The church and the addict: a model of transformation involving persons from the addictive community and the congregation of Southside CME church, Birmingham, Alabama

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THE CHURCH AND THE ADDICT:
A MODEL OF TRANSFORMATION INVOLVING PERSONS FROM
THE ADDICTIVE COMMUNITY AND THE CONGREGATION OF
SOUTHSIDE CME CHURCH, BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

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submitted to the faculties of the schools of the
Atlanta Theological Association
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Doctor of Ministry
at
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2008
ABSTRACT

THE CHURCH AND THE ADDICT:
A MODEL OF TRANSFORMATION INVOLVING PERSONS FROM
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May 2008
117 pages

The purpose of this project was to empower the congregation of the Southside CME Church to actively work with persons from the addictive community in order to help them recover from their addictions. Although the project begun from an evangelistic campaign, it soon developed into a recovery ministry because of the needs expressed by a small group of members who joined the Southside family. The church’s response gave rise to efforts to cultivate positive attitudes between the addicts and the church. It was these positive attitudes that not only gave the church family the desire to work with persons who were addicted, but also gave persons who were addicted the desire to be a part of the services that were being rendered. The net effect of this communion between the addict and the church was that each group grew closer to their greatest potential because they were mutual benefactors of the services they provided for each other. In this regard, both groups were transformed.

The model provided as a result of this ministry is ongoing and can be modified to meet future needs.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am forever appreciative and indebted to so many for the encouragement and support given as I pursued this goal. I acknowledge my wife, Carmen, whose personal sacrifice has always supported me in my many pursuits. To my children, Samantha, Sylvia and Sylvester II, whose faith in me was a constant inspiration, I simply say thank you. I also acknowledge my parents, Edward (deceased) and Georgiana Williams, who taught me to value education and who gave me a foundation and a passion for ministry. My siblings, George (Mary), Barbara (John), Gladys (Roosevelt), Dr. Abraham Smith, along with their families, were no less encouraging and supportive.

Aside from my immediate family, I am grateful for Episcopal Leaders, particularly, Bishop Paul A. G. Stewart, Sr., who has compassionately mentored, relentlessly encouraged, and graciously provided me with opportunities to serve in ministry. I am grateful to the Southside C.M.E. Church Family in Birmingham, Alabama, for embracing the ministry, and the Carter Temple C.M.E. Church Family in Chicago, Illinois, for helping me to complete this academic pursuit.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

As an ordained minister in the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, the author of this dissertation has been an itinerant pastor for over twenty years. Initially he served as pastor of several churches in Alabama while pursuing the master of divinity degree from the Phillips School of Theology, at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia. He then moved to pastor Mt. Olive CME Church in Orlando, Florida, and after a relatively short tenure there, he was relocated to Birmingham, Alabama, where he served as pastor of the Southside CME Church. It was this congregation that provided the catalyst, the context, and the motivation for his work with persons in recovery and subsequently the pursuit of the doctor of ministry degree.

Through the years, there have been an increasing number of persons who are abusing drugs. According to a 2005 report issued by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA), an estimated 19.7 million Americans aged twelve or older were current illicit drug users. As of the same year, SAMHSA reports the rate of illicit drug use among youths age twelve to seventeen to be 9.9 percent. Statistics also report a 6.3 percent rise in the non-medical use of prescription type drugs among young adults aged eighteen to twenty-five.¹ Not only has the number abusers increased, but the availability of illicit drugs has also increased. Darnell Little supports this thought.

¹Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) Report available from: http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh/2k5nsduh/2k5results.htm#ch2: Internet; accessed 26 November 2006.
in an article appearing in the Chicago Tribune by writing, “Twenty-five years after President Ronald Reagan declared a war on drugs, many law enforcement officials and criminologist say drugs are now more potent, and as easily available as ever.”2

There are many societal problems associated with the rise in drug abusers. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports “17% of State prisoners and 18% of Federal inmates said they committed their current offense to obtain money for drugs.”3 Because of the high crime rate, many people are fearful of being victimized and are therefore imprisoned in their own homes. Additionally, the National Institute on Drug Abuse estimated the total economic cost of drug abuse to be $97.7 billion. The estimate includes substance abuse treatment and prevention costs as well as other healthcare costs to society such as crime and welfare.4

As a result of the rise in illicit drug abuse, the church can no longer stand idly by. In the past, many churches have traditionally interpreted addiction and those who are addicted as persons to be shunned. It has been thought that they could simply choose to stop using drugs and their continued use meant they were just intentional sinful beings to be dismissed. Yet the statistical data showing the rise in the number of abusers, including church members or their families, along with the increased awareness of substance abuse and its associated problems, has moved the family of faith to develop ministries for those

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who are addicted and who desire recovery. Giving impetus to the church’s role, Ron Nored states, “the church could not be true to the gospel message we preach, or the faith we claim to possess, if we fail to act out our faith in practical and relevant ways.”\(^5\) In this context, the author of this dissertation contends that the church’s involvement is crucial in supporting the recovering community and moving the society toward wholeness.

Not only does Nored give support to this argument, but Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu has noted that drugs, crime, and poverty are among the highest ranking problems in the community, and that the decline in attendance at many churches, particularly among men, is due to the feeling that churches are irrelevant when it comes to addressing the needs of the community.\(^6\) If this is the case, there is an obvious positive correlation between church growth and relevant ministries. Therefore at a time when drugs are so prevalent and are causing so many problems in our society, not only should the church offer leadership in combating this issue, but by so doing, the church will ensure its viability in the community as well.

**The Ministry Issue**

The issue for consideration is how the church community of faith, Southside CME Church, can work with the addictive recovering community, in a manner that encourages recovery for the addicted and continued transformation for both groups. It is hopeful that by these two groups working together, an effective program could be specifically designed to meet the needs of the recovering community. Additionally, as the two

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groups' work together to promote recovery, mutual benefits would be realized. The addictive community would move toward recovery while the church community would move toward a greater discovery and/or rediscovery of its mission through this ministry. The relationship formed by these two groups would establish a community that would allow growth and transformation for both.

Inherent in the issue are several concerns. First, the community of faith consists of ordinary people who are not necessarily health professionals or addiction therapists. They are only faithful people who are endowed with the gift of the Holy Spirit to believe they can make a difference in the lives of those who suffer from the bondage of addictions. It is with this in mind that the ministry issue gives consideration to the role of ordinary church members in helping to transform persons who are addicted. Not only are the members aiding in their recovery, but they are helping to transform the family, the home, the church, and the community as well.

The second concern has a direct correlation with the first. Inasmuch as the church is composed mainly of people who may not be versed in addiction therapy, there is a need to associate and listen to those who can assist and help in the development of an effective transformational ministry. In this regard, the community of faith does not assume to have all of the answers, nor know all of what is needed for recovery. Wholesome dialogue between the community of faith and the addictive community may be helpful in understanding the needs and concerns relative to addiction. The Christian community
must not approach people as know-it-all-saviors. The result of this dialogue would be programs and services that are needed and appreciated by the addicted community.

The third concern is to create a climate that allows those in recovery to experience the genuine care and concern of the church community. It is probable to assume that persons in recovery are more prone to utilize services or participate in a ministry in which they are respected and where the care and concern of the community of faith is evidenced in all facets of the ministry. Additionally, because members of the recovering community are actively involved from the conception of the ministry, there is a sense of ownership and responsibility toward the success of the program. The combination of these factors will aid in creating a climate that is conducive for transformation and recovery.

**Motivation for the Research**

The author’s motivation for this project derives from a number of persons in his own biological family, as well as the Southside congregation who have experimented with drugs or whose family members have been adversely affected by drug use. Additionally, the church’s evangelistic campaign brought many to the church from shelters, halfway houses, and the community who were either in recovery or expressed a desire to recover. After several weekly meetings with the pastor, the church’s support was requested to help them transform their lives. They further expressed the need for a Narcotics Anonymous meeting site on the south-side of the city. Not only did this propel the author’s involvement with the recovering community, but in retrospect, the author attributes this set of events to God’s call to this ministry. That is, God has called not only

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the Southside CME Church family to be a "saving station,"\textsuperscript{8} but the church family universal to be cognizant of persons suffering from the disease of addiction and to offer much needed assistance to the recovering community.

In his attempt to encourage the community of faith to work with the recovering community, the author seeks to cultivate positive attitudes on behalf of both communities. He affirms that positive attitudes in the church will foster support for the addicted in their recovery. Many times the church has been too silent in addressing this issue. Yet, as "the called of God," the church is to be the transforming light of the world. By attempting to change the attitudes of the church community, the church will, with the help of the recovering community, develop and engage in support ministries to those in recovery. The result of the ministries would be recovery for the addicted while allowing the church not only to fulfill its mission to persons in need, but to be the recipient of the blessings a recovered soul would bring to the church and to the community. The author contends there would be mutual blessings for both communities in that both will be transformed.

\textbf{The Intent of the Project}

Considering the number of persons who are abusing drugs, the initial intent of the project is to aid those desiring recovery to reach their objective. The author contends that the realization of this objective can be enhanced by the church community's demonstration of care and concern for those who desire recovery. Rather than the church ostracizing them and making them feel like rejects of society, the nurturing church, by displaying the compassion of Christ and supporting them with love and understanding,

\textsuperscript{8} "Saving Stations for Addicts," \textit{Christian Century} [Birmingham], 118, no. 14 (May 2, 2001), 11.
gives them a theology that will help them to manage their lives and to take responsibility for their actions and subsequent recovery. The church’s impact can make a profound difference in their transformation.

Although the author suggests that the church can make a profound contribution in aiding the recovery process, he also contends that the church can better meet the needs of the recovering community and tailor a more effective ministry by learning from them. In this regard, the church acknowledges that it does not have all of the answers. This is especially true because the majority of the membership is not usually skilled in recovery. Therefore, the writer suggests that by working together, the church community and the addicted community establish a fellowship that would allow them to share the common goal of recovery.

Although the project was done relative to the church and the addict, it has positive implications for other ministries as well. This writer argues that there are mutual benefits of being a part of transformational communities. He also suggests that many church members do not realize the benefits and are therefore often apprehensive about initiating new ministries. They usually highlight the expenses, both real and perceived, to the church rather than focus on the ministry and how it positively enhances the life and witness of the church. However, when the membership becomes cognizant of the fact that the blessings received, as intangible as they might be, are equally as vital to the life and ministry of the church as what the church gave, then, according to this writer, members may be more open to starting new ministries. This is the sign of a transformed church.

Because of its ministry to persons in recovery, the project should help the church membership to stay mindful of its call and purpose. Accordingly, Dr. Luther E. Smith
maintains, "The Christian identity is not defined in terms of who we are as individuals of faith, it is also defined by who we are as a community of faith. Becoming Christian is more than being personally transformed; it is also participation in a transforming fellowship." In as much as it is possible for churches to become so institutionalized that it focuses more on maintenance than it does on ministry, it is hopeful that this project will provide opportunity for the church to establish what Dr. Luther E. Smith refers to as an "intentional community" and thereby rediscover its call and purpose to care for each other. Cecil Williams agrees when he states, "the church can be the group or community that breaks through exclusivity by making total unconditional acceptance of all people our main issue."

The author of this dissertation seeks to provide a model for contextualizing a ministry to meet the needs of a particular group. Congregations and groups are different and have different needs. In order for ministry to be effective, the individual group needs must be met. This project demonstrates how the church community and the addicted community combined their efforts and according to Dr. Luther E. Smith, "tailored aspects of religious communalism to fit the character and needs of the congregation."

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10 Ibid., 18.


Lastly, by promoting positive attitudes and perceptions a community conducive for recovery and transformation may be realized. The writer maintains that wholesome dialogue, education, and the Holy Spirit will help foster such community.

It is quite evident that the writer of this dissertation is optimistic about the possibilities of the church and the addict working together for the well-being of all concerned. He sees the healing brought about through recovery through faithful eyes. He is not so naïve as to think that he or any small group can do all that is required, nor will recovery happen instantaneously. Yet, by working together with a degree of commitment to the cause, great strides can be made toward recovery and transformation. He further contends that the church can and should play a vital role in this mission.

**Definition of Terms**

There are three words in the title that demand understanding: church, addict, and transformation. Again, the author re-emphasizes that the church is a group of people who share a common belief and faith. In the Christian context, it refers to the community of faith who are called out and set apart for the continued work and ministry of Christ. In his book, *Beyond Charity the Call to Christian Community Development*, John Perkins refers to the local church as “the community of believers who are intentionally linked together in worship and service.”\(^\text{13}\) Perkins further clarifies that the authentic Christian church serves others by absorbing the pain of those who are hurting, proclaiming hope to those in despair, pointing to God's authority, reflecting God's character, bringing people together, giving to those in need, and protecting the vulnerable.\(^\text{14}\) Realizing that the

\(^\text{13}\) Perkins, *Beyond Charity*, 149.

\(^\text{14}\) Ibid., 53.
church refers to the community of faith for whom Christ died, with whom Christ dwells and through whom Christ purposes are realized, the author of this dissertation uses the terms church and community of faith synonymously.

An addict as defined by the book of Narcotics Anonymous is one whose obsessive and compulsive behavior renders their life controlled by drugs. Drug addiction can be characterized by physical, emotional and psychological dependence. Intense cravings make the addict want to use drugs again and again regardless to the potentially negative consequences.

By definition, to be transformed is to have a change in nature or character. As it relates to addiction, transformation is to change the character of persons who are addicted such that they can control the obsessive and compulsive behavior that renders their lives unmanageable. For the addict, to be transformed is to have a renewed mind and realize that their future does not have to be handicapped by addiction.

Transformation has a biblical heritage in Romans 12:2 with the exhortation, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect” (NRSV). The exhortation implies that God desires humankind to live holy, upright, moral, and abundant lives. The abundant life and future to which God calls can be hindered by the negative influences and pressures of the world. To be transformed is to realize the future that God desires for humankind and for all humans to accept the responsibility for helping to bring about that future as the will of God unfolds.

Realizing the future God desires for everyone, according to Bryant L. Myers there are two goals of transformation: the recovery of identity and the recovery of
vocation. Because transformation requires a renewal of the mind, people must view themselves as people of worth. This is important for the addicts who have often internalized negative self-images that makes them feel they are truly God-forsaken and hopeless. "No transformation can be sustainable unless this distorted, disempowering sense of identity is replaced by the truth." The truth is that even the addicted are people made in the "image of God" and are called to a glorious future.

In addition to recovering identity, Myers second goal of transformation is to recover a sense of vocation. It is ones vocation that gives a sense of self-worth, importance, and dignity. When persons from the addictive community are given jobs and responsibilities, and are made to feel they are important, their dignity is enhanced.

"If there is integrity in a transformative relationship, both parties experience transformation." In this regard, transformation is not unidirectional. As it relates to the church and the addict, although the church seeks to aid the addict in recovery, it too is helped. Virgil Gulker in his book, Helping You Is Helping Me, highlights this point by stating, "there are built-in rewards to helping other people, hidden benefits. They can't always be predicted or controlled like the return on a certificate of deposit. But they are very real." The church community by giving of its time, talents, and resources which may include money is blessed with the opportunity to engage in a present demonstration

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16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., 185.

of God’s compassion and love for humankind as it fulfills its mission to the world. In return, the church would receive more ministry workers and church leaders, enhanced family structures and better communities. The addicts having received support and assistance during their recovery can now render support to the very ministries and organizations of the church that led to their recovery; they often become heralds for its programs and services. Needless to say, those who are recovering may have a greater influence when relating to others who are still struggling with addiction than persons who have never been addicted and are thus far removed from its often painful realities. It is with this in mind that as the addicted community and the church community work together, both groups are transformed.

Outline of Dissertation

Chapter 1 has provided an overview of the project. Accordingly, an attempt has been made to ascertain how the church community and the addictive community could work together to achieve transformation, how the author became involved, and the optimism for the success of this kind of ministry. Chapter 2 will highlight literature review and theoretical practical applications. This review will give insights to empirical, theological, biblical, and theoretical approaches to addressing and responding to the ministry issue. Additionally, the author will evaluate the findings of several researchers give their impact on the implementation of the project. Chapter 3 will describe how the need met the opportunity. Not only will it highlight the ministry context and the involvement of the community as the larger parish, but how the church understands itself and its ministry in light of its location. Theology will also be considered. Of equal importance are the implications resulting from the leadership assignments by its bishops.
Chapter 4 will describe the application of the project. Care will be given to give an orderly account of what took place, the problems encountered, and the solutions found. Also highlighted will be the biblical principles and pastoral experiences that guided our efforts.

Chapter 5 will allow us to evaluate the project in terms of how the church and the addict worked together to bring about transformation for both groups. By giving consideration to what was provided as well as what was received it may become apparent that transformation is not unidirectional. Consideration will be given to the pastor’s impact on the ministry, the impact of the community of faith on the recovering community, and the impact of the recovering community on the faith community. By understanding the impact that each group had on the other will reveal why the author contends that the caring church is unparalleled in the way it can help those in recovery. In essence, the services that the church can offer are done with compassion and love that is so different and so needed by the recovering addict in contrast to what other social agencies may provide. Also provided will be the summary and conclusions relative to the success of the project, implications for other ministries, limitations of the study, and the impact of the project on the church family, the church at large, and the community.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

In an effort to provide insights to address the issue of the Southside C.M.E. Church and the Addict: A Transforming Community, a literature review was done and will be presented in this chapter. The review presupposes the church as the caring and nurturing entity that could encourage the addict in recovery and bring about a mutual transformation for both groups. The review was broad in nature and gives insights to empirical, theological, biblical, and theoretical approaches to addressing and responding to the issue.

Empirical Literature Review

There were several books revealed and carefully studied for their practicality in offering information relative to addressing the ministry issue from an empirical point of view. In presenting them here, care will be given to highlighting key thoughts from the books, and comments will be made relative to its applicability for modeling and monitoring a ministry of recovery at the Southside C.M.E. Church.

Review of May's Work and Practical Applications

According to Gerald R. May in his book Addiction and Grace, all human beings have an inborn desire for God. Although one may not be consciously religious, it is this inborn yearning that gives life meaning. May expresses this desire further by describing it as the desire to love, to be loved and to be drawn closer to the source of love. He

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maintains that “this God given desire is planted in everyone, nourished by God throughout our lives and draws us toward fulfillment of two great commandments: “Thou shall love thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself.” When love is absent from one’s life, there is a longing for wholeness, completion or fulfillment.

Yet, there are times when the desire for love and the consequent fulfillment of the commandments to love may become so suppressed by other interests that its presence may not be evident. Although the desire is innate, something gets in the way, and lures people to give in to other desires. Because the longing of the heart is repeatedly ignored, the innate desire eventually disappears. People’s innate desire gives way to other desires and causes them to become attached to other interests and subsequent behaviors which they really do not want to do but over which they feel no control. At this point May paraphrases the biblical text written by Paul in Romans 7:14-24: “I do not understand my own behavior; I do not act as I mean to, but I do the things that I hate. Though the will to do what is good is in me the power to do it is not; the good thing I want to do, I never do; the evil thing which I do not want—that is what I do.” According to May, this is sin and the indoctrination to addictions.

Because all of humankind is prone to become attached to desires, May contends that all people suffer from addictions. The same processes that are responsible for chemical addictions in some are also at work in everybody leaving them vulnerable to addictions such as ideas, thoughts, work, power, and relationships. Although the bad side

\[2\] Ibid., 2.

\[3\] Ibid., 3.

\[4\] Ibid., 11.
of addictions renders us sinners, the paradox of addictions is that they can also serve as a catalyst for a growing appreciation for grace. One cannot keep the commandments on their own but only by the grace of God.

In an effort to help understand addictions, May’s definition of addiction is any compulsive, habitual behavior that limits the freedom of human desire. With this in mind attachments can lead to routine behaviors that cause addictions. Furthermore, because behavior is not confined to outward actions but also includes cognitive behavior, thoughts and feelings can also be addictive because the brain associates old attachments. This can also explain why thoughts, images and other sensory associations can trigger relapse in persons who may have been well on their way to recovery. This is May’s way of emphasizing the continuous need for Grace.

Finally, May suggests there are five characteristics of addiction. They are: tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, self-deception, loss of willpower, and distortion of attention. In an attempt to point those with addictive personalities toward recovery and wholeness, May points to several things that may prove beneficial: honesty, dignity, community, responsibility, and simplicity.

Based on May’s work, in order effectively to treat addictions, there must be a return to the point where love is the focus as opposed to other interest. Having outside interests and attachments is not an issue with persons who are chemically addicted only, but it is an issue with all people who put other things before God and are thus addicted.

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5 Ibid., 24.
6 Ibid., 26.
7 Ibid., 126.
As the church members seek to free those who are addicted to drugs and other mind altering substances, they will discover how to free themselves of their own addictions as well.

**Review of Copestake’s Work and Practical Applications**

In his book *With Christ in the World of Drug Addiction*, David R. Copestake suggests that the right way to help the addict is to have the right attitude, the right technique and the right message.\(^8\) The right attitude is to have love as the motive. Love patterns itself after Jesus who had no other motive or hidden agenda. Because he maintains that for whatever reason many addicts have not known love, it is essentially what they want and it will be the key to their recovery.

The right technique is to get to know the addicts and to spend time with them in their environment. This will give them a sense that they are really loved, and that there is a genuine concern. Not only do the addicts experience love and concern, but those who provide services to and for them get an understanding of their atmosphere and their culture.

According to Copestake, the right message to the addict is simply that God wants to do something for them, not that they must do something for God. The message is about God and what God wants to do. At the same time, however, Copestake maintains God does demand the response of loving service and the devotion of the human will. God sent Jesus into the world because God loves humankind. Because of his death and resurrection, the spirit is present and will give them power and purpose in living. The

spirit gives power of deliverance from the grips of evil habits. Whereas this is the simple message of God, care should be given to use a language and style suited for those with whom it is shared.

Copestake’s contribution to addiction treatment is that persons who are serious about helping the addict must be cognizant of how they are perceived by the addict. Care must be given to assure the addict that there is a genuine concern and a desire to help them recover without expecting anything in return but their freedom from addiction. This can only happen when love is at the core of their efforts to help.

Review of Dann’s Work and Practical Applications

Bucky Dann, in his book Addiction: Pastoral Responses notes that to help the addict requires patience, honesty, a nonjudgmental attitude and a carefully maintained willingness not to take the addict’s failures personally. He notes that addiction power lies beyond the control of those who are addicted as well as those who try to help. Accordingly he writes, “Addiction cannot be directed, issued ultimatums, threatened with hell or prison, or driven out. Addiction can only be loved.

When he encourages patience, Bucky declares this virtue is needed by both the addict as well as those who assist them in their recovery. Highlighting slogans like “one day at a time” and “aim low, go slow, and achieve greatly,” is his way of encouraging the addict to exercise patience and to stay focused. Even the addict must learn to be patient with themselves as they work the program of recovery.

Not only does the addict have to be patient, but those working with the addict must also be tolerant. Noting that many addicts do not recover during their first attempt, persons ministering to them must continue to be patient in their struggles and be a stabilizing force when the addict’s world is unstable. Additionally, during their periods of denials and deceit, patience will be a virtue.

In order for the addict to recover, there needs to be a place where they can be honest with themselves especially after periods of relapse. It is a place where failure can be acknowledged and where the addict is held accountable for their actions. It is a place where there is free expression without guilt that allows for true introspection. The addict there learns to face reality without fear of rejection or being made to feel less than human.

Although it is often difficult, it is important that persons who help addicts are not judgmental. In order to be effective at helping the addict, there must be a level of trust established. Trust will not likely be fostered if the addict feels condemned by those who are offering help. The author maintains that remembering one’s own shortcomings can decrease the likelihood of condemning others.

Additionally, maintaining personal boundaries can also be primary in assisting the addict. This will prevent those who are helping the addict from taking it personally when the addict does not comply with good advice. Additionally, boundaries lessen the chance of becoming enablers. As difficult as it may be to watch an addict suffer as a result of their actions, suffering may be the catalyst to their recovery. Hitting “rock bottom” may encourage them to get serious about recovery.
Aside from listing patience, honesty, and a nonjudgmental attitude as important ingredients to help the addict and those who support them in recovery, Bucky Dann lists proper assessments, referrals, individual and family counseling, group therapy, and worship as methods for ministering to the serious recovering addict.

Based on Dann’s work, intolerance and impatience will be adversarial to the successful treatment of addictions. Persons do not usually recover instantaneously. It is important during their struggle toward recovery, to allow them to be honest without fear of condemnation or a breach in anonymity. The message Dann gives to the church is similar to a statement now borrowed from the rooms of Narcotics Anonymous — “What we say here, let it stay here, so we can feel free to come here and share here.”

**Review of Allen and Merrill’s Work and Practical Applications**

Johnny Allen and Trish Merrill in their book, *Healing Places: How Faith Institutions Can Effectively Address Chemical Dependency*, report that for many addicts, church and spirituality are important. When the addict turns to the church to get help dealing with their addiction, however, the last thing they need is for the church to have barriers that thwart their recovery efforts. They cite churches who are opposed to the Twelve Step Program as an example of a church barrier that diminishes opportunities for healing. The fact that the church has barriers is a challenge to be addressed by every member of the faith community. In order to eliminate the barriers, these authors highlight the following concerns.
First, conversations about alcohol and drug use, misuse, and addiction are rare and uncomfortable in most congregations.\textsuperscript{10} Unfortunately, they state, although many in the congregation suffer from addictions or are affected by family who are addicted the subject is seldom breached until there is a tragedy. Even though there are symptoms and problems in the early stages of addiction, it is often ignored and therefore cause much suffering and costs.

Second, the authors suggest churches lack understanding of misuse or addiction to alcohol and drugs.\textsuperscript{11} Therefore, being untrained in addiction, pastors and lay alike are ill equipped to deal with addictions and their associated problems. This problem is complicated further when referrals are seldom and addiction is promoted as sin. This attitude, often viewed as being judgmental, does little to foster an atmosphere where healing and recovery can be nurtured.

Third, individuals addressing their addiction issues fail to find a healing climate in most congregations.\textsuperscript{12} Because of the general lack of understanding, the church is suspect of programs like Narcotics Anonymous. Hence, there is the continuing practice of isolation and discrimination.

Fourth, congregations are unaware, and uninterested, in the tools of assistance available in the community.\textsuperscript{13} Few pastors and lay leaders know where addiction


\footnotesize{11} Ibid.

\footnotesize{12} Ibid., 25.

\footnotesize{13} Ibid.
treatment centers are or the availability of centers for counseling, protection, or assistance.

Fifth, individuals who have succeeded in coping with their addiction experiences do not feel comfortable sharing their success within most congregations. Their efforts and victories are not celebrated and their testimonies are silenced.

Finally, “the power of ‘congregating’ is diminished when churches fail either to engage in a context of healing that assists people and families troubled by addiction or fail to honor successful recovery.” The church could be a positive venue in helping to change the prevailing negative attitudes regarding those in recovery.

As a result of Allen’s and Merrill’s work, the church has to become more aware of practices that may retard those who desire recovery and want to maintain their relationship with the church. How does the church’s doctrinal stance, practices, or even service hamper recovery? To have discussions relative to substance abuse and addiction may not only aid recovery, it may be the catalyst to prevention as well.

**Review of Williams’ Work and Practical Applications**

“One of the first things we learned about fighting the war on addiction was that traditional drug treatment programs didn’t work for most African Americans” according to Cecil Williams in his book, *No Hiding Place*. Williams maintains that culture, history, and people’s way of relating to each other are factors that treatment programs should consider. Recovery therefore has to be tailor-made for the recipients. With this in

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14 Ibid., 26.

15 Ibid.

mind, he challenges the traditional Twelve Step program by suggesting that it focuses on individual recovery as its main goal. Yet, because African Americans are a communal people, their identity rest in belonging to an extended family and being a member of the community. Individuality can lead to feelings of isolation and can be detrimental to recovery for persons who need to acknowledge their need for each other.

Secondly, Williams notes that Twelve Step programs have been most successful with middle and working-class people.\(^{17}\) Whereas this group gets clean and return to their places in mainstream society, for most African Americans the mainstream is the drug mix. Hence, African Americans, need to be empowered to make it in the society they will encounter after a treatment program, lest they relapse.

Because the Twelve Step programs honor anonymity, Williams thinks this adds to the already prevailing thought in the African American’s psyche, that they are invisible, faceless, and unheard by mainstream society. On the other hand, by telling their stories, they reclaim the truth of their identity and their place in the world. They are empowered to set themselves free. Anonymity feels like a place to hide, but there is “no hiding place” in recovery.

A final problem Williams has with Twelve Step programs is the admission of powerlessness. This does not sound too encouraging for people of color who have had to live with this thought in society all of their lives.

Although Williams has issues with the Twelve Step program from an African American prospective, he offers self-recognition, self-definition, rebirth, and community

\(^{17}\) Ibid.
as the basis of a recovery program. He sees the church as the extended family and recognizes spirituality as a key proponent to recovery.

Williams’ valuable contribution to recovery hinges on the word contextualization. He offers a critical look at traditional recovery programs, namely the Twelve Step Programs, and offers insights that would encourage future programmatic recovery models to give consideration to specific influences such as culture, history, and community. Additionally, because his work was done at the church where he was pastor, he gives relevant information and practical applications of how the church and the addict partnered for the good of all concerned.

Summary of Empirical Literature and Applications

The empirical literature review revealed that there is an innate desire for love and to be loved that establishes the need for spirituality and its free expressions. At times, attachments to various desires can overpower one’s spirituality and can lead to addiction that is characterized by obsessive behavior. A return to the God-given, innate spirituality that is within all humankind is the most effective way to recover from any addiction.

Persons who are interested in supporting the recovering addict should be patient, honest, non-judgmental, and driven by love as opposed to other ulterior motives. Established boundaries between them and the recovering addict will also aid the process. Furthermore, the church, as a caring institution that can do so much to foster recovery, should be intentional in understanding addiction and removing barriers that retard recovery.
Theological and Biblical Literature Review

The theological and biblical review revealed several publications as well as biblical images to suggest that the church's mission is fulfilled in its ministry to persons desiring recovery. Indeed, as these sources will show, for the church to be silent at a time when so many are held captive and enslaved by addictions that renders them hopeless and helpless is for the church to fail in being the prophetic voice serving as a medium of change for this present age.

Review of Barnett's Work and Practical Applications

Henlee H. Barnette in his book *The Drug Crisis and the Church* outlines the theology of the church when he describes the heritage of the church as the heritage of a prophetic tradition that looks upon every individual as a person “for whom Christ died” and all men as brothers by creation and redemption.\(^\text{18}\) Regardless of the person’s identity, the person’s background, or social status, the church is called to minister to them. Yet, because there are those who are looked upon as undesirables, the challenge for the church is to “kick its own addiction to class consciousness, to opiate religion which promotes ‘pie in the sky when you die,’ and to its obsession for self enhancement.”\(^\text{19}\) Barnett suggest the church must use as its model the Lord Jesus Christ who came to serve and not to be served.

According to Barnett, Jesus is the embodiment of the God of the Old Testament. In essence, Jesus became the human God who had a compassion that embraced everyone, particularly the poor, the oppressed, and the downtrodden. As one who addressed the

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\(^\text{19}\) Ibid., 137.
needs of publicans and sinners, Barnette is confident that Jesus would not have rejected the addicted. Inasmuch as humankind is made in the *imago Dei*, the “image of God,” whatever hinders humankind from reaching maturity as measured by Christ must be corrected. The church must therefore be active in combating addictions that retard and restrict maturity.

The Holy Spirit, as the third person of the trinity has the same nature as God and Jesus, and is the presence of God with humankind. As the moral consciousness of humankind, the Holy Spirit is a reminder that the body is a Temple of God and should not be abused. Rather, it is a dwelling place for God to be glorified. Since drugs destroy the body, Barnette contends they should be avoided.

Barnette describes *koinonia* as another theological teaching that the church should be aware. It is through *koinonia*, the fellowship of sharing, that those who are addicted can find comfort and consolation without feeling condemned and rejected. Through fellowship the addict will find relationships that will support them in recovery.

Finally, Barnette uses the word *diakonia* to describe the church as servant. Again referring to Christ as servant, he suggests the church must take the form of Christ in the world. It is not enough for the church merely to be a place of worship, but it must transcend its walls to meet people where they are and to address their needs.

Given the theology that humankind is created in the image of God and that they are created to give God glory, it is apparent that humankind has “missed the mark”. Nevertheless, God’s love sent Jesus to show the way of salvation and freedom. Jesus’ demonstration of love and devotion to God is the perfect example for humankind to
follow. The Holy Spirit is the power of God that allows humankind to get back to the mark.

When considering the biblical perspectives relative to addictions and treatments, again I reference Bucky Dann's book, *Addiction: Pastoral Responses*. Although he cites alcohol and drug use in the Bible, including wine and opiates, Dann maintains, "When the Bible is surveyed, what becomes evident is that the perils of substance abuse do not merit a lot of direct consideration. There are warnings about excess use. Noah is used as a cautionary example of drunkenness (Genesis 9:20-27), but there is no such person as an alcoholic or an addict. They are not even a category of sinner; they are not included with tax collectors and prostitutes. Drunks are regarded as foolish or irresponsible, not deviates or criminals. If we are looking to find a scriptural basis for the current drug regulations and programs, it is not there."\(^{20}\)

**Review of Fish's Work and Practical Applications**

Although there may not be references to persons who were addicted and for whom recovery programs were needed, Melinda Fish in her book, *When Addiction Comes To Church* shares biblical images that are inspirational for recovery efforts. The body as the temple of God was apparently a powerful image for Paul and the people of his day. Fish writes, "Every Jew as well as every Gentile who had observed the custom of the Jews knew exactly what he meant. To the Jew, the Temple was a majestic spectacle, honored and revered with awesome wonder. It was the dream of every Jew to celebrate at least one feast in the Temple. As they hiked the paths through the hills and valleys near Jerusalem, their struggle was rewarded with the glimpse of its massive structure gracing

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the crest of the mountain where Abraham had offered his son Isaac to God. It was Holy Ground. Fish, understanding and concurring with Pauline theology, uses the sanctity and purity of the temple image to bring awareness that addiction defile and renders God’s bodily temple unclean and robs it of its potential to glorify God.

Another image she uses to promote recovery is Jesus standing at the grave of Lazarus. It appeared that Jesus had arrived too late for Lazarus had been dead for four days. Nevertheless, Jesus told the people to remove the stone from the grave. Though reluctant, when the stone was removed, Jesus called Lazarus from the grave. The body that once lay decaying in the grave came forth bound in grave clothing. Jesus then replied, “loose him and let him go.” Persons who lay decaying in their addictions can have an encounter with Jesus and be set free. The church is to loose persons who were wrapped up in their addictions.

The Bible records stories that allow the mind to be coerced by an imagination that contextualize the scriptures to speak to particular situations. The imagination of the preacher whose life experiences parallel those in scripture, can literally paint a picture that makes a text come alive to the extent that people are inspired to make life changes. Despite the fact that addiction and recovery is not directly mentioned in the Bible, as the inspired word of God, its images and message often instigate a return to the values that enhances recovery.

21 Melinda Fish, When Addiction Comes to Church: Helping Yourself and Others Move into Recovery (Old Tappan: Chosen Books), 142.
Summary of Theological and Biblical Review

In order to build a redemptive community that would enhance recovery, the church should understand its theology and prophetic heritage while mirroring the Christ who personified God and God’s intention for humankind. Theology, coupled with biblical images, will allow everyone to be seen as people created in the image of God and for the purposes of God rather than being seen as degenerates or hopeless sinners and outcasts who are unworthy of anyone’s attention. This genuine view of humankind will allow people to recognize that God loves everyone and that grace is sufficient to meet every need.

Theoretical Literature Review and Practical Applications

The theoretical literature review revealed publications that offered practical ideas for persons desiring recovery. Also, inherent in the ideas presented are implications for those who desire to support the addict in their recovery.

Review of Apthorp’s Work and Practical Applications

According to Apthorp in his book, Alcohol and Substance Abuse, A Handbook for Clergy and Congregations, “Building a redemptive community is an ongoing process that takes more than an annual chemical-education program.”22 He suggests that a redemptive community comes about when the community cares for all of the people. Not only do the people care but they have a basis for caring. As long as there are those who feel that the drug addicted people are sinful degenerates, who should be cast aside, then reconciling love is negated. On the other hand, when there is a demonstration of God’s love, there

exist an opportunity for love and recovery. An understanding of biblical principles can foster an atmosphere conducive for reconciliation and recovery. The principles are:

1). the goodness of the created order – God created all and it was good. He maintains that drugs are not evil if used properly. Furthermore, Apthorp suggests if one says that drugs are evil because they cause so much destruction, there is the implication that those who use them intend to destroy themselves. That fixes a blame that is not conducive for recovery.

2). the ultimate value of people – People are made in the image of God; persons have inherent worth before God.

3). personal freedom of the believer from the law as a source of justification or solution – It is not in keeping the law that renders one acceptable before God, but rather God’s love that accepts people in spite of faults and failures.

4). the command to love your neighbor as yourself – There is a law of social responsibility that makes each person responsible for another.

5). God’s thoughts are not man’s thoughts – Human thoughts are limited in comparison to God’s. Whereas people are prone to give up on each other, God does not.

6). moral demands emerge from the character and redemptive activity of God. People respond to God because of God’s
acts of love through Jesus.

The theology as set forth by Apthorp sets the stage for understanding the love of God that is to be spread abroad. With this understanding, there should be a move toward a community that promotes love and reconciliation.

Review of Noe’s Work and Practical Applications

In her book *Finding Our Way Home* Noe, founder of Samaritan Inns homeless and addiction center offers several thoughts that she believes will aid in recovery. They are:

1). the gift of surrender – Do you really want to recover.

   She writes, “Sometimes we choose to remain paralyzed in a certain area of our inner lives because we are terrified of feeling out of control and terrified of what might be expected of us if we were to become a little more free.”

2). reclaim your true identity – Know that you are loved and that God’s love abides in you.

3). move from general to specific commitments and practices.

4). pray.

5). become a part of an authentic community – Because people were created for community, there is a need for a spiritual family.

6). being with and for the suffering and the excluded – Share life with those who are still in bondage.

7). discover your call – Recognize you are loved and have been created for the purpose of being an instrument of that love.

8). manage your ambivalence.
9). maintain the “Phoenix Factor” — Maintain hope of recovery.

10). Power in weakness — The addict is powerless to stop using drugs except there is a dependency on God. 23

Noe offers to the serious recovering addict the challenge of surrendering to becoming drug free. With surrendering comes the commitment to follow a prescribe pattern of behavior that challenges the addict to live responsibly. "Living life on life’s terms" as it is said "in the rooms" causes a lifestyle change for the recovering addict who with the help of God and the support of others live “just for today.”

Review of Cleave, Byrd, and Revell’s Work and Practical Applications

According to Cleave, Byrd, and Revell, in their book, Counseling for Substance Abuse and Addiction, “Despite the specter of failing health, loss of family or friends, time in prison, or an ultimate death, the drug user will continue on drugs. Eventually he or she will come to a state of hopelessness and despair. Paradoxically, this may actually be the best thing that ever happened to the abuser.” 24 The “rock bottom” as it is often labeled makes the addict face the reality that help is needed.

In outlining the process by which the addict can recover, these authors encourage the Twelve Steps of Narcotics Anonymous. The steps, in essence, encourages those interested in recovery to admit hopelessness, commit to God, engage in self-examinations, let God change them, be accountable and responsible, grow spiritually, and to serve others. In addition to practicing the Twelve Steps, the authors give the following


advice for the recovering user: the time to become drug free is today; recovery from drug use is a lifelong process; get help from qualified persons; do not give up after relapse; stay away from all drugs; be aware of your ability to rationalize wrong attitudes and behaviors; do not become proud and self-sufficient after periods of living drug free; maintain a support system; pray and read the Bible daily; attend church weekly and finally, memorize and learn to pray the serenity prayer:

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\text{God, grant me the serenity} \\
\text{to accept the things I cannot change,} \\
\text{Courage to change the things I can,} \\
\text{and Wisdom to know the difference.}
\]

Although these authors suggest the Twelve Steps as a right choice for recovering addicts, they also contend that getting the addict to agree to treatment is one of the major difficulties encountered. Because denial is so prevalent to their thinking, many times they come as a result of a crisis relating to the legal system, the family, health, or work. These factors may even influence the treatment modalities such as outpatient therapy, inpatient treatment, or residential programs that are available to assist them in recovery.

The contributions of these authors are invaluable for the treatment of addictions. The Twelve Step program has a history of helping addicts recover. The practical advice seems also relevant in helping the addict to maintain their focus and helping those who support them to understand the nature of addictions. Furthermore, being aware of why the addict is seeking treatment can also help assess the treatment program that may be most beneficial to them.
Summary of Theoretical Review and Application

The theoretical review suggested that the serious addict must commit themselves to recovery if it is to be realized. Although the mind is a powerful tool and can keep denial alive, by surrendering to God, accepting the grace that is available, and following prescribed patterns of behavior, that include but is not limited to the Twelve Step program, the road to recovery may become evident. By presenting ideas, practical steps, and developing spirituality, as well as giving considerations for treatment modalities, the goal of recovery is not as distant as it could be.

Summary of Literature Review

According to the literature review, several things become evident if recovery is to be realized. First, there is a need for spirituality in recovery. The rediscovery of spirituality allows the addict to realize their helplessness and powerlessness over addiction and their need for the grace that God alone supplies. Without this realization, which often comes after a “rock bottom” experience, the addict is prone to be in a state of denial.

In addition to the recovering addict rediscovering their spirituality, those who assist and support them must do likewise. It is this aspect of spirituality that will allow patience, honesty, a non-judgmental attitude, and the right motives for supporting them particularly at times of relapse and denials.

The church, as a potential agent to foster recovery, should be instrumental in building a “beloved community.” This is the community that allows freedom for the addicted to feel love and to develop a positive self-image while helping them to accept
responsibility for their actions. Therefore, barriers in the church that retard recovery, such as doctrines, services, practices, and traditions should be reconsidered.

Despite the difficulties, recovery is possible. The theology of the church, along with the biblical images of God’s redemptive power, gives rise to a prophetic tradition that dead, dry bones can live when they hear the word of God. Bones that were dead due to addictions can, by God’s grace, come alive again and fulfill their purpose as examples, as well as instruments of God’s grace.

The literature review revealed many new insights relative to addressing the ministry issue. Although this is the case, the author of this dissertation was particularly impressed with Gerald R. Mays’ book, *Addiction and Grace* and Cecil Williams’ book, *No Hiding Place*. For this writer, these books, because of their relevance to the church community, provide the context and the theological understanding for approaching the ministry issue. A closer look at these books will reveal their relevance.

Relative to May’s *Addiction and Grace*, May contends there is a need inherent in everyone for God. Accordingly, he suggests that it is this desire that gives life meaning even if one is not consciously religious. In essence, without God there is a void that leaves one feeling incomplete and unfulfilled. This, as suggested by May, is really a God given yearning to love and to be loved. With this in mind, the author of this dissertation is encouraged to think that love is the key to recovery and transformation. The church community, having been the recipient of God’s unconditional love as expressed in Jesus, is called and challenged to model the love of God to the recovering community. Through the love of the church community, persons in recovery will find new meaning in their lives and rediscover their dignity and self-worth.
Aside from giving impetus to love as an innate need and a catalyst to recovery, May helps to understand addiction as the attachment to things. As an example, when one encounters pain, the desire for love is displaced by other actions and desires that alleviate the pain. For the persons who are addicted, pain is relieved by the use of mind altering substances. The continued use of these substances over time leads to attachments and addictions that can virtually be beyond one’s control. With May’s explanation, it can now be understood why persons who are addicted usually express pain as the cause of their addiction. Understanding how pain is associated with addictions can greatly enhance the recovery process particularly as it relates to treatment. May therefore reveals that persons who are interested in helping the addicted to live transformed lives should also help them deal effectively with the pain that initially led to their attachment and subsequent addiction.

Finally, May highlights grace as the liberating agent from addictions. Grace is God’s un-merited favor granted as a result of God’s love. He maintains that God cares for everyone in a manner that addictions can never take total control one’s freedom. “Addictions may oppress our desire, erode our wills, confound our motivations, and contaminate our judgment, but its bondage is never absolute.”25 Therefore there is always hope for the addicted. Thus the message of the faith community is that God’s love is unconditionally available for all. This is the message of hope that inspires the addict along their journey to recovery and inspires persons who work with them to continue their efforts.

25 May, Addiction and Grace, 18.
Cecil Williams’ book *No Hiding Place* was equally as insightful to the ministry issue. He contended that the Twelve-Step program did not work for all people because of cultural, racial, and economic conditions. Williams’ analysis of the Twelve-Step program of Narcotics Anonymous led to his contextualization of a recovery program designed specifically to meet the needs of the African-American community. Therefore in an effort to reach and transform this community, he and the Glide family were intentional in their effort to provide services and programs that were specifically tailored to meet the needs of this group. Not only were the services utilized by the masses, but an evaluation of Williams’ book reveals how the services were monumental in the recovery of many addicts. In this regard, May’s contribution to the effective treatment and transformation of persons in recovery is to challenge service providers to understand how social differences may impact the care, treatment, and recovery of the addicted.

Particularly impressive also was Williams’ approach to reaching the mass of people who needed recovery. He, and the members of the Glide Memorial United Methodist Church where he served as pastor, literally took to the streets shouting “it’s recovery time.” Thus, Williams and the Glide Church family took the message of hope to the communities where hopelessness and despair were prevalent.

The Church not only announced time for recovery, but became a refuge center for those who came by providing services and programs to assist them in their transformation. Serving as an extended family the Church empowered addicts to transform their lives. Simultaneously, the church family, hearing their own stories in the stories of the addicted, was able to process their hurts and subsequently transform their lives as well. In this regard, the addicted community provided the forum whereby the
church community could be empowered to deal with its hurts and pain. It is in this context, that the writer of this dissertation confidently maintains that the community of faith and the addicted community can empower each other.

Having reviewed May's book and Williams' book, the author of this dissertation is convinced that they provide the theology and the context for the ministry issue of The Church and the Addict. The church can play a major role in providing the care and love for the addicted. It is the church, as the faith community, who are called to model God's grace to the addict. In return, the addicted community provides the forum for the community of faith to live out the commission of God without complacency and mediocrity. Additionally, by helping others to deal with their issues, namely the addictive community, the community of faith is forced to deal with its own issues. Transformation is therefore available for both groups.
CHAPTER III

THE CREATIVE TENSION

In retrospect, the author now realizes there was a kind of creative tension at work that seemed to have promoted the efforts of this project. Initially, there were no suggestions that a ministry for the addicted would be started at the Southside Church, and it is probably correct to say there were few who would have leaped joyfully at this opportunity without prompting. Yet, there were many in the congregation who expressed having used drugs before, or had negative experiences due to a relative’s or friend’s usage. When persons who had drug problems began attending and even joining as a result of the church’s evangelistic efforts, members were forced to deal with recovery as well as their apprehensions and biases that heretofore had not surfaced. Perhaps it was the member’s negative experiences coupled with inaccurate information at best or a mere dislike for those in active addiction at worst, that had kept the congregation silent. Perhaps those who had used drugs in the past feared their initiation of a program would somehow leave them exposed.

Whatever the case, it was apparent that the need had finally met the opportunity and that it was time for the church to be relevant to the needs of the people who worshipped there. At this point the author noticed attitudes and heard conversations that made him keenly aware that before any meaningful ministry could take place, there had to be an understanding of the nature of the illness. Prejudices had to be addressed; theologies, both personal and congregational, had to be considered and even reshaped;
and, ultimately, attitudes and personalities needed to be optimistic and amenable to the ministry. Not only did the church have to consider her feelings for the addictive community, but the addictive community had to consider its feelings toward the church, which at times may not have been as welcoming as is now being promoted. The author found that many who were addicted had been members of churches who, as a result of not understanding their plights, had not shown much love and support. Phillip Yancy in his book, *What’s So Amazing about Grace*, confirms this as he tells of a prostitute who confessed to renting her two year old daughter to men interested in “kinky sex”. The prostitute reported having to do that to support her own drug habit. When asked if she had thought of going to the church for help she cried, “Church! Why would I ever go there? They will make me feel worse.”¹ This is indicative of how the church can sometimes make people feel un-welcomed among the followers. The author recognized that if this ministry was to work, both communities had to deal with their issues. This was the point where the obvious need met the possible opportunity. This is the tension that proved creative. Although a survey was not done in the Southside setting, the author suggests that a survey of church members may have been helpful in assessing attitudes prior to the implementation of the ministry (See Appendix A & B).

In this chapter, the author will give consideration to the Southside Church as the primary setting for the ministry and reference for the study. It is intended that this chapter will allow its readers to consider how the church’s history, understanding of ministry, setting and leadership were instrumental in helping to assess attitudes and subsequently implement a substance abuse program. Additionally, the author’s exegesis,

hermeneutics, and contextualization of biblical references will show how scriptures were used to address the congregation’s feelings and thoughts that further set the stage for the ministry and the transformation of the membership and those in recovery.

**The Study Context**

The *primary setting* for the project is the Southside CME Church in Birmingham, Alabama. Among the parishioners, there is a smaller group of persons, including church officers who represent the community of faith and others from the community at large who represent the addictive/recovering community. The larger setting includes the city of Birmingham. The recovering community, moreover, consists of all persons who attend the Southside group.

Southside CME Church was originally named because of its location on the south side of the city of Birmingham. When the medical centers began purchasing property for expansion, this church, among others, was forced to relocate to an area south west of the city. Because of this, Southside is now located in a moderately affluent area within the predominantly black community. Only a few blocks away, however, are subsidized housing units that add to the community’s growing cultural, financial, and racial diversity.

For a long time most of the members were relatively stable financially and resided only a few minutes away from the church. Like any institution, however, time has taken its toll. Whereas many older members are still in close proximity to the church, there is a growing number of their descendents who have moved to communities and suburbs outside of the city’s limits. Many of the senior members are no longer serving in leadership capacities, and a new generation has emerged. Needless to say, this new
generation comes from all over the city. Evangelistic efforts have also brought persons from over the city to be a part of the diverse 650-plus member fellowship.

Southside is a traditional CME church in that it embraces the order and structure of Methodism. The church’s organizational structure consists of Bishops, Presiding Elders, Pastors and Members as set forth by the Wesleyan tradition. Similarly there are conferences; namely the General, Annual, District, Quarterly, and Church. Southside has become somewhat non-traditional in having various musical instruments during worship services including drums, saxophones, guitars, and flutes, in addition to the piano and organ. At times the word of God is dramatized rather than preached. Dance and praise ministries are regularly included in various worship experiences. Although the church is traditional, it is open to new means of worship. It is the mixture of tradition and non-tradition that allows the church to provide something for everyone and therefore to attract worshippers from various parts of the city. The Bishop stresses membership and ministries (M&M’s) and supports the church’s autonomy in promoting the programs of the church. This Episcopal support not only aid in numerical and spiritual growth but it helps the membership to be open to change and new experiences that will enhance worship. Overall, the ministries have helped the church to bond together as clergy and lay members, senior adults and children, males and females. Furthermore, activities and ministries throughout the Zion have bonded the membership with others throughout the hierarchy of the connectional church.

Historically, Birmingham has become renowned for its part in the civil rights struggle. During the early 60’s, Civil Rights came to a climax when news of the plights of black people was voiced throughout the world. It was then that Dr. Martin Luther King,
Jr., came to Birmingham, was jailed because of his political stance, and wrote the famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Since that time, Birmingham still has not been without its share of racism and even to this day memorializes the bombing that killed four little black girls as they gathered for worship in the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church that Sunday morning. As one might discern, the Black Church, particularly the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, was at the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement when the bombing took place. As a result of the struggles, however, many of the leaders of the city are African American. Viewing substance abuse as another form of slavery that prevents freedom for humankind, the city's leaders are open to assisting the churches in addressing the drug crisis.

**Scriptural Motivations**

In order for the church to actively engage in this ministry of transformation and recovery, it was apparent that the mission and ministry of the church had to be well understood by the membership. Though this church, like any other Christian church, derived its understanding of mission from the Bible, how to make that mission understood in light of present situations was the major concern. Scriptures had to be understood in such a way that people recognized the issues and became so inspired by the biblical text that past experiences were contextualized into modern realities which would give birth to relevant ministries to serve the present age. The author recalled having heard it said that the words of the printed text had to be lifted from the pages of entombment and people motivated knowing they were acting within the mandate of God. Therefore, the pastor constantly taught and preached the following biblical references in order to change attitudes, to give inspiration, to focus, and to inform the efforts for this work.
The Good Samaritan

This parable (Luke 10:25ff) had its beginning when an expert of Jewish law stood to test Jesus by asking what he must do to inherit eternal life. After Jesus questioned him on what the law said, the response came to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and strength, and even to love one’s neighbor as oneself. Jesus responded again, do this and you will live. At this point, the scripture gives us a look at the man’s real intent by saying that he wanted to justify himself so he then asked, who is my neighbor. Lest we miss the point of the question, the Living translation of the Bible renders him asking the question because he wanted to justify his lack of love for some kind of people. It was his lack of love and his willingness to exonerate his feelings that he asked the question, which prompted Jesus’ to tell the story of the Good Samaritan. According to the text, a man on his way to Jericho fell into the hands of robbers who had beaten, and robbed him, stripped him of his clothes, and left him half dead by the side of the road. A priest and a Levite who was traveling that way saw him and passed by on the other side. Along came a Samaritan who saw him and had pity on him. He therefore bandaged his wounds, carried him to an inn and took care of him. When it was time for the Samaritan to leave, he paid the innkeeper to look after the man with the understanding that if he had not left enough funds, more would be paid upon his return. Jesus then asked the expert on the Jewish law, which of the three people had demonstrated neighborliness and love. The expert replied the one who had mercy.

This text informed the ministry leaders and subsequently the membership that a lack of love and concern for those in need could not be justified. In the text the author is careful to have the help coming from the least likely source. It was understood that
because of cultural differences, religious and political biases, that the Jews and the Samaritans had nothing to do with each other. If love and kindness to those in need transcends prejudicial barriers in the scriptures, then it should be so in the church. In a sermon, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, “the Priest and the Levite were concerned about what would happen to them if they stopped to help the man. Indeed their physical health and reputation were at stake. Yet, when the Samaritan came along, he reversed the question and asked if I don’t stop to help the man, what will happen to him?”2 The question for the church to consider is what will happen to persons who are addicted if the church fails to offer support? The problem is not just what will happen to them only, but what will happen to our community, our homes, our children and ultimately our world?

In a dark world, the church can’t fail to let its light shine.

Not only does the text inform and inspire one to get over biases and prejudices, but attention is called to the continuous efforts of the Samaritan to care for the man. The text carefully outlines the Samaritan who bandaged his wounds, poured on oil and wine, and took him to an inn to receive care; he not only paid the innkeeper to care for him but also pledged to pay more if it wasn’t enough. Considering the care needed by the recovering community, healing may not come overnight. Often one or two acts of kindness and support may not yield the results hoped for, or even anticipated. This ministry often demands much work and continuous efforts. One should not grow weary in well doing nor get frustrated in the process. Change may come slowly.

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The Prodigal Son

Luke 15 records a familiar story of the younger of two sons who approached his father asking for the portion of goods that would come to him. In other words, he was asking for his inheritance before the father died. After the father divided the inheritance the youngest son packed his things and journeyed to a far country where he wasted his money in wild living. When all the money was gone, there arose a famine throughout the area. Being in need, the son found a job feeding swine. He became so hungry that he thought of eating with the swine, but he came to his senses when he thought of home. There the lowliest servants had plenty of food to eat. He decided to go back home, confess to his father, and ask to return as a servant. The father, seeing him coming in a distance was filled with compassion, ran to meet him and began hugging and kissing him. While the son was asking for forgiveness, the father was instructing the servants to bring a robe to put on his back, bring a ring to put on his finger, and kill the fatted calf for the feast to celebrate his safe return was about to begin. Meanwhile, the elder son heard the commotion and inquired what was happening. When he learned his brother had returned and that a feast celebrating his return was in process, he became so angry that he refused to participate in the festivities. Realizing he had not come to the party, the father went out to the elder son only to get “told off.” The elder son said that all of these years I have worked for you and you never gave me a party, but as soon as this son of yours who has wasted your money comes back home, you kill the calf for him. The father’s reply to the elder son was that he was always with him and all the father had was his all along, but the brother who was lost is now found. That’s what is really important.
This story was told after the Pharisees and teachers of the law criticized Jesus for welcoming sinners and even eating with them. Although the parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin had already been told, according to Luke, it is imperative that consideration be given to the parable of the lost son to see how it shapes and reshapes the theology for this ministry.

In actuality, this parable is told as an indictment against the Pharisees who are represented by the son who stayed at home. Although the son who left is often considered the prodigal, the son who never left home, yet had the negative attitude toward his wayward brother and anger toward his father, was just as lost as the one who left; he may have been more so inasmuch as there is no record of his changing his attitude as the younger brother had done by repenting. At any rate, the older son who was so caught up in self-righteousness that he couldn’t see his faults demonstrated the attitude of the Pharisees. They seemingly failed to realize that they too had faults that needed corrections. If meaningful ministry is to take place one must realize that had circumstances been different, they too could have been in the same position as those they are prone to criticize.

It is imperative that ministry providers look beyond the faults of those they serve. Careful analyses of this scripture indicate how Jesus (the father in the text) looked beyond the faults of the younger son and how the older son highlighted them. The older brother was so caught up in identifying the shortcomings that he failed to recognize that his brother was safe at home. For the members of the church to get so caught up in highlighting the faults of the addictive community that it can no longer see them as God’s creatures who are in need is to negate the possible help that could be rendered. Jesus
clarifies the theology that drives this ministry by saying, the well does not need a physician; I came to call sinners to repentance (Luke 5:31, 32 paraphrased)

One notes that the older son stayed home and worked possibly with the wrong motives in mind. Was he owed special treatment for staying and doing what he should have been doing anyway? One can be sure these thoughts were highlighted by the return of the younger son, but the fact remains that the object of ministry is not self-serving. As it relates to the work with the addictive community, though there may be benefits received, the main goal is to help persons who are in need.

As the three parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son(s) unfold, Jesus did not address why they were lost. To be sure the sheep was lost by straying; the coin was lost due to no fault of its own but probably by being mishandled or misplaced; the sons were lost due to a desire to do their own thing and self-centeredness; Yet, in neither story does Jesus spend time condemning or even highlighting how they were lost. Instead there is rejoicing at the fact that the lost were found. Therein was the inspiration for the work of ministering to the recovering community.

The Demoniac

Not only did scripture inform the work, it informed what the author contends God was doing in the life of others. He is convinced that the God of the Bible was still concerned for all humankind. The Biblical text confirms this reality as Luke 8:26-39, tells of a man who was apparently physically alive and spiritually dead. When Jesus entered the land of the Gadarenes, a man that was demon possessed met him. Homeless and naked, the man had taken residence in the cemetery. He met Jesus screaming and began shouting why are you bothering me? Jesus having commanded the evil spirit, which often
took control and rendered the man powerless to come out, asked the man his name. Legion was the reply, for there were many demons living in him. At the demons’ request, they were allowed to enter a herd of swine, which ran into the lake and drowned. When the crowd heard what had happened, they came to see the man who at one time was possessed, sitting sanely at Jesus’ feet. The crowd, was afraid, and asked Jesus to leave.

Cecil Williams in his book, *No Hiding Place*, helps contextualize the story and informs a theology of what Jesus is doing in the life of those in recovery. Although the ministry may set the stage, recovery is by God’s grace lest any one can boast. God allows for what Cecil Williams calls “self recognition” and “self definition.”

Self-recognition allows one to realize where they are. In the story of the demoniac, one is informed that the demon possessed man lived in the cemetery. This represents a place of spiritual death and subsequent hopelessness. Having often been told of their worthlessness and often forced into isolation, persons who are addicted often express feeling of hopelessness. Yet when God intervenes and allows them to recognize not merely where they are, but where God desires them to be, then there develops a spirit of recovery. When the addict recognizes that there is a better way of life and that help is available, dead bones begin to receive new life.

Not only does God initiate self-recognition, but self-definition as well. Reflection of the demoniac again, has him allowing the demons to define who he is. God intervenes in the life of the addict and allows for self-definition. Some people may call them worthless crack heads but God redefines their existence. They are a royal priesthood, a chosen generation made in his image. No longer can the man be called an uncontrollable

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3 Williams, *No Hiding Place*, 36.
demoniac; he is now sitting at the feet of Jesus clothed and in his right mind. Nobody can define who he is but him.

The theology that propelled the efforts of the author of this project was that God is not a God of the past who has abandoned his people who are just as much in need of a savior as those of previous generations. Just like God cast out the demons in the story of Luke 8, He is able to cast out demons of addiction. God’s power over the demons had them begging not to be tortured, but to allow them to enter swine which drowned in the lake. A modern example of Jesus’ power over demons would be those who, by grace, are now living drug free. In this sense, their addiction was drowned.

**Planting Time**

In order for any ministry to go forth, there is a time to “start planting.” Planting season came for this substance abuse ministry a few years after the arrival of this author as the youngest pastor ever assigned to this congregation. Energy and a theology that made him aware that ministry was more than mere maintenance propelled a discontent for maintaining the status quo. There had to be more to pastoring than just keeping the church doors open for the congregants to worship on Sundays and a few meetings through the week. Being Methodist, he had proven that he could maintain a relatively good relationship with the congregation, raise the conference assessments, and keep the fort. It was time to engage the congregation in a ministry that would bless the community. What would this ministry be? Following an evangelistic campaign that brought many persons to the church it was voiced that many were in recovery and needed a ministry housed on the Southside of the city that would assist them to live sober, drug
free lives. The pastor and the church recognized their call to serve. It was now “Planting Season.”

The church was ready to work with this ministry. Not only was the vision captured and promoted by the pastor, but an experience some years earlier, in retrospect, served as a catalyst for this effort. The congregation had discovered that one of their previous pastors had a chemical addiction. Needless to say, this news had a devastating effect on the congregation, and subsequently led to the pastor’s resignation. Yet, because of the loving manner with which they spoke of him, the positive attributes he displayed, and contributions they recalled him initiating while he served them as pastor, it was quite obvious that the congregation held him in high esteem, and wished they could have done more to help him. This experience, coupled with their own personal and familial experiences, no doubt helped the congregation to see that a ministry to substance abusers was needed and that the time had come for them to engage in such a ministry.

Lending support to this ministry also is the location of the Southside CME Church. Though the Church is one of about twelve churches that are within a five-block radius and sits in a moderately affluent community in the southwest section of Birmingham, not far away is subsidized housing. Whereas the use of drugs is relatively known in the housing projects, what may not be as well voiced is the drug usage among the moderately affluent culture. Although several of these churches claim well over two thousand members, at the time there was no ministry to those in recovery in the area or at least none that the recovering community boasted about making them feel comfortable when they attended. Therefore when the need was voiced that a recovery ministry was
needed on the south side of town, the Southside congregation was ready and offered the facility as a meeting site for the Southside Narcotics Anonymous (NA) group.

It should be noted at this point that the church worked with NA without interfering with the principles of NA. The church recognized the steps and traditions, the need for anonymity, and the rules governing NA without imposing church doctrine. The church did, however, take advantage of opportunities to demonstrate love and concern, to provide support, to give invitations to worship, and to practice before them Godly principles for living. At times other than the meetings, congregants had no reservations to join with those in recovery as they acknowledged God as their higher power.
CHAPTER IV

IMPLEMENTING THE PROJECT

As the author of this dissertation began to accept the ministry to the recovering community as a vital concern that needed addressing, he thought of others, as well as various disciplines, which had been involved with recovery efforts and sought how their involvement may inform his present efforts. Research had shown that many disciplines had engaged in many efforts to address substance abuse. Although these disciplines offered many insights to addressing this issue, the researcher found the work of Cecil Williams and the members of the Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco, particularly insightful. Accordingly, his book No Hiding Place, provided much information for the researcher in developing and implementing this model of ministry. This work was so inspiring because it was done in the church setting and gave impetus to the thinking of the researcher that the church provides personnel and an environment, unlike many places, that enhances recovery. His book was also instrumental in helping the researcher to get a glimpse of how the membership was transformed as they sought to transform those who desired recovery. No less insightful was the work of Gerald R. May whose book Addiction and Grace shared how love and spirituality gave the addicted community a sense of belonging, self-worth, and a hope that recovery was a possibility. In developing this approach to ministry, it should be noted that the researcher involved components from various disciplines and ministries realizing that experience and the
work of others like Cecil Williams and Gerald R. May, have much to offer to programs and services that are designed for recovery.

Gleaning from the works of others, this chapter is the author's attempt to provide a detailed synopsis of how the project was implemented at the Southside Church. Care will be given to show how the membership was involved and the impact of their involvement on the ministry. Additionally, it will share problems and concerns encountered as well as how they were addressed.

**Visioning**

Inasmuch as the researcher contends that the church offers the nurturing and caring environment conducive for recovery, one of the primary tasks was to get the congregation to catch the vision. With this in mind, much care was given to assessing attitudes, both positive and negative, that would impact the outcome of the project. This was done by engaging the church community in discussions that caused them to consider biases and prejudices for or against the addicted community. In wholesome dialogue, much was revealed. The essence of the discussions revealed there were those with a ready-to-get-started attitude, and others with a negative attitude. Realizing that it was important to have as many on board as possible, the researcher's job was clear; he needed to encourage persons with negative attitudes to be positive, and those with undecided attitudes to get on board.

Changing attitudes involved getting to know what the initial causes of the attitudes were. Many persons who expressed negative attitudes toward the addict did so after having been abused by them. Many people, even family members, were apprehensive about getting involved after they had already taken extensive and drastic
measures to help someone to recover. After so much pain, depletion of funds, and lies, many congregants were just fed up and thought of their efforts as hopeless. There were others who thought of the addictive community as persons who were very destructive and would abuse the church facilities and services. Whatever was the case, the researcher, as visionary, had to try to leave the congregation, even the negative members, with the understanding that Jesus did not give up on humankind, and humankind should not give up on each other. Additionally, there should be no doubt about what a loving God can do.

Attitudes were also addressed by educating the masses regarding drug addiction as a disease that has physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual implications. It has been characterized as a bondage that doesn’t respond to common sense, logic, or clear thinking. Such actions have been called “insanity,” which is defined as “continuing to do the same thing and expecting different results.”1 As a result of this understanding, care was given to aid in the awareness that recovery requires extensive treatment and often “just saying no” will not be enough. Because of the nature of the illness, treatment can be long, costly, and even repetitive. Yet, there is hope.

Not only did education regarding addiction as a disease help to change some thoughts, but education about how addiction negatively affects all of society also proved to be helpful. Social problems include deteriorating neighborhoods, higher crime rates, healthcare and human service issues. Spiritually there is a decline in morals, values, and the family structure. Emotional, psychological, and financial concerns are also prevalent. There is no need for anyone to think that anybody is exempt from the drug epidemic and its associated problems. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in his famous “Letter from a

Birmingham Jail,” said, “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

The researcher, pastor, accepted and understood the need to share the vision to the congregation as a means of garnering support. According to Jeffery L. Tribble, Sr., “Visions given by God to pastors and leaders who dare to ask for it have the power to charge, challenge, and change congregations and communities.” Indeed the pastor seized every opportunity to share the vision to the congregation. Every sermon, every bible study, text, etc., that was preached or discussed for an entire quarter raised the issue of evangelism and the church’s responsibility to those who came to worship. Though they may not look or act like the present membership, it was stressed that the church had a biblical mandate to receive and to nurture them. The pastor’s role in sharing the vision cannot be underestimated.

Team Organization

Desiring to have a successful recovery program, the pastor sought to have as many people involved as possible. Not only was this an attempt to allow everyone to have ownership and partnership with the ministry, but it would allow them to become more optimistic as they witnessed signs of growth and spiritual maturity, both personally and communally. Knowing that everybody was not conditioned for everything and that there were many areas of service needed, the congregants were asked to volunteer for services either as a “foot soldier” or a “worker on the home front.”

2 Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (Birmingham: Mentor, 1963), 77.

The foot soldiers were the people who actually went into the community to invite persons to the church. Canvassing the neighborhood included much walking as the membership sought one on one contacts with those in the community. Flyers that highlighted the ministries available at the church, especially the recovery program, were designed and distributed throughout the community. (See Appendix C) The foot soldiers included adults and children, men and women, who proudly and without reservations wore their church tee shirts, visors, and caps advertising and talking about the ministries of the church. Training sessions had taught them to meet people where they were, without being condescending or condemning. They were taught not to be readily offended by what they saw or heard, and if they were not received well, to “shake the dust from their feet” as they prepared to move on to the next destination (See Appendix D). Desiring not to offend, members made no mention, per se, of drug abuse programs offered by the church unless they were specifically asked; the mere presence of the members inviting persons from drug infested areas to attend church was an invitation to the program or any other service offered by the church. Not only did many of the persons who came become a part of the program, but they recruited others as well. It should be highlighted here that the foot soldiers concept follows that of Cecil Williams and the Glide Memorial family who took to the streets with a bull horn shouting “its recovery time” and inviting people to the church.

Diversities of gifts made the pastor aware that everyone would not make a good “foot soldier”. This was affirmed by those who expressed fear of walking through the community, had health challenges that made walking distances virtually impossible, or even had other circumstances that prevented their service in this capacity. Yet, this group
of persons who wanted to support in other areas could help by serving as a “worker on the home front.” This group provided their services by working in various capacities at the church.

In as much as the church was reaching people who were homeless and from recovery shelters as well as the community at large, it was decided that breakfast would be served before Sunday services. It was thought that it would be easier to feed the “spiritual self” after having fed the “physical self.” The pastor realized this was the concept of school systems, particularly in the South where he had been educated. Workers were needed therefore to have breakfast prepared prior to the Sunday Church School. The “workers on the home front” were the people who made breakfast possible for those desiring the meal. Although this was no meager task, for food had to be purchased and chefs needed to arrive and have the food prepared early, overall it went so well that the members decided to prepare dinner after service as well. Occasionally however, there were times when scheduling, available personnel, and even attitudes thwarted the efforts. It was then that organizations and other ministries were asked to prepare the meals and thereby this problem was solved. As the program progressed, the culinary skills of persons in recovery were recognized and welcomed to this aspect of the ministry.

It was the church’s desire to provide clothing for those who may desire to attend programs and services but may not have had proper attire. Additionally, many who began the road to recovery needed clothing as they pursued job opportunities? To address this issue the church began a clothing pantry after asking for donations from the congregation. Although purchases could be made, many supported by giving from their closets.
"Workers on the home front" organized the clothes and allowed regular accessibility for those who desired clothing. In like manner, a food pantry was started. With these efforts the addicted community could see that the church really cared about them and wanted to address their needs.

Transportation services were needed in order for the new attendees to commute to and from the church, especially for NA meetings and worship. Knowing how important it is for the addict to attend such gatherings, church members initially provided the service using their personal vehicles but increased attendance helped the membership to see the need to purchase a van that greatly enhanced this service. The van service proved beneficial although at times persons in recovery seemingly viewed riding the van as a right rather than a privilege and hence expected the van driver to wait on them to get ready, or even to carry them to make errands prior to or after meetings. This issue was addressed by the trustees of the church who provided rules for persons riding the van.

In addition to persons who felt that riding the van was a right rather than a privilege, another concern for the transportation services was who would drive the van. Of course considerations had to be given to volunteers who would devote weekly time to travel over the city to various neighborhoods and shelters to bring people who may not be as cordial or as friendly as desired. After all, they were addicted and not all were as serious about their recovery as they sometimes proclaimed. For this reason, although there were women who volunteered their services, the church was reluctant to have them fulfill this responsibility. Furthermore, because most of the men were not available due to work schedules, this lot was accepted by the pastor until after several months a senior officer of the church recommended that one of the persons in recovery could fulfill this
task. This was a welcomed response for the pastor not only because it freed him from the task, but primarily because it signaled the acceptance of the ministry, particularly by the seniors who had been the pillars of the church. The only consideration now was to identify someone who was serious about their recovery, had demonstrated their trustworthiness, had a valid driver’s license, a driving record that would allow them to be included on the church’s insurance, and would be committed to the task. This major task was rather minor for there were persons who were apparently waiting for another opportunity to further prove their ability to be responsible.

Greeting committees were organized in order to welcome persons to the services. Feeling that persons from the addicted community may have some apprehensions relative to how they would be received, greeters played a major role. Experience had taught that some church folks may not be as cordial as might be expected, and that some non members’ refusal to attend some churches was because of a lack of hospitality. The greeters, present at group meetings as well as on Sundays, recognized the importance of their roles and did not take their responsibilities lightly. They intentionally and conscientiously greeted the addicts with the same respect and love with which they greeted others on Sunday mornings.

**Financing the Ministry**

Funding is always a major consideration for any ministry; the recovery ministry is no exception. How do you provide an effective service in an economical manner? The clothing pantry proved no major concern in as much as donations from the congregation made it possible. More concern had to be given to financing the van ministry, the food pantry, and the two, weekly meals. Depending on the numbers, which grew rapidly, this
could be a costly endeavor. Nevertheless, the pastor and congregation had a vision and would not let the vision die without good efforts to get necessary funds.

The first thing done was to encourage sponsors and donations, particularly from area businesses. The people in the community, including persons who were addicted, support these businesses and to encourage them to give back for a cause that would enhance the community didn’t seem too much to ask. Apparently the business community thought likewise and readily responded to the request. The ministry was on its way. In the meantime, the church members were buying into the program. They were beginning to feel they really could make a difference, and even if there were some dissenters, the majority seemed ready to make a difference. When the pastor highlighted the benevolent fund would be used to help finance the recovery program and help those who wanted to change their lifestyles, people began giving more to the benevolent fund. The “poor offering” as it has so often been called, being that it is collected to give to those in need, ceased being a “poor offering” in terms of the amount collected. The congregation made intentional contributions in a consistent manner. Even non-members made donations to the fund. Needless to say, contributions were increased, and the need to find sponsors proved unnecessary. This convinced the pastor that people were concerned and really wanted to be a part of a church that offered relevant ministries for present times.

Realizing the importance of funding, volunteer workers should not be underestimated. Many congregants met as often as possible and did what was necessary to support the recovery effort. They volunteered their time, talents, and financially sacrificed to support. They gave so much; perhaps the only thing they received personally
in return was the inner satisfaction of knowing they had, or at least were trying, to make a difference. Though this may have seemed like a small return on one’s investment, how does one measure satisfaction? Certainly this was the difference in ministry and a job.

The church was aware that funds are available to faith-based organizations that would fund programs for those in recovery. Therefore considerations were being given to writing a proposal for a grant. As the church sought to go forward in this endeavor, the proposal would no doubt be strengthened by the efforts that are already underway.

Whereas the funding did not prove to be a major issue for the ministry, there were at times concerns about persons eating the meals who were not homeless or in recovery. Indeed there were those who desired not to cook at home although they obviously had the means and ability to do so. It was this group that posed potential problems for the ministry. To address the issue, there were times that the pastor publically highlighted the purpose for the food service and emphasized that after those in the recovery program had been served then others could be also. The parishioners were satisfied with that reminder and generally accepted it as the solution. It was later decided that the meals were open to persons who were widows or widowers, handicapped or even visitors and college students. Not only did this allow the serving to continue but it provided a fellowship while dining.

**Community Service Involvement**

As he looked at the drug epidemic as a kind of genocide which must be controlled, Cecil Williams suggested that a frequently asked question is who is behind it? Implied in the question, he explains, is the assumption that if the culprit(s) could be found and captured, the problem would be solved. He further contends, “That assumption, that
naïve hope, that there is one culprit on the loose allows all of us, black and white alike, to escape responsibility. I have long believed that the only way to solve any social problem is for each segment of society to assume some blame for creating the problem and to grab hands with others in the community and work together to make things better. In agreement with the statement, the researcher realized the expertise and benefits of involving community services as a means of providing a holistic ministry and giving a good start to those who were beginning on their road to recovery.

Inclusive but not exhaustive, were the involvement of many community services. Social workers made the recovering community aware of services for which they qualified to receive. Healthcare professionals offered health guides and related medical care for those whose addictive behavior may have exposed them to illnesses and diseases at best, or even left them challenged at worse. Legal services were involved inasmuch as many of them had fines to pay, probation violations, and court appearances. Childcare services were involved because some of the women had lost custody of their minor children during their addiction. The educational system was also solicited to help them get their General Educational Development Certificate in order to pursue meaningful employment. Although these were some of the professionals and community services utilized, it should be noted again that this list of service providers is not exhaustive. Furthermore, it was discovered that meaningful relationships with these providers would occur over time. It was further revealed that continued efforts and inclusiveness on behalf of the church, continued monitoring of the service agencies needed and rendered, and

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4 Williams, *No Hiding Place*, 55.
honest evaluations were needed to build relationships with these agencies and other services that would benefit persons in recovery.

**The Placenta Group**

During the author's initial attempts to work with persons who were new to recovery, it became increasingly apparent that they had a need to have a one on one relationship with someone with whom they could share concerns and with whom they felt had a genuine concern for them. In retrospect, this was what was happening when the author was cornered day after day, particularly on Sundays between services, by persons in recovery who just wanted to talk about their life or their week's experiences. Although the author felt honored to have persons who respected him enough that they wanted to share concerns, it was obvious that he could not possibly give to all persons all the attention they needed and were due. He therefore began what Cecil Williams called a "placenta group."\(^5\) It was so named realizing that the placenta is what feeds a fetus and nurtures it while it is in the womb before birth. Because people were almost ready to be reborn in recovery, it was the role of the placenta group to nurture and care for them until they could be self sustaining. The placenta group was ready to talk, to listen, to support, and even to expose their own vulnerabilities if it would help in the recovery process. Needless to say, the recovering addict, through the efforts of the placenta group, could now tangibly see the care and concern others had for them.

It must be noted that the placenta group not only blessed the recovering addict, but received blessings as well. This one on one relationship allowed the church members to interact with those in recovery and to learn from them as well. As a case in point, many

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\(^5\) Ibid., 49.
people, parents in particular, received a wealth of knowledge that helped them understand the plights of their teenagers that have to deal with peer pressure daily. Furthermore, as they listened to the addicted tell their stories of what led them down certain pathways; parents were able to see in themselves how they could be positive influences in their children’s lives.

Not only did the placenta group offer personal support to those in recovery, they also attended the open meetings of the Southside NA group. By so doing, everyone attending the meetings was able to feel the support of the church family even if they had not yet established a personal relationship with any member of the placenta group. Not only did this aid in relationship building, but it allowed the members of the placenta group to learn more about the disease of addiction, to see how the principles of NA could help them in their everyday situations, and even to learn how to be an advocate for family involvement.

Although it is referred to as the placenta group, it parallels the role of the class leader in the structure of the CME Church. According to the Discipline of the CME Church, the class leader not only reports funds that are collected, but is to search out the members of their charge to inquire about their well-being, and to inform the pastor of any needs they may have. Indeed this is the spirit of the Lord who bids us to care for those who are in need by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick.

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Involvement in Church Life

The author of this dissertation contends that another important aspect of recovery was incorporating the recovering addict into the life of the church. Mindful of one of the principles of NA, which suggests that the lives of the addict are unmanageable, there was a need to help them learn how to accept responsibility and to be responsible for their actions. What better way to help them learn than by making them responsible for certain things, which were important in the life of the church? This learning process was birthed, as earlier noted, when one of the oldest members of the church surprisingly suggested that someone in recovery should become a part of the van ministry and transport persons to and from the church for their meetings as well as for Sunday services. When this was done, it was noted that not only did they learn to be responsible, but they realized they were trusted to perform relevant and important tasks. They were able to see that others were depending on them and that their services were important. Though many persons may not relish the idea of having more responsibilities, for those whose lives had been unmanageable and who may have been made to feel incompetent because of past irresponsibleness, tasks like these could provide the recovering addict meaningful opportunities for redemption.

Although there has been mention of the van ministry, other opportunities were also available based on the gifts of the recovering community. Having gone to culinary school, one of the recovering addicts proudly worked to continue the efforts to provide meals for the persons who came from the shelters. Every Sunday morning he took pleasure in knowing that people depended on him to provide a much needed service. Others felt proud as well to use their gifts in the areas of yard maintenance, clerical skills,
van maintenance, etc. In as much as they now felt a part of the church, welcomed and needed, they were responsible for their tasks, doing them effectively and efficiently, with a desire not to disappoint anyone, including themselves.

In addition to the aforementioned areas of responsibility, the recovering addicts were also vital participants in the worship services. Their involvement not only catapulted the church to another level, but it allowed the membership to be blessed by their gifts and to witness the grace bestowed on those who had lived "scandalous" lives. Phillip Yancey calls this "scandalous grace."

**Celebration**

One of the things noted early in the work with the addicted community was the impact of celebration relative to their recovery efforts. At the end of every meeting, there was a period when persons who had lived drug free for specified lengths of time would be recognized and praised for their abstinence. Although the rewards and the praises for those who had multiple years of clean time was great and usually merited a speech telling others how they accomplished such milestones, the praises for those who had just begun to live drug free were just as important and seemingly as encouraging. Often shirts and awards were given out and worn proudly by the recipients. It was a badge of honor, that not only rewarded them for their past accomplishments, but it was a source of encouragement for their continued success. They were able to see and feel the support of others who were cheering them on to success. There were even annual celebrations of the Southside NA group where many other groups were invited to share in the celebration. Needless to say, these celebrations were inspirational, insightful, and encouraging.
The idea of celebration has biblical foundation as well. In Luke 15, the lost were found and celebrated. Rejoice with me was the call after the woman found the lost coin, the shepherd found the lost sheep, and the father welcomed the lost son. Perhaps this was Jesus’ way of informing us that every milestone should be celebrated and every future victory anticipated.

Many of the members of the Southside NA group also became members of the church. When milestones were accomplished, the church also joined in the celebration. When anonymity was not an issue, persons were recognized and given accolades for their success. This was another opportunity for the recovering community to see and feel the direct support of the church. Additionally, members of the placentia group were particularly happy and proud; the church family really felt they were really making a difference in the lives of the recovering community. Many members who were once apprehensive, skeptical, and doubtful began to see those in recovery in a new light, and became more supportive of the ministry. This is not to suggest however that all were now on board for there were those whose hurts and wounds would not let them come to the celebration. Like the prodigal who never left home, they complained, criticized, and found fault while others celebrated.
CHAPTER V

EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS

As one seeks to evaluate this project, it should be noted that the Southside Group was at the time host to the largest number of recovering addicts that met bi-weekly on the south side of the city of Birmingham for a narcotics anonymous meeting. This was the result of an evangelistic effort that initially brought a relatively small number of persons to the church congregation who expressed the need for help in recovery. As a result of the Church’s response, after only a few months, it was not unusual to see in excess of a hundred people at the meetings on any given night. Indeed, because the church was meeting the needs of this group, many even joined the Southside Church family. By the time the ministry was two years old, well over a hundred people from this group were members of the Southside Church family. They had become indoctrinated in the life of the church and were intricately involved in the church’s ministry and leadership. After a few short years, the Pastor, with a sense of delight and pride, gladly recommended several church members from the recovery group to serve as officers of the Southside Church. Others were appointed leaders and selected to be members of ministries including culinary, transportation, maintenance, and the list goes on.

What was it that made this ministry to recovering addicts so different from other ministries and services they received elsewhere? The author contends that transformation and discipleship provided the answers. Not only did the church want to assist them with transforming their lives to be free from addictions, but following the mandate of the
gospel of Matthew, the church sought to disciple them as well. As the initial goal of the church, discipleship was never lost and remained a focal point for the ministry although transformation, living clean and sober, became a major concern. It was therefore the aim of the church not merely to transform them from using mind altering substances, but to lead them to being Christian disciples so they too could become instrumental in transforming others as well. The Southside Church ministered to and made disciples of those in recovery rather than merely providing a service to them.

It is the intent of this chapter to consider the ministry and how it led to transformation and discipleship for those in recovery as well as transformation and maturity for the members of the Southside Church. Care will be given to consider that both groups had needs that were met by the other with the end result being a transformed group of disciples. The key to evaluating this ministry is to consider the positive impact each group made on the other. Realizing the Pastor was a key catalyst for the ministry, this chapter will initially consider the Pastor’s impact on the persons involved.

**The Pastor’s Impact**

In order for the ministry to take shape and grow, someone had to provide leadership. For the Southside Recovery ministry, that leadership initially came from the Pastor. Whereas the ministry began as an evangelistic thrust, it far exceeded the Pastor’s and the member’s expectations when evangelism evolved to a recovery ministry. Even though a ministry to recovering addicts was not the original plan, it was the pastor’s leadership and vision that prompted the ministry.

Having recently graduated from seminary, the pastor, discontent with business as usual, envisioned a church that was growing and thriving. He envisioned a church that
would attract many persons from all over the city to its membership. In seminary he had learned of mega churches and felt that if those churches could grow and have thriving ministries, so could the Southside CME Church. After much prayer, meditation, and study, he was convinced that the timing was right for an evangelistic effort that would be different from what the Southside congregation had previously engaged yet would be relatively certain to yield the desired result. Furthermore, his vision was a church effort rather than a committee effort.

Though the goal was to attract people from across the city, evangelism began in the church’s community. It was the goal to have the entire congregation involved so the mission was divided into persons who actually went door to door in the community while others prepared meals, provided transportation, served as greeters, worked in the food pantry, or the clothing ministry. Because of the Pastor’s vision the church’s evangelistic thrust was not only invitational, but it involved the congregation providing services and ministering to the needs of persons in the community.

Because of the respect many people had for the Pastor, he was influential in garnering support for the evangelistic effort and subsequently the recovery ministry. Having served the Southside congregation for about five years prior to the recovery ministry, his personality and pastoral skills had endeared him to the parishioners. He had been taught early in his ministry not to miss pastoral opportunities and the Southside family seemed to have appreciated him for that. Therefore, when the opportunity to help others presented itself, the members of the church were ready to serve. They readily answered the Pastor’s call.
The Pastor worked as hard to endear himself to the recovering community as he had endearing himself to the membership. He tried not to miss opportunities to meet with persons in recovery. Prior to and after closed meetings, along with attending open meetings were viewed by the Pastor as prime opportunities. The pastor even went to Narcotics Anonymous meetings throughout the city particularly when requested by members of the Southside group who may have been speaking at another site. They were so excited to see their Pastor in support of their worthwhile pursuits. Even in times of relapse, often the pastor went to their homes with a word of encouragement for them and their families. Despite their struggles with sobriety, many times it was revealed that this visit was the first time they had received a pastoral visit that gave them a message of hope. They were aware of a Sunday morning preacher, but the visit allowed them to witness a pastor whose ministry extended further than the walls of the church. It was the Pastor’s desire to demonstrate genuine love and concern for God’s people.

Because of the pastor’s concern he was assessable to the parishioners and particular to those in recovery. As has been mentioned earlier, persons who were in recovery trying to live sober, seemingly had a need to share with their pastor what was going on in their lives. For this reason the Pastor devoted much time talking with them on a regular basis. It was important to the Pastor that all who wanted to share with him felt comfortable approaching him. Regardless of their issue they could talk freely without fear of a breach in confidentiality. In this regard, the Pastor was assessable and available to those who wanted to share with him.

Although the Pastor was assessable, much of his task was to listen. For many persons in recovery, having someone who would listen and value their opinions had been
marred by their lifestyles. Many persons just needed a listening ear as they often shared
their life's story. It was through listening that the Pastor got to know those in recovery,
learned more about how to help them, and was able to share occasional insights about
issues that concerned them.

The Pastor's willingness and ability to empower others proved essential to the
ministry. The congregation took pride in working with those in recovery and was eager to
make suggestions to enhance the ministry. Realizing the value in their suggestions and
not being threatened by them, the members were empowered to suggest and even
implement services that were helpful. As a result more people volunteered their services
to the recovery ministry. As a case in point, although it was the Pastor's vision to serve
breakfast for the underprivileged, those coming from shelters, and persons in recovery, it
was a member who thought of and implemented serving dinner after the worship service.
Over time persons served included senior members and members who were widowed.

In addition to the family of faith being empowered, those from the recovering
community were also being empowered. After becoming a member of the church, a
member of the recovering community volunteered his culinary skills and arrived at the
church every Sunday three hours before Sunday Church School to have breakfast
prepared. Another such member was empowered to coordinate the van ministry, and the
list goes on. Even in the worship services, persons were encouraged to use their gifts and
talents.

Not only did the pastor provide the vision, but he was eager to serve in whatever
capacity needed. As a servant-leader, the pastor modeled the behavior necessary to make
the ministry thrive. When the foot soldiers evangelized the community, the Pastor was
there with them. On any given Sunday it was not unusual to see the Pastor assisting in preparing meals or driving the church van to bring people to church for worship. Indeed, at the start of the recovery ministry, the Pastor, along with other volunteers, drove their personal vehicles transporting people to the church for worship and bi-weekly to the Narcotics Anonymous meetings. The pastor’s seminary training and experience made him keenly aware that he had to be involved and willing to do whatever was necessary to initiate the ministry.

Occasionally when disputes arose, the Pastor acted as mediator. Again his experience had taught him that although some issues work themselves out, many times someone has to help provide solutions. The pastor was able to mediate solutions that were palatable enough to keep the ministry healthy without losing the support of those involved. When there were concerns about persons who were eating meals that were not intended for them, the pastor addressed the issue either by broadening the scope of persons to be served or by reminding the congregation of who the meals were initially intended.

In conjunction with serving as mediator, the Pastor served as advocate for those in recovery. As the shepherd, the pastor protects the sheep. Although well intended, sometimes when members corrected the young ladies in recovery about inappropriate attire, the ladies were offended and some even threatened to disassociate themselves from the ministry. As advocate, the Pastor had to remind the members that many persons in recovery were un-churched and did not know appropriate attire or etiquette. Whereas it was in order to teach them, care was necessary in how it was done.
The Pastor’s humility proved essential for the ministry as well. At no time did he act like a know-it-all. He had learned to treat everyone with the same respect that he wanted to receive. Without looking at others, particularly those in recovery, as inferior to him, he could see the worth in everyone. Realizing this, he was aware that he didn’t have all the answers and was therefore able to learn from those whom he endeavored to help.

The Pastor was consistent in displaying the aforementioned attributes. As a case in point, one of the members in recovery stated it was the Pastor’s consistency that brought him to the church. Accordingly, he stated while staying in a shelter, that the Pastor came to the shelter Sunday after Sunday encouraging persons to worship with the Southside congregation. Like the Pastor was consistent in going to the shelter, he was also consistent with attending open Narcotics Anonymous meetings, talking and listening to members of the recovery group, working as a servant-leader whether with the transportation ministry or in the kitchen with the culinary team, and wherever necessary. Because of his consistency, the Pastor’s commitment and dedication to the recovery ministry was evident and not only attracted persons to the ministry but persons to serve in the ministry as well.

Lastly, the Pastor’s ability to exegete the scriptures in sermons and Bible Studies were invaluable. He did not miss teaching opportunities that helped the congregation to stay focused on its ministry and mission. Additionally his preaching and teaching encouraged harmony by helping all to discover their gifts and to know they were benefactors of each other’s gifts.

The Pastor served a variety of roles that were instrumental to the success of the ministry. It was obvious that his vision in initiating the ministry, as well as his leadership
and involvement throughout greatly enhanced the positive outcome. His cordial personality, coupled with his love for people, motivated people to be comfortable with him and desire to be a part of the ministry. The seriousness with which he approach ministry stemmed from his devotion to God and an active prayer life.

The Parishioners Impact

As the ministry got underway it was soon apparent to the Pastor that theology and faith were at the heart of this ministry. As a group of people who professed Christ as the answer to life’s issues, did the parishioners really believe in a power and strength not their own who would help them make a difference in the lives of addicts. Could addicts be made to feel valued and loved to the extent that they would believe that sobriety was a possibility. Prior to this ministry, the church had fallen into a sort of routine activity. Being Methodist conference claims were met, meetings were attended, and periodically food baskets and clothing were given away during certain intervals like Christmas and Thanksgiving. Yet, there was no real on-going ministry that identified the church with the community. Here was an opportunity for the Church to live its message to a group of people who otherwise may not receive the love of God. Here was the opportunity for the church not only to share its faith but to practice what it taught.

It did not take long for the Pastor to notice how readily the parishioners were to embrace the ministry. There were those who were obviously on board from the initial thought but there were also those who were apprehensive. Yet, in what appeared a relatively short time, even the most apprehensive members seemed to soften and become more and more receptive and participatory to assisting those from the addictive community. When questioned about their change of heart, many of the members reported
it being due to having meditated on scriptures and being mindful of the changes wrought in their personal lives. They saw themselves as common examples of how theology and faith had reshaped their own thinking and subsequent behaviors. It was this faith and theology that they were now ready to share with those in recovery. They therefore approached the recovering community with the attitude that if they could change, everyone could change by the grace of God. The pastor recalls how phenomenal it was to see the membership so enthusiastic about sharing their faith.

As the members sought to share with the addictive community, it became apparent that many addicts needed to change their way of thinking. Many thought they had to be “righteous” to receive God’s love. Because of their lifestyles, they had been made to feel unloved and unappreciated by those who were closest to them and normally would have been demonstrating love to them. They had often been told how bad they were and consequently many of their privileges had been withdrawn due to their behavior. Therefore, their concept of love was based on doing things that made them feel accepted and appreciated. For them, to be loved was based on socially accepted behavior that they had violated. Before they could experience love, they felt they had to change their behavior. Yet, it was this kind of thinking that the parishioners sought to change as a means of enhancing the recovery process. Realizing the addict needed help in changing their lifestyle the membership helped the addicted to understand that true love, agape love, was not predicated on behavior. The membership gave love unconditionally without asking anything in return. In this regard, the parishioners helped them experience love from a new dimension that seem to have catapulted their recovery.
Neil Anderson in his book *Freedom From Addiction*, adds credibility to the positive effects of unconditional love. Accordingly he reports a recovering addict as saying, “the biggest mistake we can make is to say to God, ‘Lord, if I change, you’ll love me won’t you?’ The Lord’s reply is always, ‘wait a minute you’ve got it all wrong. You don’t have to change so I’ll love you. I love you so you’ll change.’ As my concept of God begin to heal, my relationship with the heavenly Father took on a new dimension. Instead of viewing myself as a slave trying to perform for God, I saw myself as a dearly beloved son.”¹

Furthermore the church shared the awareness that there is a God who loves everyone in spite of their past and what they may have been led to think about themselves. John 3:16-17 states that God loved the world so much that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him should not die but have eternal life. For God did not send his son into the world to be its judge, but to be its savior. Many persons who had battled addiction over the years, and were abused mentally and emotionally by those who did not understand the nature of the illness, needed to hear again the message of love. Phillip Yancey resolves that because of grace there is nothing we can do to make God love us more, and there is nothing we can do to make God love us less.² This message was not only shared verbally, but it was exemplified by the church family. It was amazing to witness how the same people who although having taught Sunday School


² Yancey, *What’s So Amazing About Grace?*, 28.
classes and read scriptures all of their lives were maturing spiritually and accepting all people into their fellowship despite race, social status, and background.

As the members matured in their theological understanding, they were able to share more positively a theology that enhanced recovery and sobriety. It was due to this understanding that the membership sought to share some basic theological principles with the recovering community.

The theology of the church which was so adamantly shared is that God is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. According to Psalms 46, God is a very present help in a time of need. Realizing the strong hold that addictions had and the nature of the illness, the Southside membership enthusiastically shared its belief in an omnipotent God to those who initially felt there was no hope for them. The church aided in telling the recovering community that even though their addiction was so powerful that it became controlling, there is a power that is strong enough to overpower addiction. The theology of the church was shared as a means to help them realize that even though they were powerless, there was a power that could restore them to sanity. Therefore, all was not lost and that there was hope.

In addition to the omnipotence of God, the church shared the omnipresence of God. God was everywhere, living where people live and suffering with those who were suffering. In this regard God was with those who were in recovery and not only did God know what they were going through, but in God's omniscience, God knew best how to help them overcome their addiction. This was a message the addicted needed to hear.

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inasmuch as some of their living conditions were not changed because of their desire to recover. Sometimes they were seemingly forced to begin the already difficult task of recovery in the same communities where they had begun using. Even when this was not the case, they knew where to get their drug of choice at any given time. Hence, belief in an omnipotent God, who was constantly with them and who knew how best to help them was instrumental to their recovery.

Not only did the church embrace a theology that was conducive for recovery, but the steps and traditions of NA which are based on biblical principles, were also embraced. According to John Burke in his book *No Perfect People Allowed*, “God uses recovery as a tutor so that through an understanding church, people can truly know the God revealed in Jesus.” In fact, the author of the Twelve Step Program of AA from whence NA derived was a minister who helped struggling alcoholics with their addictions even before the church was open to the thought of addiction as an illness that could be treated in the church. When this knowledge was revealed to the Southside church family, the membership had little reservations for allowing the narcotics anonymous meetings. Whereas some initially frowned on the use of the church to help those who were addicted, members now began to see its potential for ministry as they tried to model Christ’s love for all persons. Indeed God’s love as revealed to Cornelius is not partial or reserved for some only.

A continued focus on the Twelve Steps and their relationship to the church and Biblical principles reveals how they helped to build or even amend relationships. By

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4John Burke, *No Perfect People Allowed: Creating a Come As You Are Culture in the Church*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 244.

5Acts 10:34, (NKJV).
encouraging persons to be honest with themselves and therefore to acknowledge shortcomings, the recovering addict worked on being in a right relationship with God, with self and with others. It was with this in mind that this author contends the program was not just the program for the chemically addicted, but for all who wrestled with relational issues that were not wholesome. The church, embracing the principles of Narcotics Anonymous became a place for healing because the parishioner’s brokenness and relational issues allowed them to speak the language of recovery, to understand its biblical roots, and to point people onward toward recovery and a greater revelation in Christ who loves us in spite of us.

Although consideration has been given to the theology and understanding the relationship of the Twelve Step program and the church, the author strongly promoted the church as the most favorable place for recovery because of the nurture and comfort the Southside church provided. The author watched how the attitudes of the congregation toward the addicts as well as the attitudes of the addicts toward the congregation changed, positively so, as the two groups built relationships and got to know each other. The care provided initially by the congregation as they prepared meals, and provided clothing, transportation, conversations, embraces, funds, and trust was welcomed. It allowed those in recovery to know there were persons who believed in them and who wanted to support them in their journey to recovery. The genuine love and appreciation grew as they began to understand each other’s background and the experiences that had shaped their thinking, behaviors, and personalities. As relationships grew, many persons were able to share their pains and their associated shame for the first time with someone who had no need to be judgmental or condescending; this trust led them to be honest with
themselves and others. They allowed questions and sharing that really made them confront their issues without denying true feelings and actions. No longer did they have to hide their feelings for they were sharing with parishioners who knew how to pass on the grace they had received. To be honest around people who expressed understanding and love was obviously rewarding. This experience has led the author to suggest with confidence, that the comfort and nurture provided by the caring Southside church family helped persons in recovery to deal with issues in a positive and wholesome manner.

To help us further get an understanding of the importance of a caring church and why this author contends that the nurture provided by the Southside church family was the best place for a recovery ministry, Jim Burke in his book No Perfect People Allowed, refers to the church as the “redemptive family.” Referring to Exodus 34:6-7 where God declared to Moses that the sins of the fathers pass from generation to generation, he writes, “all parents pass on to their children good ways of doing life- but also broken ways.”6 If the family then, pass on the DNA, biologically, sociologically, or by whatever means to people who subsequently become addicted, then this author saw the church as the extended family of the addicted that can, through love and support nurture them back to recovery. As God said to Abraham, “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”7

As the new functional, redemptive, extended family of God, the caring Southside church gave value to those in recovery. In other words, the addict was told and came to realize they were important and that “they mattered.” This author, while attending the

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6 Burke, No Perfect People Allowed, 288.

7 Genesis 12:3, (NKJV).
meetings of NA, recalls constantly hearing persons from the addicted community speak of how they were made to feel worthless and not deserving to be loved or given another chance in life. After all, by their own admission, their lives had become unmanageable. Admittedly they had done things as a result of their addiction that were wrong and had violated trust, confidence, and had even caused pain to those closest to them. Yet, to be constantly beat down and called worthless had created a mindset of hopelessness that was not conducive for recovery. As their new family, the church members, recalling what God had done in their lives, said with confidence to those in recovery, that God has not given up on you so neither will we. Perhaps in this regard, the church family maintained what this author called a distant-close relationship; distant enough not to be hurt by the addict who desires recovery but has not yet managed to control their addiction while remaining close enough to the addict to be “imitators of God” and allowing them to see Gods love for them as exemplified through the life of the church.

Not only did the church give value, but it encouraged the addict to be all they can be. “Fear,” according to Burke, “holds us back from becoming all that God intended us to be.”\(^8\) Again this author recalled the power of fear in preventing persons who desired recovery from pursuing dreams and opportunities. The fear of failure and rejection made people who were gifted and naturally talented resolve to be complacent rather than go forth to better themselves. The Southside family, realizing the power of fear encouraged efforts that promoted success while making allowances when sometimes they failed in their efforts. By helping persons to realize they were not alone and there was help to get

\(^8\) Burke, *No Perfect People Allowed*, 292.
past failures, the church helped the recovering addict to name the fear, and address the solution without giving up even in the midst of failure.

Lastly, mention should be made concerning the church as the extended family and burden bearer for the recovering addict when necessary. “We’ve all been given a backpack of responsibility to carry – it’s manageable.”\(^9\) Although care was given so that irresponsibility would not be promoted, there were times when circumstances rendered the load too heavy and the family was needed to help. Again, listening to the horror stories in the rooms of NA, the author became more and more aware of the situations that led many down the road to addiction. Many were well educated; entrepreneurs, business and professional people who experienced extenuating circumstances while others had social environments and family situations that led them to feelings of isolation and despair. For whatever the reason however, their need for understanding and help were evident. The church family became the burden bearer that assisted them in getting back on their feet and shouldering their own load.

During the course of the project, the author became more and more aware that the issues facing those who were desirous of recovery didn’t go away when they acknowledged their desire to overcome addiction. Needless to say, it was the beginning, but in order for recovery to be realized, and for them to change addictive behaviors, some real issues had to be addressed. Therefore support services were needed to help meet physical challenges in addition to the Twelve Step spiritual program. Issues such as housing, jobs, healthcare, etc. had to be addressed in order for persons to accept recovery as a possibility. In order for those in recovery to change their old playground, playmates,

\(^9\) ibid., 294.
and habits, as is taught in the rooms of NA, the church was challenged to provide assistance in helping to address the aforementioned issues.

When the author had the opportunity to visit the areas where the addicted were living, it became apparent why abstinence was so difficult. Aside from the peer pressure felt, there seemed to have been a feeling of hopelessness that often permeated the minds of the residents. The author recalls thinking that many members who had been fortunate enough to get a good education, a decent job, and therefore to have moved from these areas may have become so far removed from this reality that there was a real lack of understanding of the plights that many people live with daily. At any rate, when there were opportunities for those in recovery to move out of the familiar areas and to surround themselves with persons who were really serious about their recovery, then the road to recovery was a lot less rocky. The author noted positive reports were given when persons lived together in a halfway house and found support from others who were working the program or serving as sponsors. With this being the case, the Southside family worked desperately hard to assist in finding housing and shelters that would greatly enhance the recovery process. Occasionally the membership who had rental properties or knew of rental properties gladly made referrals. Although providing housing was not practical for the Southside congregation at the time, considerations were being given to the purchase of a recovery house.

Additionally, the Southside Church tried to assist those who were serious about recovery to find employment. The membership was aware that jobs would assist their morale and give the addict a sense of self-worth. Additionally it could help them move from the environmental and social conditions that could promote their chance for relapse.
Although many of the addicts lacked skills, there were those who were quite skilled, smart and talented but whose circumstances and poor choices had led them down the road to addiction. Their skill and talents included barbers, plumbers, carpenters, chefs, landscapers and the list goes on. Inasmuch as the church’s membership was made of persons who were either employers or persons who were aware of job opportunities at their workplace, the Church’s membership often assisted them with job opportunities. In the Southside Church, one such employer continuously hired persons to work with her moving company and often had favorable comments regarding their performance. Additionally, the church readily utilized their services in the areas of lawn care, painting, carpentry and custodial services. When better opportunities for growth presented itself, the Pastor and membership were used as references. Again, the desire of the serious recovering addict to demonstrate a level of responsibility, allowed them to have a work ethic that was unparalleled.

Healthcare services proved necessary and beneficial along the road to recovery. Because of their lifestyles, their health had often been neglected or abused. Although the Southside Church did not have an organized health ministry, the members who worked in health related areas were initiating discussions to get this ministry going. Plans were being made to have periodic screenings for blood pressure, heart monitoring, mammograms, prostate, diabetes, along with inviting medical professionals to address health concerns. Although these ideas were forthcoming, there were immediate needs that were being addressed by referring the addicts to clinics and medical professionals who could provide services. Social workers were also involved in leading them to agencies that could provide assistance when funding was necessary.
Although mention has been made regarding a few support services that were needed and proved beneficial to the program at the Southside Church, the author expressed awareness that the list did not exhaust all of the support services that would have been helpful in instituting and sustaining a viable recovery program. Services such as education and GED preparation, childcare services, legal services and the like were also needed and handled to a degree by referrals.

The author has concluded that it was not possible for the Southside Church to provide all of the needed services to those in recovery, for they were many and they were varied. Yet, as the caring and serious church that it was, the Southside membership sought to work with community organizations and agencies that enhanced the ministry. Again the author believed that any viable recovery ministry must not be done in a vacuum. The church, as it demonstrated its concern for the “whole person,” was primary in helping all entities to work as one for the benefit of the recovering addict.

There were the tangible resources provided by the church and the membership that was helpful, and according to the author, was conducive to recovery. The first of such resources provided was a place to have meetings regularly and consistently. The idea of having a recovery program initially came about when new members informed the Pastor that a NA meeting site was needed on the southwest side of town. Realizing their sincerity about recovery, the Church responded by opening its doors. Two nights per week were dedicated to this effort and regardless of what else was happening at the Church, the members of this ministry knew their space was reserved.

In addition to the space being provided, the church represented a wholesome environment. Many of the meetings held around the city was not in the best
neighborhoods and therefore provided many temptations for those going to the meetings. Once there, the often crowded, small, dark, smoke-filled rooms left a lot to be desired. Profanity was often used as a way of speaking and occasionally some people even tried to get away with it in the church, particularly when trying to stress a point. Yet, the members of the group would quickly remind everyone that being responsible not only meant being responsible for what is done but what is said also. Because the church provided such wholesome atmosphere, when it was known that the church was available for meetings, it did not take long for the Southside Group to become one of the largest groups in the city according to the participants.

Another resource provided by the church was the use of its van. Because many persons who wanted to attend the meetings lived quite a distance from the church, and lacked responsible modes of transportation, the vans were necessary and often provided service for as many as 30 persons per meeting. The van proved useful in eliminating excuses from those who were being encouraged to attend and demonstrated to those concerned the Church’s commitment to the ministry.

Although the NA group itself was a self-sustaining group, occasionally there were persons in recovery with financial needs who were aided sometimes by the church’s benevolent fund and sometimes by members who were sympathetic to their plight. Needless to say there were those who were endeavoring to start anew but who needed assistance in getting bus passes, identifications, housing, or the like. When it was certain that the money was being used for good causes, the church had little reservations for making a financial contribution to those who needed assistance. In fact, the members
gladly increased their giving when they realized the needs of those in recovery, and knew that the funds were assisting the ministry efforts.

In as much as other resources and services provided have been mentioned earlier, namely a food and clothing pantry, suffice it to say that the church was very resourceful in aiding persons in recovery. To some degree, many of the needed services were provided by the church; for other resources and services, the church was helpful in making proper referrals.

Whereas much has been said about the church’s resources and its contribution, to those in recovery, the church was careful to draw a line between helping and enabling, particularly when monetary issues were considered. The Southside church officers, with the help of trusted individuals in recovery, constantly monitored their actions so that those they were trying to help actually were learning to be responsible citizens. The church did not want to create a situation of co-dependence; the church wanted to help, not handicap. This was not a major problem for the addicted that were aware of tradition seven of NA which states they should be self-supporting, declining outside contributions. This is why the group insisted on making a monthly contribution of twenty dollars to the church to defray a portion of their incurred expenses. Occasionally however, there were individuals who made requests that needed careful consideration. Although the church had little reservations using benevolent funds to assist those in need, the pastor and congregation learned that helping people to live responsibly often included teaching proper time management, encouraging better use of the resources they already had, or searching for job opportunities. Those who were really serious about recovery appreciated being helped rather than being treated like a charity case.
Noting how the recovery ministry revived the Southside congregants and gave the church a new spirit of commitment and dedication, the author was convinced that the church received equally as much, if not more from the ministry and those in recovery, as they had received from the church. This was a new revelation for the author who perhaps like others, had viewed ministry before this as a one-sided endeavor with the church being the primary giver. The pastor noted this as a possible reason that there were sometimes difficulties in getting members to readily agree to support ministries or even to start new ministries. At any rate, a look at how the ministry helped the church membership to grow and mature will give more clarity to the reciprocal relationship shared by the addictive community and the faith community and how the faith community was transformed.

The Addicts Impact

The opportunity to engage in a meaningful ministry was by far one of the greatest blessings the church received according to the author. They were given the opportunity to embark on a ministry that certainly not only benefitted the recipients but allowed the congregation to witness the difference they made in the lives of those in recovery and, consequently, perhaps their own families and communities. As stated earlier, many members of the congregation, if not having used drugs themselves, had persons in their families who were involved with substance abuse and had expressed feelings of hopelessness regarding that family member’s recovery. With the recovery ministry, they had the opportunity to try other approaches, with the aid of the church family, and thereby worked to help the countless numbers of persons who were addicted
and who desired recovery. With the "harvest being so plentiful," the church accepted the challenge and refused to sit by and do nothing.\textsuperscript{10}

The thing that made this call to ministry so inviting also, was the fact that there were persons who desired help with their recovery asking the church's intervention. The church therefore did not embark on an endeavor that was not needed or would not be appreciated. In fact, the participants who needed the ministry were already present. Again this allowed the church to fulfill a need rather than to have a ministry that was not really needed but somehow gave the church a false sense of serving. Too often this had been the case. Even at the Southside Church, there was some form of a food pantry but with the church being in a rather affluent community, the food pantry was not really utilized or the food distributed. However, with the church's acceptance of this ministry, food was not only served, but distributed to those who wanted recovery and needed assistance in getting a new start. Every aspect of this ministry allowed the church members to realize their services were needed and appreciated. They had an opportunity to serve and realize that they too, like Jesus, made a difference.

In the aforementioned paragraph, it was stated that those desiring recovery were asking the church community for help. According to Howard W. Stone, in his book \textit{The Caring Church}, many people who are confronted with someone who needs help in dealing with life's crises feel uncomfortable or incapable of handling the situation because they may not know specifically what to do. They therefore respond by standing on the sidelines wanting very much to help but afraid to get involved.\textsuperscript{11} Although there

\textsuperscript{10} Matthew 9:37, (NKJV).
were persons from the church who were skeptical and unsure about what was needed and the church’s ability to provide, at no time was the congregation left wondering what services were needed. Persons from the recovering community communicated their needs clearly. In this regard, those in recovery participated not only as recipient, but as treatment planner as well. According to Sandra Rasmussen the participation of the addict with their recovery planning proves beneficial to their recovery.\(^{12}\) With those in recovery serving as planners for the recovery program, the opportunity to engage in this ministry was even more attractive to the church community because there was no wonder about what to do but rather how to get it done. The congregation’s feelings of inadequacy and discomfort were therefore alleviated allowing the congregation to seize the opportunity to serve.

Although the church had always engaged in evangelism - spreading the gospel, inviting people to worship and subsequently to join the church family – what had been done previously was no match for those in recovery who invited and brought others to the congregation. They were eager to bring their friends and families to be a part of the church that had given them a new hope and another chance. Whereas the church had initially gone door to door, with a degree of success, persons in recovery were living witnesses to their peers of the change in their lives. They were able to reach people that would have been difficult, if not impossible, for the church family to reach.

When considering the factors that made them so effective in evangelism, several things became apparent and were lessons learned by the community of faith. The first lesson learned was the fact that the addicted were focused and targeted a specific group.

They, being interested in recovery, focused on others who were addicted. Persons who were un-churched, yet already pursuing recovery were encouraged to become a part of a church family who understood the nature of the illness, and others who were not actively pursuing recovery were encouraged by those in recovery to consider another way of life. The pastor of the Southside church saw this as a new revelation. Certainly the learning for the church was that rather than trying to evangelize everybody at the same time, the focus should be on certain groups. Borrowing a term from the medical profession, the church would become a “specialist” in relating to specific groups.

Not only did the recovering community share the advantage of having a target group, but their witness was undeniable and unquestionable. Because their target groups were often their peers, they literally “went home to their friends telling them what good things the Lord had done for them.” They went to the very people who knew them and could now see what the Lord had done for them. They were living testimonies for they were now “clothed and in their right mind sitting at the feet of Jesus.” Their witness spoke volumes to their families and friends who had given up on them and had no confidence in a God who to this point had allowed them to have had such a devastating past. Their witness said to their families and friends, “come see a man” who is responsible for the change. They invited their peers to come meet their new Southside Church family who had helped them and who desired to help their peers as well. The Southside family saw how witness was important for effective evangelism.

13 Mark 5:19, (NKJV).
14 Mark 5:15, (NKJV).
15 John 4:29, (NKJV).
Lastly, the energy they brought as they witnessed was profound. Their energy, motivated by love and a desire to see others recover as they were recovering, was obviously not the result of coercion or obligation. Their evangelistic thrust encompassed persons who were excited about their efforts and who genuinely desired to lead others to a new way of life. Their energy not only kept the Southside church family energized but it re-energized those who had become complacent in their witness. Together, the efforts of the two groups, namely the church family and those in recovery, led over 100 people to join the church in less than one year. That was a first for this congregation.

Though the church helped the recovering community to develop and mature spiritually, the author contends that the recovering community raised the level of spirituality within the Southside family as well. For one, the members of the recovering community taught the church to freely express emotions and love. Prior to the ministry, many of the members were rather emotionless and somewhat stoic in their responses to each other. This was particularly true regarding the way they responded to non-members. With the coming of the ministry, members in recovery freely expressed feelings and emotions ranging from pain, hurts and disappointments that made them cry at times, to feelings of joy and happiness that made them laugh. They even taught the church family to show feelings of love for each other. Handshakes were enhanced by embraces. After a season, men who no longer felt their masculinity threatened felt free to express emotions of love. It was no longer uncommon to see men embracing each other as they laughed or even cried together.

Particularly impressive also was the attitude of tithing as expressed by those committed to recovery. Many felt that tithing was the least they could do for a God who
had blessed them with so much especially an opportunity to begin anew. Their stories of deliverance entailed such things as their having lived homeless on the streets in cardboard boxes, having to eat from garbage cans when no handouts were available, having to endure sickness because there were no funds for medical care, having been dismissed by family who didn’t want them around, and the list goes on. When these members of recovery thought of how far they had come by the grace of God, they readily expressed that a tenth of all they had belonged to God. They were relentless in making sure that God’s portion of whatever meager funds they received were given to the church. Needless to say, the commitment of the recovering community stirred the hearts of many persons in the church that had not taken tithing seriously or had relaxed their commitment. The church was able also to realize there were increases in tithes as those in recovery received better jobs. Here was a tangible way that the congregants who were initially mainly concerned about the finances and the addicts potentially destroying church property, saw that the investment in this ministry was a sane investment for many reasons.

Lastly, this author contends that the church’s level of spirituality was increased by seeing how God was moving in the lives of those in recovery. The congregation having read and learned the Bible stories were able to visualize firsthand how God was addressing needs in a modern society. To witness and give glory to God for blessings and miracles of deliverance gave the church a renewed sense of hope for dealing with all issues of their lives.

It becomes apparent that with the increase in membership also came an increase in the number of persons that were available to serve in the church. In response to the
harvest being plentiful and the laborers few, the Lord answered the church’s prayer for more laborers in the vineyard. It was surprising to see how talented they were. In the group of persons in recovery were carpenters, landscapers, chefs, painters, van drivers, and the list goes on. They, being so grateful to God and the church for reaching out to them, were eager to donate their services to the church and thereby demonstrate their level of responsibility and trustworthiness. That resulted in a net saving for the church in as much as outside contractors were not needed for the services they rendered. Hence, not only did they help the church to engage in new ministries, they provided many of the services and even repairs needed. Their eagerness to serve led others to volunteer services as well.

Because one of the weekly meetings was open to anyone who wanted to attend, many persons from the church community readily attended. Not only did this allow them to show support for those in recovery but it was soon discovered that the twelve steps of NA were applicable to everyone. The members of NA were not the only ones who had issues with which to deal. Just as they were often tempted to follow a wrong course as a result of the disease of addiction, so was everyone who had to face their own temptations and issues. The parishioners were not exempt simply because they were members of the faith community. Furthermore, even though there may have been no active use of mind-altering substances such as drugs or alcohol, even the churched had to deal with addictive behaviors such as tempers, selfishness, being responsible and being patient with each other. Hurts, pains, grief, and relationships were not exclusive of the church membership. The principles of NA proved beneficial and practical in helping the entire congregation to learn how to discover positive means of coping.
The application of the twelve step program allowed the church community to understand and accept their present behaviors as a result of their past experience. Listening to those in recovery forced members of the church to realize that the issues faced by the recovering community were very similar to their own. Stories of dysfunctional families, parent absenteeism, job displacement, loss of significant persons, environments, tempers, learned behaviors, and the list goes on, helped the church members to see themselves in their stories. Yet, the addicts were willing to unclothe themselves as a means of dealing with negative coping strategies and substance abuse. Members of the church who had been taught to hide their true feelings and behaviors in the name of “holiness” and had become frustrated by having to deal with issues alone realized the potential for healing when they shared with others. The church community began to realize just as the church was concerned and reaching out to the recovering addict, there were those who would reach out to them as well. Consequently, members of the church began to relax their need to be as secretive about their past over which they had little or no control. Like the addictive community, the twelve step program set the stage for the church members to learn to understand themselves and their present behaviors in light of their past and to subsequently develop positive strategies for dealing with current issues and feelings.

During the weekly meetings the pastor, and the members, noticed the benefits of group therapy. There was strength in sharing feelings and weaknesses with others who understood and who were sharing the same desire for recovery. Accordingly, Sandra Rasmussen writes, “groups can effect changes in client’s thoughts, feelings, and actions. They can learn about addiction, relapse, recovery, and myriad specific treatment topics;
practice sobriety skills such as refusal skills, assertiveness, self-esteem exercises, and self-management; develop trust and control, acceptance, and affection; and acquire decision-making, problem-solving, and anger management strategies. Groups have ground rules that include respect, responsibility, accountability, and loyalty. They invite participation, encourage communication, and foster socialization. Because members of the church were not exempt from thoughts, feelings, and frustrations that often led to addictive behaviors, members of the congregation after noticing the interactions of the NA group, developed an even greater appreciation for the power of groups. Although there were church groups like the singles’ ministry and the men’s Bible study already meeting prior to the NA group, the pastor contends that these ministries went to a new level of care and concern based on the impact of the NA group.

**Summary and Conclusions**

At the beginning of this dissertation the issue raised was how the church community and those who are addicted yet who desire recovery could work together for the common good of both. The issue was highlighted by the mere fact that many persons in our church family may have used mind altering substances or have been affected adversely by those who have. With the rise and constant drug flow in our communities, drug use and its related issues are prevalent. This being the case, the church can no longer sit idly by watching and hoping without getting involved. Indeed, the church’s involvement would allow her to fulfill her mission while helping to address not only the addicted needs but the needs of our communities as well. Although there is a need for the church’s involvement, it was suggested that church community often revealed negative

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feelings about the addicted community that prevented them from providing the needed services. Additionally, because of the attitudes of the church family, whether real or perceived, the addicted community often feel like outcasts and are therefore reluctant to avail themselves to receive the assistance from the church. The issue then is how can the two groups, the addicted community and the church community, come together, working for the common good of both. It was the contention of the author that their working together would be mutually beneficial and transformational.

Throughout this document, care has been given to describe how such a relationship could be cultivated and nurtured. Accordingly, the initial process of visioning sought to explore and relieve the prejudices and biases that would interfere with the process. Persons were then brought together as a team to foster meaningful relationships that would allow those in recovery to feel the genuine love of the congregation while allowing the congregation not to feel threatened or that their efforts to help would be futile. As the process progressed, the author became more and more convinced that the initial tension that spawned the idea for a meaningful relationship had positive results for the church and the recovering addict. The success and mutual benefits to a large degree have been revealed throughout this document.

As the author further recapitulates the success of the relationship, it should be mentioned that the Southside group was one of, if not the, largest groups in the city. It was not uncommon to have over 100 attendees during their meetings. Although the church did not interfere with their meetings, their excitement and enthusiasm flowed into the church’s Sunday worships where over 100 persons joined the congregation during the
year. As people joined, the church family rejoiced as a new spirit hovered over the church.

The success of the program was not measured in numerical terms only. Countless persons who were in recovery testified of healed relationships with family who at one time had given up on them. Having a second chance, the recovering addict, whose family members had previously hidden their purses and not allowed them in the house, were now proving they could be responsible enough to give to those from whom they had previously stolen and abused. Spouses were reunited and children were returned to the custody of their parents. Additionally, many received GED certificates and enrolled in skill development classes that qualified them to get jobs. Those with skills were assisted in finding jobs to support themselves. Attitudes that once led them to terrorize their communities were changed and those with legal matters pending addressed them. Needless to say, they were learning to become responsible and productive citizens.

Their renewed and newly discovered sense of self-esteem was contagious. Not only were they an encouragement for each other, they were a catalyst for the church as well. The spirit of the church was rekindled as the church became more consciously aware of the difference it was making in the lives of those in recovery. As a result, many ministries were started while others were revived; the church became more accepting and loving as it embraced people from all cultures and for the first time in its history became a bi-racial congregation; and there was an increase in financial contributions that supported the church and its ministries.

From all indications, the program was a success and was mutually beneficial. The church and the recovering community, by joining efforts and working together,
reciprocated their gifts and both received benefits that propelled them toward reaching their greatest potential. The net result, according to the author was that the addict and the Church became a transforming community that transformed each other.

Limitations of the Study

Though there is much to be said about the transformation of both groups, the author is aware of the limitations of the study. The success of the program, as with any new program, rests on the shoulders of those initiating the project that must be excited and enthusiastic about the potential outcome of the effort. The pastor of the Southside church became excited by evangelism and being cornered Sunday after Sunday by those desiring help with recovery. They just wanted an opportunity to share their week, to talk about their situations, and to get help deciding the direction they should take. The pastor’s enthusiasm led to involving the church family as well as the church’s resources in offering assistance. The excitement of representatives from the recovering community was demonstrated by their desire to share and accept assistance from those who were aware of their addiction but were willing to give them a second chance. This excitement is what ignited a spark that made both groups feel they could work through tensions that would inhibit the mission. Although there were tensions to be overcome, the tenacity of the proponents for the success of the mission would be the catalyst for success.

As has already been noted, attitudes of both groups could limit the success of a recovery program. One of the first barriers that had to be overcome was negative attitudes. Being aware that many in the congregation had previous experiences that may have prejudiced them about persons who are chemically dependent, care had to be given to address the attitudes that would be counterproductive to such a ministry. This author
feels it is crucial to have as many congregants as possible sharing the vision for a recovery ministry unless negative attitudes send the wrong message to those in recovery and therefore sabotage the efforts.

Though there was excitement, enthusiasm and attempts to address attitudes, the pastor was not too naive to be aware that there were those among the membership, though a minority, who maintained their negativity. Although they were aware of scriptures and could talk about them in Sunday church school, practical applications were apparently missing. Consequently, there were occasions when those in recovery experienced attitudes and harshness that made them uncomfortable. Facial expressions, comments about dress and inappropriate actions during the service sometimes revealed attitudes that were counterproductive to the ministry and made some of the more sensitive persons in recovery refrain from being a part.

Though there has been mention of the services provided by the church, limited services also provided a challenge for the church. Because the needs of those in recovery are great and varied the Southside congregation was unable to provide many of their needs. Many people had to be referred to agencies for help beyond what the church could give. Whereas this is no doubt a good thing, the church did not readily have a list of services on hand that addressed various needs. It was a process of learning where the shelters were and the services they offered. Many people needed legal services, medical assistance, and educational opportunities that heretofore had not posed issues for the church. Having to learn the client’s history and qualifications for many of the services needed often required much time and sometimes led to dead ends. Though the church was learning of proper referrals, learning the system was at times a major task.
Furthermore, when referrals were made, the church did not know whether the services provided were rendered with the same level of care and individual concern as those provided by the church. With some services, the addicted became a number rather than individuals who longed for compassion and understanding.

Another major concern is the itinerancy of the CME church. In the CME Church pastors are assigned or re-assigned annually. After thirteen years of being at the Southside Church, the pastor, having been one of the key persons involved when the ministry began was transferred after about eight years of working with the ministry. Although the new pastors reportedly has embraced the ministry it is difficult to measure the continued impact and long range effect of the ministry. Although the ministry had the ingredients for its continuation, the pastor, as the leader of the church congregation, will be influential in the future direction of the ministry. Furthermore, because many people bond with certain leaders and leadership styles, some persons from the addicted community may be more likely to become less involved than they would have been if there had been no pastoral change.

Lastly, there was no way to measure long term transformation. Relapse, although common, was not a measurable factor in the implementation of the ministry. Some of the persons who were a part of the program had up to five years clean by the time the pastor was reassigned. Others struggled to make it from week to week without using. Some moved away while others simply stopped coming to the meetings or the church. Although transformation was measured by those who remained and continued their relationship with the ministry or the church, statistics showing the overall percentage of persons who remained clean and sober for the long term was lacking. Was the
transformation short term perhaps resulting from the attention they were given or was the transformation lasting? Indeed this was a question for the congregation also. Whether the parishioners were transformed enough to continue the ministry and begin new ones was not considered.

Implications for Future Ministries

Having embarked on this study and having seen the impact of the reciprocity between the church and the recovering addicted community, the author now maintains that more ministries may be started or certainly enhanced by highlighting the mutual benefits between the parties involved. Inasmuch as the author had been a pastor for many years he was keenly aware that many times persons in the church are reluctant to begin ministries because, as they count the cost, not merely in dollars and cents, to them the benefits given to others outweigh the benefits they received. In this regard, many parishioners see themselves as the givers only with little to no rewards. Initially, as the recovery ministry at the Southside Church began to take roots, there were those who expressed more concern about the financial cost to the church, the wear and tear of the physical building and property, the possible lack of support and who would voluntarily give of themselves to such a long lasting endeavor. These concerns, though valid, express the pessimism often faced by leaders and proponents of ministries from some of the church members. Although it is not the desire of the author to encourage members to begin ministries from selfish ambitions, the author does maintain however, that as we go forward in establishing new ministries, or even enhancing those that are already going forth, perhaps if more care is given to stress the mutual benefits received, the church membership may be more optimistic about the ministry.
Conclusion

The author, following the request of many persons who joined his congregation after an evangelistic thrust, felt led to this ministry with recovering addicts. Desiring to fulfill a need and help assist persons along their road to recovery, the author has discovered a possible model whereby the church engages in a ministry to the recovering addicts that leads to transformation for the church and the addict. The addict receives help and encouragement with their recovery and the church, by demonstrating care and concern grows spiritually and numerically. Both groups are benefactors of each other and are instrumental in helping the other reach its greatest potential. In this regard, they transform each other. From this the author has derived the following conclusions:

1. Ministry provides the opportunity for mutual reciprocity.
2. Parishioners may be more encouraged to engage in and enhance new and existing ministries when they are aware of reciprocities.
3. The church is the model for providing and environment of love and compassion for those in recovery.
4. Openness and candid discussions is necessary to fostering an understanding that overcomes prejudices and biases that could retard cooperation and community.

Though the study and ministry have had positive results and revealed much in the area of learning, the author realizes that more study is necessary to perfect this model. Additionally, more study would reveal new insights relative to fostering better relationships and services between the church and the recovering addict.
APPENDIXES
A- Questionnaire for the Church Community

Yes__No__ 1. Although I am aware of how the Church should receive and respond to persons who are addicted, I admit I was initially apprehensive about having them in my church.

Yes__No__ 2. I have always felt the church should have ministries for those who are addicted/recovering and always wanted to be a part of those ministries.

Yes__No__ 3. When we initially instituted the recovery program, I frequently attended their meetings, and offered support.

Yes__No__ 4. I have a close friend, family member who is addicted/recovering.

Yes__No__ 5. I became more and more open to working with addicts as I grew to understand addictions and saw them struggle to live drug free.

Yes__No__ 6. I have used drugs at some time in life.

Yes__No__ 7. Having witnessed the Church’s partnering with the addict for wholeness, I gladly recommend other churches involvement with addicts.

Yes__No__ 8. As I learned more about addiction and recovery, I realized the 12-step program could be applied to my daily living, even if I have never used or abused drugs.

Yes__No__ 9 I came to realize that recovering addicts had a lot to offer the church in terms of:

Yes__No__ increased attendance
Yes__No__ evangelism
Yes__No__ new ministries
Yes__No__ increased finances for the church
Yes__No__ increased spirituality
Yes__No__ exposure to 12-step programs
Yes__No__ renewed vision

Yes__No__ 10. As a result of sharing with the addictive community, I am proud to seek ways to reach out to the addictive community.

Yes__No__ 11. I found there seemed to be a correlation between the
interest shown to the Addictive Community by the Church Community and their recovery. The more interest shown, the more they wanted to recover.

Yes__No__ 12. I think it is good to include the addictive community in shaping programs and ministries that are intended to help them recover.

Yes__No__ 13. The positives of the church working with the addicted community far outweighs the negatives.

Yes__No__ 14. Overall, I think I am a better person as a result of sharing with persons who are recovering.
Yes No 1. Although I am aware of how the Church should receive and respond to non-members, I was apprehensive about how they would receive persons who admitted to having used drugs.

Yes No 2. I found the church environment helpful in encouraging my recovery.

Yes No 3. The Church was open to receiving all who wanted to participate without being judgmental or prejudice.

Yes No 4. The church provided support without interference of our NA meetings.

Yes No 5. The Church helped us to live responsibly by allowing us to be involved in the decisions and implementation of recovery/Church programs.

Yes No 6. When necessary, we could always find persons with whom we could share concerns and personal issues.

Yes No 7. The love and support of the Church made me feel that someone cared about me and my recovery.

Yes No 8. The Church provided inspiration for those desiring recovery.

Yes No 9. As a result of the help I received from the Church, I supported the Church by:
- giving tithes and/or offering
- attending and supporting the ministries
- becoming a member
- evangelizing and inviting others to church
- witnessing about my deliverance

Yes No 10. Although there may have been occasional problems encountered, the positive experiences with Church outweigh the negative.

Yes No 11. By sharing with the Church, I realized I was not only growing, but I could help the Church members to grow as well.

Yes No 12. Having witnessed the Church community partner with the
addictive community, I gladly recommend that other churches become involved with addicts.

Yes ___ No ___  13. The care and nurture I received from the Church made me more determined to live drug free.

Yes ___ No ___  14. Overall, I think I am a better person as a result of sharing and becoming a part of the Church.
C. Flyer

Southside CME Church

713 DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DR. SW
BIRMINGHAM, AL 35211
205-252-5673 - FAX: (205) 252-1794
PASTOR, SYLVESTER WILLIAMS, SR.
PRESIDING ELDER, WILLIAM WALLACE, SR.
PRESIDING PRELATE, BISHOP PAUL A. STEWART, SR.

Weekly Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breakfast</td>
<td>8:00 a.m. Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday School</td>
<td>9:30 a.m. Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship Service</td>
<td>11:00 a.m. Sunday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Study Wednesday</td>
<td>6:30 pm &amp; 12 noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narcotics Anon. Group Meeting</td>
<td>7:00 pm Tues &amp; Fri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercessory Prayer Wed &amp; Sun</td>
<td>6:00 pm &amp; 8:45 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio Mon.,Tues. &amp; Thurs.</td>
<td>6:00 pm on 105.5 FM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We, the pastor and members of Southside CME Church, take this opportunity to invite you to worship with us at one or all of our services. Although our church has been located here for some time, we do not want to take for granted that you have previously received an invitation or that you have had an opportunity to experience a worship service at Southside. It is with this in mind, that we ask you to accept this as your personal invitation to fellowship with us. Furthermore, if you are looking for a church home, we would be honored if you would consider becoming a part of our church family. Although we do not profess to be a perfect people, we do profess to serve a God who can cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

We do look forward to seeing you soon as we lift up the name of Jesus together. Until then, “May the Lord bless and protect you, may the Lord’s face radiate with joy because of you: may he be gracious to you, show you his favor, and give you His peace.”

Numbers 6: 24-26 (Life Application)
D. Faith Sharing Outline

I. Faith Sharing is God’s Idea
   A. The Seeking God
   B. Humanity Needs Christian Faith
   C. God’s Nature

II. Love: The Motive for Faith Sharing
   A. Faith Sharing is founded in God’s Love
      1. Agape – Not a natural endowment
      2. Agape – A gift from God
      3. Agape – Makes both the giver and the recipient vulnerable
      4. Agape – Grounded in the active will more than emotions
   B. Faith Sharing Fulfills the Great Commission
   C. Faith Sharing Focuses on Total Redemption

III. The Arena for Faith Sharing
   A. Begin where People are
   B. Assess Human Needs
   C. Establish Contact
      1. Enter into the other persons world
      2. Speak in the language of the hearer
      3. Be sensitive to the passages in people’s lives
      4. Recognize that the Holy Spirit prepares people to be Responsive to the presentation of the Gospel

IV. Principles of Faith Sharing
   A. Faith Sharing within Social Networks
      1. We must be clear regarding our purpose
      2. Faith Sharing must be grounded in prayer
      3. Listening opens the door for Speaking
      4. The Christian witness is responsible for taking both the person and the persons environment seriously
      5. It is better to make invitational statements rather than ask questions
      6. If people volunteer information, we can rest assured they wish to tell us more
      7. To do the mission of Christ, one must have the mind of Christ
      8. It is better to expose our vulnerability than to pretend invulnerability
      9. God is far more interested in our availability than our ability
      10. Do not tell people why or what they should believe, but rather why or what we believe
      11. It is better to expose our vulnerability than to pretend
      12. Witnessing is most effective when done in person
B. Faith Sharing with Strangers
   1. Sensitivity to the other person begins before you ring the door bell or knock
   2. In establishing a relationship with a stranger, the introductory moments are of crucial importance
      a) Give a friendly greeting
      b) Make known your identity
      c) Explain why you’re there
      d) Acknowledge the intrusion
      e) Ask to come in
      f) Promise to be brief
   3. The Encounter is not a waste of time, even if we are not invited inside
   4. Take personal and contextual factors seriously

V. Inviting Persons to Receive Christ
   A. Guidelines for Inviting
      1. The Invitations flows out of the nature of the Gospel
      2. Be aware there are many methods of inviting persons
      3. Do not pressure people
      4. Offer the invitation with clarity and integrity
      5. Be willing to wait in expectant hope and humility for a response of faith

B. Closures

C. Inviting People Saved by Grace
   1. G – God’s Grace in Christ Jesus for all
   2. R – Recognizing and Repenting of Sins
   3. A – Accepting God’s Forgiveness
   4. C – Confessing Faith in Christ Jesus
   5. E – Entering the Reign of God and the Church

VI. The Power for Faith Sharing
   A. The Holy Spirit Energizes
   B. The Holy Spirit Guides
   C. The Holy Spirit Motivates
   D. The Holy Spirit Prepares Others

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