Beyond the walls of the church: a strategy for implementing a community outreach ministry

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Beyond The Walls of The Church:

A Strategy for Implementing a Community Outreach Ministry

By

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Bachelor of Science, Livingstone College, 1988
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A Doctoral Dissertation
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ABSTRACT
Beyond The Walls of The Church:
A Strategy for Implementing a Community Outreach Ministry

By
Terrance J. Gattis
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This dissertation will address the implementation of a Community Outreach Ministry at Mount Olive Baptist Church in Stockbridge, Georgia. The working hypothesis of this project is that Mt. Olive is called to use its resources to care for and serve the local community, and in so doing, the church will help to meet the needs within its local community. Therefore, the scope of this project is to establish a Community Outreach Ministry at Mt. Olive that will primarily serve the elderly within the community who are facing issues of food insecurity. The goal of the project is to involve Mt. Olive in outreach ministry with the hope that this involvement will ultimately change the culture of Mt. Olive; that going forward the church will faithfully allocate a portion of its resources (financial, human, and property) to consistently meet the needs of the local community.

Theologically, the researcher believes that the example and ethic of Jesus Christ make it clear that churches are called to reach beyond their walls and serve those in need, for through the church’s outreach efforts, and via the power of the Holy Spirit, lives will be transformed and needs will be met. In short, the researcher will show that the bible clearly addresses the mandate for community outreach (Matt. 25:34-36); that the bible makes it clear that: 1) the church is called to reach out to those in need; 2) Christ, via the
power of the Holy Spirit, will bring about transformation to those in need; and 3) God will provide the resources necessary to serve those in need.

The researcher’s project was conducted in three phases over a period of 31 consecutive weeks - February through August, 2012: Phase 1: Centering – Rooting the ministry in a theology of serving the "least of these" (Matt. 25:40); Phase 2: Critiquing – Identifying the needs of the community; and Phase 3: Constructing – Executing a plan of action to mobilize the ministry volunteers. The overall success and effectiveness of the project was measured by the following five (5) goals:

1. Is the Community Outreach Ministry operational?
2. Are at least 50 seniors being served?
3. Are there at least two (2) seniors from the community working with the ministry?
4. Has the Community Outreach Ministry formed a partnership with an organization that advocates on behalf seniors and those facing issues of food insecurity?
5. Is the ministry meeting the needs of the seniors served and has change occurred in the church? Have the ministry volunteers experienced positive change from working in the ministry? Are they more committed to community outreach?

The researcher also provided reflections regarding the limitations and lessons learned from the project, as well as future implications as a result of the project.
DEDICATION

Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

James 2:15-17

Ministries of compassion and justice do not happen until someone cares enough to act.

Carl S. Dudley

I dedicate this doctoral dissertation to those who believe that we are called to serve the community beyond walls of the church. To God be the Glory for the great things He has done!

T.J.G.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the course of this project, there have been many people who provided support, assistance, guidance, and prayer. These persons are acknowledged here for their contributions to this work.

First, I thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for calling me to His service and for sustaining me through it all. To the members of Mt. Olive Baptist Church and the volunteers who serve on the Twelve Baskets Food Ministry, I extend my sincere gratitude and love, and I thank you for your grace, commitment, and discipleship.

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To my Father, Myron Gattis, Esq., my family, Rev. Dr. Arthur Carson, and Fred Brewer, I thank you all for your prayers, love, motivation and encouragement.

Last, but certainly not least, to my wife and best friend, Rev. Elaine Gattis (who will soon be Rev. Dr. Elaine Gattis). I thank you so much for your love, input, prayers, encouragement, and support. I would have never made it through without you. I love you much!!!
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During the latter part of the 19th century, Robert Lowry wrote the following lyrics for the classic hymn “Nothing But The Blood of Jesus:”

What can wash away my sin? What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus. Oh precious is the flow, that makes me
white as snow. No other fount I know - Nothing but the blood of
Jesus.¹

Like many of his contemporaries, the researcher has sung this hymn without giving any critical thought to its claims. The blood that is referenced by the songwriter is the blood that Jesus shed on the cross - the term “blood” serving as a metaphorical expression for Jesus’ salvific sacrifice at Calvary. Yet, by inference, the hymn writer is suggesting that this is no ordinary blood; that this blood has the power to change and transform lives. Thus, the hymn writer is making a clear suggestion that through Jesus Christ, people and situations have the capacity and capability to change. In short, the hymn reminds us that Jesus came, bled, and died so that the lives of God’s people can be changed.

So how does the church contribute to this idea of Christ influenced change? Does the church have a role in serving the community in a manner that fosters change and transformation? The researcher believes that it does. Specifically, the researcher believes that the church is called to facilitate change in the community by reaching beyond the walls of the church and serving those in need. Therefore, the task of this

writing is to offer a dissertation that “engages in qualitative research (observation, interviews, etc.),”\(^2\) and explores an issue related to the practice of community outreach ministry. The term “Community Outreach Ministry”, from the perspective of this dissertation, will be defined as caring for people in need; as “serving” those in need versus “challenging” those social systems and structures that foster and facilitate need.

The ministry project will offer a comprehensive description of the ministry context. Additionally, it will also include a conceptual framework – previous efforts to address the ministry issue from a theological, Biblical, and empirical literature perspective. Lastly, the ministry project, along with a project evaluation and reflections, will be offered.

CHAPTER 2

MINISTRY CONTEXT

The Ministry Setting

According to Tom Frank, a congregation is “a people of God called together and gifted for ministry in a particular place.” 3 The continuing power of religious belief and commitment provide the fundamental basis for the group to voluntarily choose to assemble and remain together over time. Hence, as an assembled group, a congregation has a unique culture and particular purpose. Yet, in order to become familiar with this group, one has to ask, “Who are these people?” and take the opportunity to get to know the congregation. So who is Mt. Olive Baptist Church?

Mt. Olive Baptist church is a 400 member, medium sized, African American congregation in the suburbs of metropolitan Atlanta (Stockbridge, GA, Henry County). Established in 1870, the church has a rich history that spans one hundred and forty years. The congregation can be loosely described as a “family” church, as many of the congregants are related to one of three primary families in one way or another. Moreover, the congregation is primarily comprised of middle aged, middle class people, who have lived in and around Henry County for most, if not all, of their lives.

Additionally, theologically and culturally, Mt. Olive is a conservative church. As such, theologically, the church sees the Bible as the inspired Word of God, and culturally the church believes that men should be the head of the household. Yet, while the church is theologically and culturally conservative, the liturgical orientation of the church is best

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described as moderately contemporary. One will note that contemporary music has replaced the more traditional hymns, and while the Mother’s Board upholds the tradition of wearing white on first Sunday’s, the old tradition of Deacon’s devotion at the beginning of the worship service has long been replaced with a more contemporary Praise Team.

*The Ministry Issue*

In December, 2009, the researcher was called as the sixteenth Pastor of Mt. Olive. After a few weeks of service, the researcher discovered that Mt. Olive is a historically “inward” focused church; that the church’s ministries have historically been focused on the membership and not the community. To date, there are over thirty ministries at the church, including ministries in the areas of youth, Christian education, worship and arts, and family life. Moreover, there are occasional efforts to donate food or books to local charities, to help members who are facing financial challenges, or to visit a local shelter or community center. Yet in reviewing past budgets, programs, and calendar events, there are no sustained resources allocated to consistently serve the needs of the local community beyond the walls and the membership of the church. Specifically, there is no existing community outreach ministry at the church, and while new ministries have been recommended and established during the researcher’s tenure at Mt. Olive, there have been no recommendations for the establishment of any community focused ministries.
Framing The Issue

There are many churches and Christian-based organizations working to serve those in need within the Henry County community. There are numerous churches working to provide food and clothing to those in need, churches that have excellent substance abuse ministries, and churches that are providing support services to low income families with children. Additionally, there are Christian-based organizations working to meet the pressing healthcare needs of the community. One such organization, Hands of Hope Clinic, “provides basic medical and dental care free of charge to uninsured Henry County residents who are unable to afford the health services they need.” Thus, there are many Christians doing their best to serve the Henry County community, and through their service people are being cared for, needs are being met, and lives are being changed.

Historically, Mt. Olive has been absent from the faith based community when it comes to serving the Henry County community. Even during the Civil Rights struggle, when Henry County was rife with laws and institutions that marginalized African American citizens, Mt. Olive was not an active participant in the fight to make things better in the community. The researcher believes that there are a few fundamental reasons as to why Mt. Olive has experienced social disengagement from the community. First, the researcher believes that the socio-economic context of Henry County may be a contributor to Mt. Olive’s social disengagement from the community. According to the US Census Bureau, Henry County has a relatively low poverty rate as

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5 Information based on an interview conducted on April 27, 2011 with Mt. Olive seniors who were members of the church and the Henry County community during the Civil Rights struggle.
compared to other metro-Atlanta counties.\textsuperscript{6} Mt. Olive is a middle class church, and many of the members live in middle class subdivisions with the customary amenities (e.g. swim, tennis, effective schools, etc.). Hence, the “visible” and “in-your-face” needs that are often seen in urban settings are not obvious in Mt. Olive’s immediate community. Thus, when it comes to identifying needs within the church’s community, one has to be intentional; one has to be willing to look beyond the manicured lawns and orderly subdivisions if one is going to find and serve the pressing needs of the community.

In a study conducted by C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, it was found that suburban and “rural” churches are often socially disengaged and seldom have sustained outreach programs. In the study, it is stated that when it comes to community outreach, non-urban churches “have shown an extreme paucity of community activities initiated by churches or held in church-owned buildings.”\textsuperscript{7} The authors did not provide a definitive reason for the lack of community outreach by the churches in their study, yet they do argue that outreach “is doubly important because it is so greatly needed...and because the Church is about the only organization to promote it.”\textsuperscript{8}

Additionally, the researcher believes that the culture of Mt. Olive might also be a contributor to its social disengagement from the community. As has been stated, the Mt. Olive congregation can be loosely described as a “family” church, as many of the congregants are related to one of three primary families in one way or another. If one were to walk through the adjacent church cemetery, look through the archives of the


\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
church, or scan the church directory, one would easily see the family strands that have held the church together over the years. Hence, the researcher believes that Mt. Olive has a family culture that has made the care for each other and “their” church the primary aim of the church.

The implications of a “family culture” can be seen in Max Weber’s “Status Group Theory”. In this theory, Status Groups are “composed of persons in the same locality having a common life style, common set of conventions, a common social life, and some external forms of common identification.” Hence, those who share commonalities with the group, or who are part of the “family”, are embraced by the group and cared for. However, those who are “different”, have less in common with the group, or who stand on the outside of the “family”, are less likely to be cared for by the group. Thus, one of the goals of moving Mt. Olive to become more socially engaged is to help the church see that we all belong to God’s family – those at Mt. Olive and those who stand in need beyond the walls of the church.

Lastly, the researcher believes that Mt. Olive has been socially disengaged from the community because the church has been steeped in a theological tradition that is focused more on salvation than Christian service to the community. As with many traditional Baptist churches, Mt. Olive subscribes to the belief that the primary function of the church is to save souls. Historically, there have been pastors, Baptist and otherwise, who have firmly believed that “the job of the minster...is to lead the souls of men to God, and not to bring about confusion by getting tangled up in transitory social

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problems." Yet, it was Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. who reminds us that "any religion that professes to be concerned with the souls of men and is not concerned with the slums that damn them, the economic conditions that strangle them, and the social conditions that cripple them is a dry-as-dust religion." 

Embracing a More Public Theology

According to James Leo Garrett, Baptist tradition supports "regenerate membership", or the idea that "local churches ought to consist only of regenerate persons who continue to live in fellowship with Christ and with the brethren as reborn men." Garrett goes on to suggest that the absence "of any serious doctrinal or ethical standards for membership has cheapened the meaning of church membership" by facilitating a "believe what you will and do what you please attitude." Garrett's theory highlights the traditional Baptist concern of sin and individual behavior, and the belief that the sole mission of the church is to save souls and transform sinners.

The notion of individual moral reform can be seen historically in the black church. In his book Another Day's Journey: Black Churches Confronting the American Crisis, Robert Franklin argues that there have been, and still are, black churches that "seek personal salvation for all people and tend to be disengaged from the political order, or

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13 Ibid. p 32
relate to it with contempt.”\textsuperscript{14} Franklin goes on to say that these churches “employ the metaphor of God as Savior”, and are “primarily interested in the moral hygiene of their members.”\textsuperscript{15} Thus, the church’s individualistic focus on salvation and morality is not only historically seen in Baptist churches in general, it is seen in black Baptist churches in particular.

In a very real sense, Mt. Olive is a traditional Baptist church. For most of its one hundred and forty year history, the primary mission of Mt. Olive was to save souls. Individual morality was truly important in this conservative congregation. Yet, while saving souls and individual morality are primary, Mt. Olive does have a history of “inward benevolence”; the congregation believed that it had a “Christian” responsibility to take care of the membership. Additionally, there is a history of political engagement at Mt. Olive. The church has served as a voter registration site for years, and has consistently encouraged the membership to take part in the political process by voting.

The researcher believes that the “ideal” Mt. Olive is a church that no longer emphasizes individualism, that no longer divides the world into separate realms of the sacred and secular, and that no longer ignores injustice and oppression. Franklin refers to this type of church as a “social justice church” - as a church that “seeks public righteousness through community activism and political advocacy.”\textsuperscript{16} A church who seeks social justice sees God not only as “Savior”, but also as “Liberator”, and thus its members see their role as agents who, through the liberating power of God, can “correct

\textsuperscript{14} Franklin, Robert M. “Another Day’s Journey: Black Churches Confronting the American Crisis,” (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1997), p. 49
\textsuperscript{15} Franklin, Robert M. “Another Day’s Journey: Black Churches Confronting the American Crisis,” (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1997), p. 50
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid. p. 42
the problems of poverty, unemployment, ignorance, racism, sexism, environmental abuse, and so on.\textsuperscript{17}

So how will the researcher help Mt. Olive embrace a more public theology and become more oriented toward social justice? The answer is through 1) Lively Worship, 2) Empowering Education, and 3) Prophetic Preaching. In truth, the Sunday morning worship experience “seeks to facilitate a palpable sense of God’s existence and love.”\textsuperscript{18} Through the contemporary black church worship experience, people are able to come into the very presence of God. And when people sense the presence of God, and can perceive the love of God in their life, they are more inclined to participate in the work of God and the church. In short, through lively worship, people can experience God in a way that they can begin to see themselves as partners in Jesus’ effort to “heal the brokenhearted and to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Lk. 4:18).

Currently, Mt. Olive offers a contemporary worship experience that is rooted in the black Baptist tradition. The Hammond organ, drums, bass guitar, and choirs help the congregation encounter the presence of God every Sunday morning. Yet, to facilitate the church’s move to embrace a more public theology, the researcher will work with the music ministry to select songs that inspire hope and triumphant faith. Songs such as “I’m a Soldier in the Army of the Lord” can truly empower people to “become fearless moral agents who struggle hopefully for a good community and a just society.”\textsuperscript{19}

In addition to lively worship, the researcher will also utilize empowering Christian education to help Mt. Olive embrace a more public theology. The education ministry of

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid. p. 46
\textsuperscript{18} Franklin, Robert M. “Another Day’s Journey: Black Churches Confronting the American Crisis,” (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1997), p. 31
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 34
the church provides a platform to focus the congregation on the relevant needs and concerns of the community. For example, teachers can use the teaching moment to illuminate the issues of poverty, food insecurity, the lack of affordable healthcare, income inequality, etc., and discuss how the church might respond to these issues in a manner that reflects the love ethic of Jesus Christ. And when the congregation begins to connect the Gospel message to the relevant issues of the day, the people will feel more empowered to respond to the issues and needs of the community.

The researcher has already begun to conduct training sessions with the Mt. Olive ministers and church leadership to advance a public theology agenda. Specifically, training is underway to help the leaders of Mt. Olive understand that the example and ethic of Jesus Christ makes it clear that Christians are called to confront issues of injustice and foster change. As such, during a ministerial training class, the Mt. Olive ministers were asked to exegete Matthew 21:12-13 (Jesus overturns the tables of the money changers). Through this educational exercise, the ministers were able to see that Jesus was transforming the community by challenging the practices that negatively impacted the poor. Hence, the Mt. Olive ministers are learning that they must be willing to confront and seek to transform those institutions and practices in the local community that underserve, or attempt to take advantage of, the poor and marginalized.

Lastly, the researcher will utilize prophetic preaching to help Mt. Olive move beyond the traditional concern of individual moral reform and embrace a more public theology. As Franklin notes, prophetic preachers “provide a narrative in which hearers can interpret public life in a compelling way”; in a way that invites the hearer to
"evaluate the moral hygiene of the state, market, and civil society." In short, the goal of prophetic preaching is to help the hearer think historically as well as critically about the relevant issues in the public sphere. In so doing, the hearers are able to see that they must take a stand against injustice and do their part to bring change to their community.

Throughout Mt. Olive’s long history, there have been many preachers who have delivered sermons to the congregation. Given the history of struggle for African Americans in the South, it is safe to assume that there have been many sermons that have sought to encourage the congregation to keep the faith during difficult times. In keeping with this tradition, the researcher plans to deliver sermons that will help the congregation keep the faith as we seek to serve and help those who are in need in our community. Confronting injustice and fostering change can be daunting and discouraging at times. Yet, through the prophetically preached Word, Mt. Olive will be encouraged to press forward by faith with the full assurance that God is on our side!

In summary, the researcher believes that Mt. Olive can move beyond the traditional Baptist concern of individual moral reform and embrace a public theology that is more focused on community service and social justice. Through lively worship, the congregation can experience the presence of God and thus become empowered to struggle for a just society. Moreover, through empowered Christian education, the congregation can engage the relevant needs and concerns of the community and learn how Christians are called to respond to the needs of the community. Lastly, through prophetic preaching, the congregation will be empowered to think historically and

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critically about the issues in the public sphere. In short, the mission of the church is not just to save souls – it is also to seek justice, set captives free, and serve those in need.

Motivation for Study

The researcher’s motivation for addressing the issue of community ministry at Mt. Olive is threefold: 1) pastoral, 2) experiential, and 3) missional. As Pastor of Mt. Olive, the researcher believes that he is called to help the church live up to its mission and mandate. The stated mission of Mt. Olive is “to be about our Father’s business” (Lk. 2:49); “to develop a compliment of ministries and services that seek to transform lives (Rom. 12:2), serve the least of these (Matt. 25:4), and make disciples (Matt. 28:19).”

Thus, in creating and implementing a sustained and committed outreach ministry, Mt. Olive will be able to faithfully live up to its specific mission and mandate to transform lives and serve the least of these.

In addition to being motivated from a pastoral perspective, the researcher’s motivation to address the issue of community ministry at Mt. Olive also comes from his past experiences in ministry. Prior to being called to Mt. Olive, the researcher served as the Pastor of Bethesda Baptist Church in Decatur, Georgia. Bethesda was a “planted” church that was founded and organized by the researcher in April, 2006. In February 2009, with a membership of some fifty people, the church opened the “House of Grace” healthcare clinic in the local community. The clinic provided free primary care services such as physical exams, lab services, and screenings, as well as free prevention care services to the uninsured in the community (nutrition classes, smoking cessation, smoking cessation,

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21 Mt. Olive New Member Orientation Guide (2010), p. 8
weight and stress management classes, etc.). Additionally, the clinic provided limited prescription drug assistance to those in need. In truth, this effort was truly a transformative experience, for not only did the researcher see lives transformed in the local community through this outreach effort, he also witnessed the reality that God can use a few to accomplish much for God’s people.

Lastly, the researcher’s motivation to address the issue of community ministry at Mt. Olive is truly missional. David Bosch, in his work entitled *Transforming Mission*, argues that missions “remains an indispensable dimension of the Christian faith and that, at its most profound level, its purpose is to transform reality around it.” Hence, when viewed from Bosch’s perspective, it is safe to say that when a church is not involved in outreach ministry, it may be missing out on a missional opportunity to transform reality in its local community. In its current state, the researcher believes that Mt. Olive is truly missing a missional opportunity to transform reality by caring for and serving those in need within Henry County. Moreover, the researcher believes that there are many churches like Mt. Olive, inward focused churches that are missing the opportunity to transform reality in their local community via care and service. Yet, by addressing this issue, Mt. Olive and inward focused churches across the nation can learn how to change and become churches that intentionally use their resources to care for and serve those in need within their local community.

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Project Scope

The title of this project is: *Beyond The Walls of The Church: A Strategy for Implementing a Community Outreach Ministry.* The working hypothesis of this project is that Mt. Olive is called to use its resources to care for and serve the local community, and in so doing, the church will help to meet the needs within its community. Therefore, the scope of this project is to establish a community outreach ministry at Mt. Olive that serves the needs of the community beyond the walls of the church. The goal of this project is to involve Mt. Olive in outreach ministry with the hope that this involvement will ultimately change the culture of Mt. Olive; that going forward, the church will faithfully allocate a portion of its resources (financial, human, and property) to consistently meet the needs of the local community via the newly established community outreach ministry.

The Project Outline

There have been numerous efforts to identify the unmet needs and issues in Mt. Olive’s local community. For example, the US Census Bureau reports that “more than one in every ten senior citizens in Georgia (10.7%) are living in poverty.”23 In Henry County in particular, the Census Bureau reports that “the population that is aged 75 years and over have the most percent of people living in poverty in Henry County, accounting for 10.1 percent of this age group in the area living in poverty.”24 According to the National Coalition for the Homeless, the national poverty average for people 65 and older

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is 9.7%, an average that is lower than the 10.1% average in Henry County.\textsuperscript{25} Thus, it is clear that senior citizens in Henry County are truly facing issues of poverty.

The researcher’s project will focus on establishing a community outreach ministry at Mt. Olive that will primarily serve the elderly within Henry County who are facing issues of food insecurity. By definition, food insecurity is the condition “when people lack sustainable physical or economic access to enough safe, nutritious, and socially acceptable food for a healthy and productive life.”\textsuperscript{26} Initially, the ministry will care for and serve the elderly community by delivering food to those in need. The ministry will target those who are homebound and unable to get to a local food pantry for help, and will deliver weekly food boxes that contain items such as cereal, non-perishable canned items, and snacks.

The key objective of the project will be to begin a ministry at Mt. Olive that seeks to meet a real need in the community beyond the walls of the church. Towards this end, the church has budgeted three thousand dollars toward establishing and operating the ministry for the first year. These funds will be used to establish a food pantry, a base of operations at the church, and to purchase any items necessary to facilitate the delivery of food to the community. The goal is to have the ministry functioning and delivering food by August, 2012.

In order to be effective, the newly established outreach ministry will rely on volunteers from Mt. Olive to get involved in the effort. The researcher believes that there are members within Mt. Olive who believe that the church is called to serve the

\textsuperscript{25} "Homelessness Among Elderly Persons", http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/elderly.html (accessed on April 26, 2010)
\textsuperscript{26} Faqs.org, “Food Insecurity”, http://www.faqs.org/nutrition/Erg-Foo/Food-Insecurity.html (accessed on January 10, 2010)
community, and who want the opportunity to put their gifts to work for those in need. To identify these people, the researcher will conduct a church wide solicitation for volunteers to work within the outreach ministry. The only criteria for working within the ministry will be the desire to help those who are in need. Ministry volunteers will take part in community outreach training sessions that will be designed by the researcher. These training sessions will focus on the theological and Biblical principles of the project.

The Pro-Active Research Method will be used for this project, as the researcher is expecting transformation to take place.\textsuperscript{27} The researcher intends to use this method since this project seeks to change the way Mt. Olives engages in community outreach ministry. As this method suggests, the researcher will maintain a personal journal. This journal will document the progress of the project, summarize activities, and capture personal reflections and thoughts. This method also recommends the use of interviews, and thus the researcher will interview the ministry volunteers. Additionally, data will be gathered through the use of surveys and questionnaires.

The method or steps for this project will be based on Larry L. McSwain's "Foundations for a Ministry of Community Transformation,"\textsuperscript{28} and Carl S. Dudley's Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry.\textsuperscript{29} The method used in this project considers those elements inherent in developing a ministry that is focused on community outreach.

\textsuperscript{29} Carl S. Dudley, "Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry", (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1991)
Project Phase I

Centering – Rooting the ministry in a theology of serving the “least of these”. This phase will include forming the outreach ministry, identifying the volunteers who will participate in the ministry, and establishing the food pantry. This phase also will include sharing the vision and mission of the ministry, and teaching the volunteers (and the church at large) about the theological and Biblical principles of the project.

Project Phase II

Critiquing – Identifying the needs of the community. This phase will include defining the social context of the project; establishing the “area” of ministry, identifying anchor institutions and gathering places, and finding the people who the ministry will ultimately serve. This phase also will include analyzing the strengths and limitations of the church and ministry volunteers through a congregational survey.

Project Phase III

Constructing – Executing a plan of action to mobilize ministry resources. The primary goal of this phase is to begin delivering weekly food boxes to at least 50 seniors in the community who are facing issues of food insecurity. This phase will include organizing the ministry and evaluating the effectiveness of the ministry.

In truth, it is one thing to believe that the church is called to serve the community. However, it is another thing to know “how” to do it. Hence, the aforementioned method will provide Mt. Olive with a structured approach for developing, implementing, operating, and evaluating an effective community outreach ministry.
Evaluation and Reflection

The last stage of the researcher's project will be to evaluate the success and effectiveness of the outreach ministry and reflect on the limits and lessons learned. One of the principle measurements of the effectiveness of the project will be the number of seniors served. In addition to measuring the number of seniors who have been served, the researcher will also measure whether the ministry is meeting the senior's needs, and whether the ministry volunteers have changed. For example, do the volunteers feel that their service has made a difference, and that their service is an expression of the love of Jesus? How has working within the ministry changed their faith? To measure if or how the volunteers have changed, the researcher will interview the volunteers after the project ends.

Lastly, the project will measure the number of seniors who get involved in the ministry from the community. The researcher understands that a potential unintended consequence of serving those in need is that those in need can become dependent on the service. Thus, the goal of the project is to empower at least two (2) seniors from the community to become involved in the ministry. Moreover, the project will also form a partnership with an organization that advocates on behalf of seniors and those who are food insecure; an organization that seeks to eliminate food insecurity by empowering the community. In short, by "seeking ways to empower others, you strengthen both those who are served and those who provide the service."30

The bottom line is that the success and effectiveness of the project will be measured by the following five (5) goals:

1. Is the Community Outreach Ministry operational?
2. Are at least 50 seniors being served?
3. Are there at least two (2) seniors from the community working with the ministry?
4. Has the Community Outreach Ministry formed a partnership with an organization that advocates on behalf of seniors and those facing issues of food insecurity?
5. Is the ministry meeting the needs of the seniors served and has change occurred in the church? Have the ministry volunteers experienced positive change from working in the ministry? Are they more committed to community outreach?

At the end of the project, the researcher will provide reflections of the limitations of the project and the lessons learned pastorally and personally. From the onset, the researcher recognizes that this project will not seek to mobilize community assets; it will not seek to engage the broader community in taking ownership of strategies that can reduce and or eliminate poverty and food insecurity. Time constraints and resources will not allow the project to engage in the level of community transformation that challenges dysfunctional systems and structures. Yet, in addition to this obvious limitation, the researcher believes that he will encounter even more operational limitations along way. Fostering change is never easy, but the researcher believes that seeking to bring change to Mt. Olive could ultimately make him a better pastor and a more committed advocate for the “least of these.”
CHAPTER 3

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In his essay entitled "The Hermeneutical Dilemma", William Myers argues that "a primary responsibility of the African American Biblical scholar is to aid the African American believing community in understanding, surviving, and altering its present socio-political situation through accurate and appropriate interpretation and application of Holy Scripture." While the researcher agrees that appropriate interpretation is critical to the community of faith, he would add that an additional responsibility of the Biblical scholar is to aid the believing community in understanding its role in serving and helping those who are in need. In this chapter, the researcher will review the conceptual framework that will be utilized to organize the thoughts and concepts that will ultimately enable Mt. Olive to become a congregation that serves the community beyond the walls of the church. The conceptual framework will consist of three sections or "frames": 1) the Theological Frame; 2) The Biblical Frame; and 3) the Empirical Literature Frame.

Theological Frame

In considering the God-head, the presence and praxis of Jesus clearly demonstrates our Lord's efforts concerning social engagement and community outreach. Specifically, the researcher believes that the example and ethic of Jesus Christ make it clear that churches are called to reach beyond their walls and serve those in need, for through the church's outreach efforts, and via the power of the Holy Spirit, lives will be

31 Cain Hope Felder, "Stony The Road We Trod," (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1991), p. 44
transformed. In short, the researcher believes theologically that the Bible clearly addresses the mandate for community outreach; that the Bible makes it clear that: 1) the church is called to reach out to those in need; 2) Jesus, via the power of the Holy Spirit, will bring about transformation to those in need; and 3) God will provide the resources necessary to serve those in need.

In Matthew's Gospel, we clearly see the mandate that supports the notion that we are called to help those in need:

Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit. (Matt. 25:34-36)

These verses give voice to the reality of a divine edict that bids us to reach out and care for those in need; that Christians are called to serve by feeding the hungry, providing clothing to those in need, caring for the sick, and visiting those in prison. Moreover, when we care for those in need beyond the walls of the church, the Bible says that we will be considered "blessed" and will be rewarded for doing what God has called us to do (Matt. 25:34).

The notion of being called to reach out and serve God's people is also supported by scriptures beyond the Gospels. For example, in the Epistle of James, the writer poses a profound question: "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds?" (James 2:14). The writer of James follows this question with the following observation:
Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (James 2:15-17)

In short, the writer is affirming that reaching out to those in need is what faith in action looks like. Hence, when we care for those in our local community, we are "doing" what faith in Jesus ought to compel us to do - to take action and help someone in need.

During the project, the researcher will teach that Jesus Christ, via the power of the Holy Spirit, will bring about transformation for those in need. The Bible confirms that "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor. 5:17). We see this claim supported throughout the Gospels with respect to Jesus' efforts to transform the lives of individuals. For example, in John's Gospel Jesus restores the sight of a man who was born blind (John 9:1-6). Yet in restoring the man's sight, Jesus also spiritually enriched the man's capacity to believe in Christ (John 9:35-38). Thus, when the church reaches out to help someone in need - to feed a hungry person or help an uninsured person with healthcare, the heart of the individual becomes more open to receive the love and salvation of Christ.

The notion of Jesus as transformer from a community perspective can also be seen in the Gospels. For example, Matthew reports that Jesus "entered the temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves" (Matt. 21:12). M. Eugene Boring argues that Jesus overturned the tables because the community had "profaned the
Temple by making it into a price-gouging business enterprise\textsuperscript{32}; the poor were being taken advantage of in their efforts to purchase the animals that were required for their sacrifices. Hence, Jesus is transforming the community by challenging the practices that negatively impacted the poor. Thus, as we seek to follow Christ, the church must be willing to confront and seek to transform those institutions and practices in the local community that underserve, or otherwise try to take advantage of, the poor and marginalized; we must empower the poor and marginalized to get involved and help to foster change in their community.

Lastly, during the project the researcher will teach that God will provide the resources necessary to serve those in need. There is an old Baptist saying: "the Lord will provide!" This claim is supported, for example, in the Old Testament book of Leviticus, where God tells the people:

\begin{quote}
When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God. (Lev. 19:9-10)
\end{quote}

These verses make it clear that through the harvest, the Lord is providing for those in need. Hence, while the Lord does bless God’s people with resources, a portion of these resources are given so that we can serve others. God is the source of every resource that we have, and through these resources God calls us to provide for those in need.

Theological Frame

The theological claim that God will provide what we need to care for others in the community is also supported in the New Testament. For example, in Luke’s Gospel we find that Jesus is concerned with the physical needs of the multitude that has gathered before him (Lk. 9:13). Ordering the people to sit, Jesus “served” the community; he provided food for five thousand people by divinely multiplying two fish and five loaves of bread (Lk. 9:16). Hence, the text makes it clear that when we are willing to use what we have to meet the concerns of God’s people, God will provide the resources that are needed via divine multiplication. In short, God can take a little and turn it into much. Thus, Mt. Olive can faithfully count on God to bless the resources that they have, although they maybe few, to provide for those in need in the community.

Biblical Frame

In this frame, the researcher will argue Biblically that the church, specifically Mt. Olive Baptist church, is called to reach out and serve those in need. Specifically, via Biblical exegesis, the researcher will show how Mt. Olive will ultimately be judged by Jesus on how the church served those in need. The section will summarize Old and New Testament assumptions about judgment, and analyze Matthew’s pericope to see how the judgment theme relates to the command to serve those in need. Moreover, the section will show the exegetical implications of Matthew 25:31-46 with respect to how the passage supports the notion that the believing community at Mt. Olive is called to serve “the least of these.”
The Theme of Judgment

The theme of judgment has been a foundational concept in the realm of religious thought for centuries. As a matter of fact, the idea of divine judgment is “at the heart of most ancient Mediterranean religious traditions.”33 The concept of judgment is predicated on the basic premise or conviction that a god, or gods, has “an interest in and claim over human beings, the world, and events taking place in human history.”34 Thus, since God has a claim over human beings, there will come a point where human beings will have to give account to God; there will come a point where human beings will be judged. As the researcher surveys the judgment theme in the Old and New Testaments, three questions will be asked: 1) Who is the Judge; 2) Who are the judged; and 3) What is the criterion for judgment?

Judgment in the Old Testament (OT)

The theme of judgment as a foundational tenet of Jewish thought and tradition can be seen in Old Testament scripture. In the context of Jewish tradition and theology, the God of Israel is seen “as the supreme judge”35 (see Pss 58:11; Eccl. 11:9; Isa. 33:22; and Mal. 3:5). As the supreme judge of Israel, God metes out his judgment either through the judicial system ordained by God (2 Deut. 16:18-17:213; Chron. 19:6-8), or outside the judicial system by direct intervention in human affairs (2 Kgs 21:10-15; Isa. 38:1-6). Through these mediums, God’s judgment is revealed to humans to either “administer justice or warn of future disasters due to failure to comply with the righteousness that

34 Ibid., p. 457
35 Ibid., p. 460
God expects." Moreover, Jewish tradition and theology also envisioned a future messianic figure who would judge Israel in a renewed world (Isa. 11:1-5).

While the judge in OT Jewish tradition is God, the "judged" were not primarily individuals. While individuals were subject to judgment via the legal systems ordained by God, "prophetic oracles most often concerned collectives: nations other than Israel and Judah (Isa 19; Dan 7:23-27), and leadership groups within Israel and Judah (Isa. 3:12-15)." Moreover, there are some OT texts that speak to a "universal, decisive judgment on all flesh" (Isa 66:16; Jer. 25:31). In short, the nations who mistreated Israel, and the groups who led Israel, were the primary recipients of judgment in the OT.

The criterion for judgment in the OT was primarily based on observance of the law. The most important criteria for judgment are related to how one acted in relationship to God's covenant and God's law (Ex. 19:5). While the relationship between the law and covenant is complex, and would require extensive writing to fully explain, the basic idea is that a covenant exists between God and Israel, and the law delineates "what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviors and attitudes on the part of Israel." Hence, transgressions with respect to the law and/or guilt on the part of the leadership or people resulted in "collective judgment on everyone" (Hos. 2).

Lastly, in the context of the OT, there is a concept of final judgment. Because of persistent evil within Israel and oppression against Israel, Jewish tradition held to the notion of a "final judgment in which God, and the oppressed", would triumph (Isa. 61; 36:4).
This final judgment or “Day of the Lord” (Zeph. 1:7) would take place in the future. However, this final judgment is not concerned with the righteousness of individuals but rather with “life after God’s victory in history” (Dan. 12).

Judgment in the New Testament (NT)

In the context of the NT, God is still seen as the supreme judge (Matt. 18:35; Rom. 2:1-10; Rev. 18:8). However, Jesus as the Son of Man is also seen as judge (Matt. 25:31; Acts 10:42). In the OT, God metes out His judgment through the judicial system ordained by God. However, in the NT, judgment through judicial systems “is almost nonexistent.” Rather, judgment is given by God’s presence through Jesus Christ, thereby “turning the life and words of Jesus into an act of judgment.”

While the judge in the NT is God through Jesus Christ, the “judged” in the NT has shifted to include individuals. While there are instances where cities (Matt. 10:15), nations (Rev. 17:1-9), and leadership groups are judged (Matt. 21:45), there is a noted shift from the collective to the individual with respect to judgment in the NT. For example, in Galatians 5:19-21 we find a list of transgressions, followed by the admonition that those individuals “who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21). Thus, judgment is now “universal” and includes nations (Matt. 25:31), Christian believers (1 Cor. 11:29-32), and non-believers (1 Cor. 5:12).

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41 Ibid.
42 Ibid. p. 462
43 Ibid. p. 463
44 Scripture quotations unless otherwise noted are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 2001 by the Oxford University Press, Inc.
While the criterion for judgment in the OT was primarily based on observance of the law, the criterion for judgment in the NT is primarily focused on faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:16). However, faith in Christ in and of itself did not afford protection from judgment, for “those who did not act in accordance with their beliefs” could also be excluded from the kingdom of God (Matt. 7:21). For example, while Paul subscribed to the notion that we are made righteous by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:21-22), he also believed that in Christ, righteous faith must be accompanied by righteous deeds (Rom 2:5-11). Hence, in the NT the criterion for judgment is based on faith and deed.

Lastly, in the context of the NT, final judgment results in either condemnation or salvation. With the coming of Jesus and the in-breaking of the kingdom of God, judgment is actually taking place in the present. In other words, those who reject Jesus are already condemned (John 3:18), and those who accept Jesus “are immediately transferred to the life of the age to come” (John 5:24). Thus at the final judgment, there will be a full realization of what has already been established and guaranteed through Christ. In short, at the final judgment, the Lord “will sift humanity, keeping for the age to come” only those who are judged to be worthy.\footnote{The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, Volume 3, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2008), p. 465} 

\footnote{Ibid., p. 463} \footnote{Ibid., p. 458}
The overarching theme of the final discourse in Matthew (23:1-25:46) is “judgment, the present and coming judgment of God exercised by the Son of Man.” It is “widely argued among commentators” that the judgment discourse concludes the major discourse of the last formal teaching discourses in Matthew’s gospel. For example, there are five major discourses in Matthew: The Sermon of the Mount (5:1-7:29); The Missionary Discourse (10:5b-42); The Parable Collection (13:1-52); The discourse concerning the internal life of the church (18:1-35); and the Judgment discourses (23:1-25:46). One of the common threads of each of these discourses is that each one concludes with a judgment theme (7:24-27; 10:32-49; 13:47-50; 18:23-25; and 25:31-46), with the last discourse presenting an extended description of the final judgment.

The final judgment scene within the judgment discourse (25:31-34) is often referred to as “the Parable of the Sheep and Goats” or the “The Parable of the Last Judgment.” Prior to the final scene, the judgment discourse offers a series of warning about living responsibly so as to be ready for the coming of the Son of Man (24:32-25:30). But after these warnings, the scene shifts to the actual final judgment. This final scene is unique to Matthew, and seeks to provide details with respect to the coming of the Son of Man already pictured in Matthew 24:29-31.

While the final judgment in Matthew 25:31-46 is often referred to as a parable, there are some who argue that this may not be the case. M. Eugene Boring argues, for example, that the form of the pericope makes this an “apocalyptic drama” rather than a parable. In short, parables often include familiar or “this-worldly” scenes. Yet, the passage opens with direct statements of future and “other-worldly” events (the parousia). The probable reason for the apocalyptic view is because Matthew is seeking to highlight the theme of judgment and the coming of the Son of Man – a scene that is truly eschatological and not familiar.

Yet there are scholars who contend that the final judgment pericope is in fact a parable. According to Paschasia Radbetus, the final judgment pericope is a parable and only can be understood “if taken together with the two parables that precede it: the Parable of the Ten Virgins (25:1-13) and the Parable of the Silver Pieces (25:14-30).”53 He goes on to argue that the three parables together illuminate the “saved (the wise virgins, the two industrious servants, and the sheep) and the condemned (the foolish virgins, the one lazy servant, and the goats).”54 Others such as Joachim Jeremias also see Matt. 25:31-46 as a parable that speaks allegorically and/or metaphorically to the eschatological reality that “God will judge all in the end and become king.”55 Hence, when viewing the pericope as a parable versus an actual description of the parousia, one allows for the flexibility of interpretation inherent in parables.

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54 Ibid.
As the researcher delves further into the images and language of Matt 25:31-46, he will utilize the same previous three questions with respect to the theme of judgment: 1) Who is the Judge; 2) Who are the judged; and 3) What is the criterion for judgment?

Who is the Judge?

As the pericope opens in v. 31, we are introduced to the “Son of Man”. We find the term “Son of Man” (huios tou anthrōpou) referenced in several areas of Matthew’s gospel (8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 16:27, 19:28), and we recognize that this title is referring to Jesus (16:13). Borrowing from Mark’s use of the term, we learn in Matthew’s gospel that the Son of Man has power on Earth to forgive sins (9:6), that he is Lord even of the Sabbath (12:8), that he has a kingdom (13:41), and that he has come to save the lost (18:11). Yet in addition to all that we learn about the Son of Man, we also learn that at some point in the future, he is coming back with an angelic host (16:27, 24:29, and 24:30). And why will he return? According to Carl Holladay, he will come “in angelic glory to dispense justice and usher in God’s kingdom.”56 In short the Son of Man will come to serve in the role of “eschatological judge.”57

The notion of the Son of Man as “judge” is also seen in the latter portion of v. 31. There we find the Son of Man sitting on a throne. The reference to the throne in v. 31b draws a connection to the “king” that will be mentioned in vv. 34 and 40. According to M. Eugene Boring, the image of the Son of Man on the throne conveys, on the one hand, the “triumph of the kingdom represented throughout the Gospel by Jesus as the

57 Ibid.
alternative to the this-worldly demonic kingdom represented by his opponents.\footnote{M. Eugene Boring, \textit{The New Interpreter's Bible Volume VIII.} (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), p. 455} On the other hand, however, the image also conveys a king that is about to hold royal court; a king that is preparing to make a “last judgment” on those in which he holds claim. Hence, in the context of the pericope, Jesus as the Son of Man serves in the role of eschatological king who has come to pronounce final judgment.

\begin{quote}
Who are the “judged”?\end{quote}

The question of “who will be judged” opens the door to a problem of interpretation that has existed for many years. In v. 32 we encounter the term “All Nations” (\textit{panta ta ethnê}). Matthew has used this term in other parts of his gospel when speaking of being hated by all nations (24:9), witnessing to all nations (24:14), and making disciples of all nations (28:19). Yet what is the true interpretation of “All Nations”? Is “All Nations” a corporate group or individuals? In looking closer at the words themselves, we find that “\textit{ethnê} is neuter” and that the “shift to the masculine pronoun for ‘them’ (\textit{autous}) in v.32 shows that it is individual human beings universally and not nations as corporate political structures” who will stand before the judgment.\footnote{Ibid, p. 456}

As judge, the pericope paints the picture of “how” the Son of Man will carry out his charge. According to vv. 32b-34, 41, and 46, the judge will separate those who are gathered – sheep to his right hand (the saved) and goats to his left (the condemned). The significance of this scene is that the judge has “the ability to know the true nature of those gathered before the throne with the facility of a shepherd to tell the difference between a


\footnote{Ibid, p. 456}
sheep and a goat." Thus, the judge will not only have the authority to judge, he will have the ability to do so as well.

What is the criterion for final judgment?

In vv. 35-36 and 42-43, we clearly see the criterion upon which judgment is based. The verses make clear that the criterion for judgment, at least in the context of this pericope, is not based on a "confession of faith in Christ; nothing is said of grace, justification, or the forgiveness of sins." Rather the criterion for judgment is whether or not the people have served those who are in need. Yet, why would serving those in need carry so much weight at the final judgment?

On the one hand, the passage makes clear that Jesus identifies with those in need. In vv. 35-36 and 42-43, we see that the king uses "I" and not "they" as a clear indicator that the Son of Man identifies with the needy. Thus, when one serves someone in need, they are actually serving Jesus! But even more than identifying with those in need, serving those in need may carry weight at the final judgment because of Jesus' earlier command to "love your neighbor" (22:35-40). The expectation to serve a neighbor in need theologically illuminates the primacy of the command to love, for the love of Jesus was seen in the life of Jesus. In short, Jesus "lived out his teaching that his kingdom consists of service to others".

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62 Ibid., p. 455-46
The love that Jesus speaks of in Matthew 22:35-40 is translated from "Agapēseis." This love is not a matter of feeling, but rather it is a love that fosters a "commitment to action." In other words, seeing one's neighbor in need should provoke a commitment to take action and do something that might alleviate or eliminate that need. Thus, the service to one's neighbor directly correlates to the love of one's neighbor and the example of Jesus' love toward others. In short, the love that Jesus exemplified and of which he spoke of, is a love that ought to motivate disciples to behave "in order to benefit others even to the point of self-sacrifice."64

While we have seen that the criterion for judgment is based on serving those in need, one question still remains: "Who are the needy that should be served"? Who are the "least of these who are members of my family" (vv. 40 and 45)? Is it everyone universally or only a select group? In v. 40 we encounter the phrase "my family" or "brothers" (adelphōn) in other Biblical translations. While this phrase is dropped in v. 45, it is used elsewhere in Matthew to refer to any person whose need calls for a response (5:22-24, 47; 7:3-5). Thus, it is safe to suggest that the "least of these" speaks universally to the needy and not to a specific group.

**Summary of Interpretation**

The judgment scene of Matthew 25:31-46 is a literary unit that can be viewed either as an apocalyptic drama or a parable. The researcher subscribes to the notion that "the word of God is living and active" (Heb. 4:12), and seeing the pericope as a parable

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provides the flexibility to interpret the passage in a current context. The pericope is included in the fifth or last discourse of the teachings of Jesus, with this last discourse presenting an extended description of the final judgment. The passage opens in v. 31 with the Son of Man serving as king and judge, with the “judged” (v. 32) being “All Nations” - individual human beings universally and not nations as corporate political structures.

Lastly, the criterion for judgment is solely based on whether or not the “nations” have served the “least of these.” The “least of these” speaks universally to those in need and not to a specific group, and judgment will be based on the service to the needy because Jesus identifies with the “least of these.” Thus, when one serves someone in need, they are actually serving Jesus! Moreover, when one serves “the least of these” they are emulating the love ethic of Jesus and obeying Jesus’ command to “love your neighbor” (22:35-40). In short, love should motivate true believers to behave “in order to benefit others even to the point of self-sacrifice.”

Implication of Interpretation

In considering Matthew 25:31-46, it is clear that the pericope can be used, from a Scriptural perspective, to encourage Mt. Olive Baptist Church to engage in community outreach ministry. Yet what are the implications of the exegesis of Matthew 25:31-46 with respect to the goals of the researcher’s doctoral project? How can the findings of this analysis be used to encourage Mt. Olive to serve “the least of these”? Upon close

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examination, the exegesis of the pericope will enable the researcher to appeal to Mt. Olive to serve those in a need from a practical and theological perspective.

The Practical

To begin, Matthew 25:31-46 clearly shows that in a practical sense, there will always be a diversity of needs in any community at any given time. The text indicates in v. 35 that critical needs existed during the writing of this passage: hunger, social ostracism, poverty, care for the sick, and care for those who were incarcerated. All of these critical needs are still prevalent in today's culture and context. It is estimated that nearly 47 million Americans have no health insurance. Yet, what is the church's response to this need? How should the "righteous" (v. 37) respond to this need? In short, the pericope makes it clear that the revelation of a need is an invitation to Mt. Olive to respond to that need, for when we respond we emulate the actions of the "sheep" (v. 32) and the "righteous" (v. 37) in the pericope.

In addition to showing that there is always a diversity of needs in any community, the pericope can also show that Mt. Olive is called to respond to these needs in practical ways. For example, v. 35 speaks to the practical ways in which the "sheep" might respond to the needs of God's people. If they are hungry feed them, and if they are thirsty give them something to drink. If they are standing on the margins of society bring them into the mainstream, and if they are incarcerated go and see about them. Yes, the church must pray, hope, and believe that the conditions of those in need will get better. But the

text makes it clear, that in addition to praying, hoping, and believing that things will get better, the church must become an agent of change and do those practical things to make things better.

The Theological

From a theological perspective, the pericope clearly shows that Jesus identifies with those in need. The text says in v. 40 that the King will say "just as you did it to one of the least of these.....you did it to me". Additionally, in verses 35 and 36, the language of the text is in the first person singular - “I was hungry”. Thus, it is clear that Jesus identifies with those who stand in need. Therefore, Mt. Olive must come to understand theologically that when we serve “the least of these” we are actually serving Jesus.

In addition to identifying with those in need, the pericope also theologically illuminates the primacy of the command to love. Jesus commands us to love our neighbor (22:35-40). The love in which Jesus is refers is not a matter of feeling, but rather it is a love that fosters a commitment to action; it is a sacrificial love that seeks to benefit others. Thus, when Mt. Olive acts to serve “the least of these”, the church will emulate the love ethic of Christ – an ethic that modeled the “teaching that his kingdom consists of service to others.”

Lastly, the pericope shows eschatologically, that each member of Mt. Olive will be among “All The Nations” during the final judgment. When the Son of Man returns with his heavenly host of Angels at the Parousia, he will sit on his throne as king and

prepare to judge human beings universally. The criterion for judgment will be simple: Have you served the “least of these”? Those who have will take their place at Jesus’ right hand and be saved, and those who have not will take their place at his left hand and be condemned. Based on this analysis, the fundamental question that needs to be asked is: “Which side do you want to be on”? The bottom line is that if Mt. Olive wants to be included among the sheep during the final judgment, then we must move beyond the walls of Mt. Olive and serve “the least of these.”

Empirical Literature Frame

The primary literary source for this project will be Carl S. Dudley’s Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry. Dudley fundamentally believes “that God calls congregations to minister to people at their points of deepest need.” Moreover, Dudley has directed large research efforts that have “studied the process of starting new community ministries.” Hence Dudley, and similar literary resources, will be imperative in discerning how to successfully implement a community outreach ministry at Mt. Olive.

To Serve or Not To Serve

To begin, Dudley argues that community outreach ministry begins with a group of committed and concerned Christians. According to Dudley:

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68 Carl S. Dudley, “Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry”, (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1991)
69 Ibid, p. xi
70 Ibid.
Ministries of compassion and justice do not happen until someone cares enough to act. No amount of pressure and no organizational procedure can make some love another enough to step forward and help. Pain, hardship, loss, and sadness are often triggers for sensitive Christians.  

Read a newspaper on any given day, and it will not take long to see that there are a plethora of problems in our country that are causing God’s people pain, hardship, loss and sadness. For example, when a senior has to make a choice between eating a decent meal and buying the life sustaining medicine that they need, this can truly cause pain, hardship, and sadness. And the question is: “Should believers of Jesus Christ bear any responsibility to help a senior who is facing this dilemma”? Dudley would argue, and the researcher would agree, that the answer is yes, for the desire and motivation to help is spurred by love and concern for those in need.

Yet, when one considers the notion of helping someone in need, a fundamental question comes to mind: “How should Christians help those who are in need”? Is it prudent, for example, to establish a food pantry and provide food to seniors in need? According to John McKnight, the answer is absolutely NOT! In his essay entitled Why Servanthood Is Bad, McKnight suggests that “peddling services is unchristian – even if you’re hell-bent on helping people.”  

In short, McKnight subscribes to the notion of “capacity-focused development” versus “service delivery”, as he contends that service delivery causes the recipients of the services to become dependent on the services – in other words, “church welfare.”

71 Dudley, “Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry”, p. xii
In the essay *Building Communities From The Inside Out*, McKnight and co-author John Kretzmen give definition to “capacity-focused development”. They argue that this model of community ministry “leads toward the development of polices and activities based on the capacities, skills, and assets of lower income people and their neighborhoods.”

Their argument is that individuals and communities have assets that can be mobilized, and when these assets are mobilized, the people in the community “will be part of the action, not as clients or recipients of aid, but as full contributors to the community building process.” In short, McKnight believes that anyone who establishes a ministry that provides services to the community, particularly in the name of the church, are “community busters” who are “not agents of Christ.”

To avoid “being the agent of the devil in the middle of the church”, McKnight offers the following five rules:

1. **Saul Alinsky referred to the first rule as the “iron rule”: Never do for others what they can do for themselves.**

2. **Find another’s gifts, contributions, and capacities. Use them. Give them a place in the community.**

3. **Whenever a service is proposed, fight to get it converted into income. Don't support services. Insist that what poor people need is income.**

4. **If those in power are hell-bent on giving poor people services rather than income, then fight for those services to come in the form of vouchers. That way the persons who must be served at least have a choice as to who will serve them.**

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74 Ibid., p. 6

75 McKnight, “Why Servanthood Is Bad”, p. 4
5. Develop hospitality.\textsuperscript{76}

McKnight's perspective of community ministry that only does "for those who can help themselves" is also share by Reverend Wendell E. Mettey, author of \textit{Are Not My People Worthy.}\textsuperscript{77} According to his biography, Mettey earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Cincinnati and a master of divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He served for many years as a Senior Pastor and was also a Social Worker in the Cincinnati area. In 1991, Mettey founded Matthew 25 Ministries, a 501c3 not-for-profit organization that is "dedicated to aiding the poor and suffering throughout the world." In short, Mettey's ministry collects and ships humanitarian supplies (e.g. soap, sutures, surgical needs, etc.) to those in need in foreign countries (primarily Nicaragua).

The central theme of Mettey's work is compassion. He suggests that compassion is "that gut-wrenching feeling we experience when we see another human being suffering."\textsuperscript{78} He argues that compassion ought to motivate us to take action to end or alleviate the suffering that we observe. Mettey goes on to point out various Biblical accounts where Jesus was filled with compassion - e.g. the feeding of five thousand (Matt. 15:32). And from these accounts, he theologically concludes that "it does matter to Jesus how we treat one another, and it especially matters how we treat the disadvantaged."\textsuperscript{79} Hence, for Mettey, compassion ought to be a key motivator in moving God's people to end or at least relieve the suffering of those in need.

\textsuperscript{76} McKnight, "Why Servanthood Is Bad", p. 4
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., p. 11
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p. 14
While compassion is a central theme in Mettey’s work, he warns against allowing compassion to become a hindrance in helping those in need. Specifically, Mettey warns that compassion must never get us to a place where we prevent people from doing for themselves. According to Mettey, there is a “Golden Rule of Compassion: Do unto others only what they cannot do for themselves.”\(^{80}\) In short, the author contends that “Jesus came to break the chains of dependence and He wants the same for our lives and the lives of those we would help.”\(^{81}\)

It is obvious that McKnight and Mettey are concerned about the risk of causing people to become dependent on the services provided through the church. If we believe that Jesus came to set captives free, then we must be concerned with creating a system through the church where people become bound to the services that the church provides. Thus, the researcher agrees that Mt. Olive must be mindful about empowering people to help themselves where possible. Moreover, in the long term, Mt. Olive must become an agent the helps the community leverage and mobilize those existing assets that will assure a bright future for the community.

However, while the researcher understands the risk of creating dependency through Mt. Olive’s community ministry, the researcher does question the efficacy of McKnight and Mettys’s perspective regarding help and services when it comes to the elderly. As previously mentioned, the US Census Bureau has reported that while Henry County has a relatively low poverty rate as compared to other metro-Atlanta counties, “the population that is aged 75 years and over have the most percent of people living in poverty in Henry County, accounting for 10.1 percent of this age group in the area living


\(^{81}\) Ibid.
in poverty." Hence, there are issues of poverty and food insecurity among the senior population within Mt. Olive's community. And, when one considers a homebound senior with limited mobility, who is marginalized and food insecure, one has to ask the question: "How do you empower a senior with these challenges to do for self?"

The Marginalized

It may be helpful at this point to consider what it actually means to be "marginalized." According to the Columbia Encyclopedia, "marginalization" refers, in general, to "the overt or subvert acts and trends within societies whereby those perceived as lacking function or desirable traits are otherwise excluded from existing systems of protectionism, thereby limiting their means for survival." Thus, in a contemporary context, the marginalized are the oppressed and disinherited, those on the outside of the "mainstream" who reside at the lower end of the social echelon — minorities, the homeless, the elderly, or simply those who may be perceived as "different." And because they are otherwise excluded, they tend to fall victim to societal ills such as poverty, poor education, food insecurity, and poor health. Moreover, since they are limited, they often lack a meaningful voice in society, and therefore often are unnoticed, underrepresented, and unappreciated.

The personal and psychological effect of marginalization is the adoption of an inner attitude that consistently informs those at the bottom of the social echelon that their life will be spent with their backs against the wall. According to Howard Thurman, this

reality unleashes "the three hounds of hell that forever track the trail of the disinherited — fear, hypocrisy, and hatred"— a trio that breeds apathy and apostasy. Henri Nouwen supports Thurman's contention about the impact of the trio, for he argues that apathy and apostasy causes us to feel "like a prisoner of the present, drifting from left to right, unable to decide on a definitive course and unable to relate to the Christian message." Therefore, those who are being hounded "need profound succor and strength to enable them to live in the present with dignity and creativity." In other words, they need a source of help and support that will enable them to transcend the three hounds of hell.

The researcher believes that there is no perfect approach when it comes to helping God's people. The bottom line is this: Jesus said "inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt. 25:40). As Christians, the love of Christ and the concern for the well-being of others should motivate believers to help and serve "the least of these". And while the method of help can and will be debated (a service model vs. a capacity-focused development model), what is most important is that the church forever remains a place where the marginalized can find help.

The church as a place of help for the marginalized is a reality that is supported by David J. Bosch, author of Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission. In considering Matthew's Gospel, Bosch sees mission as the transformation of community via the making of disciples. Resting on the foundation of the "Great Commission" (Matt. 28), Bosch argues that the "theme of discipleship is central to
Matthew's gospel, and to Matthew's understanding of the church and mission. The community of Matthew's context struggled to understand its calling and mission. However, as disciples and those who were called to make other disciples, the community could now see itself as the Church of Christ, and thereby seek "opportunities for witness and service around them." Thus, it is those who consider themselves to be Disciples of Christ who are called to serve and help the community.

While Bosch sees the theme of discipleship and service in Matthew, he sees the notion of standing in solidarity with the poor as a key theme in Luke-Acts. In this context, the poor can be understood as the marginalized; those without means or resources and those who stand beyond the "social religious barriers in the patriarchal society" of the day – women, tax collectors, and Samaritans. Mission, therefore, was aimed at standing in solidarity with the marginalized to the point that their reality was transformed. Thus, the church was called to emulate Jesus' practice of "boundary breaking compassion," and was commanded to follow Jesus and do its best to compassionately care for and serve the marginalized.

Dudley reminds us that historically, it has been the church that has "attempted to help people get through hard times, especially those caused by sudden emergencies." Dudley goes on to say:

The community ministries that churches most frequently mention are those that address crises with emergency money, food, clothing, shelter,

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88 Ibid., p. 73
89 David J. Bosch, "Transforming Mission", p. 59
91 Ibid., p. 86
medical attention, and personal counseling. As seen in information from the study of Faith Communities Today (FACT), religious congregations see themselves as the 'safety net' for neighbors in need."^{93}

It is clear that Dudley sees community ministry as a vital means to help and serve the community. Yet, what steps should a church follow to successfully implement a community outreach ministry that helps and serves the community? According to Dudley, three elements are essential to establishing a successful outreach ministry: 1) Social Context; 2) Congregational Identity; and 3) Organization.\(^94\)

**Social Context**

The first step in establishing a successful community ministry is to identify the social context of the church. According to Dudley, "members of the congregation must see the community as their 'turf,' their responsibility, and accept the need" for ministry in this context.\(^95\) Identifying the social context, or ministry zone, of the church can be accomplished by charting physical boundaries. In Mt. Olive's case, the physical boundary is Henry County in general and the city of Stockbridge in particular. In establishing the social context it is also helpful to identify the anchor institutions in the area (businesses, churches, schools, etc.), and gathering places in the area – places where people come together for "economic, social, political, and religious activities."\(^96\)

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\(^{93}\) Dudley, "Community Ministry: New Challenges, Proven Steps to Faith-Based Initiatives", p. 1

\(^{94}\) Carl S. Dudley, "Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry", (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1991), p. xiii

\(^{95}\) Ibid.

\(^{96}\) Carl S. Dudley, "Community Ministry: New Challenges, Proven Steps to Faith-Based Initiatives", (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 2002), p. 27
A practical example of how a church established its social context can be seen in Samuel G. Freedman’s book *Upon This Rock: The Miracles of the Black Church.* In this book, Freedman profiles Rev. Johnny Ray Youngblood and the St. Paul Community Baptist Church in East Brooklyn, NY. According to Freedman, there was a period in which the shopping district near the church was gripped with crime and drugs:

*Purses were snatched, chains ripped from necks, car batteries stolen, and the few legitimate stores struggled amid the fried-chicken joint that ran numbers, the social club that sold drugs, the boutique that offered both, and the market that short-weighed old meat.*

This was not new trouble for the community. But it was enough trouble to “bring a collection of Koreans, Chinese, Italians, Puerto Ricans, and Jews into a black Baptist Church seeking help.”

St. Paul Community Church stepped up and made the decision to help the community. Rev. Youngblood would subsequently dub the shopping area “Christ Square.” In other words, St. Paul saw this area as their social context; they saw it as their turf and their responsibility, so they “named it” and embraced the opportunity to do ministry in their turf. The church and the business leaders recognized that they had a common cause: “the merchants needed security to stay in business and the church needed

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98 Ibid., p. 49-50
99 Ibid., p. 49
100 Ibid.
decent stores to serve its people and bolster the neighborhood."101 Through the church’s efforts, a Merchant’s Association was formed:

_The merchants all signed a new membership list. Several agree to solicit bids from security agencies, others to recruit more shopkeepers as members. A formal list of suspects in the recent crimes will be developed, and then shared with the precinct commander and the local junior high school principal. Dues are set at one hundred dollars a month, enough to pay for informational flyers and nightly guard duty._102

In the St. Paul example, one can clearly see what happens when a church establishes its social context, and is willing to do ministry in that context. St. Paul had also identified its anchor institutions - local businesses, the schools, and the police precinct, and used its facilities as a gathering place for the local merchants. As a result, St. Paul was moved from “the objectivity of an observer” to the “intimacy of belonging that holds the community together.”103 In short, through their social context, St. Paul was able to successfully help and serve their community.

Another key aspect of identifying the church’s social context is to find the marginalized people in the community. According to Dudley, the church must “search for the people who are invisible to you; people who you may have ignored or seen so frequently that they have blended into the landscape.”104 In finding the marginalized, the church may begin to see and stand in solidarity with those who have faced injustice, those who have been alienated, and those who have been otherwise oppressed and victimized.

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101 Ibid., p. 51
102 Freedman, "Upon This Rock", p. 54
103 Carl S. Dudley, "Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry", (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1991), p. 4
104 Ibid., p. 24
Moreover, when we find the invisible people, we’ll begin to see the “failures of institutions we have trusted and people we know well.”\(^{105}\)

The notion of “finding the invisible people” brings to mind an experience that the researcher had at his first pastorate in Decatur, Georgia. During the researcher’s first year as a Pastor, he received a call from the friend of one of the members of the church. The friend informed the researcher that there was an elderly woman in the community who was eating pet food because she couldn’t afford to pay her rent, purchase her medicine, and buy food. She was a very private woman, and she was uncomfortable when it came to reaching out to “strangers” for help.

The researcher arranged a visit with the woman, and arrived with a few bags of groceries. During the conversation that ensued, the researcher discovered that there was a whole community of seniors living in the woman’s complex who were facing similar issues of food insecurity. The women agreed to help the researcher meet the other residents, and subsequently agreed to serve as a point of contact for anyone in the complex who needed food assistance. Within a few weeks, the researcher’s church was delivering boxes of food to more than thirty residents in the complex.

The most interesting thing about this example is that the community in which these seniors lived was on a main thoroughfare in the community; a heavily traveled avenue that served as a main traffic artery in the community. Yet, despite traveling down this avenue many times a week, the researcher never even noticed the complex, nor did the researcher know that the complex was predominately inhabited by seniors. This was

\(^{105}\) Carl S. Dudley, “Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry”, (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1991), p. 25
an “invisible” community that was inhabited by “invisible” people – seniors who were poor, forgotten, and food insecure. However, because the church began to serve those seniors, they were no longer invisible; they were seen as God’s people who needed help, support, and love.

*Congregational Identity*

The second step in establishing a successful community ministry is to leverage the congregational identity of the church. Congregational identity “incorporates the beliefs and commitments that hold a congregation together, motivate its members, and make it distinctive from others.”\(^{106}\) The bottom line is that in order to gain support from the congregation, the community outreach ministry “must touch the nerve of congregational concern and speak the language of congregational compassion.”\(^{107}\) Thus, by exploring the identity and character of the congregation, the congregation’s commitment to community ministry will become and remain strong.

To gain a full understand of congregational identity, it may be helpful at this point to examine the term “congregation.” According to Tom Frank, a congregation is “a people of God called together and gifted for ministry in a particular place.”\(^{108}\) The continuing power of religious belief and commitment provides the fundamental basis for the group to voluntarily choose to assemble and remain together over time. Hence, as an assembled group, a congregation has a unique culture and particular purpose. However,

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\(^{106}\) Carl S. Dudley, “Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry”, (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1991), p. 43

\(^{107}\) Ibid.

because a congregation assembles in a particular place, congregations are not islands unto themselves. Rather, they are connected to the community in which they reside.

Every congregation has a unique culture or "soul." Hence, the soul of a congregation is expressed in its "practices, values, outlooks, symbols, stories, language, rituals, and collective character." In short, the culture or soul of a congregation is reflected in the congregation's identity. For example, in Melvin Williams' article concerning the culture of a Black Pentecostal church, he shares that the language of the congregation enabled him to see the assembly as a "community" – a "subculture" within the context of a larger society. Thus, those on the outside of the community could easily miss the meaning of certain expressions or phrases (e.g. backslider, saint, etc.). However, to those on the inside, their language reflected the values and heritage of a cohesive community. Hence, the language of the assembly was a means of congregational identity.

Another example of a congregation's identity is its symbols and stories. Symbols are the means by which a congregation expresses its faith. Moreover, via stories, the congregation can bring meaning to their lives, individually or corporately, by relating them to Biblical stories and themes. For example, in the late 1800's Mt. Olive Baptist church caught fire and burned to the ground. By 1904, the church was rebuilt, and the rebuilt edifice represented the faithfulness of God and the fortitude of the believing community at Mt. Olive. Today, the old building is still standing and has come to represent the legacy of the church. However, when Mt. Olive erected its new Worship Center in 2011, the new edifice came to represent the future of Mt. Olive and the

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continued faithfulness of God, for the Bible confirms that our “God is faithful” (2 Cor. 1:18).

There are two key aspects in leveraging the church’s identity. The first is to identify the Biblical foundation of the church. According to Dudley:

*Although Scripture is foundational for all Christians, every church shapes its own traditional way of understanding the text. The congregation’s Biblical faith gives us a window that looks two ways. For the church, Scripture is a way to see the world; for identity, Scripture is a way to see the church.*

As previously stated, the mission and Biblical foundation of Mt. Olive is “to be about our Father’s business” (Lk. 2:49); “to develop a compliment of ministries and services that seek to transform lives (Rom. 12:2), serve the least of these (Matt. 25:4), and make disciples (Matt. 28:19).”

While Mt. Olive is very effective at transforming lives and making disciples, the church needs work in its mandate to “serve the least of these.” For example, Mt. Olive invests a significant amount of time and resources in youth ministry, and the worship, formation, and fellowship components of the youth ministry successfully reflect the church’s mission to transform lives and make disciples. Yet, when it comes to helping and serving God’s people beyond the membership of the church, Mt. Olive has yet to rise up to its full potential.

The second key aspect in leveraging the church’s identity is to analyze the strengths and limitations of the church. Dudley argues that this can be accomplished via a congregational survey – a survey that captures a broad based sample of what “church

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112 Mt. Olive New Member Orientation Guide (2010), p. 8
members think, feel, and believe."113 Through a survey, for example, the researcher will be able to determine how the church feels about community outreach ministry and whether the church will financially support this type of ministry effort. In short, a survey will "offer a larger framework for understanding the personal commitments and social dynamics of congregational life."114

Organization

The last step in establishing a successful community ministry is to organize for social ministry. According to Dudley, "organizing puts ideas on wheels, translates faith into action, and enables our vision for ministry to become a tangible reality."115 When a church establishes its social context, they know "what they want to do", and when a church knows where social ministry fits into their Christian identity they know "why they want to do it."116 But after knowing "what to do" and "why to do it," the next step is to organize the resources at hand to "get it done."

A critical aspect of building an organization is effective congregational leadership. According to Tom Frank, understanding the culture of a congregation is "imperative for effective leadership," for through cultural understanding a leader can cast a vision and mobilize resources toward that vision by building "upon the congregation’s values and strengths."117 To gain an understanding of the culture of a congregation, leaders must give attention to various aspects of the assembly. Leaders must give

113 Carl S. Dudley, "Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry", (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1991), p. 69
114 Ibid., p. 70
115 Ibid., p. 77
116 Dudley, "Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry", p. 77
117 Frank, "Soul of the Congregation," p. 161
attention to the strengths and weaknesses of the congregation to discern the gifts that are present for ministry.

In addition to understanding the culture of the congregation, the researcher would argue that effective congregational leadership also requires the ability to be a crusader and a consensus builder. According to Robert Franklin, the combination of crusader and consensus builder styles of leadership “holds special promise for those interested in effecting social change.” Crusaders are leaders who can “mobilize congregations through personal, charismatic authority,” and lead them to pursue a “righteous cause” and/or effect “social change.”

Rev. Johnny Ray Youngblood, pastor of St. Paul Community Baptist Church is a great example of this leadership style. Through his leadership, Rev. Youngblood was able to build an organization and mobilize the resources of his church to help transform his Brooklyn community into an “urban Ponderosa.” In short, St. Paul was able to compel local officials to install “three thousand missing street signs” and “renovate a park and swimming pool” in the church’s community.

The consensus builder style of leadership requires the ability to “mobilize by educating, persuading, and seeking to build unity around a commonly desired goal.” Hence, consensus builders are able to leverage partnerships and pave the way for unified action, fully understanding that effective coalitions provide the best opportunity to venture “beyond the relative homogeneity of the individual, particularistic congregation,”

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119 Ibid., p. 278
121 Ibid.
122 Wind & Lewis, “American Congregations Vol. 2,” p. 277
and toward the remediation of issues that impact the community at large.\textsuperscript{123} Rev. Youngblood is, yet again, a prominent example of this leadership style. Via a local coalition known as the “East Brooklyn Congregations” or EBC, the St. Paul congregation became part of a unified body that ultimately “built the Nehemiah homes and won guarantees of college scholarships and entry level jobs for graduates of Brooklyn’s most troubled high schools.”\textsuperscript{124}

Another critical aspect of building an organization is to effectively develop resources to support the outreach ministry. There are many resources required for effective outreach ministry including “a broad base of support, continuous interpretation, space to house your program, equipment, and materials.”\textsuperscript{125} The resources required will vary according to the type of outreach ministry that a church pursues. However, when it comes to Mt. Olive, there are two resource related questions that need to be address: 1) How will the church find essential volunteers, and 2) How will the church fund the outreach ministry?

According to Dudley, volunteers are “the essence of church-based ministries in which members express their faith in action.”\textsuperscript{126} The researcher will recruit volunteers for the ministry through appeal. In short, the researcher will directly solicit volunteers to operate and support the ministry; to supervise operations, pack food boxes, deliver food boxes, and track families served. The researcher understands that volunteers are the “foundation of a church-based social ministry.” For this reason, the researcher will be

\begin{footnotes}
\item[124] Freedman, “Upon This Rock – The Miracles of a Black Church,” p. 308
\item[125] Dudley, “Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry”, p. 91
\item[126] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
sure to encourage and thank the volunteers for their efforts, and help them understand how important they are to the success of the ministry.

Mt. Olive will fund the community outreach ministry solely through the church. Primarily, the church will allocate three thousand dollars from its operational budget of the church for the community ministry. This will be the first time in the history of the church where a community ministry line item will be included in its operational budget. The ministry will also be supported by food donations from the church membership via canned food drives. In the long term, after the church and volunteers begin to see the ministry as "God's instrument to touch individuals and transform community," Mt. Olive will be able to approach and solicit businesses and individuals beyond the membership for further financial support.

Summary

When it comes to research projects, it has been said that a conceptual framework can help to "decide and explain the route we are taking." In short, a framework makes clear why we "would use certain methods and not others to get to a certain point." In this chapter, the researcher has discussed the conceptual framework that will be utilized to get Mt. Olive to a certain point – to a church that serves God's people beyond the walls of the church.

Through the theological frame, we have seen that the example and ethic of Jesus Christ makes it clear that churches are called to reach beyond their walls and serve those

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127 Dudley, "Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry", p. 95
129 Ibid.
in need. Through the Biblical frame, we have seen that Matthew 25:31-46 can be used, from a Scriptural perspective, to encourage the church to engage in community outreach. And lastly through the empirical literature frame, we have seen through a variety of literary sources how Mt. Olive can successfully implement a community outreach ministry. By using this conceptual framework, the researcher will be able to organize the thoughts and concepts that will help to prove the hypothesis of this doctoral project: that Mt. Olive is called to use its resources to care for and serve the local community, and in so doing, help to meet needs within its community.
CHAPTER 4

MINISTRY PROJECT

Several years ago, the question “What Would Jesus Do,” as represented by the initials WWJD, began to appear on tee-shirts, bracelets, and various paraphernalia. The idea of the campaign was to cause the wearers of the paraphernalia to consider the person and example of Jesus Christ in their actions. Yet, one would have to agree that it is hard to know what Jesus would do, without first knowing what Jesus did. What Jesus did was to exemplify a love ethic that served and helped the marginalized in the community, and what Jesus is asking the community of faith to do, is to follow this love ethic and “serve the least of these” (Matt. 25:40).

In this chapter the researcher will detail the ministry project that was executed at Mt. Olive Baptist church for thirty one consecutive weeks - from February through August, 2012. The objective of the project focused on serving and helping those in need beyond the walls of the church. As stated in Chapter 2, the method or steps for the ministry project was based on Larry L. McSwain’s Foundations for a Ministry of Community Transformation\(^\text{130}\) and Carl S. Dudley’s Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry.\(^\text{131}\) The method considered those elements inherent in developing a ministry that is focused on community outreach: 1) Centering – Rooting the ministry in a theology of serving the “least of these”; 2) Critiquing – Identifying the needs of the community; and


\(^{131}\) Carl S. Dudley, “Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry”, (Bethesda, MD: The Alban Institute, 1991)
3) Constructing – Executing a plan of action to mobilize ministry resources. These three steps represented the three respective phases of the ministry project.

The primary goal of the project was to begin delivering weekly food boxes to at least 50 seniors in the community who were facing issues of food insecurity. The overall objectives of the ministry project were as follow:

1. Is the Community Outreach Ministry operational?
2. Are at least 50 seniors being served?
3. Are there at least two (2) seniors from the community working with the ministry?
4. Has the Community Outreach Ministry formed a partnership with an organization that advocates on behalf of seniors and those facing issues of food insecurity?
5. Is the ministry meeting the needs of the seniors served and has change occurred in the church? Have the ministry volunteers experienced positive change from working in the ministry? Are they more committed to community outreach?

The ministry project relied primarily on volunteers from Mt. Olive. The researcher believed that there were members within Mt. Olive who believed that the church is called to serve the community, and who wanted the opportunity to put their gifts to work for those in need. To identify these people, the researcher conducted a church wide solicitation for volunteers to work within the outreach ministry. The only criterion for working within the ministry was the desire to help those who are in need.

In the next three sections of this chapter, the researcher will provide specifics as to what was done in each phase of the ministry project.
Phase I - Centering

The effort to implement a community outreach ministry at Mt. Olive formally began in February, 2012. The researcher met with the leadership of the church, approximately 50 people (Deacons, Trustees, Ministers, and Lay Leaders), at the church’s 2012 Planning Meeting in November, 2011. The planning meeting is where ministry initiatives and budgets are proposed for the upcoming calendar year. It was during this meeting that the researcher first broached the idea of starting a community outreach ministry at the church.

Mt. Olive had a long history of helping members during difficult times. In fact, the church had an established benevolence ministry that provided immediate assistance to members during times of crises and emergency - rent and utility assistance, food and clothing assistance, etc. This ministry was subsidized through a missions offering; there was no operational line item in the budget for this ministry. However, the researcher suggested that Mt. Olive should build upon its history of benevolence, and support a new ministry that would specifically help persons in need within the Mt. Olive congregation and those in need beyond the walls of the church in the community. To the researcher’s surprise, almost everyone at the planning meeting was in favor of the new ministry, and in February of 2012, the church body voted unanimously to accept the budget for the calendar year - a budget that included three thousand dollars for the establishment and operation of the Mt. Olive Community Outreach Ministry.

In March, 2012, the researcher met with the sole individual who was responsible for the benevolence ministry. For the purpose of this dissertation, the researcher will refer to him as Brother Jones. Brother Jones is a Trustee in the church, and since 2009 he
was also the go-to-guy when someone in the church needed benevolence. When a member needed help, the formal request would be made to the Deacons, and the Deacons would subsequently contact Brother Jones to get it done. Brother Jones kept some canned goods in a barrel in a closet, and did his best to keep a written record of what each member received from the church.

It became immediately obvious that Brother Jones had a heart for serving and helping God's people. The researcher learned that Brother Jones was also involved in another church's effort to feed the homeless in downtown Atlanta, and that he had been waiting for the opportunity to serve the local community through his own church. Thus, he was excited about the new community outreach ministry, and he was looking forward to working with the researcher to get the ministry up and running.

The first order of business that Brother Jones and the researcher tackled was the establishment of a formal food pantry at the church. A barrel of food in a closet would not be sufficient for housing the supplies that would ultimately serve 50 seniors in the Henry County community. So the decision was made to covert a 100sq ft. walk in storage closet into a shelved food pantry. Brother Jones, along with a few men for the church, cleaned out the old storage closet, built shelving, and transformed the old closet into a very nice food pantry. Brother Jones even led the effort to hold the initial church wide canned food drive to fully stock the pantry, and he organized and stored all the food that was received. During this time, the researcher also began weekly announcements during the worship service to solicit members and guests to donate canned goods. During the month of March the emphasis was on canned meats; everyone was encouraged to donate canned tuna, salmon, Spam, etc. to the pantry.
Volunteers

The next step in this phase was to solicit the church for volunteers to serve in the outreach ministry. Dudley reminds us that those who volunteer to do ministry often find:

Their personal faith and church loyalty strengthened in exercising love, touching the lives of others and being touched in return. In empowering others, we ourselves become more alive."\(^{132}\)

So the researcher’s prayer was to find faithful volunteers who would be committed to the outreach ministry, and who truly had a heart for serving and helping God’s people.

In early April, 2012, the researcher began an appeal during Sunday service for volunteers to serve in the new outreach ministry. From the pulpit, the researcher shared the fact that “the population that is aged 75 years and over have the most percent of people living in poverty in Henry County;”\(^{133}\) that it was wrong for God’s people to sit back and do nothing as the seniors in our community went hungry; and that as a church of Jesus Christ we should be committed to helping and serving those who are in need. The appeal simply stated that the ministry was initially in need of people who would serve on the “core” team; those who would be willing to work with Brother Jones to get the ministry off the ground.

The first meeting of the newly formed Mt. Olive Community Outreach Ministry was held on Saturday, April 28\(^{th}\), 2012. Including Mr. Jones, the ministry was blessed with seven (7) initial volunteers – 5 females and 2 males. The volunteers were diverse in their years of membership at Mt. Olive, from only a few months to more than 50 years,

\(^{132}\) Dudley, “Basic Steps Toward Community Ministry”, p. 91
and they were professionally diverse, from teachers to retirees. All of the volunteers had previous experience doing mission work or serving the community in some form or another, and all were excited about the opportunity to be able to help those in need. During this initial meeting, the group agreed to: 1) Participate in interviews by the researcher when needed; 2) Participate in a congregational survey; and 3) Commit to three Community Outreach Ministry training sessions.

Surveying the Volunteers

In early May, the volunteer group of the outreach ministry became the first of the Mt. Olive membership to participate in a congregational survey (See Appendix A). The survey that the researcher used was based on information obtained from the Center for Family and Community Ministries. There were twenty statements in the survey and the responses to the statements were based on the following scale:

1 = Never 5 = Often
2 = Rarely 6 = Almost always
3 = Once in a while 7 = Always
4 = Sometimes

The executive summary from the survey is as follows:

- All seven of the volunteers completed the survey (100%, n=7)
- Almost three quarters of the volunteers (71%, n=5) have attended Mt. Olive for five years or more. A little more than a third (21%, n=2) have attended more than twenty years.

• Most of the volunteers (85%, n=6) are involved in worship and activities at Mt. Olive at least weekly. More than half (57%, n=4) are involved in worship and activities at Mt. Olive more than once a week.

• A majority of the volunteers are female (71%, n=5), all of the volunteers have children (100%, n=7), and most are married (71%, n=5). Note: some of the volunteers are widows or widowers and may have selected not married on the survey.

• The average age of the volunteers is 58, and all of the volunteers have at least a high school diploma or GED (100%, n=7).

The five statements that the volunteers agreed with most strongly include:

1. My faith helps me know right from wrong
2. I care a great deal about reducing poverty in my community
3. I feel that I am called and gifted to serve the “least of these”
4. Every day I see evidence that God is active in the world
5. I have a real sense that God is guiding me

The five statements that the volunteers agreed with less strongly include:

1. I am concerned that Mt. Olive is not doing enough to help the poor
2. I talk with other people about my faith
3. I take time for periods of prayer and meditation
4. My life is filled with meaning and purpose
5. I try to apply my faith to political and social issues
to ensure that the ministry was operational. The project successfully met this goal, as the ministry is now fully operational and is serving the community beyond the walls and membership of the church.

The hypothesis of this project was that Mt. Olive is called to use its resources to care for and serve the local community, and in so doing, help to meet real needs within the community. This hypothesis has been proven, as the church is helping to meet a real need in the community through its resources (financial, human, and property). The identified need was food insecurity among the senior population in the community. The reality is that Mt. Olive volunteers are now helping to meet this need by delivering weekly food boxes to seniors in the community.

**Goal 2 – Fifty Seniors Served**

The second measurement of success for the project was the number of seniors served. As previously stated, the goal was to have the ministry serving at least fifty seniors by the close of the project. However, the ministry did not meet this goal, as thirty three seniors were being served at the close of the project (33 out of 50). The researcher believes that time was the major constraint to achieving this goal. While the project begin in February, the identification of seniors in need did not begin until the end July. A lesson learned from this is that the ministry could have begun soliciting earlier for seniors in need. However, the researcher is confident that the ministry will be serving more than fifty seniors by December, 2012.
Ultimately, the researcher believes that the goal to serve fifty seniors may have been too aggressive. As mentioned previously, the researcher had the experience of serving more than thirty food insecure seniors in DeKalb County, Georgia (see page 50). Based on this experience, the researcher believed that identifying and serving fifty seniors within two months would be reasonable. However, given the expansive area of the church’s social context (Henry County), the small number of initial volunteers, and the church’s inexperience in community ministry, fifty seniors in retrospect seems far too aggressive. While the ministry ended up serving thirty three seniors by the close of the project, an average of sixteen per month over a two month period, a better target number would have been ten seniors per month, or twenty in total by the end of the project period.

Goal 3 – Two Seniors Working From The Community

One of the key goals of the project was the number of seniors involved in the ministry from the community. The researcher understands that a potential unintended consequence of serving those in need is that they can become dependent on the service, and not use their gifts to contribute to the service being rendered. Thus, a goal of the project was to empower at least two (2) seniors from the community to become involved in the ministry and use their gifts to contribute to the ministry’s success. In short, by “seeking ways to empower others, you strengthen both those who are served and those who provide the service.”

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Unfortunately, the project did not meet this goal. By the end of the project period, there were no seniors from the community actively working with ministry. During the course of the project, some of the seniors who the ministry served did help to identify others who needed assistance. Additionally, the seniors were empowered (via surveys) to provide their input with respect to the ministry in general, and to the content of their food box in particular. However, despite numerous efforts, the ministry was unable to secure one or two seniors from the community to take an active role in the ministry.

In retrospect, the researcher believes that the social context of the community may have played a role in failing to meet this objective. Many of the seniors that the ministry served lived in secluded areas in the county; in communities where neighbors are separated by acres of land. Thus, it is very difficult to get seniors who are not really close to their neighbors, and who are homebound, to volunteer to serve in the ministry. In the end, the researcher believes that he may have to look to seniors within Mt. Olive to get involved with the ministry and serve as liaisons to the senior community in the county. Another option would be to seek involvement from the families of the seniors served.

Goal 4 — Establish a Partnership with an Advocate

Another important goal of the project was to establish a partnership with organizations that advocated on behalf of seniors and those facing issues of food insecurity. Advocacy is an important form of empowerment, as advocates seek to influence policies and systems within the political and social spheres of a community. Advocates also fight for resources to serve the marginalized within a given community. Since the project did not engage in the level of community outreach that challenges
dysfunctional systems and structures that foster food insecurity among seniors, it was important for the researcher and the ministry to establish partnerships with those who did.

Overall, the project successfully met the goal to partner with organizations that advocate on behalf of seniors and those who are facing issues of food insecurity. From a senior perspective, the outreach ministry partnered with Henry County Senior Services (HCSS). Through the HCSS Council on Aging, the agency "advocates on behalf of the senior citizens of Henry County." The Council is comprised of Directors who are selected by each of the County’s District Commissioners and City Council members, and the job of the Council is to support the policies and programs that serve the seniors within the county. As a partner, Mt. Olive will support the annual fund raising initiatives for the Council.

Lastly, the ministry also partnered with the Atlanta Community Food Bank (ACFB). Currently, no organizations within Henry County specifically focus on advocating for those who are hungry and food insecure. Therefore, the ministry partnered with ACFB, an organization that “currently distributes over 30 million pounds of food and other donated grocery items each year to more than 700 nonprofit partner agencies in 38 counties in Metro Atlanta and North Georgia.” ACFB also “operates several community projects to aid agencies in community building, technical assistance and advocacy efforts.” By partnering with ACFB, not only will the ministry be able to purchase food items at a very low price per pound, but also the ministry will be

financially supporting, via membership fees, an organization that advocates on behalf of those who are facing food challenges across the state of Georgia.

Goal 5 – Needs Met and Change Has Occurred

A key goal of the project was to begin a ministry at Mt. Olive that would address a real need in the community, and then measure to see if the ministry was truly helping to meet that need. Through demographic analysis, and discussions with Henry County Senior Services, it became apparent that there were seniors in the community who were food insecure and in need of help. Mt. Olive’s Twelve Baskets food ministry directly addressed this need. Moreover, through data captured via surveys, the ministry was successful in meeting the needs of those who were served.

During the operational phase of the ministry, from July through August, the ministry conducted twenty eight (28) in-home surveys with the seniors being served (See Appendix G). The surveys captured information regarding food allergies and restrictions, and were used to identify items that the seniors might want to include in their food box. Most importantly, however, the surveys were also used to determine if the food boxes were meeting the needs of the recipients. Of the twenty eight surveys received, one hundred percent (100%) of the recipients responded that the food boxes were meeting their needs.

Another key goal of the project was to involve Mt. Olive in outreach ministry, with the hope that this involvement would ultimately change the culture of Mt. Olive. In short, the researcher believed that if the church became aware of the blessings of outreach
ministry, then going forward the church would change; they would faithfully allocate a portion of their resources (financial, human, and property) to consistently meet the needs of the local community via the newly established community outreach ministry.

While the researcher is not willing to say that the culture of Mt. Olive has changed, he is willing to note that the project did bring about significant change at the church. For example, the church agreed, via a congregational vote, to allocate a portion of its operational budget (three thousand dollars) directly toward community outreach. This was the first time in the history of the church that community outreach became a line item in the church’s annual budget. Moreover, the church agreed to use a portion of its physical space to house a food pantry. Most importantly, however, is the fact that community outreach, through The Twelve Baskets Food Ministry, is now a part of the normal vocabulary of the church. Not only has the ministry become an established part of what the church “does”, it is also a part of what the church supports through its membership. Thus, the researcher is confident that, going forward, the ministry and the community will continue to be supported by the church.

Another significant area of change occurred with the volunteers. As previously stated, all of the original seven volunteers had prior experience doing mission work or serving the community in some form or another. Moreover, through a congregational survey, all of the volunteers felt as though they were called and gifted to serve “the least of these” (see “Surveying the Volunteers” in Chapter 4). Yet, through their experience in the project, all of the volunteers reported that they had experienced some degree of change; that they were more committed to community outreach.
To determine if the volunteers experienced positive change from their experience in the community outreach ministry, the researcher conducted interviews with the volunteers at the close of the project. Specifically, the researcher conducted “open ended interviews,” as these types of interviews are built upon “areas that are critical to the practice of ministry under consideration.”151 In short, the researcher met with each of the original seven volunteers individually and asked them to reflect upon: 1) Ministry Involvement, 2) Personal Change, 3) Moments of Significance, and 4) Ministry Feedback. Each interview lasted ten to fifteen minutes. The following section summarizes what the researcher heard.

Ministry Involvement

Without exception, all of the volunteers were glad to be involved in Mt. Olive’s outreach ministry. They all expressed a commitment to the ministry, and seemed joyful and upbeat in sharing their experiences thus far. For example, one of the volunteers said: “I’m so glad that I signed up. I’ve done outreach before, but this is very different. This time, I'm going into people's homes and getting personal on a whole new level. I feel so blessed.” In reflecting on their involvement in the ministry, a few of the volunteers “wished” that more people would get involved and experience the joy of serving others.

Personal Change

Many of the volunteers expressed a belief that the ministry has changed them in one way or another. For example, some said that they were more hopeful, while others said that they were more fulfilled; some said they were more faithful while others said they are more thankful. In reflecting on personal change, one of the volunteers said: “At one point I was very cynical about people in the South. As a Northerner, I was convinced that most Southerners were selfish. But now I see that I was wrong. People are people – some are sweet and kind and some are not. The people that I’ve encountered are good people, and it has truly changed the way I view God’s people.” Another of the volunteers said: “I’ve seen what God can do when it comes to blessing others. God has truly blessed me to be a blessing to others. I’m more faithful now than I’ve ever been before, and I plan to keep on helping others for as long as I live.”

Moments of Significance

The researcher asked the volunteers to reflect and talk about an “Ah Ha” moment; a moment that had a profound impact on the volunteer. One of the volunteers spoke about the moment when he first saw the completed food pantry: “When I walked in and saw that pantry stocked with all that food, I knew that God was moving; that we were about to bless a whole lot of people.” Yet, many of the volunteers talked about their encounters with the seniors. One volunteer said: “I was blown away when I realized that one guy actually had family in the area. He had a son and other family right here in Henry County. Yet, it didn’t seem like the family was helping at all. Here was this man sitting at home and going hungry, and his family didn’t seem to care.” Another said: “An
Ah Ha moment was when it hit me how lonely this woman was. We talked for a long time. I guess because she didn’t have anyone else to talk to. It was hard for me to leave because I knew that she was lonely."

Ministry Feedback

All of the volunteers were asked to give their feedback about the ministry; what needed to be improved and what else needed to be done? Quite a few felt that nothing more needed to be done and that things were going pretty well. However, there were those who did see areas of concern. One volunteer said: “I think that our youth should join us on our deliveries every now and then. It may help them to see how blessed they are, and help them understand that they have a responsibility to serve others.” One of the other volunteers added this: “As we continue to grow, we’re definitely going to need more help. The county and businesses in the community are going to have to chip in and help because it seems like the poor are getting poorer, and we can’t do this by ourselves.”

In summary, the ministry met most of the stated goals of the project. Of the five stated goals, the ministry met three:

1. Is the Community Outreach Ministry operational? Yes
2. Are at least 50 seniors being served? Almost, 33 are being served.
3. Are there at least two (2) seniors from the community working with the ministry? No.
4. Has the Community Outreach Ministry formed a partnership with an organization that advocates on behalf seniors and those facing issues of food insecurity? Yes.
5. Is the ministry meeting the needs of the seniors served and has change occurred in the church? Yes. Have the ministry volunteers experienced positive change from working in the ministry? Yes. Are they more committed to community outreach? Yes.

Reflections

Limitations

From the onset, the researcher recognized that the project would not seek to mobilize community assets; to engage the broader community in taking ownership of strategies that can reduce and/or eliminate food insecurity. Time constraints and resources did not allow the project to engage in the level of community transformation that challenges dysfunctional systems and structures. Yet, in addition to this obvious limitation, the researcher also encountered other limitations, specifically 1) local community support, and 2) congregational support.

One significant limitation came in the area of local community support. Because Mt. Olive’s ministry was new, there were a few businesses and organizations that seemed hesitant to support the church. Moreover, there were many businesses and organizations that were already supporting ministry efforts in the community. For example, some of the supermarkets were already supporting local food pantries, and the large commercial food distributor in the community (Sysco) was committed to supporting the Atlanta Community Food bank. Thus, the ministry encountered limitations with respect to support from the local community.
In addition to community support, the outreach ministry also had to contend with the lack of congregational support. While many people in the congregation supported the ministry either by supporting the canned food drives or by monetary donations, a majority of the congregation did not do anything to support the ministry. Despite the sermons, and the teaching, and the appeals, a large majority of the Mt. Olive congregation did not do anything to support the outreach ministry. Some may believe that their tithes and offerings should cover the effort, and others may believe that the church should only help those who are members. The researcher recognized from the beginning that the culture of Mt. Olive was that of an “inward” focused church, that change is not easy, and that change never happens overnight. However, the researcher is hopeful that congregational support will get better as new people arrive, and as more people begin to understand that the church is called to serve the community and help those who are in need.

Lessons Learned

Ultimately, there was much that the researcher learned pastorally and personally from this project. From a pastoral perspective, the research learned the importance of being able to clearly communicate a "vision." The researcher had a vision for a community outreach ministry at Mt. Olive. Yet getting others to see the vision required the ability to communicate effectively. There were many meetings in which the researcher had to talk about “what” the ministry would do, “why” it was important to do it, and “how” the church might go about doing it. However, this level of communication was truly required to mobilize the necessary resources to establish the ministry.
In truth, during the project the researcher felt like Nehemiah. In the Old Testament story of Nehemiah (specifically Chapters 1 and 2), Nehemiah had a vision that was born out of the suffering of his people – a vision to build a wall. This vision had to be communicated to the people in a way that would motivate the people to act. And yet, despite various hardships and setbacks, Nehemiah was able to cast a vision, get the people to act, keep the people together, and rebuild the walls around Jerusalem. In short, it seems as if the researcher had to do the same things to build an outreach ministry at Mt. Olive. It took the ability to clearly communicate the vision, however, to get it done.

From a personal perspective, the researcher learned, yet again, that God will provide what we need to do ministry. In truth, the researcher believes that we are called to serve those who are in need, and that God will supply what we need to do it. Throughout this project, the researcher marveled at how God supplied the needs of the ministry at every turn. From the church’s vote to fund the ministry, to the company who volunteered to supply all of the food boxes, to the people who donated canned goods, God worked through God’s people to provide.

In John’s Gospel, Jesus tells the disciples that they will do “greater things” than He (John 14:28). Jesus goes on to tell the disciples that He has chosen them to go and bear fruit – fruit that lasts, and that whatever they ask for in Jesus’ name will be given so that the Father may be glorified (Jn. 15:7-8). In truth, the researcher believes that these few verses in John bear witness to the fact that the Lord has promised to provide what we need in ministry not only to bear fruit, but also to bring glory to God. This is the personal lesson that has been seared into the heart of the researcher: God will provide.
Future Implications

Because the outreach ministry has been successful, and is now helping to meet a real need in the community, the researcher believes that the culture of Mt. Olive will eventually begin to change towards community outreach and public ministry. Many of the members have no idea that there are seniors in the community who are facing issues of food insecurity. And while they may know Biblically, and believe intuitively, that Christians are called to serve those in need within the broader community, many people within Mt. Olive have never had the practical opportunity to be part of a ministry that is seeking to serve the community. But now the congregation will have the opportunity to experience community ministry, and through this experience they will discover that a few can make a difference in meeting the needs of many. So, what are the future implications for Mt. Olive’s community outreach ministry? The researcher believes it is threefold: 1) Expansion of Direct Relief; 2) Sustained Support; and 3) Advocacy and Community Development.

Expansion of Direct Relief

After the first year or more, the researcher envisions that Mt. Olive’s Community Outreach Ministry will expand its direct relief efforts. In short, the ministry will more than likely seek to meet additional needs in the community and serve those beyond the senior population. For example, the food ministry may expand to serve hot meals at the church, or provide food boxes to families who are food insecure. Additionally, the ministry may seek to offer other means of direct relief - clothing, utility assistance, job assistance, and shelter assistance.
The researcher also envisions that the outreach ministry will ultimately become a tax exempt organization. For example, Union Baptist Church is a small African American church in Buford, GA. A few years ago, the church started a community outreach ministry called "Exodus Outreach". As a 501c3 Tax Exempt Corporation, Exodus Outreach Inc. has established local partnerships that enable them to feed the hungry twice per week, and distribute more than eleven thousand pounds of food to over one thousand people annually. The researcher envisions a similar path for Mt. Olive – that after a year or two, Mt. Olive will organize a 501c3 corporation and further partner with existing organizations and local businesses to provide direct relief and support to people in need.

From a congregational perspective, the researcher believes that after the first year or more, the congregation will begin to fully embrace the church’s outreach efforts. As a whole, members will begin to take pride in the fact the Mt. Olive is helping to meet needs in the community and caring for those in need. The congregation will also be more inclined to give more of their time, talent, and treasure to support the ministry, as they will see firsthand how needs are truly being met in the community. Thus, the congregation will ultimately become more committed to community outreach as the ministry becomes more established and serves more people.

To help the congregation fully embrace the church’s outreach efforts, there will be ongoing training opportunities that seek to educate the congregation about the theological, Biblical, and practical principles concerning community outreach. For example, in Chapter 4 (page 67) the researcher provided details regarding Mt. Olive’s

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B.A.S.I.C.S. curriculum concerning community outreach. Future volunteers will continue to be exposed to this training, and the curriculum will be enhanced to provide ongoing training to all ministry volunteers.

In addition to training the volunteers, the Christian Education ministry of Mt. Olive will also include ongoing training related to community outreach in its curriculum for the congregation at large. In short, this training will seek to transform non-Christian attitudes relative to those who are poor and food insecure; attitudes that suggest that the poor and hungry are lazy or sinful. The fact that Jesus identifies with the hungry in Matthew 25: 40 not only affirms the dignity and worth of those who are hungry, but also reminds us that the hungry are also God's children. The congregation will be exposed to authors such as Charles Van Engen and Jude Tiersma, who argue that "the church is the family of God called to be a neighbor to all those whom God loves."¹⁵³ Thus, future training opportunities will seek to raise awareness to the pervasive problems of poverty and hunger, and help the church recognize the humanity of those who are food insecure. Moreover, future training will help the church understand that loving and standing in solidarity with those in need emulates the ethic and love of Jesus Christ.

From the perspective of the community, the researcher believes that people will begin to see Mt. Olive as a place of help and hope. While Mt. Olive has been in existence for more than a decade, there are many people in the Henry County area who have no idea that Mt. Olive exists. Yet, when Mt. Olive begins to deliver food to seniors in the community, those seniors will now know that there is a Christian community called Mt. Olive who cares about them. Moreover, those seniors will be able to hold on to their

¹⁵³ Charles Van Engen and Jude Tiersma, "God So Loves The City," p. 248
hope, knowing that there is a community of faith who is willing to demonstrate the love of Jesus and be a blessing to those in need.

_Sustained Support_

As the ministry reaches the five year mark, the researcher believes that the outreach ministry will begin to gravitate toward services that help the community become more self-reliant. These services would include, for example, childcare, job training and job placement. As the church becomes more involved with serving those in need, the church will ultimately become exposed to those conditions that facilitate need – e.g. unemployment. Hence, if Mt. Olive can become a resource that provides critical support services for the community, then people within the community will be in a better position to become self-supporting.

One of the immediate areas where Mt. Olive might provide sustained community support is in the area of childcare. Mt. Olive currently has the capabilities, from a facility perspective, to house a daycare center. For example, the church has a full commercial kitchen, a playground area, space for outdoor activities, and a standalone youth building that can be utilized for class rooms, etc. Moreover, Mt. Olive has members who own daycare centers and are employed by daycare centers, and the church could easily leverage these resources to provide affordable childcare support to local families.

Another area of sustained community support would come through training opportunities. The researcher envisions a day when Mt. Olive would offer courses to the community such as English as a Second Language, GED preparation, and Computer
Literacy. The church currently has numerous educators as members, and they would be well positioned to help develop courses that would effectively serve the community. Thus, by providing community support through training, people in the community will acquire the skills that could lead to better job opportunities, socioeconomic empowerment, and self-determination.

Advocacy and Community Development

As the ministry reaches the ten year mark, the researcher believes that Mt. Olive’s outreach efforts will begin to become more involved in advocacy and community development. Advocacy involves partnering with coalitions that represent the needs of the “least of these” in the community; organizations who advocate on behalf of the poor, the elderly, the immigrant, etc. One of the goals of the researcher’s project was to partner with an organization that advocates on behalf of those who are food insecure. However, long term, Mt. Olive will add their voice to those entities and organizations that seek to foster social change and justice in the church’s local community and beyond.

In addition to advocacy, the researcher believes that Mt. Olive will ultimately become engaged in community development. Community development involves leading or participating in those efforts to revitalize and otherwise develop the local community. While Mt. Olive is located in a middle class neighborhood, there are areas in Henry County that are in need of revitalization and development. Community development could include assisting in the growth and development of small businesses, providing credit and venture capital, and engaging in enterprise activities that stimulate job creation and self-sufficiency.
In summary, the implication of Mt. Olive’s Community Outreach Ministry is that it has the capacity to grow and evolve over the next ten years. From a grass roots effort to provide food to seniors facing issues of food insecurity, the ministry will grow and ultimately expand its direct relief efforts within the first year or more. After five years, the ministry will seek to help the community become more self-reliant via sustained support services such as childcare and job training. Lastly, as the ministry hits its ten year mark, advocacy and community development will become essential elements in its overall mission. In short, over time the ministry, through the power of Jesus Christ, will seek to grow, evolve, and continue to transform lives within Mt. Olive and beyond the walls of the church.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this dissertation, the researcher raised a critical question: “Does the church have a role in serving the community in a manner that fosters change and transformation”? The researcher fundamentally believes that it does. Specifically, the researcher believes that the church is called to facilitate change in the community by reaching beyond the walls of the church and serving those in need.

Through qualitative research, and a ministry project that was designed to implement a community outreach ministry, the researcher has thoroughly explored an issue related to the practice of community outreach ministry at Mt. Olive Baptist Church. The ministry project offered a comprehensive description of the ministry context and included a conceptual framework – previous efforts to address the ministry issue from a theological, Biblical, and empirical literature perspective. Lastly, the ministry project
was described in detail and a project evaluation, along with pastoral and personal reflections, was offered.

In closing the researcher believes that Mt. Olive is poised to become an agent of change in the community. The church is now reaching beyond the walls and members of the church, and helping the community at large. Moreover, Mt. Olive is now living up to its mission and mandate “to be about our Father’s business” (Lk. 2:49) and “serve the least of these” (Matt. 25:4). Thus, when the Mt. Olive congregation sings the old hymn that poses the question: “What can make me whole again?” they will be able to reflect on the divinely influenced change that is occurring through their outreach ministry, and sing the response with a renewed sense of assurance: “Nothing but the blood of Jesus!”
APPENDICES
Appendix A

Mt. Olive Baptist Church

Congregational Survey

How long have you attended Mt. Olive _____

How often are you usually involved in worship and activities at Mt. Olive (Circle One)

- More than once a week
- Every 2 weeks
- Less than once a month

Once a week
Once a month
No Response

What is your age_____

What is your gender_____(M or F)

What is the highest level of education that you completed (Circle One)

- High School/GED
- College Degree
- Graduate Degree

Less than High School
Some College
No Response

Are you married (Yes or No) _____

Do you have children (Yes or No) _____

Are your children/teens currently active in Mt. Olive’s Youth Ministry (Yes or No) _____

Ages of children living in your home (Circle One)

- Teens & Grown Child
- Child & Teen
- Teens
- No Children

Child, Teen, & Grown Child
Grown Children
Children
No Response
Please answer the questions below by selecting one number from the following scale:

1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Once in a While, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Almost Always, 7=Always

1. Every day I see evidence that God is active in the world_____
2. I have a real sense that God is guiding me_____
3. I give significant portions of time and money to help other people_____
4. My life is filled with meaning and purpose_____
5. My faith shapes how I think and act each day_____
6. I try to apply my faith to political and social issues_____
7. I go out of my way to show love to people I meet_____
8. I devote time to reading and studying my Bible_____
9. I seek out opportunities to help me grow spiritually_____
10. I take time for periods of prayer and mediation_____
11. As I grow older, my understanding of God changes_____
12. I talk with other people about my faith_____
13. I like to worship and pray with others_____
14. My faith helps me know right from wrong_____
15. I feel a deep sense of responsibility for reducing suffering in the world_____
16. I care a great deal about reducing poverty in my community_____
17. I am concerned that our country is not doing enough to help the poor_____
18. I am involved in community outreach ministry_____
19. I am concerned that Mt. Olive is not doing enough to help the poor_____
20. I feel that I am called and gifted to serve the “Least of These”_____

Appendix B

Community Outreach Ministry Training: Session 1

Prayer

Review vision and mission of ministry (5 min)
  • Vision: To meet the needs of the community through the God supplied resources of the church
  • Mission: To serve and help the least of these (Matt. 25:35-40)

Opening Exercise (15 min)
  • Groups of 2 - Group Discussion: Discuss a time in which you needed and received some help.
    o Debrief and Discuss
  • Central Take Away: Everyone needs a little help every now and then

Workshop Focus: (25 Min)
  • Believe that we are called to help those who are in need (Jam. 2:15-17)
    o Reaching out to those in need is what faith in action looks like
    o When we care for those in need in our community, we are “doing” what faith in Christ compels us to do – to take action when someone needs help
  • Acknowledge that the Lord will provide (Lk. 9:16-17)
    o God multiplies what we have when we use what we have to help others
    o God is the source of every resource

Questions & Observations: (10 min)
  • “Ah Ha Moments” & Lessons Learned

Prayer
Community Outreach Ministry Training: Session 2

Prayer

Review vision and mission of ministry (5 min)

- **Vision**: To meet the needs of the community through the God supplied resources of the church
- **Mission**: To serve and help the least of these (Matt. 25:35-40)

Opening Exercise (15 min)

- **Groups of 2 - Group Discussion**: What makes a waiter or waitress great? What would they need to do to get good tip?
  - Each team board answers
  - Debrief and Discuss
- **Central Take Away**: A great waiter/waitress is one who “serves” well

Workshop Focus: (25 Min)

- **Serve the “least of these”** (Matt. 25:40)
  - The least of these are the invisible and the marginalized (detail marginalization)
  - We have a divine edict that bids us to reach our care for those in need
- **Interpret community ministry through the love ethic of Jesus (Matt. 22:37-40)**
  - Jesus commands us to love our neighbor
  - The love ethic of Jesus is a sacrificial love that seeks to benefit others

Questions & Observations: (10 min)

- “Ah Ha Moments” and Lessons Learned

Prayer
Appendix D

Community Outreach Ministry Training: Session 3

Prayer

Review vision and mission of ministry (5 min)

- Vision: To meet the needs of the community through the God supplied resources of the church
- Mission: To serve and help the least of these (Matt. 25:35-40)

Opening Exercise (15 min)

- Paper cut game.
  - Debrief and Discuss
- Central Take Away: Things can get better and can change with some help

Workshop Focus: (25 Min)

- Cultivate change and transformation (2 Cor. 5:17)
  - The power of the Holy Spirit is able to bring forth change
  - We help someone, change occurs in them and in us – hearts become more open to receive the love of Christ
- Stand in solidarity with the “least of these” (Matt: 25:35-36)
  - Jesus identifies with the least of these
  - When we serve and help the least of these, we are actually serving and helping Jesus

Questions & Observations: (10 min)

- “Ah Ha Moments” and Lessons Learned

Prayer
June 13th, 2012

To: The Henry County Ministerial Alliance

RE: Community Outreach Ministry

Dear Pastors and Leaders,

Mt. Olive Baptist of Stockbridge is expanding our community outreach efforts to support and serve more seniors in the Henry Co. community. But we need your help!! We would like to identify fifty (50) seniors in Henry Co. (homebound or not) who would benefit from receiving a weekly food box. Our ministry will deliver a food box to the home of the identified senior each week at no charge.

The issue of food insecurity among our seniors is on the rise, and we need your help to assure that are our seniors have access to the food that they need. So if you have persons in your congregations or community who may need food assistance, please contact:

Sis. Jones
Phone: 555-555-1211

Forever In His Service,

Rev. Terrance J. Gattis, M. Div.
Senior Pastor
Mt. Olive Baptist Church
www.mobcs.org
Appendix F

Pastoral Sermon

"I Want To Make It To Heaven" (Matt: 25:34-41)

The other day I heard a preacher talk about our President, Barak Obama. The preacher said that he often gets upset by the way that people malign and talk about this president. In truth, there are those who have called this president everything but a child of God. In truth, there are those who have no problem disrespecting this president, not because of his policies but rather because he's a black man in the White House.

The preacher said that he gets upset when they say that our President is not American – that he gets upset when they say that our President’s birth certificate is a forgery, and that he doesn’t really understand America because he's not a real American. I have to admit that I too get justifiably upset when I hear some of the things that they say about our President. I get upset when they call him a communist and a socialist. And as of late, I truly get upset when they call him the “food stamp” President.

As I heard the preacher the other day, I came to the conclusion that there are things going on in the world that ought to make us upset. In truth there are things that are going on in the world that ought to make us down right mad. We ought to get mad at the fact that 12 million children are living in poverty right here in the richest country in the world; that 49 million people don’t have access to health insurance; that a disproportionate number of our kids are failing to graduate High School and are ending up behind bars; that 1% of the population in the US controls 42% of the wealth; that corporations are being treated like people while people are being treated like things; and that the rich are getting richer while the poor are getting poorer.

There are things that are going on in the world that ought to make us down right mad. When it comes to the church, we ought to get mad at the fact that people are hungry, that people are homeless, that people are hurting, and that far too many “church folk” aren’t doing anything to serve or help them. We sing, and we shout, and we look forward to “being” blessed, while we do very little to be a “blessing” to others. It has become obvious that somewhere along the way, believers have forgotten that we are called to be
the hands, and the feet, and the love of Jesus in the world. We have forgotten that Jesus said “whatever you do for the least of these you do also for me”.

Let me cut to chase today and tell somebody that if you want to make it to heaven then you need to make it your business to help somebody who’s struggling in the world. For the Bible says that there will come a day when Jesus will put some to his left and some to his right. And to those on the right, to those who took time to help somebody, Jesus will say “come you who are blessed by my Father and take your inheritance, the kingdom that’s been prepared for you since the creation of the world.” In other words, there will come a day when those who have helped the least of these will make it to heaven.

Today’s text is tailored to teach us about what it takes to make it to heaven. You see the central theme in this portion of Matthew’s gospel is judgment. In v31, the text begins by talking about how there will come a day when the Lord will return with the heavenly host of angels. And the Bible says that the Lord will gather everyone before him. In other words, there will come a time when all of us will have to stand before Jesus. And when we stand before Him, here’s what’s going to happen – we’re going to have to give account for how we helped those who are the least, the lost, and the left behind. In a word there will come a time when all of us will be judged. And the criterion for judgment on that day will not just be about faith in Jesus, it will also be about whether or not you faithfully worked for Jesus when it came to the least of these.

You see, it is true that we are saved by faith. Paul reminds us in Romans 3 that we are made righteous by faith in Jesus Christ. So faith in Jesus is needed to get to heaven. But Paul also tells us in Romans 2 that faith without works is dead. In other words, we cannot say that we believe in Jesus but never help those who Jesus bids us to help. In short, it is hypocritical to say that you believe in Jesus, but never do those things that align with what Jesus did or what Jesus said.

There’s something wrong when churches only care about their membership and not the community. There’s something wrong when church folk only care about what’s going on in the church and not about what’s on going beyond the walls of the church. And there’s something wrong when only a few of God’s people are doing what they can to serve the least of these. That’s the bad news. But the good news is that for those who are doing
what you can to feed the hungry, and care for the sick, and visit those in prisons, your labor is not in vain. For there will come a day when Jesus will say: Come you who are blessed by my Father and take your place in heaven.

I want to make it to heaven and I believe that many of you do too. In v34 of the text, Jesus promises that you and I will be blessed to make it heaven if we feed those who are hungry; if we invite the stranger in; if we cloth those who need clothing; and if we care for and visit those who are sick and in prison. Now if you think about it, this leads us to a critical question: Why does serving the least of these carry so much weight with Jesus? Why is heaven the reward for those who serve the least of these? Allow me to suggest to you that Heaven is the reward for those who serve the least of these for two reasons: Identification and Expectation.

When it comes to identification, the text makes it clear that Jesus identifies with the least of these. Look at verses 35 and 36: Jesus says for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you invited me in. Notice that Jesus did not say that “they” were hungry. No Jesus said “I” was hungry. And what that means is that Jesus identifies with the hungry, and the thirsty, and the stranger, and the sick, and even the incarcerated. In other words when you see the least of these you’re also seeing Jesus.

So here’s what we all need to understand. When we ignore that person on the corner begging for change, we’re also ignoring Jesus. When we look down on the poor, we’re also looking down on Jesus. When we turn our back on those on prison, we’re also turning our back on Jesus. And when we turn up our nose at the least of these, we are also turning up our noses at Jesus. Because Jesus identifies with the least of these, that means when you see them you’re also seeing Jesus.

Heaven is the reward for those who serve the least of these for two reasons: Identification and Expectation: Identification because Jesus identifies with the least of these. But expectation is also a reason because Jesus expects us to help the least of these. Look again at the text. In verse 41-43, Jesus says to those on his left: “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I
was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.” In other words, those on the left did not make it into heaven because they did not do what Jesus expected them to do – they did not help the least of these.

Now to fully understand what Jesus expects of us, you need to go back to Matthew 22, for Matthew 22 actually helps to setup the expectation in Matthew 25. You see, it’s in Matthew 22 where Jesus gives us the two greatest commandments. The first commandment is to love your God with all your heart, your soul, and your mind. This is the first great commandment. But the second commandment is as great as the first: love your neighbor as yourself. Thus, Jesus commands us, and therefore expects us, to love our neighbors. And what we need to understand is that the hungry are our neighbors; the thirsty and poor are our neighbors; the sick and incarcerated are our neighbors; and the least of these are our neighbors too.

The bottom line truth is this: Real love is not measured by what we say, real love is measured by what we do. And what real love must do is help the least of these. In short, Jesus is expecting us to love the hungry like Jesus loves us. He is expecting us to love the poor and the sick and the incarcerated, like He loves us. And when we love and help the least of these as expected, we can be sure that we will make it to heaven.
Food Distribution Survey

Recipients Name:__________________________________________________________

Is the Food Box helping _____ (Yes or No)

Is there anything you’d like to see added to box?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Are you allergic to any food items or do you have any medical restrictions?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Do you know anyone else who might also like to receive a food box?

Name:______________________________________________________________

Address:____________________________________________________________

Phone Number:________________________________________________________
## Appendix H

### Pantry Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Exp. Date</th>
<th>Distributed Date</th>
<th>Qty</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Meats (Can)**
- Tuna
- Salmon
- Chili
- Spam
- Vienna Sausages
- Beef Stew
- Chicken

**Grains/Bread/Cereal**
- Cereal
- Oatmeal
- Grits
- Rice

### Food Pantry Recipients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Address:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number of Persons in Household:**

**Distribution Dates:**

**Food Items Distributed:**

**Any Known Allergies:**

**Food Items Wish Not to Receive:**
Appendix I

Twelve Baskets Food Ministry Guide

Mt. Olive Baptist Church

About Our Father's Business - Lk. 2:49

Pastor Terrance J. Gattis, M. Div.
Senior Pastor
469 Mt. Olive Road
Stockbridge, GA 30281
(770) 957-3308
www.mobcs.com
Vision & Mission

The ongoing, unwavering vision of Mt. Olive’s Twelve Baskets Food Ministry (TBFM) is to serve and help “the least of these” (Mt. 25:40). Towards this end, the mission of TBFM is to provide food to seniors in Henry County who are facing issues of food insecurity, and to help any family who needs emergency food assistance.

The foundation of our vision and mission is based on the following B.A.S.I.C.S. principles:

- Believe that we are called to help those who are in need (Jam. 2:15-17)
- Acknowledge that the Lord will provide (Lk. 9:16-17)
- Serve the “least of these” (Matt. 25:40)
- Interpret community ministry through the love ethic of Jesus (Matt. 22:37-40)
- Cultivate change and transformation (2 Cor. 5:17)
- Stand in solidarity with the “least of these” (Matt: 25:35-36)

What is a Food Pantry

The TBFM pantry is a community outreach ministry that collects and stores food to distribute to those in need. Food pantries provide supplemental food items to low income families who are facing issues of food insecurity.

Food Boxes

Each food box will contain approximately twenty five pounds of canned goods. The food box will include canned meat (e.g. tuna or Spam), and a grain or cereal (e.g. oatmeal, grits, or rice). The box will also include canned vegetables, a dry good (e.g. beans), soup, and canned fruit. Lastly, the box should contain a dairy item (e.g. powdered milk, instant breakfast drinks, etc.).
Food Storage

Food must be able to be stored safely and securely on the Mt. Olive campus. The room must have sufficient shelving, pest control, and security. The pantry must not be accessible for general church activities. Food must be stored on shelving that is at least six (6) inches off the ground. Food must be labeled with expiration dates.

Eligibility

Recipients of food boxes must be 65yrs or older and must live in Henry County. However, any person facing an issue of food insecurity can receive some level of support from the TBFM. Also families or individual who need emergency assistance can also receive a food box from TBFM. All food box recipients must be logged and recorded in the TBFM tracking system so that the ministry can track what was given, when, and how often. Food will never be sold to recipients.

Staffing

TBFM is staffed entirely by volunteers. Basic volunteer functions include preparation, distribution, and administration. Anyone can volunteer in the ministry. The only criterion for service is a heart for serving those who are in need. In short, volunteers will be responsible for the following activities:

- Stock shelves
- Preparing food boxes
- Delivering food boxes
- Keeping records
- Developing relationships in the community
- Attending meetings
- General cleaning and maintenance of the pantry
Transportation

All drivers will use their own personal vehicles to deliver food. As a contribution to the ministry, drivers will also cover the cost for gasoline. Drivers are asked to unpack the food boxes at the recipient’s location so that the food boxes can be reused. Also, drivers are asked not to drop or leave boxes at the recipient’s door.

Funding

TBFM is funded primarily through Mt. Olive Baptist Church. Food and cash donations are always welcome, along gift in kind donations.

Hours of Operation

Food boxes will be prepared on Thursday evenings. Food boxes will be delivered on Saturday mornings. The food pantry will be stocked on Monday evenings.
Journals and Websites:


Henry County Senior Services, http://www.co.henry.ga.us/SeniorServices/ (accessed June 1, 2012).

Henry County Senior Services, “Council on Aging”,

Income and Poverty in Henry County, “Henry County GA”, (January 10, 2010),

Candidates Emphasizing Health Care Accessibility, Cost, “The News Record”,

Community Health Status Indicators – CHSI 2009, “US Dept. of Health and Human Services”,

Hymns:


Books:


New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright 2001 by the Oxford University Press, Inc


