesville – Hall County community, the researcher was only able to identify with little job development taking place in the community surrounding the church. Additionally, the developer of the revitalization project that

³"Hall County Quick Facts" from the U.S Census Bureau, (database on-line); Accessed 26 February 2007; available from http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/bstate/13/13139.html.

went into effect in the neighborhood used and continues to use outside contractors to come in and renovate properties.

Looking at the community at large, most black businesses in Gainesville and Hall County according to the U.S Census are categorized as “Suppressed”, which means they do not meet publication standards. Publication Standards refers to what business in the Gainesville – Hall County will be reported or recorded as real businesses. Businesses that are not recognized will not be calculated in the Census. The majority of the residents in the surrounding community of Trinity CME Church work domestic jobs like landscaping, roofing, certified nursing assistant, and house keeping to private Home Owners. The members of the community who have retired have retired from domestic jobs. Most of the older members of Trinity’s community are living off of small pensions.

The Undergirding Clicks within the Black Religious Community

When the researcher speaks of the undergirding clicks, she is referring to the larger and more functioning churches that collaborate and only support those churches who share similarities to the structure or operation of their church. Before making this next statement, let me first say, there are a few leading churches in Gainesville who have shown to be supportive to the needs of Trinity and the pastors of those churches have been encouraging in sharing words of hopes and giving some ideas as to how Trinity could accomplish there goals. The churches that do collaborate seem to stay in a class by themselves. If small struggling churches do not fit the profile, then those larger churches express little interested in associating with them. The researcher discovered in her quest to reach out to some of those leading churches for support though participating with some of Trinity’s church programs or using their congregations for programs sponsored by
Trinity that it was impossible to get them to respond back. The researcher shares this story about how Trinity was scheduled to co-host a musical workshop with one of the leading churches in their new place of worship. When entering into the Sanctuary during the musical, none of the members of the host church felt as if they had to pay to be apart of the workshop. In addition to them not wanting to pay for the workshop services, they entered in with a superior attitude. The instructor of the workshop began his teaching, and the musician of the church basically informed the instructor that perhaps Trinity needed the teaching more than them. Some of the representative from went on to elaborate about what churches they were accustomed to working with in the community, and certainly Trinity was not among the list. The pastor of the host church assured the pastor of Trinity during the planning stage that he would be present, but as it turned out the pastor did not show up. He committed himself to a larger church in the community program that was scheduled after he had agreed to co-host the musical workshop with Trinity. Many of the members of the larger church did not think it important enough to attend the workshop. However, the host church did have a church officers waiting in the parking lot for the workshop to be over so that he could come in to collect his church’s share of the money.

One month later following the music workshop hosted by Trinity another church in Gainesville hosted a music workshop in which was well attended and highly praised throughout the community. Additionally, there is a ministerial alliance (Interdenominational Black Ministers Association) in Gainesville in which many of the pastors in the leading churches are associated with and serve as the officers of the alliance. These same churches have access through political ties to resources that are
available primarily to their churches However, these pastors of the leading churches are only interested in seeing that those that they collaborate with benefit.

Edward Smith, a theologian and an instructor of theology at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta Georgia, in his manuscript, Theological Reflection Towards Public Theology, Black Church Renewal, and Spiritual Economics, noted that “it was extremely difficult for the poor to break the bonds of their poverty, or for anyone new to move into ranks of the wealth. The problem is as stated by Wesley in his book, The Wesleyan Movement, the well establish church then and now, are so connected to the political structure that it cease to have meaning for most common people or places.” Thus, before Trinity’s new pastor approached the larger churches, Trinity did not stand a chance of acknowledgement as an identified church.

An Actualized View of Trinity Outside/In

Trinity CME Church is located at 1059 Black Drive, Gainesville Georgia. Trinity’s location was often referred to as the church at the “Dead End” of Black Drive. Also, because of the incorrect pronunciation by the members and some neighbor’s Black Drive was often referred to as Blacks Drive with an “s” Drive. Correspondence sent mail addressed Blacks Drive instead of Black Drive until the current pastor made the corrections through response to all correspondence.

Symbolically speaking, the name alone and how it was played out for so long, according to the researcher, aided in the confusion of the church identity. Because of the condition of many of the properties including Trinity CME Church, anyone without hope and vision would have said that the life of the area was at an end for survival.

5Edward L. Smith, Theological Reflection Towards Public Theology, Black Church Renewal, and Spiritual Economics (ITC Institute For Black Religious Life MVP Project-Lily Endowment, Inc. grant) , 9.
The researcher found the name “Black Drive” presented a very negative image of the church and the members to the wider community.

When the researcher arrived at Trinity to assess the church visually, she initially passed the church, looking for a church on Black Drive that appeared to have some outward signs of life. Many churches are outwardly structured and arrayed with some impressive features that may raise the consciousness of those who pass by, in hope that the by-passers may be moved to come inside.

The researcher immediately thought of the story of the lame man in the Book of Acts chapter 3. Although the lame man that laid outside of the beautiful gate of the temple in the Book of Acts 3:2, before entering in after his physical and spiritual healing he chose to be laid at the gate that was made of Corinthian brass. From the appearance of the gate it was assumed that something was possibly going on inside of the temple that could aid him on the outside of the temple.

In the case of Trinity the appearance was not an impressive picture. The church with its small structure entrance faces the street Black Drive. Entering the church anyone could observe that the church had not had a fresh coat of paint on it for years. The roof had lost several rows of its shingles and appeared to no longer have an overlapping structure. The doors to the church were in deplorable condition with swelling and peeling wood panel. The welcome and information board that is located outside on the churches property did not bear the name of Trinity CME church neither did it give any information about the times of worship. However, the board did bear the name of a pastor from over 15 years who had long left the church.
Inside of Trinity’s sanctuary, most of the furniture and artifacts were old and outdated. The pews were filled with Baptist hymnals rather than the hymnal of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, another confusing factor about Trinity’s identity. The pews showed signs of wear and tear and were no longer tacked in place to the floor that needed a good sanding and finishing.

The members and attending persons of Trinity can be categorized from infancy to adulthood. But within Trinity’s programs there were no clear definition of who constitutes appropriate membership in that group. An example would be, one particular member who is well over fifty often participate with the youth or takes on youth and young adults role in programs or worship. When asked about a program for the youth, the members replied that the member who is over the age of fifty, “usually do things to represent the youth,” and they appeared to be proud in that.

There also appeared to be some unsettling and underdevelopment of the member’s roles. Something kept them from having a sense of belonging. Initially, almost none of the members claimed to be apart of anything associated with the church, other than being “church goers.” However, the researcher discovered that the members of Trinity had no confidence in their ability to serve. They appeared more shameful of who they were more so than anything else.

**Members Profile**

The members of Trinity consist of more females than males, but the males that are in attendance sit in one area of the church grouped together. The older ladies of the church sit totally opposite of the men and all of the youth and young adults sit in the very rear of the church, when they are in attendance. All of the young adults who have
children in the congregation are single. Most of the young women have at least three
cdren. The children attended church service with their grandparents more than they did
with their parents. Several of the young adults had jobs that required them to work on
Sundays, and others according to some of the older members, would not come if they did
not have any money to give to the church.

The member’s economic status was viewed as insignificant to the members
themselves. As a result of that, it appeared to have created a barrier to how the members
viewed themselves as significant to the need and work of Trinity. The Thomas theorem,
named after W. I. Thomas states that situations people define as real becomes real in their
consequence. To put it another way, people who expect others to act in certain ways
often encourage that very behavior. In doing so, people set up a self-fulfilling prophecy.
The researcher observed this type of behavior and was unclear as to where the stereotypes
of the members initiated from and also observed that it was deeply embedded in them.

The members did from time to time discuss their adult children who were no
longer connected to Trinity as a result of moving away, some as far as Germany. Many of
those who moved away never returned to Gainesville. Others sought out other churches
that they felt could offer them spiritual growth and more social involvement. One family
in Trinity that has a lawyer in its extended family classes themselves with this lawyer in
the family success, but the lawyer, for the most part is disassociated from Trinity.

A Theology in Opposition of a Dead Church Faith

Trinity in its major decline and lost of mission and purpose was blocked into the
belief that nothing good could happen for them if it consisted of them looking further

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6The Thomas theorem is a theory of sociology which was formulated by W. I. Thomas (1863–
1947) in the year 1928.
than they could see. One of the long time members of Trinity stated that Trinity could not see its way out of it predicament. The researcher found that the whole idea of Trinity trying to formulate a theology that could bring some hope to their issue was indeed a complex situation. Trinity could not image God being present with them in their experience. The members believed that because of their low state of existence they could not experience God. Trinity did not feel good about who Jesus represented as Immanuel which meaning God is with us. In their minds their condition made them to feel that they were exempted from God presence. Trinity had gotten so use to others not participating with them until they just did not believe that God would participate with them.

However, in time as Trinity began to experience some change in how they felt about God being present with them and speaking to them through the Bible they started to realize that their hope was always in God. Somehow Trinity forgot that their hope and faith was in God but found themselves once again ready to develop new faith in God.

While the congregation did not initially see much of the manifestation of God, they became more hopeful and full of optimism. Several members shared with the researcher their hope for a spiritual revival and renewal of the church. Another member stated that he believed that God would include them in the planning of his purpose for Trinity. “What one believes about God’s purpose for the church will be shaped by his or her expectation. Thus those who believe that it is God’s intentions for the church to grow will be led to look at ways in which the church can and will experience growth.”

**Trinity’s Organizational Structure**

As Christian Methodist Episcopal members that adhere to the prescribed Discipline of the CME church, there is a structured guideline with the intent to bring

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7Smith, Theological Reflections, 18.
order to how services and programs should be carried out. The researcher has the understanding that The Discipline was established as a guide to the local church to help facilitate as a governing pattern for churches to follow.⁸ That works well for those who are able to articulate what is spelled out in the book, or better yet, those who own a copy of The Book of Discipline. In the case of Trinity, considering most of the member’s inability to read, and not having a current edition of the CME Discipline in the church, the members did the best that they could to be organized as members of the CME denomination. Trinity did not have everything in place as spelled out as a guide in The CME Discipline. Several reasons contributed to Trinity’s noncompliance with some of the CME Discipline. Trinity did not have the financial resources to send members to district and or annual conference workshops and training sessions. Nor did they have the finances to subscribe any printed CME materials.

The presiding elder would come every quarter and ask the members if they were subscribing to the connectional materials and participating connectionally. The members of Trinity would respond no, and the elder would move on to the next item of action on his list. Unfortunately, the presiding elder offered no solution to Trinity’s circumstances.

Being that most of the members of Trinity had not been trained or retrained, the older members relied on the little knowledge that they had to operate and control the flow of the Trinity.

There were no clear indications that Trinity spent time planning for anything that involved them as a church. In July 2005, when the new pastor arrived the very first Sunday the choir president planned a musical in order to raise some money to pay the

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⁸For the purposes of this study, *The Book of Discipline of The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church* will be referred to as The Discipline, The Book of Discipline, The CME Discipline or Discipline.
churches musician. The choir president advised the new pastor of the musical the day of
the musical and asked her if she would stay for the 3:00 o’clock musical? The pastor
agreed to stay but had questions about how it was planned and, which church choir was
scheduled to sing, what guest choirs were invited, and were there any programs prepared
for the musical? The response was, “well we’re just going to do a little something that we
pulled together. We did put a letter in some of the churches doors on yesterday inviting
them to come, and Chris he is our choir director, he know the churches, he’ll just call
their names if they show up.”

It was discovered that Trinity would need training in becoming an organized body
of Christ and representatives of the church. There was an immediate need for ministries
to be revised and implemented at Trinity in order to address some of the spiritual and
physical needs that the church and the community faced.

When considering the formation of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church
(formerly Colored Methodist Episcopal Church) during the era known as the
Reconstruction (1865 – 1877,) which involved cooperation, denominational competition,
sectional rivalry, ecumenical outreach, interracial conflict, and identity challenges, the
history of the CME denomination has an impact on the identity issue of the local
churches and their relationship to the community and other churches.⁹

A Poor Interpersonal Relationship Outside the Wall’s of Trinity

By definition interpersonal relations is the ability to interact with others,
participate with others, and or being active with others. The researcher discovered that
there was very little interaction between Trinity and it surrounding neighbors and

⁹Love H. Whelchel Jr, Hell Without Fire: Conversion In Slave Religion (Nashville, TN: Abingdon
Press, 2002), 84.
churches. It appeared to be a divided world between Trinity and everything outside of the walls of the church.

Trinity was experiencing some shame and low self esteem due to the church’s social, spiritual, physical condition at that time. They were reluctant to associate with other churches and the community for fear of others seeing them and judging them. In the book of Ruth it was recorded that Naomi along with her family left her hometown full and plentiful. In time they experienced a famine away from home in a place called Moab and it caused the lost of practically everything that Naomi had. When she decided to return home in such a deplorable and empty state, she was extremely shameful. Naomi decided that she would not and could not go back as who she was before leaving, therefore she decided for identity purposes to change her name. We find in Ruth 1:20 that upon returning to Bethlehem, the crowd questioned whether it was Naomi. “She said unto them, call me not Naomi: call me Mara: for the Lord hat dealt very bitterly with me.”

Mara in Greek term is defined as one who spreads shame. The entire life of Naomi shifted her interaction with others one way or another.

There was no doubt that Trinity shared a correlation with the life of Naomi. Trinity focused on the things that they identified with not having and were limited in doing. Trinity needed to take some step towards strengthening their interpersonal skills. They had gotten so acclimated to saying to each other what they did not possess as a church, but it became an excuse for not trying nor communicating with others, as stated by one of the members.

Considering the fact that Trinity is apart of a well structured religious organization which has a connectional and a national body, every church should be

10 Holy Bible.
protected by and nurtured by a church hierarchy consisting of a presiding elder, general officers, and bishops. However, Trinity did not get that needed support from the CME Church connection in its 130 years of struggling to exist.

By all indications, Trinity was made to feel inferior. When the Georgia North Annual Conference was held in Gainesville Georgia in previous times pass, Trinity was never extended an invitation by the bishop to host neither co-hosting the annual conference. Trinity in an indirect way was made to feel as if they were not capable of serving as host at the annual conference. Because of Trinity member’s inability to interact well, they never responded to the bishop neither to other CME officials over looking them.

Hickory Grove CME Church is the sister church to Trinity C.M.E Church and is located in Dahlonega Georgia. Dahlonega Georgia is 30 miles away from Gainesville. Hickory Grove CME Church was selected to host over Trinity because it was a larger congregation, in addition, their pastor interacted with the bishop and the presiding elder on a regular basis. Had Trinity been given the opportunity previously to serve as the host, it probably who have provided for them a sense of belonging, recognition, identity, and connectional participate. However, it will be revealed in another portion of this dissertation how things would change for Trinity and their time would come for them to serve as the host church to the 2006 Georgia North Annual Conference.

Significant Historical Events that Impacted Trinity CME Church’s Present Situation: But Who Will Help Tell the Story?

History can be just and painful as it is jubilant to those who share in that history. Historically, many African Americans shared their stories about their life experiences during and after slavery, in the work place, in their communities, about their families,
about their strive for education, and their place in the church as an effort to move forward in their lives.

The researcher thought that it would be beneficial to the members of Trinity to share their history as a way of reflecting on the pass. Discussing their history was though to be a way to deal with some of the pass and receive some healing at the same time. The members were uncomfortable with doing the reflection for several reasons. Telling their story was difficult because somehow they were not capable of putting the pieces completely together, and to some of the members it was shameful because they believed they failed in fulfilling their mission for the present generation.

However the members were reassured through the researcher that they could use their stories as a way of claiming their heritage, remembering previous accomplishments, and the strength and togetherness it took for them to accomplish the things they did do as a church. Sharing their stories would help them face their wounds and failures and stimulate ideas of how they could reclaim their identity. Considering the dialogue between the members of Trinity and the researcher about their history, there was not one current member willing to come forth for a time of reflection.

There was one member who rested on past accomplishments of Trinity. He believed if the church did not accomplish anything else in its life time of service, what the church did in earlier years was enough. He was satisfied with the fact that they did it before and that was good enough for him. But, the researcher and the congregation while they were overall silent in their sharing, somehow knew that attitude was not going to move the church forward.
The researcher continued her investigation about the history of the church in an effort to understand the member’s current situation more. While having a one on one discussion with one of Trinity’s longtime members, the member mentioned the name of Dr. Ulysis Byas over and over again. As it turned out, Ulysis Byas was an older member who had moved away many years ago to Macon, Georgia. It was discovered that Ulysis was an educator and could possibly share information to help put the pieces to the History of Trinity CME Church together.

**Significant Information Shared**

Trinity CME Church was first established before the 1900s by a small group of faithful and determined Christians from the Gainesville, Dahlonega, and Little River areas of Georgia. This group of Christians desired to start a CME church because they wanted to be apart of a recognized denomination. Trinity’s building was first erected on Summit Street in Gainesville Georgia. According to Byac, some of the families that started Trinity were the Byrds, Goudlocks, Malcolms, Martins, and Putmans. However, only the descendants of the Goudlocks and the Putmans are still apart of Trinity CME Church today. During the early 1920’s Trinity had a very strong and promising membership of supporters, and often had very prestige members from the Gainesville Community to attend services regularly. Among the visitors were doctors, educators, “that is to include me,” stated Byac, “and builders like Mr. Sykes who stayed with Trinity for a very long time until tension brew between Mr. Sykes and the new presiding elder that arrived in 1997.”

During Trinity’s earlier years on Summit Street the church it was considered as being in a prime location. Many businesses and homeowners resided in the area, making

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excellent for the growth and prominence in the community recognition of the church. But as years passed the neighborhood shifted and businesses and homeowners took plight to new locations. Byac stated that Trinity died along with the neighborhood and to make matters worst, Trinity’s structure was in need of repairs but the church was not in the financial position to make repairs to the church at that time.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{The 1936 Tornado: A Mighty Blow}

In 1936 a tornado came through Gainesville and destroyed Trinity CME Church. The members were fortunate to be able to rebuild part of the church in order to continue worship service. Sadly, some of the members did not return to Trinity because the church building was in such deplorable condition and was considered not safe to enter. Other members remained faithful and supportive, determined to hold on to Trinity’s legacy and identity. They continued attending services at Trinity until a project called “Urban Renewal Clean Up” was implemented in an effort to revitalize the neighborhood. Trinity was forced to relocate to a new location. At that time the church could not afford another building. One of the church supporters by the name of Doctor McGee [deceased] allowed Trinity to hold services in his office. Other churches opened their doors to Trinity for church programs during their time of transition. Worship services were conducted in doctor McGee’s office from 1956 to 1960.

At last Trinity was able to purchase three lots on Black Drive. This was an exciting time for some of the members and a disappointing time for others. Many of the members were not willing to relocate to the new location and predicted that Trinity would not do well on Black Drive. One particular reason was that the new location would take them out of the city of Gainesville Georgia into Hall County. During that time frame Hall

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid.
County was considered as an undeveloped area, and did not hold the same opportunities that Gainesville did.

In July 1960 a “ground breaking ceremony” was held for Trinity and three years later on September 15, 1963 Trinity held its first worship service in its new location at 1059 Black Drive.

Many members did not reconnect with Trinity when its church doors opened on Black Drive. Some of the strong members joined other churches. Hickory Grove CME received many members who did not return to Trinity after the relocation. This was the first major split that the church experienced as a result of its new location.

**A Costly Move**

With limited members Trinity worked hard to survive in its new neighborhood. This was a neighborhood with some homeowners but no churches, apartments, schools, and limited resources. Through faithfulness and hard work in the neighborhood, Trinity attracted children in the neighborhood to attend Sunday school. In time Trinity became the pillar of support for the neighborhood. However, the neighborhood began to decline and the County was slow about redevelopment in the area. Homeowners began to relocate into the city, and when many of them left, a different caliber of people with a less respected set of morals began to move in the community. Once again here is Trinity impacted by the shift of its community. The neighborhood, particularly Black Drive began to change. There was violence, drugs, and prostitution throughout the area.13

The researcher discovered that Byac’s information was accurate. As preachers of the community came back to Trinity to participate in various church programs, the researcher witness them from the pulpit talk about Black Drive when it was full of drugs.

13Ibid.
prostitution, and crime. Many of them told stories of how they rode the street of Black Drive looking for various services themselves that was offered on Black Drive before their own conversion.

And there was Trinity in the midst of all the infested crime, drugs, sex and other problems that existed on Black Drive. Trinity as shared by some of the members tried to hold on to its presence and little identity as a church in the neighborhood. Black Drive by this time was viewed as a deplorable area, and people were afraid to travel to the area.

In time Trinity began to feel like they were forgotten and disinherited. No matter how hard they tried, they barely received support from others. The church became identified with the plighted neighborhood.

CME ministers were not eager to be appointed to Trinity in Gainesville by the bishop. Trinity for a long time struggled to keep the doors of the church open for those who would attend. The reluctance of some of the previous pastors wanting to be assigned to Trinity was reflected in their inept leadership and lack of concern for the church. Many of the significant historical events that impacted Trinity’s situation had caused some of the members to become demoralized.

Sandra Wilson in her book, Released from Shame, states: “shame is a strong sense of being uniquely and hopelessly different and less than other human beings. When one experience shame he or she feels isolated and alienated from others. It is as if one is standing alone on one side of a broken bridge while everyone else in the world stares at you from the other side.”

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14 Sandra D. Wilson, Released from Shame: Recovery for Adults Children of Dysfunctional Families (Downer Groves, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 54.
It was the researchers’ hope that the Study Context portion of this dissertation has given the readers a clear insight as to the state of Trinity. It was envisioned that the readers of this dissertation grasp and understood after reading this portion of the dissertation the importance of the researcher discussing the ministry context before the ministry issue.

The researcher realized and understood through the Study Context that many factors that led up the Trinity’s situation were external and beyond Trinity’s control. While some of the situation resulted from complexes in personalities of some of the members.
CHAPTER III

FRAMING THE MINISTRY ISSUE: A RIGOROUS PROCESS

The researcher and members of Trinity CME Church initial goal agreed upon was to identify and concentrate on a definable issue in their ministry setting that would lead the researcher in to a case study. A round table discussion was conducted at Trinity church. The meeting included the researcher, the members of Trinity, and some of the neighbors of Trinity. The discussion led to various issues that were presenting issues, but not the underlying most pressing issue that needed to be addressed by Trinity. The members of Trinity CME Church brought up problem after problem that turned out to be concerns of old. Mainly the discussion was about, how if they restored the original mission they would be a different church. When asked to write down on paper, what their original mission was, not one member was capable of articulating what the original mission was.

A different set of questions were brought to the table for discussion, such as who is Trinity, who is Trinity to it's community, and what uniqueness does Trinity hold, that is not offered through other surrounding churches. Lastly, the members were asked, what is the one thing about Trinity that will cause others to desire to worship with Trinity? These questions were perplexing to answer, and certainly time had to be given in order to consider them. Each member was asked to take the questions with them on paper and answer the questions. After they answered them, they were to identify a problem that they thought needed to be addressed. A time frame of one week was given to each member to
answer the questions. Neighbors who attended and wanted to participate, and a county representative who was very familiar with the church and the area in which Trinity was located were required to answer the same questions.

The following week the members realized that there was a serious issue of church identity at hand, among other issues that could be worked out once they dealt with the issue of church identity. Trinity members realized that many aspects of their old mission, which was excellent for over a decade ago was no longer possible. Nor did it define the needs of its members, neighbors, and community today. Trinity was ready to at least put forth an effort to develop a new mission that would identify them as a viable and resourceful church in its community. Trinity was discovering, “that others can carry you but only a distance, and will give you but a grain of anything, but the greatest accomplishments and recognitions are going to be done by them with the promises of God.”

The Question

The most pressing issue that needed to be addressed by the members of Trinity was the issue that helped to form the basis of the researcher’s project. The question that had to be asked was; How does a small church that had lost its identity, in a declining community, be transformed to a viable congregation that felt empowered to embrace and minister to the needs and challenges of the neighborhood?

When communities begin to undergo major redevelopment projects such as revitalization, churches within that community begin to redefine themselves along with its community through church revision and renewal.

1Author unknown.
When Trinity realized the issue of having a deficient church identity, that was the key for the revitalization project that was in the process of taking place in its neighborhood. The researcher was confident that the revitalization project that was on its way to Black Drive, which included rebuilding houses, widening streets, renovations, and installing stoplights in the community was right on-time. This was the experience that Trinity needed as an example of renewal of identity. The researcher and the members of Trinity CME Church expected the results of a new church identity through the proposed project.

**Motivation for Research**

While Trinity CME Church was viewed as the “dead church” at the dead end of Black Drive for an extensive period of time, the researcher was more concern with the motivation that was driving the members to keep the doors of Trinity open Sunday after Sunday, while facing enormous oppositions as a church. That alone was enough for the researcher to assist the church in discovering the root cause of their issue. A church that was holding by threads after existing for over 129 years shows that there is some hope.

After reading various resources that illustrated excellent examples of small congregations that were left for dead, how they all came back to life and began to offer viable ministries to their members and surrounding communities, the researcher became very passionate about the project that was to be implemented at Trinity CME Church. The researcher discovered through reading Jackson Carroll and Carol Lytech’s book, *What Is Good Ministry*, that with the right motivation, any small church can experience a turn around and live through new identity.
It Is How You Look At It!

Looking at a half of a glass of water, through the lens of some, the glass is half empty, but looking through the lens of others, they will see the glass as half filled. That is how it is with almost everything in life. It is how you look at a situation that determines what one sees. Looking at Trinity from a first glance, the researcher summed up possibility.

It was stated by the presiding elder of Trinity, that Trinity did not have enough members, neither resources to experience much change in its congregation. To the researcher, those words spoken by the presiding elder, in an indirect way were very familiar terms. The researcher had already completed some work at a previous congregation that was believed to be impossible. It turned out that, that previous church developed a strong community choir. It was the researcher’s motivation to apply the same kind of energy at Trinity in order to assist Trinity members with experiencing change.

Hearing the Voice of James Cones Through Trinity’s Obstacles

James Cone a Black Theologian, who stands on the fact that God is on the side of the oppressed, once stated these words at an Interdenominational Theological Center lecture, that would someday, drive the researcher as they did in the case of Trinity, Cone said, “White Theologians were out to discredit the thought of Black Theology and God being on the side of the oppressed. But the more White Theologians suggested that Black Theology could not be promoted, the angrier I got. And the angrier I got the more I wrote.”

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2James Cone, lecture on Black Theology (Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, Georgia, September, 1999).
The researcher held on to that piece of speech and used it over and over as apart of her motivation in the face of obstacles. The more it was stated that Trinity CME Church was not capable of transforming, the researcher continued to seek out methods of how Trinity could and would experience change.

**Historical Background to Trinity’s Issue**

The historical background to Trinity not being a strong church goes as far back as 1870. The year that the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church (now the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church) was founded in Jackson Tennessee is connected to Trinity. The colored people had a desire to be separate from the white church. “Their purpose was to organize a separate and independent church for colored persons who had been previous members of the Methodist Episcopal South Church while they were slaves and chose to remain in it in order to get their own independent church upon the authority and goodwill of the white church.”

So as one can see, the organizing of the CME Church as a whole was solely about the support and identity of others. The church really experienced issues of identity when they attempted to stand on their own in building up their churches. The CME Church wanted to be identified as a church of higher education that provided educational training for colored members, but they lacked the identity of an independent church in many ways. Banks refused to give the church any funding. One reason for the refusal of funds was that there was no way for the bank to ensure that the church would be able to repay the loans.

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Being determined to be identified as a well established church that was “set up and not set off” by the Method Episcopal South, the late Lucius Holsey, the fourth bishop of the CME Church got the attention and support of Georgia Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South (M E Church South), which was very instrumental in the founding of Paine College, in Augusta Georgia. Reading his story also inspired the researcher to be courageous and tenacious.

In an address given before several annual conferences of the Methodist Episcopal (M E) Church South, in 1882, Lucius Holsey made a distinction between being set up and being set off. Holsey’s distinction reflected the perception of the CME in the manner in which their church was organized by the M E Church South. If they were set up, their Methodist heritage would be in tact, and the CME Church would be nurtured by the Mother Church until the CME Church was able to exist by itself. If the C.M.E Church were set off, their living or dying would mean little to the M E Church South. Their true Methodist identity would be suspect, and their reason for being a separate Colored Methodist Church in the South could be justified.”

According to the researcher, the history of the CME Church is deeply embedded in the history of slavery and the early CME Church fight for its own identity, may continue to impact the growth and the development of the denomination today. But during the time of slavery, Africans were brought from Africa across the middle passage and striped of their identity and de-humanized as the white man’s property, so they were expected to do things the white man’s way. The researcher suggested that there were many stories told by ex-slaves about how they struggled to retain their identity. The same

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4Ibid., 131.
could be said for the CME Church. The CME Church fought arduously for its independence and identity.

Trinity CME Church from the time of its founding has had to struggle with the issue of having a strong sense of identity. Trinity has always been a small congregation that has had to always depend on other’s support to survive. Even while on Summit Street, which was viewed as the better days for Trinity, they relied on the financial support of the prestigious visitors that often visited the church at that time. While Trinity remains to be the only CME Church in Gainesville, they were never identified as a church that was capable of hosting any major conferences with the CME Church denomination. Trinity was pretty much isolated from the mainstream of its own denomination. Trinity identifies well with the struggles and the reflections of their distorted past.

**Relationship of Issue to My Model of Ministry**

In many cases there are those who want to do good ministry but find themselves attempting to approach an issue or a problem by trying to understanding the pain of others without having been in the position of those who are experiencing pain. Therefore it becomes difficult to relate to others pain and not having your own story to disclose or to show your old scars makes it even more difficult.

Speaking from a biblical standpoint, the researcher believes that the advantage that Peter had in being more effective with the lame man at the Gate of Beautiful more effective than the Jews that gave the man alms, was that Peter was able to relate to the lame man in several ways according to (Act 3:3-6). One, telling the man to look on us, Peter perhaps wanted the man to see how Jesus restored him after he fell from grace.
Secondly, Peter uses the name of Jesus by location of Nazareth, where nothing good is viewed of those coming out of Nazareth. Both examples showed some relation to the lame man in crisis.

The researcher in her personal life was able to identify with the members of Trinity and did use her relation to their issue as an opening for connecting with the members. As stated by the researcher, from her own personal experiences, she had to struggle against a myriad of difficult circumstances but was inspired by the admonition of the Apostle Paul, who wrote in 2 Cor 4:7-9: “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despairsed; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down but not destroyed.” The researcher held the same hope for Trinity CME Church.

The researcher shared a piece of her life story in this manner, “I can remember growing up in the church and not being identified as one of the leading or prestige families of the church, which meant that my siblings and myself were seldom selected for anything, and were looked over more than any other youth in the church. The favoritism shown to other families over my family accentuated my own identity problem. My mother’s children were identified as the bastard children in the church. We had grown up without our biological father in the household, neither was my mother married to our father. As a point of relation, there are no young adults in Trinity with children that are married. But to continue the researcher story, the researcher went on to say, throughout life almost everybody had nothing good to say about how my mother’s children would turn out as adults.

5The Holy Bible.
Too often, people decide that they are in life what others say that they are, and end up wearing or carrying the label given by others. By definition Self-fulfilling Prophecy is when someone labels another as something for so long, the person who has been labeled begins to believe that is who she or he really is in life. The researcher gave thought to some of her life choices that lead to some not so good consequences, and compared them to Trinity being viewed as at its end with no life preservers. The researcher found that for some time, it was difficult getting people to believe or even accept her leadership and ministry. The researcher had to decide for herself that her destiny was not determined by others, therefore, considering all that the researcher and Trinity shared in commonality, it was considered a good starting place for Trinity to begin to believe the impossible. The correlation between Trinity and the researcher could only lead to seeking a mutual and beneficial resolution to Trinity’s existing problem.

**A Contribution from Trinity to Its Neighboring Community**

“We give Thee but Thine own, Whatever the gift may be; all that we have is Thine alone, A trust, O Lord, from Thee. A-Men,”⁶ is sung Sunday after Sunday in the CME Church by those who do give, those who do not give, those who want to give but often find themselves in position where they can not give financially. Regardless of the state that some CME members may find themselves in, they are only connected by the words of the offertory song through the singing of the hymn. The researcher used the very same song that is sung by all those who attend Trinity, applied a different and effective aspect of how money should not be viewed as all that one has to offer God, but challenged the members to take a closer look at the words that say, “we give thee of

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Thine own," and then asked the members, what else was it that they possessed that belonged to God that they could contribute to transforming the church.

The members identifying with other gifts and graces that they could use were eager to offer themselves in giving. The researcher's effort was to promote change by the members in their ministry setting that they could see and others from the outside could see. Transforming the minds of how the members use to view themselves as a church was a needed contribution that needed to come directly from the members of Trinity.

After Trinity began to evaluate their previous state of being, they were ready to move forward in making a transformation at Trinity that would not only be beneficial to them, but also to the neighbors and the surrounding community. The researcher identified with three steps to social change that were initially identified by sociologist Kurt Lewin. The three steps of "Freeze, Move, Freeze" suggested by Charles R. McCollough are a useful paradigm for Trinity identifying and moving pass their problems:

The social condition has to be made fluid- that is, they must be questioned and declared unacceptable. They must no longer be taken for granted, accepted as fate, or unchangeable. People have to become conscious of their conditions as the result of historical decision rather than natural determination. Instead of being satisfied with their slavery in Egypt, for example, Moses had to create dissatisfaction and discontent among the Hebrews. The absolute, the frozen tyranny of Pharaoh had to become fluid. In this unfreezing step, oppressed people become aware of their place in society. Such awareness leads to discontent with oppression and the desire to move out. 2. Moving toward an alternative land of milk and honey. Conscious awareness leads to dreams of a better life or a New Jerusalem. Through planning, preparing, training, and building, the necessary means for escape are developed. The move towards freedom takes place. Power is employed. New life begins. But reestablishment in a new land takes as much effort as the escape, and the freed slaves must learn how to use the power of self-government. 3. They must freeze a new social order. There are, of course, many more intervening factors in a liberation movement, but the essential ingredients are discontent with the
present social conditions, a vision of an alternative system, and the exercise of power to change that condition.  

To The Church Universal

By addressing Trinity's need of transformation through revised and newly implemented ministries, a witnessing of God's blessings was presented to the Universal Church. Paul in Hebrew 12:1 confirms that, "we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witness." Others seeing and reading the transformation at and about Trinity will be able to make the determination that the change occurred, and the acts of ministries do serve as hope for others. Trinity realized that all of their efforts would one day be accounted for as a help ministry for those who read the researcher work and apply the model to their own setting of ministry.

The researcher expressed that there is nothing more applicable, then witnessing a church with little to no resources change the spiritual and social order of its ministry setting through renewal which ultimately begins with changing the way you view yourself and how you are viewed by others. Trinity has applied steps that will make excellent study, evaluating, measuring, and steps that can be taken to promote change in any small congregation. As a result of the effort and work of Trinity, the term transformation, by definition categorizes Trinity as a "Change Agent."

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CHAPTER IV

DRAWING FROM THE INTELLECTUAL MINDS, STYLES,
AND PRACTICES: A HOST OF INFLUENCES

In the literature review process the researcher’s effort was to make an association with intellectual influences concerning her focus about Trinity CME Church presenting issues and the opportunity to test her preconceived hypothesis. Extensive research was indeed necessary in order to balance and enhance the researcher’s perspective. The researcher embarked upon a theoretical quest relying on the quantitative data reviewed to confirm her assumptions about Trinity and that would aide the researcher in her project. The researcher discovered through her theoretical framework that she was not required to “reinvent the wheel.” Throughout the researcher’s review of literature, the researcher discovered a vast of material with excellent illustrations on how to turn small churches around. The researcher was able to adopt various strategies that were already put in place at other congregations that experienced church transformation and are serving their perspective congregations and communities.

The Congregational Resource Guide: Resources For Congregations

*The Congregational Resource Guide* is a very relevant source of resource literature with many examples of practical approaches to church renewal. The guide provided a number of books that congregations could turn to for guidance when their life cycle wanes. The approaches were congregational profiled, therefore, a small congregation like Trinity was offered steps for small declining churches as opposed to
attempting to follow steps listed for larger congregations facing similar problems. From the *Congregational Resource Guide* the researcher has listed several stories written by pastors who used the guide and yield change and are now writing about their church experiences in their books and are offering help for others.

Steve R. Bierly, an experienced small church pastor, in his book, *Help for the Small Church Pastor: Unlocking the Potential of Your Congregation* discussed how in small congregations everything rises and falls on relationship. “After a congregation has been in isolation for a lengthy time, the development of renewed relationship among the church members and its pastor must take place first before attempting to establish new leadership among the members. When the members can first understand themselves better, then they have the potential to understand and carry out their church roles better.”

The information provided by Bierly helped the researcher to identify with the importance of getting the members to join together as a congregation before attempting any steps towards renewal, in fact, the researcher considered the members of Trinity coming together as a step of internal renewal.

Luther K. Snow in his book, *The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts*, expresses that, “Most churches facing decline find it difficult to see that they have any asset at all and are overwhelmed by the problems they face.” Snow’s book provided a strategy for showing congregations ways to identify their asset and seeing the power of those assets. The steps include both the congregation and the members identifying with what they have to offer. The most impressive part for the

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researcher was that the book confirmed her belief that Trinity could build starting from what they had. Snow stated that the asset mapping process requires the congregation to ask different questions.

At this point the researcher was feeling more confident in the direction she was heading with the project. The researcher posed a question to Trinity, as is mentioned in the dissertation. She asked them what gifts and graces did they have to offer to the renewal of Trinity, and as with Snow in his book, by suggesting such questions the researcher felt that she was making the necessary connections and coming up with the needed views from others. Additional books referenced from the Congregational Resource Guide addressed the ministry issues at Trinity CME Church and provided various approaches to applying the suggested methods.

**Empirical Observations**

Pastor Henry R. Delaney, pastor of the St. Paul CME Church in Savannah Georgia, in a printed but not published brochure, entitled “St. Paul CME Church High Lights,” give some important dates in times in the life and growth of St. Paul. The brochure provides literature on the church from 1990 to 2005. There was a time when St. Paul had no ministries outside of Sunday worship service that could offer support to its surrounding community. During that time the neighboring community was in a deplorable state, but under the new leadership of Rev. Delaney there was a major paradigm shift in the church and the community. The neighborhood went from being drug infested to a community offering resources and ministries for all people. Some of the ministries included bible study, food for the homeless and the elderly, housing for families, schools for youth, vocational trades for men and women, rehabilitation
programs for drug abusers, and a variety of church ministries for the total family. St. Paul in these most recent years have become identified as a supporting and helping agent with transforming power for its surrounding community. Considering that St. Paul served as the researcher home congregation, the researcher marked the literature from this resource reliable and useful in aiding with the proposed project for Trinity.

Darryl L. Claybon in his dissertation, “Assisting A Declining Congregation to Recapture Its Mission And Ministry served as an excellent model for the researcher project. At the time of Claybon’s appointment to St. John CME Church in Hartwell Georgia, the researcher visited the church when it was going through its transition. Claybon allowed the researcher to observe the state of the church at that time. It was clear that the few members were suffering from decline, identity, and low self esteem.

The researcher was fortunate to follow Claybon the entire year as he took the church through several modules where the members were able to identify were they were in the life cycle of their church. The members had to decide on what definite things they could do to find their identity and enhance their ministry.

The researcher reviewed several pieces of literature that clearly showed how Claybon addressed the issue that his congregation was facing. That church as a result did recapture its mission and ministry. With a mind to work, the church underwent thousands of dollars renovation through donations and support of others. These resources were solicited and received as gifts through the implementation of Claybon’s Macedonia Project.

The empirical literature reviewed from Pastor Anthony B. Robinson’s work entitled “Renewed Life” addressed the purpose of the church. In his work he illustrated
how the congregation and his decision to move the church focus from profit to purpose helped them to rediscover a new identity that renewed the life of the congregation. But first it required the church to ask some bottom line questions such as, “What is the deep purpose of the church? What descriptions once defined the church mission? How conscious is the church of the community? Is being a center for civic or social life still adequate?” The researcher realized that the questions asked by Robinson where similar to the questions that had to be asked at Trinity CME church. This literature proved the influence of confronting situations that exist in congregations but are never dealt with until the church experience a lost. Robinson did not only ask such questions but used them to lead the church in a new direction of “Christian Formation, Spiritual Development, Healing, Making Disciples,” which were all images of change.

Robinson’s work helped to guide the researcher through her review of literature and clarified some initial questions that the researcher had about her review process. These were questions that were developed at the beginning of the researcher review. Some of the questions that the researcher had were, how would she identify with and label the literature that was similar to Trinity’s issues, how to determine which literature would be most applicable to Trinity’s issue, would the literature reviewed enhance or distort how she started to formulate questions she had for investigation in light of what she already knew about the topic? As it turned out the empirical literature collected and reviewed was relevant to the issues that Trinity faced. The researcher discovered that most of the literature provided solutions that were not difficult for identifying church

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3Anthony B. Robinson. “Renewed Life” [article online] (assessed 2 March 2006); available from http://63.136.1.23.ezproxy.auctr.edu:205; Internet.
issues and working through them. Some of the literature gave excellent insight on how to start renewal with limited resources that were available in almost every church.

**A Theological Perspective**

The researcher's theological stance is that the very nature of ministry should have theological implications. Any and every great commission should have faith attached to it and the consciousness of God's presence. Ministry with the faith of God's presence attached to it moves the work beyond just being a good idea but brings the consciousness and assurance that God's hand is upon the work. It is the belief that the work will prosper in whatever God directs it to do. Every work and effort in ministry should be viewed as "spiritual as it is physical."

The researcher during her literature review discovered those who were made up of both authors and theologians that expressed their theological stance as it related to the issue of identity. The sources offered strategies for implementing renewal through having a clear identity. Provided steps as spelled out by the authors, entailed the consciousness of God's presence in their work. Thus, an assumption is not being made, but the consciousness of God in their midst and work was mentioned and illustrated in their work.

Edward L. Smith, professor of Theology at Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta Georgia, in his manuscript entitled, "Theological Reflection Towards Public Theology, Black Church Renewal, and Spiritual Economic" expressed that renewal should be God driven and not man driven. He went on to express that God driven renewal was the only way to prepare for the 21st Century. He shared in his manuscript that more churches must be willing to become change agents with transforming power.
with the ability to change the hearts and minds of people spiritually, mentally, emotionally, politically, and economically. However, Smith expressed that the change could only occur through renewal.

Smith shared this one particular story from his manuscript,

Churches can accomplish remarkable things when they work from God induced vision. For instance, one of the poorest districts in Mississippi convinced the members to pool their food stamps together (the majority of the 30 member were on public assistance and food stamps) to buy food in bulk in order to sell food to the residents of their community with money saved. The idea was to put money back into their community and create investment profits for reinvestment, and their own upward mobility. That church eventually purchased real estate with those profits creating jobs and becoming landowners themselves.4

As Smith puts it, the church in its renewal efforts must believe that the church is called by God to do great work.

Smith concluded this portion of his writing with an illustration involving a Black Church Renewal Planned that was developed by him and other leaders from the Ninth Episcopal District of the CME Church. As a result of a mission that challenged the church to change through renewal in preaching, teaching, spiritual identity, stewardship, and social change in their community, Smith witnessed the “abrupt turnaround” in many local churches and communities. Smith experienced, transformation in his own church at same time other churches were experiencing turnarounds.5

The book God So Loves the City: Seeking a Theology for Urban Mission brings compelling stories of the challenges to light about urban ministry in the face of injustice. They then retell the stories in light of scripture, introducing new hope to each one of the

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4Edward L. Smith, Theological Reflection Towards Public Theology, Black Church Renewal, and Spiritual Economic 2005, manuscript shared with doctoral students of ITC, September 2006..

5Ibid.
The researcher was captivated by one particular story because of the close relation in identity to Trinity, more so than the other stories. The story surrounded a church in an urban setting in Los Angeles where the poverty level was high, the crime was high, and incest and physical abuse was high, however, their was no identity of incest or physical abuse in Trinity’s context. The problem to be noted in the story was that the church was not clear on what they could do to help make a difference. Trinity’s members were asked by several mission workers in the community that were trying to promote change, to consider answering some questions. The purpose of the questions was for the church to identify with what God had called them to be to its community. The questions are stated below. “Occasionally, new response may be God’s will for the church, but they will fail to empower if the church do not take time to ask basis questions such:

1. How can we accomplish goals with our neighbors?

2. How can a newly identified project bring life to the participating neighborhood?

The aforesaid questions were presented to the church by the missionaries to help the church strengthen themselves, make a statement about who they were as a church in the middle of desperation, and act on it. Secondly, network with others in the city for God’s blessings to penetrate the city and the existing mission structure.”

This particular piece of literature provided for the researcher some hope in the case of Trinity and the possibility of transformation with God at Trinity’s right hand side and going along with them.

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7 *God So Loves The City*, 96.
Karth Barth in *Church Dogmatics* speaks theologically about the task of the church. As Barth states it, the church is to transform the community through the work of Christ. He confirms that Jesus will always serve as the content of the task. Barth position in the eyes of the researcher re-enforces who the church is and its roll. The church is the task/mission worker. His position makes plan what the church should be doing, and if the church is not doing it. The church should be listening for directions from God. Barth says this, “The Christian Community is given its task by Jesus Christ and must live by and with its task, and by doing so, the Christian community becomes the one who preserves and renews the community unto which God sent those who answered yes to the task with purity.”

The researcher concluded her review of theological influences and highlights with a clearer concept for doing theological reflection. She understood well how the literature served as example of God’s divine purpose for God’s church. The researcher through this process developed a strong passion to go forth with the proposed project. Her passion out weighed her experience, but her theological stance claimed the project as God’s divine purpose above all.

**Biblical Perspectives on the Issue of Identity And Renewal**

The Bible informs us of the hope found within the text and gives us directions for living and doing ministry. There are many great accomplishments by the people of God during biblical times, under the direction of God that can be accounted for restoring and rebuilding the life, spirit and structure of the church. With every human frailty or facet of life, weather it is dealing with a contextual situation or personal dilemma, there is a biblical story that shows a close relation to the situation. The hope that is found in

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biblical relating situations is that there is always a story of rebirth, regeneration, restoring, resurging, and new identity.

In reflecting on several biblical texts that showed relations to Trinity’s issue and illustrations on how such issues were attempted to be addressed, the researcher did identify with Nehemiah 2:11-20 as being the most appropriate passage of scripture to relate Trinity’s issue. After doing a critical examination of Nehemiah 2:11-20 the researcher discovered that the passage offered the best solution for rejuvenating the life and identity of Trinity. The researcher will expound more on her findings from the biblical passage of Nehemiah further along in this biblical review. Before expounding on her findings in Nehemiah 2:11-20, the researcher will highlight and mention other findings in the biblical review aspect of this dissertation.

In Exodus 3:11-12 Moses struggled with identity looking at his past and focusing on his incapability’s, but God equipped Moses for a great work. Moses moved forward through the power of God.

The children of Israel in Exodus lacked a strong identity on their way to the promise land. God had to use some extreme examples to show them who He was to them.

The church of Galatia in Galatians according to 3:1-9 received sound doctrine from Paul about Christ, themselves, and the work of their church. It was not long before another group had some along after Paul left. Another group from a Jewish background came on the scene telling the Galatians something different from what Paul had taught them. As a result, when Paul returned to them they were confused about what they had first believed about their identity. Paul had to reassure the Galatians through the word of God of who they were.
These biblical stories mentioned had the ability to connect Trinity to those in the bible that received recurring response to situations that appeared hopeless. In each on renewal and restoration was achieved.

**Discovery of Hope In Old and New Testament Scriptures**

The hope of moving forward and not being defined by a dark past, can best be illustrated through 2 Corinthians 5:17 for Trinity CME Church. One thing that would stagnate Trinity’s vision would be if Trinity stayed focus on the past with the fixation in their minds that the past is who they are. This text brings hope in that Paul convinces the Corinthians that if they are in Christ, then they are new (transformed,) all the old things about them no longer exist, and they must do away with old principals and practices. Paul gets their attention with an assertive “Behold,” which means understand, get it in your hearts and minds, all things are now new. Expressing the “behold,” speaks to the psychological state of the members of Trinity, in the sense that they have to get it in their mental state, that through renewal, they will be different.

In the Second Epistle of Paul, 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, he writes, “We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not forsaken; suck down, but not destroyed.” Trinity can be described through this text, but at the same time draw strength from it. Trinity did find themselves in a perplexed state of existence and was unclear on their identity and did take some serious blows in their 130 years history. Through 2 Corinthians Trinity discovered that wounds can in time heal themselves. This particular text offers vindication through encouragement after suffering.
Matthew Henry in his commentary on 2 Corinthians 4: 8-9 helped the researcher to understand that while the church may be in such a despaired state, there is always hope in the text. “In our greatest perplexities, knowing that God is able to support us and deliver us is the hope we have in God. While forsaken by others, God will never leave us nor forsake us. One spirit may begin to fail us and there is fear within as well as fighting without, but still our heads are kept above water. Whatever condition the children of God may be in, in this world, they still have a, but not. Some time bad, but not so bad as it might be.”

In Ezekiel 37: 1-14 is the story of the dry bones, but beyond that, it is a biblical story of assessment and restoration. This makes the story fits for the issue that Trinity faced. God showed the prophet through a vision the end state of the children of Israel which was symbolic to the state that Trinity found itself in due to their contextual situation. The prophet was placed in a valley of dry bones with no visible sign of life. However, restoration and new life for living can not take place without a full and comprehensive assessment. The researcher felt drawn in and connected to Trinity’s issue as the one who was placed at Trinity beyond being appointed by the Bishop. Coming from the outside to the inside of Trinity’s situation, the researcher was able to make an assessment that was initially different from Trinity’s assessment. Ezekiel was required to spend time assessing the condition of the bones. God asked some critical questions about the condition of the bones and Ezekiel assures God through his answer, “O Lord, thou Knowest.”

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Several contributing factors could be pulled from this biblical story that could assist Trinity. One, the story supports the need for a full assessment. Two, the assessment would initiate more interaction between the members and the researcher and allow all views of the issue to be expressed. And thirdly, the scripture confirms that the church can experience life and identity again through a new vision for the church.

It is definite that there must be a clear vision for the direction that Trinity desires to head in, but if everybody is consumed by their own ideas the vision will remain unclear. There are scriptures that serve as road maps with given steps to follow, but Proverb 29: 18 confirms the need for a vision. If one can envision what they see or what they want they will keep that vision before them. It will be discovered further in this dissertation that the researcher has identified a model scripture for doing the project. If the members of Trinity cannot envision change through the model scripture, it is likely that change will not occur.

Proverbs 29: 18 states that without a vision the people will perish. People will result to what is right in their own eyes. Having a vision for doing ministry can be described as a model for carrying particular methods used for ministry.

The Bible shows the importance of having and following a vision as early as the time of Abram in Genesis 15:1. In addition, in every biblical account God chose someone and gave him or her a vision for his people to follow. Those who followed the vision experienced God in his greatness and his presence, but those who did not work according to the vision perished as it were in the days of Noah. Noah had a vision of God’s plan for the ark. For 120 years Noah stayed true to the vision. Proverbs 29:18 serves as an
excellent tool for visualization. Visualization ultimately leads to writing the vision and making the vision plan.

**Nehemiah 2: 11-20 As The Corner Stone Passage of Scripture**

The researcher while finding all of the biblical literature that she reviewed to be helpful and to have some association with Trinity’s issue, and proclaimed that many of the biblical writer revealed a recurring theme of response to situations that appeared hopeless, she has identified **Nehemiah 2: 11-20** as the best passage of scripture to serve as a model. Nehemiah was selected as the most appropriate passage of scripture for addressing and implementing her proposed project for Trinity CME Church. The researcher believed the passage to be a beneficial Blue Print for what steps must take place to experience renewal at Trinity.

**Nehemiah 2: 11-20** begins after the return of Nehemiah in 444BC, with Nehemiah himself reviewing the ruins of Jerusalem. Nehemiah had to be certain that the wall and the faith of the Israelites could be restored before making a report to them. The call from God filled Nehemiah with compassion to reconnect with his people. He was called to help the Israelites move from a state of disgrace and ridicule and offer assistance and protection during the restoring the wall of Jerusalem as God as their guide. It was stated by some scholars such as Tamara C. Eskenazi’s and Joseph Bleninsopp that Nehemiah was out for personal gain as governor of the Persian Province of Judah, which causes the reader to possibly look at how Nehemiah 2: 11-20 does not fit or should be called to questioning. However, the researcher after her own interpretation of the passage of scripture and review of others materials found Nehemiah 2: 11-20 most appropriate.
Nehemiah 2: 11-20 is the most appropriate passage of scripture with which to relate Trinity. There are numerous correlating factors that show similarity and show compassion for a people who have suffered and experienced confusion of identity. The condition of the wall can easily be compared to the physical structure of Trinity church structure. But more importantly, Nehemiah in this passage of scripture is not judgmental towards those returning Jews. He was eager to join with them in their struggle by making himself inclusive to their struggle. In the researchers opinion inclusiveness to the relating issues or struggles should in no wise be avoided. Inclusiveness becomes critical ones empathic effort to help others rebuild. Nehemiah in his approach illustrated through his action that perhaps he was enabled to have a more vested interest in seeking a mutual and beneficial resolution to the Israelites dilemma. In the Case of Nehemiah and those returning Jews, as will be the case with the researcher and Trinity, the situation moved from being the people problem to becoming their problems as a people on one accord. Being on one accord they realized that they all had to seek answers.

Nehemiah asked them in chapter 2 verse 7, “Do you see the trouble we are in?”

This passage of scripture offers hope for Trinity and it says that through faith in God that Trinity can be transformed. The researcher especially selected Nehemiah 2: 11-20 so that Trinity could be assured through scripture that God does send help in the time of trouble. This passage of scripture can be viewed as a place where Nehemiah was able to rebuild/reestablish his identity with his people. Jacob L. Wright in his book, Rebuilding Identity: The Nehemiah-Memoir and its Earliest Readers, expressed that “The story of

\[10\]Nehemiah 2: 17 (NVS).
Nehemiah is about Nehemiah discovering his identity in a foreign land and then moves to redirect the identity and destiny of his people."^{11}

Nehemiah in his determination to help his people through their lost of hope and identity, and their transforming from disgrace back to a strong nation was most helpful to the researcher the ability to help Trinity. Nehemiah offered supportive aide to the researcher in redirecting Trinity in their identity. "The book of Nehemiah with chapter 2: 11-20 after review of the condition and Nehemiah giving a definite and courageous charge, stands out with clarity as a challenge and a guide in carrying out the work of God in the face of orchestrated oppression."^{12}

While Nehemiah 2: 11-20 did serve as the Corner Stone scripture for the Ministry project at Trinity, all of Nehemiah that made up Nehemiah’s Memoir up until Nehemiah chapter 7:73a was used as a part of the visual affects for viewing implementation of the project and witnessing possible outcome was placed in the sanctuary. The visual affects will be discussed in details in the implementing phase of this dissertation.

**Results of The Theoretical Frame Work**

Through the literature review that related to the issue that Trinity CME Church faced, the researcher was able to make a clear assumption about the identity of Trinity and the need for church renewal. The researcher discovered that church renewal was a universal idea for restoring churches to their rightful roles as indicated throughout the literature read. With Trinity lacking various needed ministries, it became obvious how Trinity did not have a least one strong ministry implemented that could speak to their

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identity. Having no church identity was one factor that led to Trinity major church decline and non-participatory status in the community. At one point the researcher thought that perhaps she was reading into the issue prematurely, but literature reviewed by the researcher confirmed her hypothesis. It was the researcher's hypothesis that Trinity had a critical identity issue. There were numerous shared stories of how churches that lacked an identity risked and did face major declines, but churches that had a strong identity or experienced renewal were maintaining and excelling.

The author found that the book Research in Ministry: A Primer for the Doctor of Ministry Program, by William Myers, used the First Congregational Church as an illustration to show how important church identity is to people's choice in church attendance and membership. "First Congregational Church on any given Sunday would be able to draw some immediate conclusions as to who they were as a church. The beauty of the building may have been the first reaction, but once the worship began visitors were able to experience the presence of God in the atmosphere through prayer, praise and preaching."13 The study concludes that people will gravitate to churches no matter where they are if the churches identity is clearly stated through their vision and practices.

Upon reading What is Good Ministry by Jackson W. Carroll and Carol E. Lytch the writer surmised that it provided a collection of portraits and essays that discussed various ministries that lack identity or that were experiencing major church decline. After each church went through a renewal process, the work and ministries flourished and were defined as good ministry. Many of the stories shared some kind of correlation to what

Trinity was experiencing but gave good examples of how to turn ministries around for the best.

**A Theory That is Right on The Mark**

C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya in the discussion of their book, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* included a very important portion of work by Hart Nelson and Anne Nelson entitled *Black Church in the Sixties*. The significant piece discussed in the Nelson book was *The Dialectical Model of the Black Church*, and in that the Nelson's first identified three different types of interpretive models of the Black Church as described by past researchers and then delineated six dialectical models of their own for describing and interpreting the constant tension in the African American Religious experience.\(^{14}\) In those models the researcher identified with several models that described and interpreted Trinity CME Church profile. Identifying Trinity's profile was a major contribution to some of the underlying issues that Trinity faced.

The Assimilation Model by Frank Frazier described the Black Church as anti-intellectual and authoritarian.\(^{15}\) The model in relation to Trinity explains why members of Trinity due to limited education of the member displayed at times the anti-intellectual role. They displayed anti-intellectual behavior as a defense mechanism to protect themselves from embarrassment and or shame. For Trinity the anti-intellect has been about what they did not know, and others attempting to teach and train them in what they feared they would not comprehend.


The Compensatory Model that Glanner Myrdal contributed to describes the control within the church in opposed to control in the larger society.\textsuperscript{16} This model aids in the understanding as to why a few members clamor for the control and power. It could be that the recognition in the church compensated for the lack of control and status in other areas of the members lives.

The Isolated Model by Anthony Orum describes The Black Church as: "being characterized by involuntary isolation due to lower class status in the black community and being isolated from civic affair and mass apathy."\textsuperscript{17} This model presents a clear picture in that it can be used to show how relocation of Trinity from the inner city to the edge of the town had an adverse impact on the congregation's self esteem. Also, the lack of recognition in the CME denomination on the district and annual conference levels may have contributed to the congregation's identity problems.

Considering all of these challenges the researcher thought it fitting to mention, for the first time in the history of Trinity CME Church. Trinity had a member to be elected as a delegate to the 2007 Missionary Quadrennial. She served as a representative for the Georgia North Conference.

As offered by the Nelsons' in their own six dialectical models, "The Dialectical Priestly and Prophetic Model and the Dialectical Communal and Privatistic Model," their models offered a more positive interpretation of the Black Church. There models were listed among those models mentioned that helped to described Trinity in its congregation's profile. The Nelson two models are deemed as a "spark" and tension

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid.
“igniter” that is necessary for Trinity to stay rooted in their ethnic identity as they experience change.

The dialectic between priestly and prophetic functions as stated by the Nelson’s, “the priestly functions involve only those activities concerned with worship and maintaining the spiritual life of members. Prophetic functions refer to involvement in political concerns and activities in the wider community. However, some churches are closer to one end more than the other of the other end of the dialectic between priestly and prophetic. Priestly churches are bastions of survival and Prophetic churches are net workers of liberation.” Trinity has shown themselves to be more priestly as opposed to being more prophetic in effort to maintain the spiritual life of the members. But in Trinity’s prophetic role they have held a major Black History program in 2006, and did have a well known Black Historian, Preacher, and Educator to come to Gainesville in 2007. The ethnic community activities held and those that are forth coming, enhances the development of Trinity’s prophetic functions.

The dialectic between the communal and the privatistic, “refers to the historic tradition of Black Churches being involved in all aspect of their member’s lives, including political, economic, and social concerns. The privatistic pole of the dialectical means withdrawal from concerns of the larger community to a focus on the religious needs of its adherents.” However, it has been sometime since Trinity had focused on the needs of the members, neighbor, and the community. An example, Trinity struggled with embracing the need to move to a more contemporary style of worship on the Sunday’s

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19 Ibid.
that more youth were present. The Older members viewed it as affecting the historical aspect of the church style of worship. Understanding the dialect between the communal and the privatistic offered some theories as to why Trinity had been in the position it was in for long and why Trinity experienced rapid decline.

These models explain in part why churches refute renewal in fear of losing their old established foundations to contemporary ways that appears to be less sacred to inherited member. From these models the researcher saw how being more communal in many ways will be more profitable for Trinity’s transformation.

It is the researchers’ opinion that Black Churches are ripened for asserting the dialectical tension described by Hart Nelson and Anne Nelson. Their work provides for the Black Church opposing views that are out their about the Black Church. The Black Church should be making its own decisions about its place and its role.

**Conclusions of the Literature Review**

The variety of theoretical pieces of literature served as other expert’s resources. Some of the resources were universal and others were specific programs. Yet all of the information was meaningfully. The researcher was able to match topics and illustrations to the project proposed to Trinity and offered a method or some insight for implementing the researcher’s project. The researcher felt confident through the literature process that engaging in Trinity’s ministry issue is what good ministry is all about. The researcher was eager to use these new perspectives in a systematic way that would transform Trinity from a church with no identity to a church that is clearly identified through its mission.
CHAPTER V

OUTLINING AN EFFECTIVE MODEL THAT TRANSFORMED TRINITY CME CHURCH

This chapter explains the development and implementation of the revitalization project at Trinity Christian Methodist Church in Gainesville, Georgia between August 2006 and November 2007. The project included four day-long workshops on consecutive Saturdays. All of the members were invited and encouraged to participate. More than 70% of the members did attend the workshops on the consecutive Saturdays.

Motivational training, visual effects, and member’s participation in the proposed ministries plan were critical to the revitalization project. The researcher was comfortable with identifying the project as a practical and applicable help ministry with one goal: to assist Trinity in experiencing what good ministry is and should be through church transformation.

Naming the Project

The project that was developed and implemented at Trinity CME Church is entitled, Revising and Implementing Ministries that will Rejuvenate the Life and Identity of Trinity CME Church. Naming the project came as a result of literature reviewed by the researcher that resounded over and over again, that renewal comes with revising and transforming. Trinity did have some systems in place, but they had to be reviewed before a decision of approach was determined. Through the process of review with Trinity, revising naturally became a part of the process.
Major Terms Used And Definitions

The major terms used in the project were Revising, which means to look at the good of what already exist and revise it or perhaps take a new approach to what already exist. Revising can also mean renaming. An excellent example would be, congregations that have the term churches attached to them are losing membership to congregations that have the term ministries attached to them. Second, Implementing, this term is key, because as many great ideas that are thought up, are not always put into action, or the thought of what it takes to put systems or ministries in place overwhelm people, and they never get around to doing them. After identifying at least one thing that the surrounding churches do not offer to the community that Trinity could offer, and then training the members in that area, this is to include an expert resources then start that ministry through Trinity CME Church. Third, Rejuvenate, this term speaks life. New and improved ministry is the best way to ignite the excitement of the members working in the church and visitors coming to the church to witness the new life of the church. When one is on life support or has been in a coma for some time, doctors consider them as being flat lined without life or possibility of life. Trinity experienced its period without life, but had something helping them to hold on until life resurged at Trinity once again.

Literature Assumed As Terms Were Defined

The author in determining the appropriate terms for naming the project looked to several topics from Church Renewal literature to determine terms that resonated throughout the literature. Resource materials the researcher utilized included:

- **Renewed Life** by Anthony B. Robinson. This book was extremely beneficial to the researcher, bringing clarity to terms that defined the project implemented at
Trinity. Robinson used term renewed to identify ministries his congregation already had in place. The existing ministries were defined as old by the members when they looked at them, therefore the congregation looked at and implemented ministries that could be defined as renewed ministries.

- Luther K. Snow in his book, *The Power of Asset Mapping*, defined asset mapping as a way of looking at what one has, and giving techniques for building from the asset discovered. Throughout Snow’s book, the term asset was clear in the purpose that it served, thus the researcher realized the terms selected for her topic, had to be defined through implementation of the project.

- *Whose Religion Is Christianity?* By Lamin Sanneh, showed a strong correlation to major terms defined in the researcher’s project topic and additionally, the book was a driving force for affirming the researcher’s terms.

- In *Whose Religion Is Christianity* by Lamin Sanneh, terms like, discovery of the gospel, were used in reference to how the gospel is reaching parts of the world like in unprecedented ways because churches are redefining themselves as global ministries and are moving in to areas that were not exposed to Christianity. The author suggested that the same approach could be taken in small church locations and the gospel should not be restricted to identity by large churches only.

Another instrumental and relating term used was Resurgence, which is defined as rising again. Resurgence supports the fact that Christianity has not outlived its convictions of a once Christian society. The researcher felt that such terms were supportive to the suggestion that the project should be about restoration and prominence.
The researcher's selected terms offered a sense of purpose to a church that believed that they no longer had any purpose. A church without purpose is viewed as unhealthy, according to Peter L. Steinke in his book, *Healthy Congregations*. Steinke states, "Healthy Congregations are purposeful organizations. They have a clear direction. They keep asking, what is God calling us to be? What is the meaning of what we do? They have a working vision that conveys the message that together they can influence their future. Vision always requires revision. Health is a continuous process, and healthy congregations keep at the work of visioning and revisioning."¹ The researcher agreed that it was pertinent for a congregation to continue a revising process as a measure for living on.

With these terms, the researcher introduced a model for Revising and Implementing ministries that would, Rejuvenate the life and identity of Trinity CME Church.

**Implementation Phase**

The implementation phase involved the full participation of each member of Trinity CME Church, including the pastor in charge, who was also the researcher of the project. The initial thing to do was to get the members to see themselves as contributors to the life of Trinity CME Church. People are motivated by motivational seminars, participation with others, and visual artifacts, so the researcher initiated several phases to create the vision in writing before taking the steps for going forth with the project.

Placing the Seed of Motivation

It was interesting to the researcher in that before she was transferred from the Central Georgia Region of the Six Episcopal District of the CME Church to the Georgia North Region in July 2005, that the researcher had just completed facilitating a week of bible study at the Central Georgia Annual Conference before being transferred. The researcher did a series on “The Christian Life is a Service Life: Use What You’ve Got” and discovered that it was an initial tool that could be used for motivating the members at Trinity CME Church in Gainesville Georgia.

The series was presented as a workshop to the members of Trinity over the course of a four weeks period on Saturday. The series was outlined as follow:

**Week One**
The Concept of Using What You’ve Got

Supporting Scriptures:
A. Colossians 3: 16 – 17
B. Romans 12: 2 – 8
C. Romans 15: 1 - 5

Working Scriptures (Old and New)
A. Exodus 4: 1 – 12
B. Luke 9: 1 – 6

Point of Focus- “Phillip and the Eunuch”
(Acts 8: 26 – 40)

The Jesus Metaphor
(Matthew 14: 13 – 31)

**Week Two**
Every Good and Perfect Gift is From God

A Refection of Week One
Supporting Scriptures:
A. James 1:17
B. 1Timothy 4: 14 – 16
C. 1Peter 4: 10-11
Working Scriptures
A. Psalm 23
B. 1Samuel 17

Point of Focus- “Peter and John”
(Acts 3: 1-11)

The Jesus Metaphor
(Matthew 25: 14 – 30)

**Week Three**
The Harvest is Full, But The Laborer are Few

A Reflection of Week Two
Supporting Scriptures:
A. Matthew 9: 37 – 38
B. Matthew 10: 7 - 8

Working Scriptures
A. Acts 4: 32 – 37
B. Acts 5: 1 - 11

Point of Focus- “A Woman With An Alabaster Box”
(Mark 14: 1 – 11)

The Jesus Metaphor
(John 2: 1 – 11)

**Week Four**
What Do I Have???

A Reflection of Week Three
Supporting Scriptures:
A. Isaiah 9: 6 – 7
B. John 3:16
C. Matthew 7: 7 – 11

Working Scripture
A. 1John 5: 14 - 15

Point of Focus- Use What You’ve Got
(Acts 1: 11)

The Jesus Metaphor (This Same Jesus)
After motivating the members of Trinity through the series of workshops, the next phase was to present some “Visual Affects.”

**Visual Affects**

Two large banners were posted on the walls of Trinity C.M.E Church. The first banner read “The Year of Sacrifice” and the second banner read “The Nehemiah’s Model to the Implementation of Renewal.”

Addressing the first banner, The Year of Sacrifice, each member stood before the congregation and pledged his or her commitment to make the necessary sacrifices that were needed to assist in developing a new church identity. After the commitment was made, there was a space on the banner provided for each member to sign to his or her commitment. People are motivated through motivational sermons and visual artifacts, therefore, several phases of the project had to take place, which entailed seeing the vision in writing before taking the steps outlined by the members. Some of the sacrifices made by the members included dedication to the service and work of the church, commitment to time in training and weekend repairs, identifying surrounding resources that were helpful to the renewal of Trinity, and financial support.

The researcher incorporated “The Year of Sacrifice” slogan in the worship experience through an effort of call and response. The leader would ask the congregation while standing, right before dismissal, what year is this? The congregation would respond, “it is the year of sacrifice!”

The second visual affect, The Nehemiah’s Model to the Implementation to Renewal banner, which served as the blue print for the project through Nehemiah’s
action, was posted opposite of the first banner on the wall of Trinity's sanctuary. As stated earlier in the biblical review of this dissertation, Nehemiah was selected as the biblical model based on his review and confidence in God as illustrated in Nehemiah 2: 11-20. Listed below is an outline of the step-by-step guide that was used in the project of renewal.

- **Prayer-** Nehemiah made it clear that prayer was essential before going forth with any planning. Nehemiah went before the Lord in prayer for his people in Jerusalem. Once God gave Nehemiah the clearance and approval, through King Artaxerxes, Nehemiah went to Judah.

- **Arriving and Assessing-** When Nehemiah arrived in Judah, for three days he was just there in the midst of his people, but after the third day of observing among the people, Nehemiah went to review the ruins for himself for purpose of his own assessment. A determination of yes was made concerning the repairs, after review. Nehemiah concluded chapter two with a charge and the acceptance of that charge by his people who were suffering.

- **Implementing the Work and Keeping Record-** Nehemiah recorded the families that worked on different projects such as the sheep gate, doors, fish gate, laid beams, residence of the governor, and so forth. Chapter three concluded with a bond being formed among the people, the tribes, families, and Nehemiah.

- **Defending the Vision and Progress-** Opposition occurred, but there was a solution. For opposition by the enemies from the outside, the people were encouraged to remember the Lord was great and awesome. As a result, the people
had a mind to continue working. The people continued their newly developed prayer life as they worked.

- **Staying on one accord at the cost of Sacrifice and Observing the Integrity of a Good Leader** - some of the Jews grew wearying in well doing, and began to focus on what they were sacrificing and began to complain. In effort to ensure that this was not an obstacle, Nehemiah as the leader had to point out some of their efforts of usury that was taking place. More importantly, Nehemiah in 5:9-10 showed himself to be in the same position as lending the brethrens money and grains that they may all continue and complete the work. Nehemiah showed himself to be different from previous leader who took from the Israelites bread and wine. He prepared food for his people and invited them to his table. Nehemiah’s integrity showed that he could be dependable and trustworthy.

- **Examples of Remaining Focus** - the enemies attempted to distract Nehemiah in his work and leadership, but a praying leader is always gifted with discernment and is always made aware when he or she should join with others, and when he or she should not to join with others. Nehemiah knew those who were God sent and those who were not.

- **The Wall Completed** - illustrated how much work could be completed when you stay focus. The celebration in chapter seven of Nehemiah Memoirs was the positioning of the people where they would serve best, and the returning of those Jews who were returning to Jerusalem from captivity and finding a place to dwell in Jerusalem.
The members of Trinity realized that the project that would be implemented at Trinity with Nehemiah's action as a blue print guide, would take at least one year to implement. Being able to visualize the goal on the wall helped kept the members focused. The members marked off each step of the guide as they reached a phase of completion.

**Congregation Participation**

It is vital that each member of a congregation that is expecting change or church renewal through a series of training workshops becomes a participant of the program implementation. Participation from the congregation seeking transformation increases the expectation of each member in his or her role that is to be carried out and joins the members to some aspect of program or church operation.

Each member of Trinity was asked to submit to the pastor one thing that he/she was very interested about implementing at Trinity that would improve the outlook of the church. The member's were clear and accepting of the fact that each proposal would be discussed openly among the other members in a group setting. The proposals submitted were very varied along age differences in the membership of Trinity. Some differences in the member's beliefs and style of worships, however, required that the researcher task was to include raising the congregation faith consciousness in God as high as she could through accomplishing the work that Trinity was preparing for. Each proposal was focused on until an agreement was made among the members and the pastor.

The second request from the researcher to the members of Trinity was to think of one thing that they thought would improve the outlook of Trinity, and think on that one thing in terms of a ministry being developed. Using a Proposed Ministry sheet, developed
by the researcher, (see Appendix A) the members were asked to go back a second time and follow the Proposed Ministry sheet and complete the following questions.

This process was conducted to see how much the members would, if any, change from their first suggested proposals that were submitted in the previous group setting.

The members and the researcher discussed the outcome of previous attempt to the proposals that were submitted, and developed new approaches to revising and re-implementing those programs and ministries that were once attempted but were ineffective. As a result, the members agreed that some of the previous plans could work if approached differently and with member’s full participations. Many of the suggestions followed boards and programs that were found in *The Book of Discipline of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church* and were expected of Trinity to be carried out as a part of the connectional body of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

**Training And Implementation Of Ministries And Programs**

January 2006 through July 2006 was time used at Trinity CME for prepping and preparing the members for training and work through previously mentioned motivational training, visual artifacts, and member’s participation in the proposed ministries plan. It was cleared and confirmed by the member’s of Trinity that the trainings and the programs that would be carried out would begin during the August 2006-2007 conference year.

During the course of prepping and planning, the researcher spent time gathering information that would serve as excellent training for church renewal and development. The researcher pulled resources from other churches that had experienced renewal and offered guidelines to follow for implementation. Several district leaders from the Georgia North Region of the CME church were called upon to come and assist with training the
members of Trinity. The trainings that were scheduled included church leaders and educators outside of the CME Church.

The researcher scheduled those who would come to Trinity to train the members in order to have a system of operation already in place. The researcher felt it was important to put a system into place that the members could pick up from and follow. "Loops can create change in the system. The more loops a system experience or is created, the more complex the system of operation becomes."

August 2006-2007 began with excitement for Trinity CME Church. Trinity had just accomplished a major project that would have never been thought of as being possible for a small church that lacked a strong church identity previously. In the midst of preparing for church transformation for 2006-2007, with the support of the researcher, and Hickory Grove CME Church and their pastor, who agreed to the role Trinity CME would carry out as the Host Church of the 2005-2006 Georgia North Annual Conference. Trinity had just hosted a successful conference that was talked about highly, giving Trinity recognition for the quality conference. Trinity hosting its first annual conference was major for Trinity’s church identity and preparation for implementing new programs for the 2006-2007 conference year. See Appendix B.

The 2006-2007 Conference Year Planning Meeting

Trinity’s planning meeting was scheduled for August 12, 2006, although the church did not have an administrative assistant at that time. The researcher arrived with 2006-2007 planning calendars for the entire congregation to mark and decide on dates that training and programs would take place. The researcher stated that having the

\[2\text{Ibid., 30.}\]
training in place, deciding on some of the programs before hand, and distributing
planners, did improve the flow and cooperation of the meeting.

Trainings that were scheduled included:

Discipleship In Practice, Christian Education, Articles of Religion, Boards and
Offices (book of discipline), Leadership 101, Children’s Ministries, Church
Finances and Budgeting, Developing and Implementing Effective Church
Programs, and Self Awareness.

**Training Highlights (Selective)**

One particular training that was established at Trinity and continued beyond the
scheduled Saturday trainings, were “Team Training.” In this facet some of the younger
members of Trinity were paired with some of the older members serving on boards such
as Steward, Stewardess, Trustee, and Usher boards. They worked along side of each
other, allowing the younger members to learn the work of the boards they were placed
on, and allowing the older members to receive the possibility of new suggestions for
serving from the younger members.

**Discipleship In Practice**

Discipleship was defined as the life into which humans are being called by God in
Christ as followers. According to *Discipleship: Creation, Covenant, Community* by
Gilmore, Linsey, and Thomas Hoyt, Jr., “Discipleship is who the new being is. Because it
is the person, discipleship is lived. It is the expression of who persons are in Christ.
Which confirms Paul saying of, all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed
yourselves with Christ, (Gal. 3: 27 NIV).”

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Christian Education

Christian Education was defined as the ministry that undergirds and supports all other ministries of the church. Undergird, Gird, and Support, were defined by the trainer as followed:

**Undergird**
Strengthen or brace from the bottom side, as a foundation undergirds a building.

**Gird**
To encircle with a belt or band
To surround and enclose
To prepare oneself for action

**Support**
To bear; sustain; to maintain; to uphold; to prop up, to keep from falling or sinking.
To endure without being overcome; to uphold by aid; as to support the courage or spirit.

Leadership 101

The congregation was given a book that was written by John Maxwell on leadership. The book outlined the things every leader needed to know. Chapters in the book such as: *Why should I grow as a Leader*, *How Can I Effectively Cast Vision*, *Why Is Influence Important*, others were discussed. The members and officers of Trinity were asked to identify their strengths and weakness and then determine if they were good or bad for leadership in the church setting.

Church Finances and Budgeting

Church finances and budgeting was conducted by a CME preacher who was also employed by Sun trust Bank as a Financial Consultant. Training included the importance of setting a budget and operating from the set budget, ways to establish funds, and strategies for teaching on tithes, offerings, and seed sowing.
Boards and Offices of the CME Church

The researcher utilized the 2006 Book of Discipline of the CME Church to train the member's on various boards in the church and their roles of operation. However, the stewardess received their training from the Georgia North District Stewardess Board president. Additional Discipline books were made available to the members of Trinity. See Appendix E.

Children's Ministries

Children’s Ministries covered ways to teach children and how to coordinate their participation in the worship experience. Information about using acolytes in the call to worship, conducting Children’s Meditation and Children’s Church was shared with the members of Trinity.

Developing and Implementing Effective Church Programs

It was stated during the training, that when developing church programs to be sure that the programs will be of interest to both those in the congregation and the community. Programs should always be centered on addressing a need, some type of awareness, or a celebration. The church should have a public relations committee for determining how the church, surrounding churches, and the community will receive notification on programs. When selecting guests to come and conduct various programs on preaching, teaching, singing, or workshops, the guest in most cases should be someone or an organization that is well establish or known by the good of their work.

The 2006-2007 Ministries And Programs

In the 2006-2007 Conference year, Trinity hosted programs and ministries that attracted inactive members, surrounding churches, and members from its neighboring
community. As a result of other churches coming to participate with Trinity, observing the revising of the structure of the church, implementation of programs, how they were carried out, the orderly manner of the church leadership, which included the pastor, the pastor and members of Trinity began to be invited to other churches programs. Trinity also started to re-associate its self with the community and the neighborhood. See Appendix D.

Some ministries that were not included in the list were ministries that were revised and reestablished, such as board of evangelism, Usher Board, Bible study, and missionary society, in which for the first time in Trinity’s church history had a member from Trinity to serve as a delegate to the 16th Quadrennial Assembly Women’s Missionary Council in August 2007. These boards are continued ministries that are permanently in place to enhance the services and worship experience of Trinity.

Ministries And Programs Highlights (Selective)

The researcher will highlight selective ministries and programs that were implemented by Trinity. The researcher has found some of these ministries to work well in other ministry settings that she served in, and thought that they would do well at Trinity. According to the members and community, Trinity was viewed as very creative. Some of the programs had never been carried out by some of the surrounding churches in Gainesville Georgia prior to this.

Life Line Mission Ministry

Life Line Mission was a ministry developed to demonstrate through major repairs to the outside and inside structure of the building that Trinity was still alive. Trinity
developed a slogan, *Trinity Alive On Black Drive*. Life Line Mission focused on networking and reaching out to others in the community for help.

The researcher first called a meet and greet social at Trinity, where the pastor shared some of the visions for Trinity’s renewal, and invited the neighbors and the community to hear about some of the plans and to offer suggestions. The county commissioner was present and offered her support. The meeting did give some insight as to how to get the Life Line project going.

In the next step that was taken, the pastor contacted a news reporter from the Gainesville Times to come out and do an interview and to utilize the media for publication on the Life Line project. There was an article written about Trinity, and an invitation was extended to the community to come and assist with painting and repairs on August 24, 2006. See news article below.
Trinity 'alive on Black Drive' but ready for face-lift

By NIKKI YOUNG
The Times

Black Drive may be a literal dead end, but the church and congregants who reside on it are not, said the pastor of Trinity Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

"We are yet still alive on Black Drive" is the Rev. Joyce Dawson's theme for a revitalization project at the 43-year-old church building. Warped hardwood floors, peeling paint, paneling braced with push-pins and air heavy with moisture greet the some 60 people who attend Sunday services.

Trinity was founded 129 years ago and moved to Black Drive in 1963. Poverty and crime eventually overtook the neighborhood built for black residents in the 1950s off Athens Street and West Ridge Road. The church suffered along with its neighbors, many of whom battle electrical, plumbing, heating and stormwater drainage issues along with pollution from the industrial surroundings.

Like the J.D. Black subdivision, "A lot of people forgot about Trinity," Dawson said.

Now, as Black and Cooley drives are targets of a million-dollar restoration project, Trinity also is preparing for rebirth. The congregation is asking community volunteers to come June 24, paint brush in hand, and give new life to the church.

"We're trying to solicit any help for the church we can," Dawson said. "If improvement is going to take place in the neighborhood, then Trinity should be part of that."

The state Department of Community Affairs has awarded Hall $790,881 in Community Development Block Grant funds to rebuild Black and Cooley drives. Hall County contributed $230,250.
Home Development Resources Inc., a nonprofit affordable housing developer, will administer the funds, which should arrive from the state in the next 15 days, executive director Mary Ledbetter said.

The group will revitalize 14 houses and rebuild four. So far, Ledbetter has received six applications from the neighborhood and many calls of interest in the project.

"We are hoping to finish it by the end of the year," Ledbetter said.

The Newtown Florist Club is already on the move. On May 13, the civil rights group's Newtown Community Land Trust had an open house for its second and third houses built in the neighborhood, said club president Faye Bush.

The two colorful homes on Cooley Drive are offered at $94,900, perfect for a first-time home buyer. A day care worker with two small children bought the Newtown trust's first house on Black Drive in June 2005.

The property is leased for $5 per month from the trust to lower the cost of home ownership. Buyers may purchase the home through the club, Bush said.

"We try to help them find services that might finance it for them," she said.

Bush said the trust owns two more lots, one on Black and one on Cooley, that they plan to develop.

As the neighborhood reaches its potential, Dawson said she wants to draw more young people to Trinity. That means organizing more programs and activities, lack of which often causes youths to choose megachurches over their home church. It also will require tearing up the stained carpet and replacing warped flooring in the children's worship area.

Black Drive resident Audrey Glenn, a longtime member of Trinity, said the needed repairs will make the church feel more like a proud place of worship.

"If we had some money, we would have it looking good," she said.

Trinity recently purchased two new front doors that will face Black Drive. Coincidentally, they are symbolic of Dawson's vision for Trinity.

"My goal is to reconnect the church with the neighborhood."

Contact: nyoun@gainesvilletimes.com; (770) 718-3428

Originally published Saturday, May 20, 2006
inside of the building. There were a number of groups; businesses and individuals that made contributions see Appendix F for complete list. On the day of the Life Line Project, there were over 35 people from the community, 13 people from Hopewell United Methodist Church, including the pastor Susan Taylor, and 15 members from Trinity that showed up as early as 8:00 to assist with painting, cleaning, trash removal, and repairs. With the Support of the community, it took one day to paint Trinity’s church building inside and out.

The County Commissioner, Debra Mack, introduced the researcher to Brain Rochester from Lakewood Baptist Church, the largest Baptist Church in Gainesville Georgia. Brain Rochester and the researcher scheduled a meeting with his church mission group and the Trustee from Trinity to discuss how Lakewood could assist in Helping Trinity to complete its Life Line Mission Ministry.

The Life Line Mission project concluded with Lakewood Baptist Church building a state of the ark handicap ramp for Trinity and supplying the material for a new roof and installing the roof for Trinity. Lakewood Baptist Church also donated a reliable van to Trinity, which has helped tremendously in picking up members for church who had not attended in years.
ROOF REPAIRS ---------- BEFORE AND AFTER

TRINITY C.M.E. CHURCH
1059 BLACK DR
GAINESVILLE GA 30501
770 536 7774
Another important contributor that assisted Trinity in completing its life Line Mission Ministry project was The Oldham Little Church Foundation. The researcher submitted a proposal for a grant in the amount of $6,500 to have drainage work done to Trinity’s fellowship hall. The Foundation granted Trinity $5,000 for drainage repairs. The repairs enabled Trinity to once again use the fellowship hall for various occasions.

When there are signs of life from the inside and outside of a church, there is always an inquiry from outsiders as to what is going on, and in many cases lead those from outside to the inside.

Cooley Drive and Black Drive Revitalization Project

In effort to get the community involved in the revitalization project that was taking place in the neighborhood, the researcher was asked by the County Commissioner to allow Trinity to become the neighborhood’s meeting place for discussion of the project. It turned out that the researcher was identified by the neighbor as an advocate for helping members of the community to understand what was going on. The researcher efforts to support the neighborhood opened a door for the neighbors to fellowship with Trinity. They learned more about the researcher through her support with the revitalization project and began visiting Trinity for Sunday worship and community bible study.

Community Bible Study

At the beginning of the 2006-2007 Conference year, two local ministers, after observing the researcher during the 2005-2006 conference year, offered themselves to the work of Trinity as local ministers. One of the ministers is a seminary graduate, and teaches at Brenau University, and the other minister is a student attending Gainesville
State College, and is extremely gifted in offering ministry to young adults. These two very capable ministers rotate the community bible study at Trinity. The community has been responding, along with the members of Trinity, to the bible study. When researchers asked a neighbor what did she think about the community bible study, she responded that she appreciated the convenience of not having to leave the neighborhood and that the bible study teaches were really doing a great job at Trinity. Trinity's community bible study has increased in attendance from 8 members from Trinity, to 18 to 20 with the inclusion of neighbors, family, and friends. Bible study is offered every Wednesday at 7:00 and ends at 8:00. Not only are the members of Trinity experiencing spiritual growth through the classes, the entire community has the invitation and opportunity to grow spiritually through the bible studies conducted at Trinity CME Church. Having the opportunity to help shape peoples lives through effective teaching is what classify ministry as good ministry.

**Black History Programs**

Two Black History programs hosted by Trinity afforded Trinity tremendous acknowledgement as a church with a strong presence in the Gainesville community.

Trinity presented *A Preaching Performance of James Weldon Johnson*, entitled “God’s Trombones.” Preachers from both large and small congregations were invited to preach one of the sermons in their own creative way. The performances were expressive and energetic. The community of Gainesville packed the pews of Trinity to hear their favorite preacher perform one of James Weldon Johnson’s sermons. The production provided a historical moment for Trinity in that the production had not been performed previously by any of the surrounding African American churches in Gainesville.
The second Black History program hosted by Trinity was the invitation to hear a	hrenown historian, civil rights activist, educator, and author, Love Henry Whelchel. The
program was publicized through the media and church notification that Dr. Love H.
Whelchel would be speaking at Trinity CME Church for Trinity’s Black History
program. See ad below.

*A True Historian Visits Gainesville*

The Dr. Love H. Whelchel, professor of Church History at the
**Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC)** will be the guest
speaker at *Trinity C.M.E church on February 18, 2007 at the 11:00
worship service*. The Theme for the worship service is, “He brought
us out to bring us in.”

You are invited to come and be apart of this awesome worship service.
The church is located at 1059 Black Drive, Gainesville Georgia, 30506.

*A Biographical Sketch of Love Henry Whelchel, Jr*

Love Henry Whelchel is the recipient of the B.A. degree from Paine
College, Augusta Georgia; the S.T.B degree from Boston University
School of Technology, Boston, Massachusetts; the M.A. degree from
New York University, New York City; and the Ph.D. degree from Duke
University, Durham, North Carolina.

Love Henry Whelchel served as pastor for twenty eight years. he was
an effective minister in both the Baptist and the Christian Methodist
Episcopal church.

In, Birmingham, Alabama, he served as the Vice-President of the
Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (an affiliate of Dr.
Martin Luther King’s SCLC). During his tenre in Birmingham, he was
deeply involved in the 1963 Civil Rights demonstrations, the Selma
to Montgomery Voting Rights march, and the spring of 1968 he
initiated an economic boycott against job discrimination in Ensley,
Alabama. Dr. Love Henry Whelchel is one of the founders and the first
president of the Ensley-Pratt City NAACP. In Durham North Carolina he
championed the liberation of Wilmington Ten, which ultimately led to
the freedom of Reverend Benjamin Chavis from prison.

For seventeen years (1988-2005) he served as chair of the
Department of Religion and Philosophy and Professor of Religion at
Clark Atlanta University.
Some of his publications include: *My Chains Fell Off, How Long this Road, and Hell Without Fire.*

Present in the congregation for the delivery of the message by Whelchel, were representatives from the Mayor Mark Musselwhite Council Members, representatives from Gainesville’s school districts, church leaders, the county commissioner for the Black Drive area, and family members of Whelchel.

**Alternative to Halloween**

The Young Adults of Trinity decided that instead of restricting their children and those in the neighborhood from the celebration of Halloween because of its pagan custom, the Young Adults planned a Hallelujah Fest for the entire block of Black Drive and other surrounding blocks. A participation meeting was held at Trinity in early September for coordination and participation from the neighborhood. The neighborhood responded well and joined in with Trinity for the Hallelujah Fest that was hosted on October 31, 2007 from 6:00 to 8:00. There were games, face painting, cakewalks, sack rags, a moonwalk for the children to enjoy, and plenty of food for everyone to feast on.

The Hallelujah Fest provided the opportunity for the people in the neighborhood to re-kindled friendship, meet and greet, and to learn more about who Trinity CME was in the community, and witness one of the ministries of Trinity that is serving its community. Most importantly, the Hallelujah Fest was a successful activity that provided an exciting time for all who attended while falling under the umbrella of the church.
Many of the programs and ministries that were implemented at Trinity, and that will continue as annual programs and ministries will continue to greatly enhance the effectiveness of Trinity as a community church that is identified as a church that is providing ministries to its members and community, and a good place for worship.

As stated by Robert C. Linthicum, in his book, *Empowering the Poor*: "Being an effective church will strengthen the churches credibility in its community. The community will view that church as having a strong sense of concern for it, as a community, and believe that church to have joined with them. Being very present in the community strengthens the chances of becoming apart of the community organizers that get great responses from the community, because of their work."\(^4\)

The steps taken for an effective implementation of the model used in the transformation of ministries at Trinity CME Church between August 2006 and November 2007 were provided through the researcher’s proposed Doctor of Ministry project. The purpose of the project was to change the outlook of Trinity starting with the members and then the community. It can be stated that the project was effective through observation of interaction and participation; however, in order to determine levels of success an evaluation of the project was included. Evaluations are excellent tools for measuring outcome. The next chapter of this dissertation will discuss various types of evaluations that were used to determine the outcome of *Revising and Implementing Ministries That Will Rejuvenate The Life and Identity of Trinity CME Church*.

CHAPTER VI

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROJECT

In some instances evaluations are used at the end of a project and in other instances evaluations are used continuously through programming. The researcher discovered early on in the implementing phase of the project for Trinity that the programs and ministries that previously existed at Trinity had to be evaluated. The evaluation was instrumental in helping to determine the programs and ministries effectiveness or ineffectiveness. Depending on the effectiveness of the programs evaluated, some programs that were already in place would be eliminated before establishing the new ministries that the members decided on during the planning stage.

As stated in the *Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook*, “Effective evaluation is not an “event” that occurs at the end of a project, but is an ongoing process which helps decision makers better understand the project; how it is impacting participants, partner agencies, and the community; and how it is being influenced/impacted by both internal and external factors. Thinking of evaluation tools in this way allows you to collect and analyze important data for decision making throughout the life of a project. We also believe that evaluation should not be conducted simply to prove that a project worked, but also to improve the way it works.”

The pre-evaluation that took place early on in the implementing of the project before the final evaluations aided in the success of the members as a group. The pre-

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evaluation as described in the *Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook* is the “participatory evaluation”. This will be the first type of evaluation discussed by the researcher in this evaluating phase.

**Participatory Evaluation: Members, Neighbors, And Pastor**

At the end of the Georgia North Region, of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church conference in July of 2007 a meeting was set for August of 2007 for all participants of the project. The participants included the members, neighbors, and community of Trinity C.M.E. Church. A questionnaire was developed through a set of questions formulated by the researcher with assistance from the use of the Kellogg Foundation evaluation Handbook. Each participant was asked to give rigorous though and effort to answering the questions. The responses were expected to define measurable means for the project. See Appendix A.

This evaluation was conducted in a workshop setting. Some of the implemented programs were displayed on charts through out the workshop setting in order for members, neighbors, and participants from the community to recapture some of the ministries that took place through the project set dates.

**The Members Voice Project As A Measuring Tool**

Members Voice Project (MVP) is a research project conducted by the Institute for Black Religious Life (IBRL) at the Interdenominational Theological Center. The purpose was to share information on the role of the religion in the African American community. The researcher used the survey from the MVP with the members of Trinity the previous year for a class assignment. She thought that the project would serve as an excellent tool for measuring some of the outcome as a result of the dissertation project. It
was determined by the researcher that the project allowed both laity and clergy that belong to a body defined as a church to express what is it like to be apart of an organization that is operating accordingly or a part of an organization that has identified the need for change within the organization. The project did exactly what it needed to do. The project showed that many churches under the leadership of Black pastors are spiritually alive or are working towards transforming the life of the church.

Before conducting the MVP questionnaire, the researcher spent time discussing the importance of participating in the MVP questionnaire and how it could help the members in strengthening their voices individually and as one body of believers belonging to Trinity CME Church. Several illustrations and church responses from the MVP project were shared with the members of Trinity. It was determined by the members that some notoriety and good could come out of them being participant of the MVP.

There were four building blocks used in the MVP such as **Spiritual Connections**, **Inside Connections**, **Outside Connections**, and **Identity Connections** to examine the vitality of congregations, however, the project itself as used by others, the results were submitted as a calculated percentage of the congregations responses. Trinity responses to the questions were more detailed because Trinity members were able to respond as a group. Listed below are the questions to Trinity and Trinity’s response to the MVP.

**Spiritual Connection**

The members initially struggled with how to articulate their experience to their Spiritual Connection, but after explaining that “for the Christian theology is an attempt to describe the experience of God’s grace applied in a redemptive relationship” the
members were clear. The researcher went on to explain, “a living experience may be analyzed, but it can never be completely contained.”

“Christians may identify with Paul in Corinthians 12: 3-4, I had such an experience that it cannot be told; in fact, it does not seem appropriate to speak about.” The members became clear on how they wanted to response to the question. The members described their connections through prayer, giving, sermons, and working in the church. They expressed that those were things that made them feel closer to God. The members expressed that in previous times they did not feel connected to God. Ministry of Music was another expression of their Spiritual Connection, as stated by the members of Trinity. Some went on to say that the music has helped them in their worship experience to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in their worshipping God during the Sunday and Bible Study services.

**Inside Connections**

The members of Trinity expressed that they realize now more than previously that participation in the churches boards, programs, and ministries is crucial to the vitality and growth of Trinity. The members stated that being active in the church now helps them in staying focused spiritually and living a more balanced life. At one time they had no idea of how they would revive the many ministries that should have been active previously to the changes made at Trinity. “And indeed these were ministries as required and suggested by the Book of Discipline of the CME Church,” stated one long time member of Trinity. The members now feel a strong sense of belonging. The members stated that their inside connection to Trinity keeps them supportive in the giving of tithes and offerings. Others

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3 Ibid., 7.
stated that they are now tithing, but also give additional funds in support of Trinity now that they feel more connected to the church and its new identity.

**Outside Connection**

The members expressed that they are now excited about connecting with people outside of the church and looks forward to participating and supporting others. The members expressed not only were they committed to inviting others in the community to come share and experience the renewal at Trinity, but they were proud not only to invite them, but also to bring them to Trinity for services. The members stated that they are grateful that they are able to identify with others outside of the church that may have needs. The members were excited that through the improvement of the churches Benevolence funds they could help others in making their lives a little more comfortable.

**Identity Connection**

Identity Connection was a major piece for Trinity and was emotional being that the members struggled at one time with the issue of identity as a church and discovered themselves in a state of hopelessness. Trinity response, “it has taken a lot for us to come to this point in our identity whereas we are clear as individuals and as a church about who we are, what we offer, and our uniqueness. We have discovered in our doing that being a small congregation does not make us ineffective. The one thing about us being a small church is that we can and will offer personalized ministries to those in need. Offering ministries to others is one that stronger relationships can be developed.” Trinity members stated that they are excited that people all over Gainesville Georgia are impressed with the bible study and the leadership that conducts the bible study to members and the community. One member stated, “Can you imagine being as small as we are, and having
a committed Master level degreed teacher teaching the class?” There is so much clarity in the teaching and life relating issues that take place in the class, as one member put it. In addition to responding to the Identity Connection the members expressed that they strongly believe that there is now a clear vision for the future of their congregation. It can be determined definitely that through the responses of the questions asked in the Members Voice Project that Trinity has experienced growth in their faith in God’s ability to help. There has also been growth in their effort to follow through on the work they have committed themselves to in the church.

The CME Church Pastoral Report, As an Evaluation Tool

At the end of each church conference year each preacher that has been appointed to a church the previous year is required to make a written “Pastoral Report” for submission to the presiding elder and the presiding bishop. The report is supposed to show the growth of ministry that took place in his or her ministry setting. The report also allows the preacher to highlight significant ministries that took place doing the conference year. The researcher used the Pastorals Reports from conference year 2005, 2006, and 2007 to measure the effectiveness and the growth that has taken place from the time the researcher was appointed to Trinity in 2005 up until the completion of the project that went forth at Trinity CME Church. See Appendix C.

Members Reported

In 2005 when the researcher arrived at Trinity she discovered that the previous pastor had reported a total of 94 active members. The 94 members reported included 14 new members for that year. The researcher completed an evaluation of the members on roll, and discovered that there were 83 people on roll. The 83 on the roll did not include
the 14 new members reported by the previous pastor. Because there was no way to verify the 14 members the researcher adjusted the numbers according to the accountability evaluation conducted. She started her actual count with 83 members for the first year. From 2005 to 2006 there was an increase in membership on roll by a total of 3 people.

From 2006 to 2007 there was an increase in membership on role by a total of 8 people bringing the total count of members on roll at Trinity C.M.E Church to 94 members. The 2007 to 2008 report has not been calculated for the close of this conference year, but there has been continuous membership growth taking place at Trinity CME Church.

**Active Members**

While there is a total of 94 members accounted for on roll, there are not 94 active members of Trinity C.M.E Church. At the end of the previous pastor's 2005 conference year he reported a total of 35 active members. From 2005 to 2006 the active membership increased from 35 active members to 45 active members. From 2006 to 2007 the active membership increased even more. Trinity went from 45 active members in 2005 to 2006 to a total of 55 active members. Members are reuniting with Trinity and are becoming more active in Trinity’s ministries and programs.

**Ministries to God’s People**

At the close of the 2005 Conference Year the previous pastor preached 50 sermons, taught 0 Bible studies, taught 0 Sunday School Classes, and conducted no Vacation Bible School and no Revivals were held.

**Conference Year 2005 to 2006** the current pastor preached 54 sermons, taught 24 Bible Study Classes, taught 12 Sunday School Classes and developed an Adult
Sunday School class and a Children’s Sunday School Class, and a One Week Vacation Bible School was held, and 2 Revivals were held.

**Conference Year 2006 to 2007** 56 sermons were preached, 36 Bible Study Classes were held, the Adult and Children Sunday School Classes continued, and Vacation Bible School was held, and 2 Revivals were held.

**The Nurture of God’s People**

2005- Christian Youth Fellowship (according to members of Trinity inactive)

2005/2006- Christian Youth Fellowship active

2006/2007 Christian Youth Fellowship active and participating at district level

**Laymen’s Counsel**

2005 Inactive

2005/2006 Inactive

2006/2007 Active and participated on the district level of the Georgia North Conference Laymen’s Counsel.

**Women’s Missionary Society**

2005 Active (Non participation status)

2005/2006 Active (Sponsored missionary Sunday)

2006/2007 Active (Hosted a Women in White program, Sponsored Missionary Sunday, and had 2 member to join the Missionary Board)

**The Stewardship of God’s People**

2005- Total Funds Raised ($30.000.00)

2005/2006 -Total Funds Raised ($37.000.00)

2006/2007- Total Funds Raised ($45.000.00)
2006/2007- ($10,000.00) was raised through special programs held at Trinity.

According to the Pastoral Reports for Trinity C.M.E Church from 2005 to 2007 Conference year there was a significant increase in services and ministries. The number of members increased, programs and ministries increased and improved, and the churches finances increased, as a result of the researchers implementing the dissertation project, Revising and Implementing Ministries that will Rejuvenate the Life and Identity of Trinity CME Church.

All methods of evaluations conducted by the researcher verified that renewal of church identity through revised ministries is effective in turning small churches around. Churches can go from having no identity to being identified through revised and new ministries.

**Summary And Conclusions**

Initially Trinity CME Church was faced with a number of existing issues that stagnated the church in its movement forward. It was more complex than imaginable of what it would take for Trinity to reclaim itself as a community Church. Lead by the researcher Trinity was able to identify with its most pressing issue through group meetings involving members, neighbors, and the community, and evaluating the previous conditions of the church. Trinity realized that as a church they were no longer who they used to be to their community. Trinity identified their most pressing issue. Trinity lacked a Strong Church Identity. The researcher investigated through the theoretical framework on declining congregations that once lacked strong church identity and discovered literature in the area of study that gave examples of how transformation could take place
in small congregation. The question that had to be asked was, can Trinity CME Church located at the dead end of Black Drive renew their identity, and if so how?

The question was asked of Trinity, is each member willing to become committed to the churches renewal project? The response to the question was yes. Through a one team one body of believers approach, the project of Revising and Implementing Ministries that would Rejuvenate the Life and Identity of Trinity C.M.E Church, which in terms would reach out to its neighbors and community through its New Identity.

**The Researcher’s Final Intentions For The Project**

Projects are developed and implemented with the end or continuing goal in mind that they will have visual and measurable results, and be clear about what difference they will make to a specific group are people. Through implementation of the researchers project the researcher final intentions was for the project to serve as a change agent. The project needed to be a change agent for Trinity CME Church, members of the neighborhood and the community, and lastly, the project needed to help the researcher identify with change within herself as the researcher and a full participant of the project.

It was important for Trinity to experience change in its identity in that the church would be viewed once again as the community church and a good place to come for worship, programs, and ministries. And always discover ways for continuing, evaluating, revising, and implementing ministries as they become pressing to the change of its community.

The neighborhood needed to reconnect with its neighboring church and the church needed to be identified as a part of its neighborhood that could work together.
For the researcher the intention was to conclude the project with having developed improved skilled for assisting in church transformation through the witnessing of the members great contributions, insight of literature, and the ability to know how to offer hope to others in hopeless situations; And also to conclude that major projects can be accomplished in little and big ways. This would have to include those who find themselves hopeless accepting assistance and support from those who will join in to help.

The final results of the project was the intention for the project to have worked and become a viable tool with a practical application that can be used to assist other churches in reclaiming their church identity through Revising and Implementing ministries.

**Future Implications for Ministry**

While great accomplishment have been made through the project it is intended for Trinity to continue to be aware of what they have to offer as a church. In order to continue to experience growth, maintain their status, or excel their existing status, Community, solutions, and developments must consist of the pastor, the members, the neighbors, and the community. One well suggested method for ensuring future implications for ministry will be for the church to conduct mid year focus groups to determine if at the time of the focus group each member that is apart of the churches transformation is still developing and participating, and if not, what will it take to redirect their focus back to the churches growth.

Trinity is in the right space of existence in ministry for doing exceedingly more than what they have accomplished already, and getting others to join them in accomplishing more. The motivation and the mindset of the members are great and
continuously improving, the neighbors and the community have proven to be partnering with Trinity.
APPENDIX A

PROPOSED MINISTRIES FOR TRINITY CME CHURCH

Identify Your Ministry of Intent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Describe your interest</th>
<th>List Time &amp; Cost</th>
<th>Targeted age group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How will you promote the ministry</td>
<td>How will Trinity be different</td>
<td>How often will ministry occur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

IDENTITY QUESTIONNAIRE

Member's Name_______________________ Present Board Serving________________

Describe the identity of Trinity in your own words:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Describe who Trinity is to the surrounding community:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What uniqueness does Trinity posses, that other surrounding churches do not posses?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Describe one thing about Trinity that draws others to come and worship with Trinity:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
APPENDIX C

Sixth Episcopal District
Theme: “From Good to Great”
Pastoral Report 2007

Regional Conference
Presiding Elder's District
Church
Pastor

(A) The Number of God’s People

Members Reported in 2006

Members Received This Year:
1. By Conversion
2. By Christian Experience
3. By Letter of Transfer
   Total Members Received

Members Lost This Year:
1. By Death
2. By Transfer
3. Lost Sight

Members Reporting for 2007

Present Active Membership:
Children
Youth
Young Adults
Middle Age
Older/Senior
   Total Active Members

(B) The Ministry to God’s People

Sermons Preached
Bible Study Classes
Sunday School
Vacation Bible School Yes No

(C) The Nurture of God’s People

Christian Board of Education
Women Missionary Society
Commission on Evangelism
Christian Training Institute

(D) The Stewardship of God’s People

Total Conference Assessment
Total Conference Assessment Paid
Total Paid Pastor for Salary
Total Funds Raised This Year

(E) The Care of God’s Property

Value of Church Property
Balance of Mortgage
Amount of Ins on Church

99
APPENDIX D

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

130th Church Anniversary
First Annual Music Workshop
A Preaching Performance of James Weldon Johnson: God’s Trombone
Dr. Love H. Whelchel, Educator, Author, Civil Right Leader, as Black History guest
Youth and Young Adult Summit
Spring Revival
First Annual Children’s Day
A week of Vacation Bible School: Hidden Treasures
Senior Choir Sponsored Old Ship of Zion Musical
Pew Rally Service: A Reunion Service for members, family, and friends
APPENDIX E

TRINITY CME CHURCH OFFICERS AND BOARDS

FOR CONFERENCE YEAR 2007

Church Treasurer
1 Treasurer and Trainee

Missionaries
1 President
2 Members
1 Trainee

Steward Board
1 Chairman
1 Recorder and Trainee
3 Financial Attendees

Class Leaders
3 Class Leaders
2 Trainees

Trustee Board
3 Trustees and Trainee

Usher Board
1 President
3 Members

Stewardesses Board
1 President
4 Stewardesses
3 Trainees

Choirs
Senior Choir and Young Adult
Young Adult Choir

Sunday School Superintendent and Teachers
1 Superintendent
2 Teachers

Publication
2 Members

Board of Christian Education
1 Director

Children Ministries
Children Church
Acolytes
Trinity Voices of Joy Choir

Christian Youth Fellowship
1 President
All Youth and Young Adult Members
APPENDIX F
LIST OF CONTRIBUTIONS

- The members and family members of Trinity C.M.E Church pledged and paid a total of $3,500.00.
- Oldham Little Church Foundation contributed $5000.00 in grant money for roof and basement repairs.
- Reverend Cheryl Bost contributed $300.00.
- Reverend Brown family members from Savannah contributed $1,900.00
- Lakewood Baptist Church purchased materials for a Handicapped ramp and installed the ramp.
- Lakewood Baptist Church donated a 1996 Chevrolet for $1.00.
- Flowery Branch Paint Company donated 50 gallons of paint, paintbrushes, paint pans and drop clothe.
- Hopewell United Methodist Church volunteered their time and energy to assist Trinity in painting the entire Church in one day.
- The neighbors of Black Drive donated food for the Life Line painting and ramp building event.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


